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Mr. Guy Lauzon

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•(0910)

[Translation]

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Yvon Godin (Acadie—Bathurst, NDP)): Good morning.

I'd like to welcome you to the Standing Committee on Official Languages. Our Committee has been around for 25 years. This is the first time, however, that it is making a trip such as this. Last year, we had decided to go across the country to meet with groups, but because of the election being called, our plans fell through or, as we say back home, fell right into the Baie des Chaleurs. This time, the project was approved by Parliament. Like other parliamentary committees, we wanted to make this trip, among other reasons, to meet with people on their home turf, rather than Ottawa, right in the middle of the big parliamentary machine.

One element of our mandate is the 2003 Official Languages Action Plan, which set aside \$700 million for official languages. We are anxious to see what is going on in minority regions and communities with respect to official languages and, in some cases, as regards their minority status.

My name is Yvon Godin, and I am the NDP member of Parliament for the riding of Acadie—Bathurst, in the Acadian Peninsula in New Brunswick. That's why I made that reference to the Baie des Chaleurs. With us today are Mr. Pierre Lemieux, Ms. Sylvie Boucher, and Mr. Daniel Petit, representing the Conservative government. To my left is Mr. Jean-Claude D'Amours, representing the Official Opposition — in this case, the Liberal Party — and Ms. Vivian Barbot, of the Bloc Québécois. We also have with us our clerk, Mr. Samy Agha and our analyst, Mr. Jean-Rodrigue Paré.

This is how we are going to proceed: each group will have five minutes to make its presentation. Now you may be thinking to yourselves that five minutes is not much, but the idea here is to keep some time for a discussion with members after the presentations. We would like you to give us a brief overview of your organizations and your concerns. I can assure you that once the question period has begun, you will have an opportunity to elaborate further. Once we know the specific challenges you are facing, we will be better able to engage in meaningful dialogue. If you have any points to add, don't hesitate to do so.

We will begin with Mr. Jean-Claude D'Amours.

•(0915)

Mr. Jean-Claude D'Amours (Madawaska—Restigouche, Lib.): Mr. Chairman, I can begin asking my questions, if you like. I have no objection.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Yvon Godin): Oh, I'm sorry! I just wanted to see whether you were really awake or not. But you seem to be. So, let's get going.

I will turn it over to M. Marc-André Larouche, Executive Director of the Réseau des services de santé en français du Moyen-Nord de l'Ontario.

Mr. Marc-André Larouche (Director general, Réseau des services de santé en français du Moyen-Nord de l'Ontario): Good morning, Mr. Chairman.

Five minutes really isn't much time, but I believe it will be enough. This morning, I would like to tell you about some of the achievements of the Francophone health network.

Of the \$700 million set aside in the Action Plan, \$14 million was allocated for the creation of 17 networks across Canada. These are networks of Francophone professionals, health facility managers and post-secondary training institutions, as well as community members. I would like to begin by saying that four of the 17 networks involved are in Ontario. One of those covers the mid-north region of Ontario. It is located here in Sudbury, and I am the Executive Director.

I want to talk about a very specific issue relating to reform of our health care system in Ontario. In 2004, several months after the networks were set up, one of the most significant health care system reforms to have ever occurred was implemented in Ontario. Yet no provision was made, as part of that reform, for health care services in French. That simply was not part of the plan. But the establishment of the networks allowed the Francophone community and key French-language health care services stakeholders to make their presence known, to find out what was going on and to become a force to be reckoned with, thereby ensuring that our voice would be heard as the reforms moved forward.

At the same time as these reforms were proceeding, one of the networks' projects involved planning the provision of health care services in French across Canada. As part of that project, one of the recommendations for Ontario was that Francophones should be given the responsibility of planning their own health care services in French, the idea being that they would be in a better position to understand their own needs. That was also raised with reference to the Montfort Hospital. So, there was nothing new in this. However, this was the very clear message we wanted to deliver to the Ontario Ministry of Health.

Today, some two years later, we have made tremendous progress. And that progress will contribute to the history of health care services in French. Now health care reform includes the Health System Integration Act. The four Ontario networks have finally succeeded in securing a Francophone planning entity. We are still at the discussion stage, but the fact remains that the four Ontario networks are likely to become planning entities recognized by the Ministry of Health. They will work closely with regional authorities responsible for developing funding plans. They are called local health integration networks, or LHINs. This is a major step forward for health services in French. That would have been impossible had these networks not existed. So, that is a real success story.

This major reform also had another positive effect as regards health care services in French. Thanks to the Health System Integration Act, which started out as Bill 36, a provincial committee composed of members of the Francophone community was created to advise the Ministry of Health. Although it is an advisory committee, because it's set out in the actual legislation, it is quite significant. I think this is one of the greatest advances we have made in the last 20 years as regards health care services in French in Ontario.

Now I haven't mentioned this so far, but I want you to know that for the last 20 years, health care services in French have not been very healthy in Ontario. The French Language Services Act has not yielded the desired results. On the contrary, services are stagnant, and even declining.

Do I still have a minute or 30 seconds left?

• (0920)

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Yvon Godin): You have 10 seconds left, but I will give you 30.

Mr. Marc-André Larouche: That will be enough.

I again want to talk about results, but with more of a local focus this time.

The initial idea was to establish networks. But before those networks became a reality, the provision of health care services in French was left to the discretion of each facility. The offer of such services was more anecdotal than hit or miss. It wasn't something people were particularly interested in or valued in any way.

For several years now, the network has been operating on the ground. There is now ongoing training, and networking activities are occurring throughout the region. We have a sense of renewal and, among professionals, we are seeing a renewed energy and interest in health care services in French. People now have access to a variety of tools, to ongoing training and networking. The effect is analogous to someone being brought back to life by being given oxygen.

I believe that is a good overview of the concrete results that have been achieved with the \$14 million.

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

We move now to Mr. Denis Hubert, from Collège Boréal.

Mr. Denis Hubert (President, Collège Boréal): Thank you, and welcome to the City of Sudbury and Northern Ontario.

Summarizing the issues associated with education in French in Ontario in five minutes is an almost impossible task, but I am going to attempt to do the impossible. I left a copy of some material with the clerk earlier. I invite you to have a look. And just to annoy people, I'm going to begin at the end. So, I'd ask you to go to the last page of the document, where I present my conclusions and concerns with respect to French in Ontario.

Assimilation, combined with lower birth rates, is currently ravaging Ontario. Out of ten students starting out in school, three drop out before reaching the post-secondary level. Every year, of 31,000 Francophone students in Ontario, between 500 and 600 high school students decide to study in English. 55% of Franco-Ontarian families are exogamous and, of that number, only 14.5% say that they use and learn French at home, which means quite a burden for primary and secondary schools, as well as colleges.

At the present time, 33% of Francophones who have the right to be educated in French in Ontario do not exercise that right. At the present time, more than 30,000 Francophone students in Ontario are not attending Francophone facilities or schools. I believe that if, as a representative of a post-secondary college, I'm able to ensure a family's or individual's economic stability, I will at the same time ensure their cultural stability. Hence the role played by a Francophone college in Ontario.

I come back to the first page of my document now, which I will go over with you quickly. Colleges in Ontario are different from colleges in other provinces of Canada. The ones most like ours probably those in the East, in the maritime provinces. The fact is that in addition to post-secondary education, we are also responsible for vocational training, trades training, literacy, employability, career counselling, back-to-work programs and community integration of immigrants. In Ontario, we have all those mandates. The 24 colleges have a very broad mandate in Ontario, and a very important one. Indeed, that is why they are called community colleges. I will come back to the idea of "community" later.

Our institution has been around since 1995. We cover 85% of the province. I should also mention that there are approximately 500,000 Franco-Ontarians. This is a population that should not be ignored. There are campuses in Kapuskasing, Cochrane, Sudbury, and Toronto. There are 42 service centres across the province. As you can imagine, I am often behind the wheel of a car or seated in an airplane. I travel from Point Pelee as far as James Bay.

So, it is a real challenge for a post-secondary institution to survive under these conditions. Up until now, we have had some success. But I would like to briefly touch on some of our challenges.

In any given year, the college has approximately 2,000 full-time students and 9,000 part-time students. Thus far we have trained approximately 10,000 people in the trades and again, in any given year, we have between 20,000 and 22,000 Francophone clients using our points of service for anything has to do with return to employment, jobs, and so on. In that context, we have actually just signed partnership agreements and agreements aimed at coordinating our programs with university programs in New Brunswick and elsewhere. We are also present in 12 countries and are working very, very hard to secure resources outside the province.

I would just like to mention two very important points. Of the 24 colleges in Ontario, 22 are Anglophone, and of those 24 colleges, Collège Boréal has had the highest graduate satisfaction rate in Ontario as well as the highest student retention and school success rate in Ontario for the last five years. That is quite an achievement, because it's a small college servicing a minority that has been around for barely ten years.

The challenge we are facing is this: our students see the Anglophone product and they are easily assimilated. Our students see how well provided for the Anglophone colleges are that have been in place for 40 years. When they're thinking of going to school, they shop around, they have a look at what it offered and what is available elsewhere. If we cannot equip our college to the same extent as Anglophone teaching institutions, we run the risk of losing our Franco-Ontarian clientele. Competition is stiff.

