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•(0805)

[*Translation*]

The Chair (Mr. Guy Lauzon (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry, CPC)): Good morning, ladies and gentlemen. Welcome to the Standing Committee on Official Languages. We have a very full agenda this morning: we will be receiving approximately eight witnesses. We will therefore begin by giving the floor to Ms. Marielle Beaulieu, the Executive Director of the Fédération des communautés francophones et acadienne du Canada.

We will begin by hearing from all of the witnesses. The members will then ask questions.

Ms. Beaulieu.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Marielle Beaulieu (Executive Director, Fédération des communautés francophones et acadienne du Canada): Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Good morning everyone. I would like to begin by thanking you for having invited us to appear today in connection with your study on the vitality of official language minority communities. I would also like to congratulate you and thank you for having taken the time to go and meet francophone and Acadian communities to hear what they had to say about issues of vitality, the action plan, etc.

As most of you know, the Summit of Francophone and Acadian Communities to be held in June 2007 will give francophones from across the country the opportunity to think about key issues and to work together to define their vision of the future. The vitality that is under discussion today will be among the issues to be discussed at the summit. Among other things, it will be an opportunity to take stock of our strengths and accomplishments and to identify strategies to address existing shortcomings.

Today, however, what we want to do is explore with you a number of ideas about what is meant by community vitality what the ingredients of this vitality are. There is often a tendency to define the vitality of francophone and Acadian communities in terms of numbers. However, this definition does not always give enough consideration to the dynamism of communities, whether at the social, cultural, economic or other levels.

We feel that there is a very important link between a community's ability to live and develop in French and the vitality of that community. That is why what is often called institutional completeness is for us a very important ingredient. By institutional completeness is meant the ability of a community to have a complete infrastructure of services in every sector of activity that

affects its development, whether in health, education, culture, the media, immigration or elsewhere. Even communities in which the population of francophones is small can demonstrate a high level of vitality if they are provided with a range of services that allows them to live in French. This direct connection between completeness and vitality in communities becomes the key to successful community development efforts.

That leads us to discuss the government's strategy for supporting francophone and Acadian communities. The Action Plan for Official Languages introduced, as part of the government's strategy, a comprehensive approach based on close interdepartmental cooperation, for the development of these communities in a number of priority areas. Several strategic initiatives were implemented in various sectors, including immigration and health.

Generally speaking, I believe that the people you met on your visit to the West and in Moncton mentioned health and immigration as major successes.

With the Action Plan for Official Languages coming to the end of its term in 2008, the question that comes to mind is what comes afterwards? For a year now, the new Part VII of the Official Languages Act has required all federal institutions to adopt positive measures to support the development of the communities. This alone would require a government strategy to continue beyond 2008.

One of the goals that this new strategy will have to focus on is searching for a way to lessen the impact of the government budget cuts announced in September on the vitality of the communities. The cuts to literacy, the elimination of funding for the Canadian Volunteerism Initiative, the closing of several Status of Women Canada regional offices and of course the elimination of the Court Challenges Program show clearly that there will be a real impact on the communities.

Corrective action is required. The renewal of the government strategy should make it possible to capitalize on the momentum that we have at the moment with respect to the development of these communities in key sectors, among other things by ensuring that the action plans that have been developed thus far, whether for immigration, health, literacy, education or other areas, can be implemented.

But this strategy will also have to address other issues. We need to make sure that francophones everywhere in Canada have facilities where they can become educated, play, and obtain information, in short, live in French.

I will be finished in a minute, Mr. Chairman.

●(0810)

The Chair: The time allotted to you has elapsed, Ms. Beaulieu.

Ms. Marielle Beaulieu: Okay.

That is why we feel that it is a priority to create an infrastructure fund. This fund would support things like school-community centres, schools, child care, arts and culture and community media.

All of which is to say that renewing the strategy at this point is extremely important, and that we need to build on what exists, and also focus on other sectors, but that an infrastructure fund like the one we mentioned is in fact an important factor.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Beaulieu.

Mr. Cousineau, you have the floor.

Mr. Gaétan Cousineau (Director General, Fédération canadienne pour l'alphabétisation en français): Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Thank you for your invitation to come and speak about the vitality of official language minority communities. The Fédération canadienne pour l'alphabétisation en français believes that literacy is the glue that holds all the parts of a community together. A high literacy rate strengthens a community's vitality, and conversely, a low level generates high economic, social and democratic costs.

For example, an employee who does not understand safety instructions, parents who cannot help their children at school, elderly people who do not understand instructions about prescription drugs, or people who can neither read nor write cannot be involved in their community. We could give you many examples from everyday life, whether for financial services, justice, health or communicating with governments and citizens.

It is taken for granted that most Canadians have finished high school and know how to read and write. However, for more than a decade, research has shown that the true situation is more complex. And we are not only speaking about illiteracy here. For example, people might be capable of reading a simple text without being able to understand or use the information contained in it. There are thus several levels of literacy.

The results of the 2003 Statistics Canada International Adult Literacy and Skills Survey speak for themselves. Two out of every five working age adults, or 42% of Canada's population, have trouble understanding simple textual material. This means 9 million Canadians between 16 and 65 years of age. If people over 65 years were included, the total would be 12 million. The situation is worse for francophones: over 50% of Canadians whose mother tongue is French cannot meet the requirements of a knowledge society like Canada's.

This is worrisome, particularly as outside of Quebec, 66% of French-speaking people chose to answer the questionnaire in English. This is revealing.

The federation has played a leading role for 15 years because of its expertise in literacy. In terms of development, literacy cuts across a variety of sectors. The federation has partnerships with various groups to work in sectors such as health, employability and early childhood. We have achieved positive results, for example by

establishing networks of experts in family literacy, which I believe is one of the best outcomes of the Action Plan on Official Languages.

For a year now, the federation has been working with its members to develop federal and provincial remedial plans in all of the provinces and territories with a view to raising the average literacy rate for francophones over a 10-year period in order to achieve a level equivalent to that found in Norway.

Please do not hesitate to invite us to come here once again to speak to you about these plans in detail.

By aiming at being among the best, we can succeed in ensuring the vitality of our communities. But success requires everyone's support. Achieving results would be facilitated by having a national life-long learning policy for people and a national vision for literacy.

Literacy training runs parallel to formal education. It begins in early childhood and needs to continue life-long to enable people to enhance their education. It is the missing link in the development and vitality of minority francophone communities. There have been examples in Quebec, Norway, Sweden and Ireland, which could be consulted, in which people were able to implement adult education and life-long learning policies.

Learning does not stop when people stop attending educational institutions; it needs to continue throughout life. In a knowledge economy like ours, a growing number of jobs require higher levels of education and literacy than ever. The countries that took part in the International Adult Literacy and Skills Survey demonstrated that workers in growth sectors tended to make greater use of their reading and writing skills than workers in declining sectors.

If Canada wants to be competitive in a knowledge economy, then clearly the level of literacy for all Canadians needs to be improved.

●(0815)

As experts, we offer our services to collaborate in such a venture. We are prepared to do so. We have plans and are ready to speak to you about them. Literacy is an investment, not an expenditure.

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

I now give the floor to Ms. Gagné-Ouellette. She represents the Commission nationale des parents francophones.

Ms. Murielle Gagné-Ouellette (Director General, Commission nationale des parents francophones): Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

In 2002, the Commission nationale des parents francophones succeeded in placing early childhood development on the agenda for francophone communities.

Here is why: Recent research by Dr. Fraser Mustard on brain development showed that the neurological and biological pathways created in the first months of life had a life-long impact. The brain develops through sensory stimulation. Without such stimulation, there is a risk of producing children and adults who will be a burden on society and a barrier to prosperity. The successful societies will therefore be those that invest the most at a time when such interventions have the greatest impact—in early childhood, when the brain is extremely malleable. James Heckman's research has shown that every dollar spent on quality early childhood care generates up to \$8 in savings over the long term.

In 2003, early childhood development was recognized as a priority in the Action Plan for Official Languages.

Here is why: Brain research is revolutionizing our understanding of education. For example, sensory stimulation, attachment to parents and visual contact are needed to awaken curiosity and pleasure in learning; the higher cognitive functions peak at the age of 12 months; language learning begins at the sixth month of pregnancy and levels off before the age of 12 months. When preparing to send a child to day care or to school, it is too late to begin speaking to the child in French and having the child read in French. The basic identity forged in the early years is the most solid.