Almost 80% of our immigrant clients who settle in Ontario end up abandoning the French language. We have to put processes in place to put a stop to that. Increasingly, in terms of Francophone students and families arriving from abroad, these families are in fact the ones that will ensure the survival of the French fact in Ontario. There are currently 1.56 children per family. So, it is important to be there for these clients and be able to give them what they need.

I will quickly move on to a couple of other points.

● (0925)

We got some news recently. I don't want to be partisan here, but I do want you to be aware of the fact that some of that news has hurt us or could potentially hurt us. I urge you to reconsider these decisions.

Let's talk about the Court Challenges Program. I work as a volunteer on the Montfort Hospital file, and laboured day and night to ensure that that hospital would survive. My family was here in 1912 when Regulation 17 made the use of French in our schools in Ontario illegal. I survived the first iteration of Francophone school boards in Ontario in 1968, as well as the school funding — finally! — debate in Ontario. After 200 or 300 years of history, it isn't always easy to continue using the French language in Ontario. We are facing challenges, and we need the federal government. You cannot simply leave this responsibility entirely in the hands of the provincial government.

I know that time is moving along, but I do want to caution you with respect to devolution. In the last little while, there have been a lot of agreements signed:

[English]

labour market development agreements, labour-management partnership programs.

[Translation]

These involve a devolution of federal powers to the provincial government. In some cases, that's a great idea. However, I do want to caution you: when responsibilities are transferred from the federal government to the provincial government, it is essential — and this is what I'm asking of you — to include somewhere, whether it is written in black, green or yellow, that they must abide by the Official Languages Act and the philosophy that underlies it. It is possible to

abide by the strict terms of a statute without necessarily abiding by the philosophy that it espouses.

Recently the decision was made to put an end to HRDC's activities in the field. Part of those HRDC activities have been entrusted to the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities. Regional branches have been set up to deal with employability, counselling, education, and so on. It was decided that the position in Eastern Ontario would be bilingual, but that turned out not to be the case either in northern Ontario or in central southwestern Ontario, where there are 165,000 Francophones. That is just one small example.

I do hope this situation will be corrected. I'm sure you understand how important it is. Receiving services in French at HRDC service outlets has been quite a challenge. We have been partially successful in that regard. However, I am concerned about the transfer of these activities to the province; I'm afraid there will be slippage. I could spend quite a lot of time talking about that.

Thank you.

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

We move now to Ms. Suzanne Roy, Executive Director of the Association canadienne française de l'Ontario du grand Sudbury.

Mrs. Suzanne Roy (Executive Director, ACFO Regional, Community sector development, Association canadienne française de l'Ontario du grand Sudbury): Good morning. Thank you for inviting us and giving us the opportunity to speak to you today.

The vitality of minority language communities depends to a large extent on work carried out in the field, and therefore on the work of regional ACFO branches in Ontario. ACFO stands for the Association canadienne française de l'Ontario, for those who may not be aware of it. There are 21 ACFOs in Ontario that do their best to cover the entire territory. ACFOs have as their common goal to give the community the tools it needs for its own development, in a spirit of sustainable development and with a view to ensuring the growth of the community and the Francophonie. Every ACFO is in charge of local development in its own region, in the broadest sense of the term. Any service that is not available in a given region may lead to an ACFO's involvement, but what works in one place may not necessarily work elsewhere, because development is different from one region to the next.

Community development is the least well structured and the most underfunded of all the sectors. Regional ACFOs are one of the oldest development tools, along with education. We have been doing what we do since 1910. The Association is governed by the community it serves at the regional level. The places where development most readily occurs are the small base units, on the ground, and the work carried out in the field is neither recognized, valued or supported. The very principle underlying community development is think globally and act locally, which runs completely counter to the centralizing and bureaucratic approach which is increasingly forced on us.

In terms of the overall development of Francophone communities in Ontario, we want to emphasize the exceptional contribution that regional ACFOs have been making for years now. Community development is not just projects, and the work carried out by regional ACFOs should be recognized as the vital work that it is and supported accordingly. All ACFOs are facing similar challenges, but every region is unique and decides on its own direction in the field. Community development is not something you can do on the basis of a framework, and what is done in one place may not be appropriate elsewhere. As a result, the first step is to ensure that there is recognition of the work being carried out on the ground and of regional specificities, with a view to ensuring the survival of the community and slowing assimilation. We are in favour of long-term, sustainable development through funding in the form of multiyear grants.

Cofunding must be acknowledged by the federal government in order to support and sustain regional development, and that development happens at the grass roots. The kind of funding that is needed is not project funding, but operational funding. Program officers and funders have to be trained, because they need to recognize that community development is not project development but, rather, the kind of development that is essential to ensure the community's survival. With an adequate operating budget, we can develop projects to better meet the needs and expectations of the community.

By supporting that vision of recognition, the Canadian government will ensure the viability and vitality of the Francophone community in Ontario, while reducing assimilation and boosting its demographic growth. Regional ACFOs have to work together to develop a consistent approach that reflects their needs, and ministries have a duty to collaborate with these ACFOs to identify ways of ensuring we are truly effective.

• (0930)

We need guarantees in the form of a larger budget envelope for the Ontario official language minority community, so that the government can appropriately meet its obligations with respect to supporting and promoting its minority. Equitable core funding for organizations working directly with the community and for its development in Ontario is absolutely critical, and requires that all ACFOs working on the ground receive recognition.

• (0935)

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

Mr. D'Amours will be our first questioner.

Mr. Jean-Claude D'Amours: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I want to thank all of you for taking the time to come and meet with us this morning. It's very important that we have an opportunity to discuss your concerns and challenges.

Mr. Hubert, to begin with, I would like to commend you for your cooperation — and you mentioned this at the beginning of your presentation — with the University of Moncton as regards forestry. That is certainly a clear demonstration that even though there is quite a distance between you and that you are in two separate provinces, when people are really determined, they can make great things happen. If you're interested in saying a little bit more about this later, you will have an opportunity to do so.

Mr. Hubert, you mentioned one thing in particular. Indeed, you did more than that. I almost sensed some distress as you were speaking. One doesn't have the same perspective as a Francophone from New Brunswick, where the Madawaska region is 98% Francophone. Sometimes the reality facing other communities is difficult to understand, unless you actually come into a region such as this, to see how things really are.

As you were speaking, I sensed some distress at the budget cuts that were introduced in late September. You referred specifically to the Court Challenges Program. You said that this is not just a matter of policy, and that there are major challenges to be met. I would like to hear you say more about that. You spoke in detail about your history and the difficulties you have faced in order to be able to speak impeccable French even today, in 2006. I would like you to clarify what the challenges are you're facing and the risks for your communities if we completely abolish the Court Challenges Program.

Mr. Denis Hubert: Thank you.

First of all, I think we have been able to surmount the obstacles by working to develop linkages.

We have just returned from Acadie. We only just signed an agreement to develop a bachelor's program in forestry that will be jointly delivered by our college and the University of Moncton, allowing young Francophone students to take advantage of the expertise that exists in New Brunswick in that area and then come back home. I don't doubt they will come back. What is important, however, is economic development and stability. Those young Francophones will come back home even richer, because they will have learned about another culture or gotten to know brothers and cousins who are not that far away.

It is possible to break down those distances. We signed a similar linkage agreement with the Université Sainte-Anne in Nova Scotia. I am so proud that New Brunswick and Nova Scotia have their own Francophone university.

The Court Challenges issue is certainly of great concern to me. At the time, I worked with other colleagues on the Montfort file; I am from a family that has been defending the French fact in Ontario for 250 or 300 years. We need access to funds in order to do that, and the cost of preparing a case is huge. Whether it goes through the Association canadienne-française de l'Ontario, or the new Assemblée de la francophonie de l'Ontario which was created this summer, it is important that our minority community continue to have access to federal assistance.

I could spend a lot of time talking about the challenges we face because of the federal and provincial governments. Sometimes our agency finds itself caught between the federal and provincial governments on matters relating to health, education, community activities, and so on. We have to be relatively capable of meeting these kinds of challenges.

One of the problems I would like to raise has to do with learning a trade in Ontario. I am currently discussing this issue with Crown counsels with a view to showing that Francophones are subject to systemic discrimination when it comes to learning a trade in Ontario. I alone am handling this file, but I do hope to receive some assistance, in order to clarify the whole issue of trades training or vocational training, and the discrimination that I believe exists in that area in Ontario.

Literacy is a major priority for Ontario colleges. That may not be the case for colleges in other provinces, but in my view, literacy is important. I was recently told about a variety of cuts, including a \$17 million budget cut that will directly affect the Coalition francophone pour l'alphabétisation et la formation de base.

I teach basic education, particularly in Northern Ontario. I have the highest complement of clients who have not completed Grade 12. I have to sit down with a father or mother who may have worked in a mine or in forestry, and talk about their sense of pride in trying to convince them to go back to school. That is not an easy thing to do. I have to sweet talk them, be supportive and convince them to go back to school. But I don't necessarily receive any money from my province for doing that work. I have to knock on a lot of different doors to get that money. It's a huge challenge.

My apologies for getting so passionate about this.

• (0940)

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Yvon Godin): Ms. Barbot.

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

Ladies and gentlemen, thank you for coming to meet with us this morning.