The impact of a good start enables children to be able to learn at least two languages, prepares them to attend school and allows them to become success stories rather than constant failures. A good start is crucial because once adolescence is reached, when identity is challenged in predominantly English-speaking communities, the young people in question will be able to build on their successes and capitalize on their confidence in their language and culture. They will thus stand a better chance of resisting assimilation.

That is why the CNPF and parents are so emphatic in wanting early childhood services to be considered as essential to our society as public education. Learning while very young establishes the trajectory for life-long learning. It acts as a catalyst for education. Investment in young children is essential to lasting economic development.

The Commission nationale des parents francophones conducted a national tour of its members and partners in 2004 and developed a national early childhood vision: the optimal development of all francophone children in healthy families and communities through universal and affordable access to a continuum of high quality services in French.

The need for an emphasis on early childhood was reiterated at national congresses gathering together over 300 francophone leaders from the early childhood and French education sectors in 2004, and on health in French in 2006. At the provincial and territorial level, our parent federations and their partners developed strategic plans and action plans in 2005.

The CNPF got the 15 partners of the Table nationale sur la petite enfance francophone involved in a process to develop a strategic framework for early childhood development. One of the things we recommended was the establishment of an early childhood and family centre attached to each of the 400 elementary schools in

minority communities. There are already 20 of these centres in Canada, providing a number of services.

These centres provide comprehensive early childhood services. They naturally include programs for children such as nursery schools, play groups and junior kindergarten, in addition to direct support services for families, beginning at the perinatal period. It is during pregnancy that there is an opportunity to include families in francophone communities. Early childhood services are the doorway to all the other services in French and to French-language schools.

The challenge to the communities is enormous: at the moment, only one out of every two francophone children is enrolled in a French school.

We will soon be undertaking a study to evaluate the costs of establishing the services we are proposing. It will be useful addition to our existing tools.

● (0820)

We have all the information we need, and we have established a national vision as well as a model for service delivery. We have action plans in each province and territory. We have obtained the commitment of governments and community partners to begin implementation.

In short, the Commission nationale des parents francophones is putting together the conditions needed for a change of direction in early childhood in minority francophone communities. The challenge is a major one. It will condition the very future of francophone communities. Communities, after all, are built from the bottom up.

Are you with us?

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Gagné-Ouellette.

Before continuing, I wish to point out that the final 15 minutes of the meeting will be used to discuss motions.

We will begin with a five-minute round of questions. Ms. Jean-Claude D'Amours has the floor.

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

I'd like to thank all three of you for being here today to represent your respective groups.

Ms. Gagné-Ouellette, to answer the question you asked at the very end of your presentation, I can assure you that we are listening.

I am from rural francophone New Brunswick, where official languages and everything to do with early childhood development are very important. I am also a young father and can assure you that we are listening. At least on this side of the table.

We could raise various subjects. I just spoke about early childhood. We could speak about literacy. All three of you will see that it will affect you directly.

Not so long ago, in September, many budget cuts were announced. Everybody is talking about them; you talked about them and I believe that everyone will continue to talk about them for months and years, until the situation is reversed.

However, there is another situation: Canada Post's contribution to funding to the Publications Assistance Program has been eliminated. At the end of this meeting, we are going to discuss a motion that I introduced a few weeks ago. The motion asks the government to reinstate the Publications Assistance Program to ensure that rural communities and official language communities are not negatively affected.

Indeed, we know that francophone communities or French-speaking communities are not necessarily the richest communities in Canada. That being the case, they are probably not able to pay more for such things as buying a newspaper.

Mr. Cousineau, you spoke earlier about literacy.

Ms. Gagné-Ouellette, you spoke earlier about children.

Ms. Beaulieu, you spoke earlier about francophone and Acadian communities.

In reality, if we are unable through such a program to provide assistance, then that limits what we can do. And if that is the case, it means that people will not be able to read or not have access to the tools they need to develop.

The government appears at the moment to be doing virtually everything it can to keep its citizens as ignorant as possible. I know that the government's members of Parliament disagree with me: I can understand them, because they are the ones implementing the cuts.

I would like to hear what you have to say about the reinstatement of the Publications Assistance Program. I want to make sure that everyone around this table understands the possible repercussions on the various communities.

• (0825)

Ms. Marielle Beaulieu: I will be very brief.

In principle, every government program, before having any cuts made or before being changed, should be submitted to the attention of the official language communities if indeed the government is going to maintain its policy on the Action Plan for Official Languages, which includes an accountability framework.

It is more or less what we mentioned in our most recent discussions. We need only remember the latest cuts, whether for the Court Challenges Program or others.

As it happens, we were very surprised. The official languages viewpoint is extremely important. You have been mentioning rural communities, francophone communities outside Quebec. All of these communities are indeed extremely vulnerable and sensitive.

That is why the action plan had incorporated an extremely important component: the accountability framework. We are in fact always surprised when we find that changes are made without any consideration of official languages, whether for publications assistance or programs that affect the communities in one way or another.

Mr. Gaétan Cousineau: At the federation, we can give you an example of two publications that were delivered by Canada Post under this program. We published approximately 300,000 bookmarks as a way of encouraging people to read. This year, for example, the

message included an invitation to parents to read to their children to stimulate their interest in the French language, and encourage them to speak French at home. The distribution is very broad; it is promotion to make people aware.

There is also the magazine entitled *Mosaïque*, which recognizes the work of the learners. The magazine is for those who finally manage to get themselves out of the black hole, out of their isolation, by writing material in French that is published in *Mosaïque*. It is important to us.

The Chair: Mr. Cousineau, the five minutes are already up.

Ms. Barbot, you can ask the next question.

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

Thank you ladies and gentlemen for having come to meet us this morning.

Ms. Beaulieu, thank you for having appropriately asked the question about the vitality of the francophone minority communities. It is true that we often speak about numbers. It is an easy way of trying to understand the phenomenon, and you correctly said that this vitality had more to do with social, economic and cultural dynamism. I think that if we can understand that, we can better see what opportunities present themselves to enable such communities to develop. Everything that you said about this was very eloquent, in so far as these things need to be implemented.

Personally, I would have liked to meet you in a different setting, because you are currently being faced with draconian cuts. If we wish to maintain this vitality, then special efforts need to be made and an action plan needs to be developed to guarantee your "survival". It's unfortunate that this is being threatened.

You will no doubt find no consolation if I tell that it's the same thing for all the groups, not only francophone communities, but also for the women who came to meet us yesterday. A way therefore needs to be found to break down the wall.

My question is for Mr. Cousineau. You spoke about illiteracy. You are living in an environment in which there is illiteracy and a great deal of competition from the English language. You said that 75% of people had responded to the survey in English.

Do you feel that this is strictly something to do with literacy or is there a very direct link between this form of literacy that you are experiencing and the fact that people's English language skills are better ?

• (0830)

Mr. Gaétan Cousineau: There may be several different ways of explaining it. There has not been a specific analysis, but to begin to answer your question, 66% of those who were given the choice of responding in French or in English chose to do so in English. One might have expected, given that the people were francophone, that they would have answered the questions in French, but some of them felt more at ease in English. Some told us that they thought they had to choose English because the call had come from the federal government, because that was the language of work. These people live in a minority community.

So we are talking about vitality. If there had been more confidence in French and more vitality, people would have answered in French. We think that it is a clear sign of the challenge that awaits us.

Mrs. Vivian Barbot: Okay.

Mr. Chairman, you can give the floor to someone else.

The Chair: Thank you.

Ms. Brunelle.

Ms. Paule Brunelle (Trois-Rivières, BQ): Do I have a few minutes?

The Chair: You have two minutes left.

Ms. Paule Brunelle: Ms. Beaulieu, you told us that it was important to be able to live in French, and I found that very interesting. Ms. Gagné-Ouellette spoke to us about early childhood. I think that this ability truly does need to start at the beginning, which is to say through early childhood centres, where children are educated.

In Vancouver, we had the opportunity to hear about schools that children attended for much of their primary level. I think that this is really a possible avenue.

Mr. Cousineau, I don't know if we have enough time, but I would like you to shed some light on the national learning policy. What do you mean by that? We know that education is a matter of provincial jurisdiction, but what can you tell us about it in a few minutes?

Mr. Gaétan Cousineau: Early childhood begins before school, even before primary school. This phase is not part of the formal education structure. It is informal. That is where there is room for the federal government, in partnership, if you will, with the provinces and agencies like ours, to develop programs.

Ms. Gagné-Ouellette explained child development much better than I can. If children are not in contact with French at home, and if they do not learn it when they are very young, they will perhaps never even enrol in a French-language school. They may end up enrolling in an English school because it is easier for them. These children will be more at ease in developing in that language and will lose their French.

Parents have to speak French to their children, but they need to have tools to do so. The day care centres these children go to must be French-language centres, so that they can hear French spoken. We have a network of experts, like the one in Manitoba for example, that also makes use of grandparents to speak French to their children and grandchildren, and make French the language spoken in the family once again.

So this all happens before school. After that, children will continue to develop if they go to a French-language school.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Cousineau and Ms. Brunelle.

Mr. Godin will ask the next question.

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

Ms. Beaulieu, you spoke earlier about infrastructure funds. At the moment, it is as if the government had decided to give us the money directly and allow us to deal with our own problems. You need not

worry, there is nothing discriminatory about this, as we were able to see when it spoke about eliminating the Canadian Wheat Board and the CRTC.

Can you explain to us what you mean by infrastructure?

Ms. Marielle Beaulieu: At the moment, in many communities, French-language schools are in a thoroughly lamentable state. In some instances, including a school in Prince Edward Island, they have been described as third-world schools. In this area, there is therefore a great deal of catching up to do. Ms. Gagné-Ouellette spoke about early childhood centres. It is essential that within the schools areas be set aside for this purpose. In many instances, such spaces are not available.

Infrastructure also includes the cultural sphere. The people from the Fédération culturelle canadienne-française will testify somewhat later. They will thus be able to tell you more about this. In any event, what is involved is providing people in the communities with places where they can meet, speak, live and engage in activities in French. Community spaces need to be built where there are none.

I think that in Saskatchewan there has just been an agreement on a school-community centre. Such centres are the preferred venue for minorities, given their ability to include a school, community areas and early childhood facilities.

• (0835)

Mr. Yvon Godin: Ms. Beaulieu, you thanked us for having gone to visit francophone communities, and I want to point out that these visits were very interesting. The Court Challenges Program enabled us to obtain schools, but these schools were closed because new ones were being built for the anglophone community. The schools that had been closed because they were no longer usable were given to francophones. We saw this with our own eyes. It is shameful to see what governments are doing. The Liberals have nothing to boast about in this area either.

From the literacy standpoint, it's the same story. It is as if people could wake up one fine morning and decide to teach themselves. We need organizations and organizers. I have said it before and I will say it again: there is a surplus of \$50 billion in the employment insurance fund. Yesterday evening again, the government answered one of my questions by saying that it was through training and education that we can help people. So why not spend some of this surplus on literacy and thus be able to set up some schools?

In the town of Petit Rocher in New Brunswick, there was a literacy school operating in a church basement. The teacher had to supply the toilet paper himself. That's how people are treated.

Do you think it would be a good thing in phase II of the employment insurance program, which addresses training, for there to be agreements between the federal and provincial governments on literacy in order to make it possible for our workers and the population to enter the labour market?

Mr. Gaétan Cousineau: The federation is prepared to work with others to find literacy solutions and tools. Needless to say, French-language centres, spaces and schools are needed. I support Ms. Beaulieu's comments when she said that without places where you can speak French, there will never be a francophone community or a vital francophone community.

Even though they may be francophone, people who work in English and attend English schools end up no longer speaking French at home. I myself am from a Franco-Ontarian family. At the Cousineaus, some no longer speak French because they lived in such an environment. I continue to speak French. To do so, you need tools, facilities, and means. We are prepared to cooperate in finding such means. We have literacy expertise and are prepared to share it with you. People working in this area need support.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Cousineau and Mr. Godin.

I would now ask Mr. Lemieux for the next question.

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

I am the member from Glengarry—Prescott—Russell. It is a riding located very close to Ottawa in which 65,000 Franco-Ontarians live. I am therefore very much aware of the challenges and concerns of my fellow Franco-Ontarians.

I would like to begin by making a few of comments about literacy. To fill in some of the gaps, I would like to point out that our government is going to spend \$80 million on literacy over the next two years, on programs to help adults improve their reading and writing skills.

I am also currently involved in 10 important initiatives. For example, in Prince Edward Island, the government is going to spend \$1.5 million to develop adult skills. There is

[*English*]

Building Island Literacy, Adults Reading Across Canada,

• (0840)

[*Translation*]

the Alpha Média Réseau project. So there is money, there are initiatives and you have the support of our government.

Nevertheless, I would like to ask Ms. Gagné-Ouellette a question.

I believe that the family is the key. Promoting the francophonie and our heritage begins in the family, particularly with parents. There are resources outside of families to help parents, but the parents need to be helped directly. It is in the family that you learn important things like values, where character is built, and where we acquire our strengths, and other such things.

In their presentations, our witnesses mentioned a concern about exogamous families. There are these concerns. Nevertheless, with respect to families, you did not really say how you were going to work directly with them to promote French at home. If parents do not speak French at home, and if they do not promote their own heritage at home, then I believe that the impact of early childhood services and day care centres in French will perhaps be minimal, because it is in the family that values are established and that important things are emphasized.

Could you speak to us about strategies for working with families, particularly with parents of exogamous families, to improve current conditions in such families?

Ms. Murielle Gagné-Ouellette: Thank you.

I agree fully with you: there is the whole question of energy and synergy, and values come from the family. I agree with what you have said on this.

On the other hand, with respect to services offered to exogamous families, when we speak of francophone families, exogamous families are included. Indeed, we know—I can no longer remember the percentage—that there are many francophones who are married to members of anglophone families or people from other cultures.

Consequently, exogamous families are included in the strategies of the Commission nationale des parents francophones. In some of our provinces, our parents federations have developed Ex Teams. I am certain that in British Columbia, you have had the opportunity to hear about the Ex Team, which is an initiative of the Fédération des parents francophones de la Colombie-Britannique, and of the British Columbia Francophone School Board. This initiative supports exogamous families by providing them with bilingual documentation to enable the anglophone parent in the family to be involved in the child's education.

If we could have an early childhood and family centre in each of our elementary schools, trust me when I tell you that the anglophone parent would be supported and able to help their children from the moment they are born. Because the decision to speak French to your children is something that occurs the minute the child is born, and sometimes even during pregnancy, which is precisely when parents decide which school their children will be going to: French or English.

If none of our communities has a French school or an early childhood centre, or none nearby, then there will be no option. We are not speaking here only of day care centres, because parents also have the option of sending their children to day care or to keep them at home: I fully agree. On the other hand, if we do not have early childhood and family centres, then there is no alternative.

As francophones, we never had an option, even though we had a right, because there were no francophone schools. The fact is that 20 years ago we did not have French-language schools.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Gagné-Ouellette. Your time is up.

That is the end of our first round of questions. Mr. Rodriguez will begin the second round.

Mr. Pablo Rodriguez (Honoré-Mercier, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Good morning to everyone. I am sorry for arriving late.

I am somewhat worried about how the government has been dealing with the cuts in general, and in particular for the communities. There was a time—I don't know if it was in the Action Plan for Official Languages or whether it was official—when there was a process for consulting the communities. I do not know how official it was. Was it part of the accountability framework?

Ms. Marielle Beaulieu: Yes it was. Not only that, but the action plan had mechanisms for consulting the minister on the one hand, and senior officials on the other, once a year. That is how things were begun and actually held.

• (0845)

Mr. Pablo Rodriguez: I remember taking part last year. I think that Mr. Lauzon was also there. Were there consultations afterwards?

Ms. Marielle Beaulieu: No, there were none this year, not since last spring.

Mr. Pablo Rodriguez: Were any consultations announced?

Ms. Marielle Beaulieu: None.

Mr. Pablo Rodriguez: So obviously you were not consulted on the elimination of the Court Challenges Program either.

Ms. Marielle Beaulieu: Not at all.

Mr. Pablo Rodriguez: I presume that these consultations should be continued.

Ms. Marielle Beaulieu: Mr. Rodriguez, when answering a question from Mr. D'Amours, I reported that we had been very surprised when the cuts were announced. Indeed, under the action plan accountability framework, it is very clear that official language communities must be consulted, whether on any new policies or on any changes made to policies that concern them. We were very surprised to see that for the most recent cuts, there had been no consultations.

Mr. Pablo Rodriguez: I share your concern about this matter. I travelled just about everywhere across the country over the past few months. We would like to see the action plan renewed and ideally, enhanced, and for this to be announced as quickly as possible to enable people to know where they stand. I have been hearing a great deal of talk about enhancing it with a portion set aside for arts and culture. What do you think about that?

Ms. Marielle Beaulieu: Mr. Rodriguez, on the one hand, the FCFA organized a major summit in which, moreover, the federal government invested a considerable amount of money. The summit should make it possible to clearly determine what guidelines should be followed for the development of the communities over the coming years. To begin with, I think it is important to refer to this event.