What you have told us is similar to what we've heard from other stakeholders. There is this enthusiasm out there that, despite the many challenges you are facing, sustains your belief in what you're doing and your conviction that the French fact in Ontario is important enough for you to keep going. I strongly encourage you to do that, particularly since I understand the federal government has a responsibility as regards official languages. It has responsibilities to you as citizens, but it has special responsibilities with respect to official languages. Furthermore, it has to provide you with the means to carry out your mission and especially to ensure that people get what they need, because that is its principal function.

In that regard, the abolition of the Court Challenges Program has really shaken us as well, just as the other cuts have. They were carried out indiscriminately, with no consideration of where social needs are greatest, because of the problems associated with the current environment. You can rest assured that we will be passing that information along to the people who have decisions to make and who want to make those decisions.

However, there are a couple of points you raised, Mr. Hubert, that I would like to explore further. I understand the complexity you have described with respect to colleges in Ontario, which are completely different from colleges in Quebec. When you are in charge of literacy, education and vocational training, your responsibilities are obviously very extensive, and the cuts hurt you in many different ways simultaneously — hence the problem.

The particular point I would like you to clarify relates to immigration. You say that 80% of immigrant families choose English. I would like to know two things.

Are their numbers similar to the number of Francophones who just decide to leave? I don't think so. There are simply fewer Francophones. However, it is surprising, because the Francophone communities keep telling us that they are now trying to bridge the gaps through immigration. I would be interested in hearing your comments on that.

Mr. Larouche, your network is clearly a success, from what I understand. You have taken the time to point that out to us, while adding at the same time that the situation is serious. I realize that you have succeeded in becoming fully integrated with the various programs, but what concrete results do you expect to achieve and what will you need in order for that to happen?

Mr. Marc-André Larouche: In terms of concrete results, I would like to come back to the initiative entitled Setting the Stage. This is a planning project with a limited budget and timeframe. Its purpose is to review the situation in the region to identify critical needs and find solutions that effectively improve the health services offer in French. As that and the reforms are going forward, new provincial organizations which are now officially recognized, having been created and institutionalized by the province, will also be involved in planning.

I'm talking about the four Ontario networks, and particularly those in northern and northeastern Ontario — in other words, my own region and the region for which Mr. Bénard — who, I neglected to mention initially, was unable to be here this morning — has responsibility. So, we immediately made contact and developed a relationship with the provincial entity — the LHIN — based not far from here in North Bay.

As soon as they came on stream — I just want to clarify for the lady from Quebec that LHINs are sort of the equivalent of regional health boards in Quebec — we began to work together. There is obviously a lot of preparatory work to be done. Over the last two years, there has been lobbying, I guess you could call it, supported by the networks, in order to ensure that services in French would be included in system reforms. Almost 25% of the population in our area is Francophone. Because of the pressure we have brought to bear and our determination, our message has been well received and we have begun to work with LHINs.

For the time being, this institution is officially responsible for planning for the entire health care system. I'm going to go out on a limb here. They have been in place for almost a year and a half and are about to table a report which is also an official plan for the province — the Health System Integration Plan for the Region. It reflects regional health system planning — in other words, who should be doing what, and so on.

We have held consultations and worked for a number of months on developing that plan. I would say that together, we did a reasonable job, and that there was openness and good will on both sides. Without saying too much, since I don't want to give the show away, I would say that overall, just about everything that was in Setting the Stage is now reflected in the integration plan.

I just want to add that in Ontario, the French Language Services Act is not strict enough and has some weaknesses. This legislation is intended to ensure services are provided in French, but if they are not provided, there are no sanctions. So, this plan includes ways of giving the legislation a little more teeth and correcting those weaknesses. So, it will have a quick, and direct impact.

● (0945)

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

Mr. Lemieux, please.

Mr. Pierre Lemieux (Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, CPC): Thank you very much for your presentations.

I am the Member of Parliament for Eastern Ontario. In my riding of Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, there are some 65,000 Franco-Ontarians. So, there are a lot of people who require services in their mother tongue.

How are health care services delivered here in Sudbury and in the mid-north region of Ontario? I imagine that the challenges are probably different.

Mr. Marc-André Larouche: There is a lot of variation across the region. For example, in the western part of the region, the City of Sault Ste. Marie has declared itself to be unilingual Anglophone. So, there are very little openings there. In fact, health care services in French are practically non-existent there. And because Francophones constitute an aging population in that region, the negative impacts on them are significant.

In the far east — for example, in the North Bay region — there are slightly more services available in French. On the other hand, considering the percentage the Francophone population represents — almost 25% — health care services in French are practically non-existent. Let's not forget that one quarter of the population is French-speaking.

In the central region, Sudbury does provide health care services in French. Unfortunately, there are some major deficiencies: health care services in French are not always offered consistently. I'm sure you know that there is a regional hospital. At the present time, as far as designations are concerned — in other words, being recognized as an institution that provides health care services in French — the regional hospital is not considered to be one of those. In fact, it has a partial designation which corresponds to about half. This has been dragging on for years.

I have to say that providing services to Francophones is really not considered a priority in these institutions. On the other hand, things are better there than they are in the rest of the region. In certain polls, such as the Sturgeon Falls region, the population is quite different: almost 70% of residents are Francophone. So, Anglophones are the ones that are in the minority. That is really interesting. In fact, there is one institution — a general hospital — where services are provided in French and English, because Anglophones demand to be served in English. However, we are well served in both languages and we feel comfortable, whatever our culture — in other words, both Anglophones and Francophones. As far as we are concerned, that is a great model.

Under the national project called Setting the Stage, which you are aware of, these are what we call points of access; this also has to do with jurisdiction over culture. Whether you are Anglophone or Francophone, in a health care institution, it is critical to feel comfortable — to be able to request services in one's own language and, as a professional, to be able to provide them. That, too, is a problem.

We have voiced our support for the Canadian Nurses Association. This summer, the Association travelled across Canada and stopped in Sudbury to consult with nurses and find out more about the challenges they are facing. One nurse said that when she spoke French, she was told by her boss to stop. She was very young and was from Hearst, a Francophone-dominated area. So, she was in shock, in a way. There were ten or more nurses present, including some from Sudbury that were older and more experienced and who were nodding their heads as she spoke, as if to say: yes, that is the reality.

So the issues have a number of sources: historic problems, public awareness, funding, and human resources. The fact is that we do not have enough Francophone health care professionals. We also have to tackle that problem. The provision of services is highly variable, sometimes anecdotal, from one part of the region to the next.

● (0950)

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Yvon Godin): You have 30 seconds left.

Mr. Pierre Lemieux: Mr. Hubert, you said there is a great deal of cooperation among colleagues, particularly here in Ontario.

What is your strategy for attracting and retaining students?

Mr. Denis Hubert: Our strategy focuses on providing extensive student support — looking after them as though they were clients and ensuring that all their needs are met. That is what we do. We work very hard and very closely with school boards. As far as we are concerned, every student is important.

Right now, I am working with nine school boards in Ontario. I haven't had a chance to discuss the linguistic accommodation policy, but that is addressed in my paper. It is an Ontario invention that I believe will be quite successful.

The secondary schools have to work closely with the colleges and universities. That is the only solution.

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

It's my turn now. I am usually seated on the Opposition side and I am used to asking questions. Today I am chairing the meeting. Nevertheless, I want to get my own questions in.

Ms. Roy, you talked about the ACFO. In your opinion, what did the action plan do for the community in your region? What is missing? I would like to hear your views in that regard.

Mrs. Suzanne Roy: In terms of what the Official Languages Action Plan has meant on the ground, I can tell you that a lot of the large institutions got preferential treatment. Very little is happening in the field. Our funder is Canadian Heritage. The ACFOs have very little recognition. There is a great deal of disparity in terms of what is being done.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Yvon Godin): You say that the major institutions did receive funding. Is that correct?

Mrs. Suzanne Roy: Yes.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Yvon Godin): And you say that the action plan has not had much impact on the ground. Yet the institutions themselves have had an impact on the ground.

Mrs. Suzanne Roy: Yes, in very specific areas, although it hasn't really helped in terms of developing anything else. A lot of money has been invested in education and health.

We were very involved in developing the networks and that sort of thing. But it's another matter to develop new things.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Yvon Godin): Could you give us some examples?

You say that the ACFO helped to develop these things and that now, it's as though you are being shunted aside.

Mrs. Suzanne Roy: Yes, that is basically it. We acted as an instrument and a lever in many different cases. But there is still a great deal of work to be done, because assimilation is still occurring and things are still happening. There is no doubt that the grass roots has less recognition. And in terms of joint action on the ground, it is not really valued because we now have institutions and infrastructure in place. As a result, it is becoming increasingly difficult to get people to work in the field. We are not devoting the necessary resources to this and we are certainly not giving it the appropriate recognition. There are still many things to be done.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Yvon Godin): What do you recommend?

Mrs. Suzanne Roy: One of the things we have to pay attention to is immigration. There is no recognition of Francophone immigration. It was determined that Sudbury would be a good place to send Francophone immigrants. But very little has been done on the ground to provide for the appropriate structure, and there is very little recognition. Since the departure of the provincial ACFO, an institution like ACFO is now nothing more than one organization among many, but the sector has no real structure, and no longer is there a provincial alliance. There is nothing to ensure that we can work together. Some associations working on the ground have to make due with \$10,000 a year. It won't be possible to do much if we don't provide the necessary resources to ensure that development is appropriate.

• (0955)

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Yvon Godin): Mr. Hubert, I would be interested in hearing your views on that.

I only have a minute and a half left.

Mr. Denis Hubert: Since about 1910, the associative movement in Ontario, which developed through our parishes, has made advances and evolved. It's important to support the associative movement in Ontario. People who have been part of it have enjoyed an exceptional level of collaboration. What was called the coalition, and what is now called the collective, has managed to mobilize and engage the population, which made it clear that it needed a Francophone college and Francophone institutions. The associative community is like the oil that keeps the gears working properly. I think we have to do whatever we can to ensure that it is healthy,

without necessarily criticizing the fact that it always depends on government. In a minority situation, that is the reality.

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

I have ten seconds left, Ms. Barbot, and I'm going to give them to Mr. D'Amours.

Mr. Jean-Claude D'Amours: Mr. Chairman, thank you for your generosity.

Mr. Larouche, at the beginning of your presentation, you talked about networking, which is a form of lobbying.

Mr. Marc-André Larouche: Yes, partly.

Mr. Jean-Claude D'Amours: Without that lobbying, what would happen? Can you answer in one minute?

Mr. Marc-André Larouche: Yes, of course.

This actually gives me an opportunity to finish what I was saying earlier. Without that networking, nothing would have happened. The health care sector is a fairly technical, specific area. Had there not been networks there to act as a catalyst or foundation, a rallying point for the people actively involved in ensuring that health care services could be provided in French in Ontario, nothing would have happened. We would have services that lack oxygen, we would have health care professionals with nothing in their environment to remind them that they are Francophone, that they should be proud of being Francophone and proud to be able to provide services in French — in other words, that this is value-added.

The institutions are doing nothing to make people aware of that reality — nothing at all. In fact, as far as they are concerned, it's a problem.

But the winds of change are now blowing. If we weren't there, the situation would be really sad, because the health care sector is comparable to the mining industry, I'd say: it's Anglophone, very Anglophone. In leading sectors of the economy, such as technology and international research, everything is done in English.

Mr. Jean-Claude D'Amours: What you are basically saying, Mr. Larouche, is that had there been no lobbying, nothing would have happened, because that is your way of getting your message across and ensuring the vitality of the French language in the health care sector.

In light of that realization — if you consider the argument used to justify the recent budget cuts, which was that lobbying only wastes taxpayers' money — one can assume that had there been no lobbying, for you, no progress would have been possible and the status quo would simply have been maintained. So, it's as a result of that network and lobbying activity that you were able to make advances, look towards the future and try to improve the situation for your communities.

• (1000)

Mr. Marc-André Larouche: There are several different parts to my answer. First of all, networking does include a lobbying component. Furthermore, there are different ways of lobbying. There are arguments that are political, yes, but there are also arguments that are more clinical in nature that have to do with best practices in the health care sector. So, as far as I'm concerned, lobbying is a big word, an argument, a dialogue involving arguments of different—

Mr. Jean-Claude D'Amours: Let me be clear: lobbying does not necessarily mean making money at someone else's expense.

Mr. Marc-André Larouche: No, absolutely not.

Mr. Jean-Claude D'Amours: Lobbying means—

Mr. Marc-André Larouche: No. We definitely agree on that.

In the context of the reforms instituted in Ontario, without the pressure of arguments in favour of improved health care, I don't think we would have moved forward. Absolutely not.

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

How much time do I have left, Mr. Chairman?

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

Mr. Jean-Claude D'Amours: Mr. Hubert, as regards literacy, can you again tell us which Francophone coalition will be affected—

Mr. Denis Hubert: Yes.

Mr. Jean-Claude D'Amours: What is the name of that Francophone coalition?

Mr. Denis Hubert: It's called the Coalition francophone pour l'alphabétisation et la formation de base en Ontario and for a number of years now, it has been requesting funding for basic education.

Mr. Jean-Claude D'Amours: You are part of a community that has problems. It is a well known fact that many Francophones living outside Quebec are illiterate.

Mr. Denis Hubert: That's correct.

Mr. Jean-Claude D'Amours: So, progress has to be made in that regard. For the last month and a half, we have been trying to get the Minister of Human Resources to tell us where exactly the cuts were made and who will suffer, but we haven't received an answer. I am glad to hear you say that your organization is feeling the negative impact of that decision.

We may finally have uncovered the secret. At last we are getting our own answers, without the government having to provide them.

I realize that my time is up; I'll come back on the third round.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Yvon Godin): You have the floor, Ms. Boucher.

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher (Beauport—Limoilou, CPC): Good morning everyone, and thank you for being here today. I am happy to share this time with you in order to move things forward. I am the Parliamentary Secretary for Francophonie and Official Languages. It is important for me to be here. I am the link between Parliament, the Minister and the communities, and as a government, it is very important for us that that linkage be made.

Having said that, Mr. Hubert, I have a question. I am an eternal optimist, and I like finding solutions to problems. I think that's the best way to operate. If you were able to make suggestions to the Committee today as to the best way of ensuring the most effective cooperation between the different levels of government, be they provincial or federal, and the communities, what would you suggest?

Mr. Denis Hubert: The solution is to provide the means to facilitate communication. I'd like to give you two examples.

The government has just finalized the Labour Market Development Agreements, or LMDAs, which were anxiously awaited. We

are very grateful. Approximately \$523 million will be transferred to Ontario. Congratulations! I take my hat off to you.

However, a second agreement — the Labour Market Partnership Agreement, or LMPA — which represents \$323 million, is still pending. That delay is hurting us, because the second part of the agreement allows us to mentor people who are subject to Part II of the Employment Insurance Act and end up jobless. That \$323 million has yet to be paid out, and the same applies to the \$900 million earmarked for immigrants and facilitating their integration in Ontario.

Some \$900 million are still pending; that amount is part of the strategic plan that Mr. Solberg has just tabled. I am not criticizing, but we have been talking about funding for a long time — funding that the government sees as a priority. For our part, we have been working for almost three years with all kinds of task forces, lobbyists and other individuals to ensure that money can be distributed more quickly.

I'm afraid that people may be beginning to lose hope. We're having trouble maintaining people's optimism. Things have to start moving. Whether we're talking about \$800 million, \$900 million or \$1 billion, that is not the point. We need to access that \$900 million and the team that works with the Minister on developing the strategic plan, if we want to facilitate settlement for immigrants coming to Ontario.

I realize that the situation may be quite complex, but we have been waiting for news of that \$900 million for a very long time. That funding would allow me to fully play my role, including in Toronto, where 80% of my students are first or second generation Canadians.

In two weeks, we will actually be awarded the provincial prize for the best fast-track immigration settlement program in Ontario. We set that program up with practically no money and we have been extraordinarily successful in hosting new families here in Ontario and helping them to succeed; after settlement, these families still have to complete the program and the course.

But I can't do that alone. Since I'm not receiving any money directly from my own government to carry out this kind of project, I need your support. I'm optimistic.

• (1005)

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: I understand.

Mr. Denis Hubert: And we have to continue to lobby, because it's important.

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: Do I have any time left?

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Yvon Godin): Just one minute.

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: Ms. Roy, I'd like to know what your greatest success has been thus far. And what potential solutions are you proposing to the government?

Mrs. Suzanne Roy: Thanks to the ACFO associative movement, Ontario now has a good infrastructure. If colleges have been established, it's because of the work carried out at the grass roots. All of our institutions flow from the grass roots. However, people now seem to be saying that because the infrastructure is already in place, it is no longer necessary to carry out that work at the grass roots level.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Yvon Godin): You have 20 seconds left.

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: A whole twenty seconds!

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Yvon Godin): You can make one comment.

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: Possibly, yes.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Yvon Godin): I may be strict when it comes to counting the seconds, but I don't want to take them away from you.

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: That's okay, but Mr. Larouche—

Mr. Marc-André Larouche: Just to give you an illustration of the network, I'd say that the institutions and organizations that are gaining strength and vitality within the Francophone minority are community-based organizations and institutions. The best recent example is our network. The ACFO has been supporting us for three years, and we appreciate its assistance. That funding is obviously important, but with Treasury Board rules, we will certainly have liquidity problems at some point.

If the ACFO were not a solid partner, we would not be here. Despite that \$14 million, which is great, we would not exist. It is thanks to the ACFO that we have been able to grow. Unfortunately, there is not sufficient awareness of the fact that it is organizations such as this that are involved.

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

Ms. Barbot.

Mrs. Vivian Barbot: I'm glad that Ms. Roy is here, and I'm especially glad that we can hear for ourselves what associations such as hers are doing. In the end, where are the real people? A sick person only exists once he is part of the health care system, and a student only exists when he is in school; otherwise, the grass-roots organizations are the ones that allow us to see what the problems and the needs really are. Having been president of the Fédération des femmes du Québec, I am well aware of the extent to which women have played, and continue to play, an important role in this regard. Is it because they're women that they receive less recognition? The fact is that these groups have less recognition, even though they are absolutely critical for survival. In this case, we're talking about the survival of the French language.

When the government proposes budget cuts and these groups find themselves continually deprived of core funding, the other sectors are necessarily affected, in my opinion. This is an important issue, which is why I am making this comment. I want it to be on the record. Very few grass roots based groups have appeared before the Committee.