On the other hand, in the comments I made earlier, I spoke about the development of schools and other infrastructures. Culture is an important part of that. Over the coming months, we are going to work together with the summit, to a certain extent, to encourage the government to do something in a way that will be consistent with the highest priorities for the communities. The summit should affect not only members of the FCFA, but the whole of the Canadian francophonie, in order to establish future directions.

Mr. Pablo Rodriguez: Did the day care program put forward by the Liberal government and cut by the Conservatives have measures for the communities?

Ms. Murielle Gagné-Ouellette: Yes. We worked with the federal government and the provinces to ensure that there would be various measures for francophones in addition to an established percentage. There were different measures for each province. For the first time, the federal-provincial agreements included measures for francophones. It was a first, something that had never before been included in federal-provincial agreements.

Mr. Pablo Rodriguez: You are talking about measures for francophones outside Quebec.

Ms. Murielle Gagné-Ouellette: That's correct.

Mr. Pablo Rodriguez: We might return to that.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Rodriguez.

Mrs. Boucher.

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher (Beauport—Limoilou, CPC): Good morning everyone. I am pleased to be here with you.

As you know, the committee travelled from one end of Canada to the other. We went on-site in the heat of the action to see the reality of francophones outside Quebec. It was very enriching for each and every one of us. I must say that our government and those who work for it believe unshakably in the francophonie and in official languages.

It is true that there have been cuts; everyone has heard about them. However, I would like to place the situation in perspective, because some of my fellow members on the other side of the House went from \$309 million to only \$215 million between 1993 and 1999. So this could be a matter for lengthy discussion as well.

During our trip, we heard a great deal about the shortcomings of the Action Plan for Official Languages, and in particular about the lack of planning for communications.

I have a question for Ms. Beaulieu. I believe I understood that you were more or less in agreement with everyone about the fact that there was a lack of communication. As your organization is at the very centre of the Canadian francophonie, could it play a role at this level? Do you have any possible suggestions to give to the government?

• (0850)

Ms. Marielle Beaulieu: First of all, Ms. Boucher, in connection with the development and implementation of the action plan, the FCFA of Canada played a very important role in terms of coordination and in preparing the consultations that have been held thus far, both at the departmental level and in dealings with senior officials.

The FCFA also spent a great deal of time—in fact I used this term earlier—to inspire the strategy of the government at the time. Rest assured, Ms. Boucher, that we will definitely be pleased to work with the government, no matter what the political party, to properly identify potential solutions for the years to come.

Somewhat earlier, we referred to one possibility, which was the matter of infrastructures. These are definitely out-of-date in some instances, not quite up to the mark in others, and in other areas they are good. But a better balance is needed in terms of infrastructures.

At the FCFA, we feel that the action plan made it possible to accomplish some great things, in particular in health and immigration. The FCFA has always advocated the importance of a comprehensive development plan that involves the communities and governments in action on several fronts. And that leads us to the question of institutional completeness, to which we referred.

There is another factor that strikes me as extremely important. In recent years, there was a component of the action plan that had not really been mentioned much. In fact, there is more than one. The issue of community life was not sufficiently supported to increase vitality, but to go beyond vitality, particularly in terms of increasing the availability of services in French. They should be provided to all citizens in each of the communities.

We talk a lot about achieving genuine equality. However, we can't yet say, even though we remain optimistic, that it exists outside Quebec. I think that this is something important that deserves to be looked at more closely.

I will let my colleagues speak at greater length about arts and culture, but the Action Plan for Official Languages has a number of flaws that could certainly be improved. We would be happy to work with any government.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Beaulieu and Ms. Boucher. The five minutes are up.

Ms. Brunelle, you can ask the next question.

Ms. Paule Brunelle: I must say that I admire your determination and courage. It seems to me that when there is an action plan and an accountability framework, and after some heated battles over the years, in which some schools were lost, it is certainly discouraging to find yourself not even back where you started, but behind the start line by a fair distance.

I would like to say a word about families. My colleague said not long ago that learning French was something that had to happen in the families. One mustn't forget what the typical family is like today. It is often a broken family, a blended family or one in which both parents work. Most women are no longer at home raising children and able to teach their children a language.

You said that you wanted to build community spaces. I find that brilliant. In Quebec, the opposite was done. Schools were built at great expense, along with community centres for recreation and culture. This later became too much of a financial burden for the communities. Then, there was a baby boom, of which I am a part. So this happened a fairly long time ago. After that, there were fewer children, and some schools had to be closed. When the last school in the village was closed, it was tragic because you could see the communities disintegrating. The link I would like to make is that wherever there is a common community space, it is possible to develop all aspects of the language, and I tip my hat to this initiative.

Ms. Beaulieu, you told us that we were not providing enough support to community life. I think that this will be something to consider in the action plan. Community life needs to be supported so that the language can develop horizontally in all sectors.

I do not really have a question to ask at this time. Those were comments.

If you wish, we could speak about some of the more important aspects of the action plan or of things that we might be able to develop. It seems to me that the committee members would be interested in hearing comments about some of the urgent things that need to be done. We know that there is the reinstatement of the funding, respect for the accountability framework and the action

plan, but is there something else that this committee could do to help you?

• (0855)

Ms. Marielle Beaulieu: Ms. Brunelle, I believe you have touched upon some essential elements. The strengthening of community life and the community's capacity at this point to live more effectively in French are extremely important basic factors.

I think that in the past, there was perhaps a misunderstanding about all the work done by the many organizations dedicated to the development of French-language communities and to the spread of French in every form. We were told many times that there were many, and that there was some complexity.

It is important to understand that in a minority community, life is not the same as when you are part of the majority. Hence the extreme importance of spaces and infrastructures. This capacity needs to be strengthened so that there can indeed be these services and so that people in a community know where to go. I would say even more than that. I would say that there is still an enormous amount of catching up to do. We need only think of those families—Mr. Cousineau mentioned this earlier—in which it was no longer considered useful to speak French because people spoke English at work. In some families French has been lost for generations.

If it is not possible to actively offer services in French and to promote these services, people will get out of the habit of requesting them. Hence the importance of capacity building, because what is involved is not only offering the services, but being able to talk about them, promote them, and in other words, being able to do more.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Beaulieu.

Mr. Godin, you can ask the next question.

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

Another group was also affected, and I think that it is an important group. When we talk about communities, there are people who work on a volunteer basis to help francophones. Whether in French or in English, in Sherbrooke in the province of Quebec, where anglophones are a minority, it is the same thing.

In my riding, I met a man who was a director of volunteer services.

According to one study, in New Brunswick only, volunteer work amounts to 15,000 unpaid jobs. Does the government really understand what it is in the process of doing? This network of volunteers receives an annual grant of \$140,000. I am not saying that it was this amount alone that was supporting the whole project. The federal government granted \$140,000 to New Brunswick—I do not know how much it gave to Quebec—to help one volunteer organization doing work equivalent to 15,000 jobs. If these 15,000 people were to tell themselves that there was nothing left for them to do in society, that they had done their work and would rather go home and sit in front of the television set, what then? I feel that this is one of the most mean-minded of the government's cuts.

Of course it took 10 years to convince the previous government to come up with an action plan, which came into effect in 2003, and which still has some flaws. Today, we have taken a step backward. Usually, there is only one speed when you are driving in reverse, but in this case, there are 10. It is not enough to be working on an action plan with a view to improving it, when we find ourselves with less than nothing. I know that it is frustrating for the government. I understand it. I would not like to be in their place.

It seems to me that your group came here without making any specific suggestions. It is true that you spoke about the need for infrastructure. But I would like to have a clear idea of what your position is. Are you telling the government to pause for a moment to consult? You are part of the community, you are in the field, and each of you has a brain, you are close to the community, you pay taxes, and the government is elected to represent you. Are you asking the government to listen to you and to work with us? Is that the message that you would like us to enter in the report? We are going to write a report. What do you want? What do you think are the most important things to include in the report?

● (0900)

Mr. Gaétan Cousineau: The federation has been working for a year now to prepare literacy upgrading plans. We have plans for each province and territory that include the costs and the needs. We have thus done our work. We have plans. We can present them, explain them and discuss them in order to put infrastructures in place, prepare tools and support the people who will provide these services.

To follow up on what Ms. Beaulieu said a while ago, people want services in French, but people need to be able one day to provide these services in French. Unless we work on literacy for francophones, whether at school or elsewhere, what will happen one day to people like nurses, who will be providing health care services in French, and the answer is that there will no longer be any services in French because there will be no francophones left to deliver them. Things therefore need to begin in early childhood, continued at school, and in adult literacy programs, by keeping parents sufficiently educated to support the family. We have these remedial plans.