I now want to make a comment to Mr. Hubert.

You raised a matter that we have not heard much about, it seems to me — at least in the time that I have been around. I refer to the ability of professionals to provide services in French. We have not received much testimony about that from professional associations.

Could you give us any additional information about that?

•(1010)

Mr. Denis Hubert: The major challenge for us has been to convince the managers of certain government organizations — such as the Service Canada Centre — to assign a Franco-Ontarian to the

reception desk. You will probably say that I am looking after my own interests here. But I don't believe that a Franco-Ontarian is any better than an Anglo-Ontarian. On the other hand, I know for a fact if a Francophone is not greeted in French, he will immediately switch to English, because what he is ultimately looking for is an answer. In some cases, this individual may already be partly assimilated.

That is easy to do and doesn't cost much. All I'm asking is that at all reception points, the first contact generally be handled by someone from the minority. In that way, Francophones who arrive at the reception will tend to want to express themselves in the same language. That is what I think. People often say in Ontario that French is learned but that English is caught. Don't worry about the Anglophones; they will be served in their own language. Furthermore, the rate of assimilation in the other direction is infinitesimal.

Mrs. Vivian Barbot: Someone talked about a nurse who wanted to work in French. Can you tell me whether that dynamic exists in a number of different areas?

Mr. Marc-André Larouche: Do you mean geographical areas?

Mrs. Vivian Barbot: Yes.

Mr. Marc-André Larouche: Well, the area of Sudbury where, with one exception and some gaps here and there, services in French are actually the best structured of anywhere. In the North Bay or Sault Ste. Marie region, however, when you're Francophone, you don't even tell anyone. People don't feel confident and enough to be proactive. Seniors who need service do not speak French simply because they are Francophone.

Mrs. Vivian Barbot: What are you doing to try and counter that phenomenon? In Quebec we have experienced the same sort of thing. There was a time when people wanted to be assimilated. There was a kind of social opprobrium attached to being Francophone: if you didn't speak English, you were a nobody. And people themselves bought into that notion and sent their children to English schools. We had to pass Bill 101 to counter the exodus of Francophones to the English-speaking community.

Does the action plan under which you are carrying out your activities include public awareness initiatives?

Mr. Marc-André Larouche: This problem can be attributed to several factors. You talked about a public awareness problem, which is a long-standing one. It may be difficult to raise awareness, though, because some are more resistant to this than others; but we really have no choice.

In the health care sector, public awareness can take the form of cultural sensitivity training on the importance of being different and the value-added it brings. That kind of training should already be available, but it is not. We have to start educating people and encouraging them to be more open-minded.

There are also some tactical issues which are not static. I referred earlier to the Sturgeon Falls region near North Bay, which is a small, very Anglophone community where, even though 25% of the population is Francophone, very few services are available in French.

We are trying to build on existing French services. Our partners in Sturgeon Falls, who are very Francophone and very much aware of the French fact, have links with the health care system in the North Bay area. They do have some Francophone contacts. Someone said earlier that we have to rally people to our cause. Yet it's only by giving them state-of-the-art tools in French that we will achieve that.

Let me give you an example. Continuing education in French in the health care sector has often been considered to be second-class. It's pretty good training, but it's far from being of the same calibre as the kind of training course where an international expert comes and spends a whole day presenting the most up-to-date techniques.

The situation has started to improve. We brought in a long-term care specialist of international renown from Quebec. A health care professional told us that every region can access Francophone professionals using Telehealth technology. Another one told us that it was the best training she had ever received.

That strategy is prompting people to sit up and take notice. You raise people's awareness not only by changing their convictions, but also by giving them the most up-to-date tools in French. That is another part of the strategy.

• (1015)

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

I would like to talk about Part II of the Employment Insurance Act, and in that respect the Liberals have little reason to pat themselves on the back, except insofar as they took \$50 billion out of the Employment Insurance Fund to pay down the debt and achieve a zero deficit.

It's true that Ontario is the only province not to have an agreement under Part II. Maybe that is because there are 105 Liberal MPs from Ontario and they didn't want to give the money to the province and allow it to hand out the goodies on its own.

When that happened back home in New Brunswick, we told the federal government that because training is a provincial responsibility, it had no business getting involved. The province asked the government to give it the money under Part II of the Employment Insurance Act, so that it could determine the terms and conditions for training.

Initially, we received \$67 million in the first year, which was moved up to \$78 million, and then to \$93 million. The amount is now some \$105 million.

Now it's true that it wasn't written in black and white, or green, red or orange — which is a great colour — but we could not appeal to the province, whereas under the Employment Insurance Act, we were able to do that. In other words, we couldn't challenge its decisions.

Initially, literacy courses were accessible to people with Grade 7, because we wanted to raise their level of education. In our area, for example, people would quit school and begin working in the fish processing plants when they were still young. At one point, there was no more fish in the sea, and the work dried up. So, people had to be retrained and upgrade their skills. However, the province had decided that henceforth, that training would no longer be available to

people with Grade 7 or Grade 8; it would only be given to people with a Grade 10 education.

Everyone was stunned. We couldn't ask for more money because the federal government was saying it had already given us \$105 million and that we would have to figure it out on our own: we asked for it, and we got it!

I think that is sort of what you're saying, Mr. Hubert. I'd like to hear more from you on that.

Mr. Denis Hubert: Yes, exactly. When I began at the College, it was in the area of employment. I helped people who were jobless, and so on.

I was saying earlier that there are 42 service centres in Ontario where men and women who are jobless and have lost their way in life receive help. In Ontario, the colleges are service providers for both the federal and provincial governments. We bid on contracts, just as a private firm would, and we deliver training and mentoring products, as well as other services to these kinds of workers.

Too often I would be in an office and find myself in the middle, between the federal and provincial authorities. Some were responsible for the provincial Job Connect program for youth aged 16 to 24 and the others were responsible for the federal Youth Employment Strategy program for youth aged 15 to 30. We couldn't even agree on the age of the client base; also, when the provincial government gave jobless youth \$1,000 to go back to work, the federal government would give them \$1,100.

So, you're right: for years there was this kind of competition. There were discussions as to whether or not that was training. It is clearly a grey area. We're talking about the situation of a person with no job who is seeking employment and agrees to be retrained. At one point, we would be leaning towards training, and the battle would begin all over again. We were the victims of this sort of misunderstanding, but unfortunately, the client was even more victimized by it.

We have just signed an agreement in Ontario. The process for managing it and the actual name of the project have yet to be defined. We don't know whether it will be called "One Stop Shop", "No Wrong Door Approach", or something else altogether. I would like us to focus on attaining our goals, rather than on acronyms. What concerns me is that the federal principles are enshrined in the agreements when they're transferred to the provincial government. We don't want to fall victim to another disagreement between the federal and provincial governments with respect to workers. We want to look after the workers ourselves.

• (1020)

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Yvon Godin): Well, all I can say is good luck.

We had a particular experience in New Brunswick. If you read the proceedings of the parliamentary committee — at the time, Jean-Claude sat on that committee — you'll see that we had recommended that people have the right to appeal. For example, if a client goes to an office and asks to take a training course and the official he happens to be dealing with — having gotten up on the wrong side of the bed that morning — rejects his application, well, it's just too bad, because that client won't get any training. It's as simple as that, and he has no right to appeal.

Also, if that client is not well informed or is referred to the wrong place and registers at college, he won't be told that he is not in the right place or that he has to go back to the Human Resources office. In my case, it is the New Brunswick Human Resources Office. So, if he registers and applies for Employment Insurance benefits, he will be told that because he was not referred by Human Resources, he is ineligible for benefits.

We are not the only ones this happens to. As I say, I know all the ins and outs of this issue, and I know about its effects on the ground. I'm just suggesting you be careful.

Do you wish to comment?

Mr. Denis Hubert: You are absolutely right, and I feel we can only improve the old system. I've lived with it, or worse. Here we're talking about official languages, but imagine when those people came to the agency and the person greeting them could not speak French. Not only was I losing them or sending them back, I was losing them in English. It was twice as bad.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Yvon Godin): Yes, indeed.

Mr. Denis Hubert: I am optimistic. I hope that with the new agreement, the provincial government will be able to better control the situation and draw lessons from what has occurred elsewhere in the country. That way, we may become more effective.

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

Mr. D'Amours, please.

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

I would like to raise a couple of different points. The longer this discussion lasts, the more information that comes out.

Mr. Hubert, I have a very brief question to which I would ask you to provide a brief answer. You referred to programs like Job Connect and the Youth Employment Strategy. Do you think it's a good idea to provide training to our young people while at the same time allowing them to discover other things elsewhere?

You said that it's a good idea to leave Ontario, but if you stay in Ontario and receive training in New Brunswick, that allows you to discover something else. Do you agree that internships abroad are a good idea?

Mr. Denis Hubert: Yes, they're absolutely essential, because they broaden people's horizons. I did it, I was there, I learned things, sometimes more than I'd learned at school.

Mr. Jean-Claude D'Amours: You experienced that yourself?

Mr. Denis Hubert: Yes, I did.

Mr. Jean-Claude D'Amours: So, if it is a good thing and you know this from experience, that means the \$11 million worth of

budget cuts to international internships should never have been made?

Mr. Denis Hubert: Exactly.

Mr. Jean-Claude D'Amours: Okay. I'll stop there because I could go on for quite some time.

Mr. Denis Hubert: We should be doubling the subsidy for the Explore Canada program. It invites young people from across the province to go and study in a different institution, in a different language. It is absolutely critical to support that program. It is funded by the Department of Canadian Heritage and allows us to receive 200, 300, or 400 young Anglophones every year, who come to see Francophones in Ontario. In the end, they realize that Francophones don't bite and that they're not as mean as they thought.

Mr. Jean-Claude D'Amours: So—

Mr. Denis Hubert: It's important to maintain that program.

Mr. Jean-Claude D'Amours: If you say it's important, that means that you are concerned it may be cut.

Mr. Denis Hubert: Exactly.

Mr. Jean-Claude D'Amours: If it were, that would directly affect your college.

Mr. Denis Hubert: Yes, directly.

Mr. Jean-Claude D'Amours: And it would also directly affect Francophones you're serving in the region.

Mr. Denis Hubert: Yes.

Mr. Jean-Claude D'Amours: Good heavens! That's terrible.

I want to come back to literacy. Let's take the example of a mother and father who work and who believe their ability to read and write is adequate. The kids come home after school. One of them has homework to do, and the parent tries to help him as best he can, but because he is illiterate, he has trouble doing that. When the child returns to school, he hasn't had the same opportunity to be helped at home as his classmates. It's a vicious cycle.

A little earlier you confirmed for me that cuts had been made. What will the impact of that be in your communities?

Mr. Denis Hubert: I believe the situation may get even worse because once we fall back into that vicious cycle — I see too many families in that predicament in Northern Ontario — particularly if the economic situation is bad, the generation that follows will be facing even more of a challenge. We have to break that vicious cycle.

In Northern Ontario, there is a tradition, though: people live off the land, or from mining or forestry. In the past, they didn't necessarily need training. But the market has changed — it's a little like the fisheries in Eastern Canada — radically. The people we call Ontario's first generation are not a first generation of new Canadians; they are the first generation not to have access to a post-secondary education. The rate in Northern Ontario is among the highest. We just cannot go on that way. If our youth are unable to write their own name or prepare their own resume, try and imagine what their chances of survival are, either in the trades or any other type of employment. It's an impossible situation.

•(1025)

Mr. Jean-Claude D'Amours: I want to raise one last argument, because I know my time is quickly running out. We are here to discuss an action plan, among other things. An action plan aims to improve things. But when people at the grass roots take a direct hit, either in terms of literacy, training programs, youth strategies, student employment, or anything else, it's all well and good to have an action plan, but if they pull the rug out from under you, the fact is that you won't be able to achieve very much.

Is that a fair analysis?

Mr. Denis Hubert: Absolutely, and that is the rationale for the linguistic accommodation policy that has just been launched in Ontario.

I'd like to tell you a little story. With 55% of exogamous families in Ontario, only 14% of whom speak French at home. The rather strange burden of having to try to prevent assimilation falls to us, as educational institutions. But we have concluded that as a college, and the same applies to primary and secondary schools — we can no longer limit ourselves to the classroom when it comes to promoting francisation or defending the French language in Ontario. We have implemented what we call the provincial linguistic accommodation policy — I believe it is a Canadian innovation — which will yield results. What is it all about exactly?

Well, here is my little story. For the graduation ceremony at the college, we handed out diplomas to every student at the college along with a work by a Franco-Ontarian author. Everyone of them left with a diploma and a novel — a literary work. I told my students that the diploma would be their passport to employment, and the book, a passport to culture.

We have just signed an agreement with the Théâtre du Nouvel-Ontario. It will be mandatory for my students to receive training at the Théâtre du Nouvel-Ontario. Some of them don't like that, but they're going to have to do it. We have just signed an agreement with local daily newspapers and every single one of my students will have to subscribe to a Francophone daily. I will be using the newspaper in the classroom as a developmental tool. I could go on and on; we have 12 such measures under the linguistic accommodation policy. The fact is that education doesn't only happen at school. We need the associative movement and all our community partners. Otherwise, we will die.

Mr. Jean-Claude D'Amours: I hope we will have a fourth round.

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

Ms. Barbot.

Mrs. Vivian Barbot: Your comments are extremely interesting in terms of integration. The fact is we have a tendency to see things in isolation and believe that education is something that happens in a college, and that it pretty well stops there. But education has long-term effects. If students are asked to read authors that reflect a certain culture, what they read influences them over the long term.

In Quebec, we have a critical mass, but in a way, that is what allowed us to foster all things cultural, as well as cultural and economic development, and so on.

You probably see Quebec as a role model in that regard. All forms of collaboration are welcome. I believe you are already engaged in some.

The Bloc Québécois is increasingly trying to raise awareness among people in Quebec of the fact that there are Francophones outside Quebec, of the ties that exist between the communities and of the factors that truly transcend politics. Of course, Quebecers make their own decisions, but we have to keep that responsibility and that connection with Francophones outside Quebec.

There is also the matter of immigration which, in Quebec, plays an important role. Quebec has special agreements with the federal government as regards immigration. I would like to know whether the situation is comparable in Ontario. Can you at least provide some details on the support you receive from Citizenship and Immigration Canada in Sudbury, particularly for Francophone immigrants? Are there linkages there?

Mr. Denis Hubert: We need a land of welcome, and everything has to be built. That is one of the reasons for the plea I made earlier about the \$900 million that is pending.

We have to convince immigrants who settle in Ontario to go up north, where job opportunities are available. Approximately 64% of immigrants settle in Toronto. At the present time, there is practically full employment in Sudbury. The mining industry is doing well. We have great jobs for new Canadians, but we cannot do this alone. We need appropriate structures to help immigrants get settled and mechanisms whereby we can recognize the education they received in their own country, so that we can tell them they don't have to start their training all over again, or study the same programs a second time, because we recognize that their certification is valid.

At the present time, we have no supports that would allow us to investigate or analyze the file of an immigrant from another country that we know little or nothing about. How can we more effectively facilitate new Canadians' transition to Canada, to our educational system, for the purposes of completing their education, if need be, and particularly outside Toronto? Toronto and Montreal are not the only places to go. It would be nice to have direct incentives for new Canadians to encourage them to settle in Sudbury, Timmins, Hearst, and so on.

We really do have our work cut out for us in that respect.

•(1030)

Mrs. Vivian Barbot: If I understood you correctly, those linkages do not exist. Canadian Heritage and Citizenship and Immigration Canada are not involved there.

Mr. Denis Hubert: No, they are not.

Mrs. Vivian Barbot: The communities are telling us that Francophone immigration is absolutely critical for the survival of their communities. I thought a program of that type was already in place. It is really important to establish one.

I think that completes my questions.

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

I'm going to move on now to Mr. Petit.

Mr. Daniel Petit (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Good morning, Mr. Larouche, Ms. Champagne, Mr. Hubert and Ms. Roy.

I would like to draw your attention to the fact that having been around for some 25 years now, our Committee has come here to meet with you. I am a new member of Parliament; I do not have the experience that the NDP or Liberals have. I don't know how things worked before, but I do want to know certain things, because I have a report to make. We went to see people in Newfoundland and Labrador and Moncton, places that are represented by Mr. D'Amours and Mr. Godin, who are their members of Parliament. We also visited Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island and Toronto.

One thing attracted my attention in Toronto. You said earlier that you had started on the last page of your report. As Conservatives, we immediately react to a word like "accountability"; that is no secret. So, I certainly support you in that regard. You say in the last sentence of your report that as far as transfers from the federal government to the provincial government are concerned, it is important to specify the exact amounts that are earmarked for official languages.

Now I don't know exactly what went on previously, but it doesn't seem to have worked all that well. So, I would like us to talk about the future and for you to tell me about something that you feel strongly about, such as health care and the ACFO. I would like you to tell us how the federal government can help you. You talked about huge transfers from the federal government to the provincial government. I don't want to talk about issues that are within the provinces' jurisdiction; that is not my role. However, I would like to know, since you are active on the ground, how we could realize what you have in mind. You seem to be intrigued by this, and I am as well. I heard the same thing in Toronto.

Mr. Denis Hubert: Well, I think it could be fairly simple. We basically know what the mandate is in terms of protecting official languages. Whatever the department, whether it's Canadian Heritage, Human Resources Development Canada, Service Canada or another organization, it is important that when the time comes to do something and actually put one's signature on a piece of paper, it be absolutely clear that all the necessary steps have been taken to abide by — based on any possible changes to the context or federal philosophy, or even a change of government — the current policy. In this case, we're talking about language. I see that as absolutely critical.

At the outset, I cited the example of regional offices that were set up in Northern Ontario, where we suddenly realized there was a lack of requirements. As much as possible, I would like to avoid having to call on Mr. Fraser's office. I respect the fact that he has been appointed and I am even proud of that. The fact remains that if his office ceased to exist, we would have accomplished wonderful things in Canada. We wouldn't need this kind of organization anymore. I do hope that I won't have to make use of his office's services and remind people that in Northern Ontario, there are more than 150,000 or 160,000 Francophones. I don't want to be told that someone may be able to speak to me in French.