At the moment, enrolment is declining in francophone schools because students do not have the capacity to learn on their own in French. They are no longer sufficiently skilled in French to go to French school. Francophone schools could handle more francophones—the pool is there—but they are unable to reach them. There will soon be no one left to provide services in French. We need to support volunteers, and upgrading plans are required. We have them, we are prepared to show them to you and to help you from this standpoint.

Ms. Marielle Beaulieu: Mr. Godin, to conclude, I think that at the moment, all the sectors have plans, whether for early childhood, education or literacy. You are going to hear from people who are going to tell you that they are ready, that the plans exist. At the FCFA, we presented a plan to Ms. Verner about the issue of strengthening community life, but beyond all of that, what is most important at the moment—and this would be expected of any government—is that we begin by respecting the spirit and the framework of the action plan whose term will end in 2008, that we work with communities so that in the end, the next government

strategy will properly reflect needs. Furthermore, you all approved a bill called Bill S-3 to amend the Official Languages Act and to put more teeth into Part VII of the Act, making it binding.

The Chair: Ms. Beaulieu.

Ms. Marielle Beaulieu: We expect that the government, no matter which party is in power, will meet its obligations.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Beaulieu. Your time is up.

There will be another round of three-minute questions, and I am going to be very strict about the timing involved because we have a great deal to do.

We will begin with Mr. D'Amours.

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

In listening to you speak, it is clear that you are feeling very frustrated and we can see that there is a problem. It's like an old couple or a couple that is not getting along. On the one hand, there is the government and on the other the official language communities. There is a problem within the couple. The official language communities are saying that they are trying to speak to the government but that the government does not want to speak to them. Eventually, a split occurs. Increasingly, the government can be seen to be withdrawing from areas in which it ought to be supporting the official language communities.

Earlier Ms. Gagné-Ouellette, when you spoke about the federal/provincial/territorial Early Childhood Development Agreement, you stated it very clearly. Earlier, I had mentioned the Publications Assistance Program to you, whose budget is being cut. There was discussion of the September 25, and of all the cuts that were being made, but it began well before, when the government decided to back out of the promise to spend \$5 billion on day care centres and the guarantee of a percentage of money for francophones, to vary depending on the province. The cuts to the communities did not start yesterday or on September 25. In fact, since it was elected on January 23, the Conservative government, as soon as it had the chance, made cuts to its grants to official language communities. As soon as it had an opportunity to attack the official language communities, it did so stealthily. Every time there are discussions, and in hearing you and when we speak together, it can be seen just how much harm the Conservatives have done to us and since when. Sometimes, it is areas that we did not know about: the question of this federal/provincial/territorial agreement strikes us as something new. It was something new, as it happens. The federal government had an agreement that was designed to guarantee amounts to help the communities within its available financing.

Do you share my feeling that this reality really goes back to the very beginning of the new government? It calls itself new; soon we will be calling it old. The fact remains that since this new government came to office, little by little, very gradually, the official language communities have been losing ground. We now wonder what types of measures will have to be taken to make up for these deficits and even to simply recover what has been lost, let alone talk about moving forward.

● (0905)

The Chair: You have 30 seconds to answer the question

Ms. Marielle Beaulieu: I think that the communities have been playing catch up for ages. Generally speaking, I think that the FCFA and the communities have been in favour of the action plan, which represents a horizontal vision that should be upheld.

Over the past 15 to 20 years, development has been in fits and starts. There have been ups and have been downs. So there has indeed been the feeling in the communities—

The Chair: Ms. Beaulieu, unfortunately, your three minutes are up.

Ms. Barbot.

Mrs. Vivian Barbot: Thank you.

Very quickly, I want to congratulate you, to acknowledge the vitality to which you have contributed. I am gaining a better understanding, through the visits we have made and the people we have met as part of the work of this committee, that living in French outside of Quebec is a constant effort, an ongoing effort. From this standpoint, a country that calls itself bilingual and that has a legal obligation to support the efforts that you have to make should not act in a short-sighted way. There needs to be consistency. I have just said this, but it is not a matter of petty politics to accuse the government of anything. In fact, we in the Bloc Québécois have no immediate interest in this issue, except for the natural ties that bind us to the francophone communities. I believe that we should do everything possible, no matter what government is in power, to ensure that you can obtain that which you are owed to enable you to ensure the vitality of communities outside Quebec.

We have already introduced a motion to this effect. It concerns the government's commitment to support the development of official language communities. We are also asking the Conservatives to increase the funding that was allocated to you, the overall funding, and in particular to provide you with core funding in the long-, medium- and short-term. Indeed, it is clear that the scope of the work you have done cannot be handicapped year after year by administrative or government decisions that threaten the very essence of what you are doing.

I want in particular to assure you that we are very much behind what you are doing and that we will do everything possible to set the situation right.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Barbot.

Mr. Lemieux, you have three minutes.

Mr. Pierre Lemieux: Thank you.

If we speak too long, there won't be enough time remaining to get an answer.

Here is what I would like to know. The FCFA is working with us, the federal government. However, I would like to know how you work with—

Ms. Marielle Beaulieu: The provincial governments?

Mr. Pierre Lemieux: Yes, the provincial governments. Because we are signing agreements with the provincial governments, for example in education. We announced a billion dollar-agreement. During our travels, I could see that it was very successful. In fact,

there has been an increase in the number of francophone schools, students, etc.

How does your association work with the provincial governments?

● (0910)

Ms. Marielle Beaulieu: Mr. Lemieux, I am very happy that you raised this question. We feel that it is a very important one.

We had been working with the provincial governments in several areas, for quite some time now. The education issue is one of those aspects.

People working in health have been working with the provincial or territorial government. The whole issue of services in French affects us as well, and we are working more and more with the provincial and territorial governments.

Everywhere in Canada, the advocacy associations that have mandates similar to ours, but in their province or territory, have been working closely and increasingly with their provincial or territorial government specifically to improve these communities.

However, in recent years, several governments have developed policies or regulations about French-language services. You are also aware that the federal government has signed an agreement with these governments on services in French.

A federal-provincial-territorial-community connection has been established. My view is that this connection is extremely important.

That said, it must never be forgotten that with respect to the Charter and the Official Languages Act, there are federal obligations. In other words, when we speak of official languages or services in French, it would be dangerous to work strictly with the provinces. In my view, a balance needs to be struck, which is the triangle that has developed over time.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Beaulieu and Mr. Lemieux.

The final question will be asked by Mr. Godin.

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

I return to Mr. Lemieux. He was saying earlier that a literacy program had been introduced in Prince Edward Island. I remember, having read it in the newspapers, that this was the only place that benefited. Is this true? The newspapers had said that a literacy program had been introduced or that the program would continue until December 2007.

Then, the Premier of Saskatchewan, among others, got rather angry. He was asking why this province and not any of the others.

Can you tell us whether there is now a Canada-wide agreement?

Mr. Gaétan Cousineau: I have only been with the federation for a month. It is the people behind me who have all the information. I am currently doing my homework.

I can tell you however that there are many places from which we are awaiting responses. Not very many people received the applications. The great challenge for people—

Mr. Yvon Godin: Mr. Cousineau, you are—

Mr. Gaétan Cousineau: I am the Director General of the Fédération canadienne pour l'alphabétisation en français.

Mr. Yvon Godin: You are the Director General.

And Mr. Lemieux is trying to tell us that there are currently discussions with your organization and with a national organization.

Are there currently any discussions between you and the provinces, or has this just...?

Mr. Gaétan Cousineau: The federation submits projects. The federation's great challenge is to live with projects that often last only a year, hence the fits and starts we were speaking about earlier.

The provinces or the regions; it's the same thing.

Mr. Yvon Godin: I only have three minutes—

Mr. Gaétan Cousineau: I will reply quickly.

Mr. Yvon Godin:—and I only have one and a half left. When the government announced the extension of the program to Prince Edward Island, did it do so after discussing it with you or on its own?

Mr. Gaétan Cousineau: Not necessarily with us. It's with the regions, with the people in the province.

Mr. Yvon Godin: All right, with the people in the province. So several provinces did not get a response concerning literacy?

Mr. Gaétan Cousineau: That's right. People are waiting all over the place.

Mr. Yvon Godin: People are waiting, and when people are waiting, they don't know where they're headed.

Mr. Gaétan Cousineau: And in the meantime, there have been closings. That's correct.