It's something else when it actually states in the job description of the director of employment programs that the French fact is always recognized, just as we recognize it and as the federal government has always recognized it. I'm not saying that everyone in the province has to become bilingual. That is just an example. In the province, we are on the verge of creating a whole series of small offices that will be responsible for employment management, return to work, and so on. It's important to ensure that not only the spirit but the letter of the law are adhered to.

You cannot imagine how hard I have fought, for example, to get brochures in French in some offices. I should not have to ask where the French version of a program is. I have been going through this for the last ten years.

When you sign an LMDA/LMPA or immigration agreement, be sure that the rights of Francophones and minorities are spelled out in every single document passed from one person to the next.

• (1035)

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

You talked about Sault Ste. Marie. Earlier, I went to Sturgeon Falls about a month ago and was surprised to see that 80% of people were speaking French. I went into stores where they were speaking French. In fact, everywhere I went, people were speaking French. In the spring, I went to Sault Ste. Marie and met with Francophone groups who were wearing a small pin that said "Bonjour". You saw it, did you not? It's not much, but people suggested that I wear it. When I got to the Sault Ste. Marie airport, a lady came up to me and said "Bonjour, monsieur." I asked her how she knew that I spoke French, and she said it was because of my pin. That is one way of allowing Francophones to recognize each other.

Also in Sault Ste. Marie, they are in the process of setting up a community centre that will bring together all the different organizations in a single venue. People will be able to know who they are, come together, and feel supported. In fact, because Francophones are scattered here and there, they don't have an opportunity to meet. They don't know one another. Since the City of Sault Ste. Marie declared itself to be unilingual Anglophone, Francophones are almost afraid to speak French. I agree with you in that respect, Mr. Larouche.

The action plan has been in place since 2003. What do you suggest we do, under this plan, to help a community like Sault Ste. Marie to come out of its shell? I certainly don't want to insult anybody, but you yourself said this, Mr. Larouche: people are afraid to speak French. That's terrible.

In Toronto, Ms. Barbot said that we shouldn't talk about Francophone minorities anymore; instead, we should talk about official languages. I agree with you, Mr. Hubert, that the Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages should probably no longer exist because we should no longer be coping with this kind of problem. Our country was founded by two peoples: Francophones and Anglophones. If everybody respected those two identities, we wouldn't have this problem and we would probably have better institutions for our young people. They would be interested in attending Francophone institutions just as much as Anglophone ones.

So, what do you suggest that we recommend?

Mrs. Suzanne Roy: This week, we were told that the Sault Ste. Marie ACFO would have to shut down and that one in Cochrane was in a similar predicament because its financial support and results are inadequate. They do demand results, but in communities such as that, we are unable to move forward. We can barely maintain the status quo, and that's when we're not actually regressing.

People are working relentlessly on the ground. Unfortunately, this is volunteer work, because an organization like ACFO has no chance whatsoever of obtaining adequate core funding to hire qualified personnel, develop projects and implement them. So, we are all working on a volunteer basis, and that is increasingly the way it is. I believe we need financial support, in order to ensure that every organization working in the field has a minimum amount of essential support.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Yvon Godin): So, I guess we shouldn't be all that proud of the action plan, which has been in place since 2003. Rather than seeing things improve, grass roots organizations are having to shut down.

Mrs. Suzanne Roy: Yes, that is absolutely correct. They are being shut down, one after the other. They are being forced to manage themselves as though they were projects, rather than organizations with a community development thrust.

• (1040)

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Yvon Godin): When did the financial support come to an end?

Last year, and two or even three years ago, funding was provided, was it not?

Mrs. Suzanne Roy: The situation over the last three years has hurt us a lot. Core subsidies were cut.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Yvon Godin): The Dion action plan — the Liberal plan — suggested that we focus our efforts downstream, as opposed to upstream.

Mrs. Suzanne Roy: That plan was conceived at senior government levels, rather than at the grass roots. That is probably the reason why it is problematical.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Yvon Godin): Ms. Roy, I am certain that Ms. Boucher will be pleased to report that back to her government, so that changes can be made.

Mr. D'Amours.

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

I agree that it is sometimes necessary to stop looking at what other governments have done. We should be focussing on the future and doing better. And in order to do better, we have to be proactive. I completely agree with the government members in that regard, except that they are talking out of both sides of their mouth. On the one hand, the government says we need to be proactive but, on the other hand, it brings in budget cuts that are a setback and result in our losing everything that we've gained.

It's great to be proactive and focus on the future; in fact, it's absolutely necessary. I don't agree with people who say that Francophone communities are living in the past. That is completely untrue. Mr. Hubert, based on what you said earlier, you are living

proof of that. In a way, the 12 initiatives that you mentioned are good deeds.

Do you believe that in future, the government will fund such initiatives? They could be as small as ensuring that our students have access to the local Francophone newspaper. Indeed, what can be better than a newspaper if you want to read and understand your own language? That was only one of the 12 initiatives, or good deeds, that you mentioned.

Ms. Roy said that the federal government does not support the grass roots, which is both disastrous and negative. And yet the government should be providing small amounts of money for the development of initiatives such as yours or those of Ms. Roy — initiatives that directly benefit the communities.

I'm sure a newspaper cannot possibly cost a million dollars per semester. These are small amounts of money, but they foster an incredible vitality. The problem of assimilation that you referred to earlier might not be completely resolved, but it would certainly be partly resolved.

Mr. Denis Hubert: I would just like to echo your comments. One of my concerns is the scrapping of a budget allocation of \$39 million towards the Social Economy Enterprise Development Program, a cut that will have very serious repercussions. This fund made it possible to develop certain initiatives in Ontario. Among our collaborators are the RDEE and the Chambre économique de l'Ontario. Once again, they are part of the associative movement.

When I launch a linguistic accommodation initiative, I receive no money from my province to carry out that kind of activity. We are trying to convince the province to support us. Two ministries are responsible for education in Ontario: the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities. The first one provides funding for this kind of activity, but not the second one.

You're right: these initiatives are not expensive, but I still have to ensure that they are self-financing. For example, I have to go and see merchants or the owner of the newspaper *Le Voyageur* to negotiate an agreement and ask them to help me, because I don't have much money. It's sad.

Yet investment in these kinds of activities yields absolutely amazing results. It is an investment in our young people's future. The government would not have to spend large amounts of money. I would like to see the federal government create and endorse a policy of linguistic accommodation.

I am neither for nor against anyone. Mr. Gerard Kennedy, the Minister of Education for Ontario, launched a provincial policy which was a success in Ontario and didn't cost much. When a policy turns out to be attractive, why not extend it to the rest of the country? How can we go about doing that?

Because we have no jurisdiction outside the province, we need a kind of national sponsor to support us by giving us \$2,000 to buy books, so that we can give a Franco-Ontarian graduate a literary work.

Every time one of my young students reads *L'Hebdo*, *Le Voyageur*, *La Tribune*, or the Timmins *Le Soleil*, I am encouraging the person who wrote the article. Subsequently, he or she will come to me and ask whether I know any reporters, and if I have a journalism program.

At that point, a process begins that makes it possible to nurture the entrepreneur, to encourage that young person, and that results in a quality product that I will incorporate into my courses. Students do not only read the newspapers; they also have to do the work associated with that.

I also need help to develop an Ontario genealogical project. In fact, starting next year, I am considering including a genealogical component in my courses, because I believe that if you don't know where you're from, you cannot possibly know where you're going.

• (1045)

Mr. Jean-Claude D'Amours: But, Mr. Hubert—

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

Ms. Barbot.

Mr. Jean-Claude D'Amours: Already?

Mrs. Vivian Barbot: It's frustrating, because it's so interesting. Everything we're hearing today is interesting. I don't mean in the sense that it is edifying, but—

I would just like to correct my colleague; I'm sure he won't hold this against me. The more I hear our guests speak, the more I realize that they should be called, not lobbyists, but activists, or missionaries.

Mr. Denis Hubert: Missionaries.

Mrs. Vivian Barbot: It's really incredible to see the extent to which your needs are really essential needs — things that the citizens of an organized country would consider to be elementary. You know what you need, and I am stunned to see that what you are lacking, in a developed country such as ours, is the money to meet those basic needs.

Mr. Hubert talked about philosophy at the outset, and I think that is really where the rubber hits the road. There really is no philosophy outside Quebec with respect to developing Francophone communities. In Quebec, we have one because we took matters into our own hands. I won't repeat what I said earlier, but basically, what we have to make the federal government understand is that the French fact is not something that involves only several million individuals; it is a Canadian reality. It is a basic notion in this country, which was founded by two equal communities. And there is the rub.

I hear the Conservatives say that the Liberals did nothing for 13 years. That is the phrase I have heard most often since I was elected. I have only been here since January, and as a result, I am still quite candid. If I can tell you a secret — which isn't really, because you hear this every day on radio and television — it may well be true that the Liberals did nothing for 13 years, but now what exactly are we doing? We're cutting programs. That just doesn't work.

I want you to know that I hear your cry of despair. We will continue to demand, as we already have, that the Court Challenges Program be reinstated, that the budget cuts — not only those

affecting Francophones, but particularly those — be cancelled, because you have rights under the Constitution and those rights must be respected. You have to be given the means to develop. In that respect, your message has come through loud and clear.

To have a clear idea of what that represents, Ms. Roy, I would like you to tell me what your organization's annual budget is.