Mr. Yvon Godin: Mr. Lemieux and Ms. Beaulieu were saying that the government was working with you.

Did the government consult you? You had the opportunity for a meeting with the minister. You spoke with her, but that's all.

Ms. Marielle Beaulieu: We met several people, to be sure. However, as I said at the beginning, I spoke about the accountability framework, about the importance of and requirements involved in consultation. I said it more than once and I will repeat it again: we were not consulted about the cuts that were made. That is why, when I asked earlier what you ought to be in your report, I said that there were certainly areas for improvement, but that meeting obligations struck us as something essential.

Mr. Yvon Godin: Were you consulted before the day care cuts?

Ms. Murielle Gagné-Ouellette: No, we were not consulted.

Mr. Yvon Godin: Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Godin.

Things have gone quickly, but that is how we go about it here. I would ask all the members to stay here. We have a few minutes to deal with a number of committee details. I would like to thank our three witnesses and ask the other witnesses to come forward.

In the meantime, can the members tell me whether the meeting scheduled for Thursday ought to be cancelled?

Mr. Godin, would you agree to cancelling it?

● (0915)

Mr. Yvon Godin: Were there witnesses to appear on Thursday?

The Chair: We could call them for January 30. I personally am prepared to stay until Thursday.

Are we prepared to have a committee meeting on Thursday?

Mr. Yvon Godin: No.

The Chair: Does everyone agree?

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: Yes.

The Chair: A motion has been circulated. I will ask the analyst to explain it.

Mr. Jean-Rodrigue Paré (Committee Researcher): It is a straightforward routine motion to facilitate discussion at the end of the meeting. At the start of the meeting, we were to study immigration—

Mr. Yvon Godin: A point of order, Mr. Chairman. Some order is needed.

Mr. Jean-Rodrigue Paré: At the beginning of the meeting, we undertook three studies on immigration, health and the vitality of communities, respectively. As for the report, to avoid any problems of legitimacy related to the three separate studies, it is important for the committee to be able to include the testimony concerning the three studies in a single report.

If Parliament were to prorogue or something, then to ensure that everything is tied together properly, all that is needed is to adopt a routine motion in order to be able to include the testimony concerning health and immigration in the report on the vitality of communities.

The motion is here.

Mrs. Vivian Barbot: All right.

Mr. Jean-Rodrigue Paré: The Chair can move the motion, that is usually the rule.

The Chair: Could you read it please.

The Clerk of the Committee (Ms. Danielle Bélisle): The motion reads as follows:

That, the evidence received during the Committee's Study on Health and on Immigration in Official Languages Minority Communities, be adduced as supplementary evidence for the Study on the Vitality of Official Languages Minority Communities.

The Chair: Are you in agreement? Is this all right?

We will now recess for five minutes to allow time for the witnesses to enter.

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● (0920)

The Chair: Good morning, ladies and gentlemen. Welcome to the Official Languages Committee. We are beginning the second part of our meeting, in which four witnesses will be taking part. I would ask you to limit your presentations to three minutes. The members will then ask you questions.

Ms. Mariette Carrier-Fraser, you have the floor.

• (0925)

Mrs. Mariette Carrier-Fraser (President, Assemblée de la francophonie de l'Ontario): Good morning. I am the President of the Assemblée de la francophonie de l'Ontario, an organization that has existed only since the month of June. We held our first annual general meeting in June. I do not know whether a brief was submitted to you. If not, it will certainly be sent on later.

Very briefly, the Assemblée truly reflects the drive of French-speaking Ontario. Our vision for Ontario is: a French-speaking Ontario united in its diversity, that shows solidarity in its actions and that is collectively committed to its well-being.

The AFO is truly inclusive. In terms of diversity, for example, we have representatives of ethnocultural racial minorities, and we have sectoral representatives. In all, 14 sectors are represented on our organization's board of directors. From the geographic standpoint, five of the province's regions are represented. To begin with the geography of Ontario, we have francophones in Thunder Bay, Orillia, Kingston, Toronto, Ottawa, etc. This means that for francophones to get together, people have to travel, sometimes more than 1,000 kilometres, to come and see us in Ottawa to attend meetings. For the francophonie, the geography of Ontario is rather vast.

There is also a feeling of isolation within the francophone community. It is often said that people are isolated in rural communities, but the francophone community in Toronto is also isolated. There may be 50,000 francophones in a city, but when there are 2 million in the province as a whole, it is not necessarily easy to be in touch with one another.

Interests vary from one community to another. In the small town of Hearst—where I was born, and my parents still live—the population is 98% francophone. My mother has lived there for 80 years and does not speak English at all. Elsewhere, in southern Ontario, the situation is completely different.

For the first time this year, we did some strategic planning and established two development thrusts, because we did not want to spread ourselves too thin. We said to ourselves that as a new organization, it was important for us to make sure that we did not try to do too much at the same time. The two objectives we set were organizational capacity—because we are a new organization, and must make sure that we can do the work properly—and strengthening our political actions. We need to make sure that what we do is based on facts.

We have a few priorities: collaboration and coordination among sectors, regions and racial minorities; communications; increasing the number of services in French. From the political standpoint, with respect to increasing French-language services, we turn mainly towards the province, and to the French Language Services Act, etc.

Another priority is visibility and recognition from governments: the work of the provincial association in recent years did not have much of an impact because the group was in the process of restructuring. Now that things are in place, we want to make sure that we are much more visible and in a position to increase financial resources and government support.

In terms of being dynamic, the meetings that were held over the past few months showed that there was solid representation from the francophone population.

I will list the 14 sectors I was just mentioning: seniors and retired people; special needs; communications; community development; education—there is the whole *aménagement linguistique* issue that affects several levels, even the colleges—; youth—which is very much engaged: we have a very strong youth organization in Ontario; it is perhaps the strongest organization of its kind in Canada—; the municipal sector and urban planning; the arts, culture and heritage; cultural centres and community development; cooperatives; the economy; women; justice, and lastly, health. All of these sectors are very dynamic and very well represented on our board. There are many different activities just about everywhere in the province within these groups.

As for ethnocultural racial minorities, as I was saying, there are four sitting on our association. It is essential, and it is included in our by-laws and regulations: we need to have ethnocultural racial minorities within our organization. There are other members who are members of racial minorities, but not elected as representatives of the racial minorities. They are simply elected as people from the community. Thus, we have five regional representatives.

The challenge to us as an organization, and what we want to do with government assistance and cooperation, is not to make demands on Parliament Hill, but to work with government to move our issues forward.

The important issues for us are: increased funding for the francophone community—it is almost impossible to do the work we need to do as an organization; we have over 1,000 in Ontario— increase in services and having the federal government consult the community.

Thank you, Mr. Lauzon.

The Chair: I now have the pleasure of welcoming one of my neighbours, Ms. Brisebois, of Cornwall.

You have the floor.

Mrs. Francine Brisebois (Centre culturel de Cornwall, Stormont, Dundas et Glengarry): Thank you for having me here today.

I am here as the Executive Director of the Centre culturel de Cornwall. This cultural centre has the following goals: to ensure the unity and safeguard of francophone culture; to study the measures needed to encourage progress; to promote the tourism industry; to strengthen cooperation, unity and friendship among French Canadians; to safeguard francophone customs and traditions and give them pride of place; and to promote arts and culture.

As the Executive Director, I have several concerns: social change; demographic statistics; civil rights, obligations and responsibilities; francophone social, cultural and artistic services; the quality and quantity of our services; francophone community integration services; various sources of funding; social impacts; the next francophone generation; and the involvement of professionals. Those then are the major interests. There are several points that stand out as important for my region.

I find that three minutes to explain 45 years of operations is not a lot. I didn't think I would have only three minutes to speak to you about the problem being experienced by our francophone community.

I am a Franco-Ontarian who lives in a francophone minority region. I got involved in the cultural centre because I found that francophone culture was missing in our region. Personally, I encountered many challenges in growing both culturally and academically. The cultural centre is trying to continue its development. We have been collaborating for 45 years and we intend to keep our francophone community.

At the moment, funding is the main problem being faced by the cultural sector, particularly after the substantial cuts it experienced this year. These cuts are threatening the survival of the centre and the survival of our francophone communities.

Last year, we presented a development plan to the Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration. The plan focuses on the following: developing access to infrastructures, resources and equipment needed for the development of the francophonie; promoting coordination and solidarity among socio-cultural communities; promoting the francophone identity.

How much time do I have left?

• (0930)

The Chair: Approximately 30 seconds.