Mrs. Suzanne Roy: We receive our core grant from the Department of Canadian Heritage. The Sudbury ACFO is the richest of all the ACFOs in the province: we receive \$40,000. The other associations may receive between about \$12,000 and \$25,000, and that's about it. With the \$40,000 from the Department of Canadian Heritage, we can secure projects and get initiatives going and thus leverage our budget up to \$350,000 or \$400,000.

The minuscule part of the budget that comes from the department is the part we want to have guaranteed. The magic number we have always suggested is \$50,000 per association. That would allow us to hire qualified staff to be able to secure projects, do other things, and move forward.

• (1050)

Mrs. Vivian Barbot: Because part of that \$40,000 that you receive is used solely to find other funding?

Mrs. Suzanne Roy: Yes, exactly.

Mrs. Vivian Barbot: I can accept that the ACFO is considered to be a community organization since it has no other form of recognition, but what I find really unfortunate is that your college also has to be a peddler.

Mr. Denis Hubert: As you say, we often play the role of missionaries; there is no doubt about that. That is part of the job, and when you are Franco-Ontarians living in a minority situation, you simply accept that. It must be the same thing in the East.

It's important to understand how the federal government's support is secured. I was actually talking about this with Ms. Verner recently.

In Timmins, for example, I am trying to put in place the necessary infrastructure to provide training in French in the trades. Timmins is a city that is growing, or continuing to grow. At the present time, I have no facilities there. Everyone believes that this project will be a real challenge.

There is one way of obtaining assistance that worked in the past. That was when the federal government would say to the provincial government — I witnessed this when I was at the Cité collégiale, and I've also witnessed it here, at the Collège Boréal — that it believes in training trades people, that this makes sense, and that it might be prepared to invest in an apprenticeship fund. So we go and talk to officials at the provincial level, we apply some pressure, and the provincial government tells us that if we develop a project for the trades, the federal government might be willing to support it. I say "the trades", but that could include the health care sector or something else. It worked in the past, because all of a sudden the provincial government reacted, saying that because the federal government was there to provide support, it, too, would do something.

That's the kind of situation we are trying to reproduce in Timmins at the present time, in cooperation with Ms. Verner, so that we can secure support for a project aimed at training at least 400 apprentices per year in Northern Ontario in the mines sector, as well as others.

This is a solution that allows each level of government to take some of the credit. So, it is worth being persistent.

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

Mr. Lemieux, please.

Mr. Pierre Lemieux: Thank you very much. I would just like to put my colleague's comments about the cuts in perspective. He talked about an \$11 million student exchange program. That kind of program is really important. We would like to do a lot of good things. However, just as you do in each of your own organizations, we need to set priorities.

When we travel across the country, everyone tells us — the ACFO and the other associations in my riding say the same thing — that we have to solve the problems here in Canada. That is the priority. We need a better health care system for Francophones who live here, in Canada. It's the same thing for education.

Mr. D'Amours neglected to mention a few facts. In 2004 and 2005, the Ontario Government invested \$48 million in education for the linguistic minority in Ontario. That is a lot of money. Mr. D'Amours also neglected to say that there is a \$1 billion federal-provincial agreement — you did mention it; thank you for that — which will be in effect until 2009. Those are important initiatives. When we focus our efforts, we are able to achieve real results. We see this in the health and education sectors. If cuts are being made, it is to allow us to focus our efforts in areas that are evolving in a positive manner.

We went to Moncton and, at the University of Moncton, we were told about the program to train physicians in French. That is terrific, because we focussed our efforts. And I'd like to talk about the efforts being made in these areas.

With respect to the communities, we have spent \$64 million improving services. We signed a \$120 million agreement for the communities.

Ms. Roy, how do you know which organizations in Sudbury and Northern Ontario are receiving money and implementing programs that work? It's a real challenge to find out how associations are delivering services in Northern Ontario. How do you go about exchanging information, in order to know what is working?

• (1055)

Mrs. Suzanne Roy: The vast majority of this information goes through the Association des francophones de l'Ontario, or AFO, a provincial organization representing a variety of sectors and regions. That is where information exchange occurs. A committee looks at the agreements. They can then tell us who is doing what and who has what, and pass on the results. But as far as disseminating that information is concerned, there is no real mechanism in place for that to occur.

Mr. Pierre Lemieux: As far as I am concerned, it's important for the associations to be sharing information about their successes,

because that motivates people, and we know that we all have an interest in protecting our heritage.

Mrs. Suzanne Roy: The regional ACFOs are trying to consolidate in order to ensure closer cooperation. Earlier, I was saying that our sector is not well structured. In addition, no funding is provided for this kind of structure, where we could talk about successes achieved elsewhere and work together. We are strictly in survival mode. It's a little difficult for us now to even think about getting that far.

Mr. Pierre Lemieux: Thank you.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Yvon Godin): Earlier, Mr. D'Amours' question was addressed to both of you, but only Mr. Hubert answered. The question suggested that, since the official languages action plan was implemented, what the ACFO has lost can now be found in the organizations and institutions. But that is not what I understood Mr. Hubert to say. Mr. Larouche seemed to be suggesting the same thing, saying that what was needed was an organization on the ground. With \$10,000, you can't even turn around. At the current price, you can barely afford to put gas in the car.

I would like each of you to briefly comment on that. With the official languages action plan, do we still need local organizations on the ground? Is that important? If so, why is it important? What should the government be doing to support those organizations on the ground if we want this to work?

Mr. Larouche, could you give me your opinion on that?

Mr. Marc-André Larouche: This is my opinion. As I said earlier, the grass roots is essential. Without it, our network would not exist. As I was saying, it's fine to have money — even the \$14 million — but our money comes in dribs and drabs. Often the expenditures were made a long time before that and the money has not yet come in. We would not even be in a position to balance our budget. We have this assistance as a result of a partnership with a community organization. What is really needed is for funding to be given directly to the community organization.

We are also seeing similar situations in the health care sector. We have to change structures that have been in place for ages, and we simply can't do that with a three-month project.

For example, a year and a half ago, funding of \$10 million was announced, and a year and a half later, we received the money. That amounts to about \$6 million across Canada, for a project that was supposed to last one year, in order to implement plans that we had developed. As it turns out, for reasons known only to the Treasury Board, the project will only last three months. If that's the way it's going to be, fine, but in three months—

That is, to a large extent, the way we work. It always comes down to small projects, and we want results. And there is that slight paranoia associated with results, and so on, but we have to—

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Yvon Godin): Focus on the long term, and not just the short term.

Mr. Marc-André Larouche: Yes, we have to think, and we have to understand the situation. We cannot change mentalities and make this happen by focussing only on numbers. This is very harmful to community organizations and it actually has a pernicious effect — which is to try and get the answer that you want to get, when that simply isn't feasible. We have to stay honest.

Under a revised action plan, we need to have that openness, that understanding, and get away from the paranoia of total control, which ultimately smothers and suffocates us.

• (1100)

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

Mr. Hubert, do you want to add anything?

Mr. Denis Hubert: Yes. I fully endorse those comments. By way of preamble, I would like to say this. This morning, we are talking. I wouldn't say we are complaining, but we seem to be raising issues. But the fact is the federal government has carried out some important work in recent years. I would even go so far as to say that if the federal government had not been there for people living in a minority situation, I am not sure I would be here today. In fact, I am quite certain that I would not be here, whatever government was in office, because I have seen all of them, one after the other. I'm not sure that we would exist.

So, the federal government is essential. We cannot leave the survival of minorities up to the provinces alone. That's my first point.

My second point is this: that means a federal action plan and, out of the federal action plan, a provincial agreement, and thus accountability, to ensure that the parameters that are set are adhered to. I agree with that way of working. As for the associative movement, if the minorities don't have that to back them up, they will simply die.

I would refer you again to the book by Graham Fraser entitled *Sorry, I don't speak French* where he points out the importance of the Ordre de Jacques-Cartier that existed here. All the associative

organizations that have existed in Ontario have meant that I am still speaking French 300 years later.

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

Ms. Roy.

Mrs. Suzanne Roy: In fact, as regards the associative movement, right now funding is the sinews of war. We need increased core funding, based on regional characteristics. Compared to other cities, Toronto has higher rents, and so with \$50,000, the Toronto ACFO will not be able to continue. There are other things that will also have to be considered, such as distances in the North.

We have also talked about multiyear plans, rather than having to do the same work over again every year. That makes no sense. We need a three to five year plan so that ACFOs can create the right structure and subsequently attain the desired results. That is not something that can be done in one year; and without adequate funding, it's a vicious cycle. If there is less money, there is no work and no qualified staff. If there is no alternative funding, there are no results, and if there are no results, there is no money. So, the whole thing starts all over again.

That is pretty well what we have been saying here today: there must be guaranteed core funding.

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

And that marks the end of this hearing this morning here in Sudbury. I am sure I speak for all my colleagues in Parliament when I say that we were pleased to be here with you, in the field, and hear what you had to say. We can guarantee you that your comments will be reflected in the report we'll table in Parliament.

I also want to announce that lunch will be served in the room located on your left as you go out. It's 11 o'clock, so it's already ready. People have to check out before 12:15 p.m. We will meet in the hotel lobby at 12:15 to travel to the airport, and we'll arrive in Ottawa at 3:20 p.m.

The meeting is adjourned.

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