Mrs. Francine Brisebois: To conclude, I would like to see a support program established at the Centre culturel de Cornwall that is based on a federal-provincial-community agreement, in collaboration with inter-, extra- and intra-ministerial cooperation, to jointly articulate the cultural development of our minority francophone communities.

I am fortunate to be working with people from different ethnic backgrounds from different countries. Geographically, the region we live in is reasonably strategic and it is experiencing some serious economic development problems. These problems are having an impact on the community, particularly in education.

We have lots of statistics and important points, but I don't think I have the time to present them to you today.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Brisebois.

Our next witness is Mr. Pierre Bourbeau, Director General of the Fédération culturelle canadienne-française.

Mr. Pierre Bourbeau (Director General, Fédération culturelle canadienne-française): Good morning.

As I have only three minutes, I will do without the acknowledgments and not bother with our organization's presentation. I nevertheless want to tell you that I am here on behalf of our President, René Cormier, who lives in New Brunswick. It is unfortunately impossible for him to be here today.

When the Action Plan for Official Languages was launched in 2003, we noted that the arts and culture sector for the Canadian francophonie was not mentioned. The FCCF therefore recommended to the federal government some changes designed to include the

cultural component. In our view, these components are still relevant, and we will present them to you today in four parts.

First of all, to promote effective cultural action in the francophone and Acadian communities, with a view to cultural dissemination and the consolidation of the cultural and artistic network, the FCCF recommends that the federal government introduce two things.

The first is an Official Languages in Culture Program. This would be similar to something that already exists in the field of education, and which is called the OLEP, the Official Languages in Education Program. Alongside this program, the FCCF would like to initiate an intensive discussion process to determine the exact nature and scope of its mandate.

Then, we suggest the creation of a strategic arts and cultural industries fund. This supra-sectoral fund would make up for some of the flaws in existing programs. In concrete terms, it would mean that hybrid organizations and their initiatives—culture, arts and cultural industries—would have access to an additional source of funding to consolidate the cultural sector.

There have been significant impacts over the past few years in cultural dissemination and distribution. Challenges remain in terms of building infrastructures in the region—we have just seen a good example—and distribution networks that would be able to meet the special challenges of Canada's francophonie, and to deal with technological change.

This moves us to part two. Over the past year, French Canadian artistic creation and production has been able to establish national platforms to support artists and organizations, as well as businesses, in our communities.

The FCCF therefore recommends the implementation of an arts and culture framework agreement that would have a specific budget, based on the model used for funding national organizations over a period of five years; the establishment of strategic inter- and intra-departmental partnerships under the leadership of the DG-OLSP; the opportunity to encourage new IPOLS agreements, the inter-departmental partnership with official language communities, and to enhance existing agreements; greater equity and increased access to funding from federal cultural agencies and federal departments; and greater accountability from these bodies.

I now come to part three. Culture and education are the mainstay in promoting language and affirming identity. The education summit held in June 2005 confirmed this perception and identified a thrust that it called the "school identity and culture role". The FCCF recommends a significant investment to support the language-culture-education link initiative.

We come now to the fourth and final aspect. Several other community development sectors include initiatives that support the integration and recognition of culture in developing communities, for example economic development, immigration and early child care. The FCCF would like to see arts and culture included when federal-provincial agreements are negotiated or included in other agreements mentioned in the previous sections.

The FCCF recommends that the next formal mechanism for inter-departmental coordination in relation to official languages include an arts and culture component; that the fundamental nature of culture also be reflected in the other portions of the next mechanism; that it encourage the implementation of cultural projects and that the accountability framework be extended to federal institutions involved in the arts and culture.

We believe that the time has come for the federal government to perpetuate the current Action Plan for Official Languages and that it is now more than ever necessary to give proper recognition to the contribution of artists, cultural agencies and industries of the Canadian francophonie. The most recent recommendations made to the federal government by the Standing Committee on Finance in its report entitled "Canada: Competing to Win" are consistent with these recommendations, and we are pleased to see this.

Pierre de Coubertin said: "It is not enough to blaze the trails; we most often go back over them, over and over, to expand them and make them passable."

• (0935)

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Pierre Bourbeau: Did I meet the three-minute time limit?

The Chair: Yes, you did.

We will resume our round of questions, with five minutes for each one.

Mr. D'Amours.

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

Ladies and gentlemen, I would like to thank you for being here today. There has been talk of budget cuts, but at least you were able to make your presentations without being interrupted.

I would like to raise a matter. Ms. Carrier-Fraser, you spoke earlier about consultation, and Ms. Brisebois spoke about cuts in Cornwall. As the name of your cultural centre takes a long time to say, I will simply use the term "Cornwall".

Were you consulted before the budget cuts were made?

Mrs. Francine Brisebois: No.

Mr. Jean-Claude D'Amours: I can no longer recall which of you said that being able to obtain services in French was a right and that it was also a federal government obligation. If it is our right to obtain these services and the federal government has an obligation to provide them, how do you explain the cuts that were made to the official language communities, whether to the Court Challenges Program, to Status of Women Canada or to literacy? I will not waste my time by naming all of them. If we have a right and the government has an obligation, then someone is failing to live up to their duties. I hope that you are like Ms. Brisebois. I hope that you do not need to come before the committee to explain to your federal member the problems you are experiencing at home. Does one of you have something to say about this?

• (0940)

Mrs. Mariette Carrier-Fraser: I think that when Ms. Brisebois talks about cuts, she is referring mainly to cuts to this year's programs. Canadian Heritage nevertheless has a rather limited

budget to support organizations. The number of organizations in Ontario alone is increasing, but the pie is still the same size. To ensure that francophone organizations and associations receive some funding, the amount allocated to each of the organizations is being reduced so that everyone gets a little. The organizations then have trouble not only living, but surviving.

Mr. Jean-Claude D'Amours: What use is the program? I have my own ideas about that, but what purpose does it serve for you? Would it not by any chance help to ensure the vitality of the communities?

Mrs. Mariette Carrier-Fraser: That is what we are doing. The development and vitality of communities is our job. Whether we are talking about cultural centres or the ACFOs, all of the organizations have responsibilities with respect to the vitality and development of the communities, just as the federal government has this responsibility. We cannot do it with the means available to us at this time.

Mr. Jean-Claude D'Amours: Ms. Brisebois, please go ahead.

Mrs. Francine Brisebois: Our programs represent the continued development of francophone culture. If our programs are cut, it will mean cutting our youth summer camp program. Thirty young people go to an immersion cultural summer camp to maintain their French during the summer. If I can no longer offer the program, its absence will be felt.

Mr. Jean-Claude D'Amours: Ms. Brisebois—

Mrs. Francine Brisebois: Resources of \$25,000 to ensure—

Mr. Jean-Claude D'Amours: —you are speaking about funds from Canadian Heritage, but do you need student jobs in order to be able to give your summer camps?

Mrs. Francine Brisebois: Yes, of course, but that is problematic as well because it depends on how the allocations are made in the cultural sector.

Mr. Jean-Claude D'Amours: As we know, the Summer Career Placement Program was cut by 50%. Where will you find the money? It means not only that you don't have money for the programs, but you don't even have the money to provide services to young people or projects for students.

Mrs. Francine Brisebois: It is important to understand that in the field, when you work in a cultural centre, you need to work regularly on projects. These are annual projects, and even if we plan to develop an annual project, no department will advance us the money we need. We need to divvy up the funds we receive. If one turns down our project and two accept it, how can we get our project under way? How can we make our project a reality? We are forced to review our funding plan and our programming and to start all over again.

Mr. Jean-Claude D'Amours: If you—

The Chair: It's too bad, Mr. D'Amours.

Mr. Jean-Claude D'Amours: If your organization were to disappear, what would happen?

The Chair: Mr. D'Amours, your time is up.

Ms. Barbot, it's your turn.

Mrs. Vivian Barbot: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Thank you for being here, even these touches that you have been adding to the portrait that the many witnesses have been painting for us make it even bleaker. It's truly discouraging. I would like to raise something a little different, given that so far, everyone has spoken to us about services that have been cut. Behind these services, there are people who are working. When a service is cut, there are so many workers—particularly women, where community sectors are involved—who lose their jobs, and total uncertainty is created. I would like you to tell us who is affected specifically in your communities. How would these lost jobs affect overall economic development in your regions?

Mrs. Mariette Carrier-Fraser: It's not only the loss of jobs. In most of our community organizations, there are very few employees who are paid even the minimum wage. We can't give them much.

What happens is that we lose volunteers. Our organizations function because of full-time volunteers. These volunteers truly work full-time and work for nothing. Because we have no money to hire staff in the various community organizations, the volunteers pick up the slack. They can no longer do so, because they are exhausted. We are suffering from a syndrome that I always describe as the ASP syndrome: always the same people. At some point, people can no longer carry on. With no more volunteers to do the work and no employees to take over, some organizations are shutting down.

Recently, a number of regional organizations of the Association canadienne-française de l'Ontario, who work on behalf of community development, closed their doors, for example in Sault Ste. Marie. On weekends in Nipissing, we will also no doubt be required to close. We are currently on hold. In the Cochrane region and in several other areas, the ACFOs can no longer continue.

The exhaustion of volunteers is a fact. It is clear. People are tired. Sometimes the communities may not perceive their relevance, but there are no employees to do the work to ensure that the community is properly served. It thus becomes a vicious circle.

• (0945)

Mr. Jean Comtois (Vice-President, Assemblée de la francophonie de l'Ontario): Another dimension also needs to be added to this. Ontario is receiving an enormous number of immigrants and attempting to integrate them. When these people arrive in our communities, we need to be able to provide them with services in order to promote their development, integration, etc. It then becomes necessary to rely on departments like Immigration Canada to help us provide the resources that enable us to do this. It's not easy. We are told that inter-departmental cooperation needs to be promoted. We are trying to do this, but the response is not clear.

The other dimension is the devolution of federal services to the provincial level, to the provincial and municipal level and when I say municipal, we need to ask where? In the communities. And our community organizations need to provide services, and delivery services, for which funds are not available.

Volunteers are taking on added responsibilities. Mr. Godin, you were talking about volunteers with the previous group. As Mariette was saying, these volunteers are already exhausted and they are being asked to shoulder additional responsibilities because of these extra services.

In addition, we are being asked to meet this need, but the resources required to do it well, effectively and in a well-organized manner, are not always there. In fact, we don't have the resources to do it.

Mr. Pierre Bourbeau: With respect to arts and culture, I would add that more and more cities and provinces want to become leaders who are more involved. In recent years, people have changed their tune and the arts and culture are no longer necessarily considered simply a form of recreation or like the Friday night show. People are now really understanding the contribution made by the arts and culture from various standpoints: social cohesion, economic development, job creation, the promotion of competition, etc.

This requires that our organizations do even more representational work. It becomes very complex at the federal level. Indeed, when you look at the complexity at the federal level, and try to find where all the arts and culture files are located, it's like a puzzle. However, when you add the complexities involved at the provincial and municipal government levels, and they are players now, it must be admitted that the organizations need tools to be able to do the representation work required.

For the municipalities, it is a double or triple challenge, because not all the municipalities consider official languages an obligation, but rather an area in which they must intervene.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Bourbeau.

It's now Mr. Godin's turn to ask the next question.

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

With arts and culture, if you compare it to Quebec, and if you take the francophone minorities into account, Ms. Barbot said it clearly, what is involved is really the two officially-recognized communities in Canada, the French and the English.

In Quebec for example, there is competition between the TVA, TQS and CBC television networks.

Mr. Pierre Bourbeau: And now there are also the specialty channels.

Mr. Yvon Godin: I'm not familiar with those.

What do we have where we live? What do we offer to the minorities? How does the government support communities outside of Quebec in order to make them feel that they don't have to go to Montreal for national exposure?

• (0950)

Mr. Pierre Bourbeau: On that subject, Mr. Godin, we are currently in discussion with the CBC. There are winds of change at the CBC, with the structures for television, radio and other media being merged.

We therefore recently met Messrs. Sylvain Lafrance, Louis Lalonde and Richard Simmons, among others. One of the concepts we are currently trying to develop, or to do a better job of developing with the CBC, is the showcasing of regional talent. We are in fact arguing to the CBC that it remains the main television station viewed by Canadian francophones.

To be sure, with all of the satellite signals available now, it is possible to have access to more channels like TV5, TVA and some specialty channels, but they are not as accessible as the CBC.

At the moment, the CBC needs to clearly improve its visibility in the francophone and Acadian communities in its prime time network programming. There are indeed things happening at the regional level. For example, in New Brunswick, there are special programs that reflect the reality of Atlantic Acadians, but not much of this is seen at the national level in prime time.

As might be expected then, we are arguing, at least for arts and culture, that there might be golden opportunities, in variety shows, when there are programs that cover the arts and culture, to give some visibility to the Canadian francophonie elsewhere than in Quebec in order to put these talents on display. There is therefore a great deal of work to be done.

Mr. Yvon Godin: Mr. Bourbeau, I recall that the CBC once filmed the Caraquet Acadian Festival. It was Acadian day. They had televised the festival on the national network and we virtually had to salute them and thank them.

As was discussed earlier, I received an e-mail from people back home telling us that it was unfortunate, but that the government ought to stop giving money to the CBC and begin to give it to the communities because the CBC was not fulfilling its mandate.

Do you agree that the CBC is not fulfilling its cultural mandate?

Mr. Pierre Bourbeau: We fully agree that there are many areas for improvement.

Mr. Yvon Godin: Improvement! They are not doing anything at all! You are being too kind. I have never seen such a polite person.

Mr. Pierre Bourbeau: My apologies, Mr. Godin, but from one standpoint, I can't say that they are doing nothing, but they are not doing enough. There are many areas for improvement at the CBC. It is absolutely—

Mr. Yvon Godin: What are they doing? Fifteen percent?

Mr. Pierre Bourbeau: Fifteen percent? No. I do not want to talk about percentages. On the other hand, there are certainly many things that could be improved in terms of visibility.

Mr. Yvon Godin: In Ontario, there is the TFO network. They have another French-language radio station. But here and in the rest of Canada, there is only the CBC. It's all we have apart from Rogers, which gives us one hour—

Mr. Pierre Bourbeau: There is an excellent example.

When there were municipal elections in Ontario recently, the CBC never talked about it. We perceive this as an insult. It's absolutely awful, and makes no sense. But when there are elections in France, the CBC will talk about it. It is examples like that that make us say that it's unbelievable, and that there are all kinds of areas for improvement.

Mr. Yvon Godin: But do you agree with me in saying that the government has washed its hands of it? In fact, the CBC has its own organization. No one has anything to say about it. They have their executive committee and they decide everything.

Mr. Pierre Bourbeau: In my view, the criteria are not demanding enough. There's something missing. Something more needs to be done.

Currently, under its licence, the CBC must broadcast six hours of regional production as part of its national programming. Regional for the CBC means everything outside of Montreal. That includes Rimouski, Sept-Îles and the Canadian francophonie. Very often, the programs are things like *Le Jour du Seigneur* or *La Semaine verte*, which have a very small viewership.

What we would like to see is an increase in the number of hours during which the Canadian francophonie can be seen and that these programs be broadcast in better time slots.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Bourbeau. Your time is up.

Mr. Lemieux, you may ask the next question.

I think that Ms. Carrier-Fraser would like to make a comment.

Mrs. Mariette Carrier-Fraser: Yes, I would like to make a comment strictly about—

The Chair: First, we will hear what Mr.—

Mrs. Mariette Carrier-Fraser: Ask me a question about the networks.

Voices: Oh, oh!

Mr. Pierre Lemieux: I would prefer to start with something else.

Mrs. Mariette Carrier-Fraser: I'll be glad to submit your questions and give you the answers too.

Mr. Pierre Lemieux: I would like to make a few positive comments, because Mr. D'Amours has given us only part of the story.

The government has not cut funding to the Action Plan for Official Languages, unlike my Liberal friends who made cuts to official languages programs during the 1990s.

We have announced some fine initiatives in education; we have signed a billion dollar agreement with the provinces, we have allocated \$64 million to services, which represents an increase of approximately 25%. We have also announced a contribution of \$120 million for minority francophone communities; this is an 11% increase. Lastly, we presented the strategic plan to promote immigration within minority francophone communities.

You have our support. We are signing agreements, we are providing money and, I repeat, there have been no budget cuts at all to official languages programs.

I would nevertheless like to ask Ms. Carrier-Fraser a question. Not the same question.

I attended the annual meeting of the Association canadienne-française de l'Ontario, the ACFO. What are the differences between the mandates of the ACFO and the AFO?

● (0955)

Mrs. Mariette Carrier-Fraser: You are speaking of the former provincial ACFO.

Mr. Pierre Lemieux: There is the Prescott and Russell ACFO here.

Mr. Jean Comtois: At the regional level.

Mr. Pierre Lemieux: Yes.

Mrs. Mariette Carrier-Fraser: The regional ACFOs have a local mandate: they address the needs of their own communities. The purpose of the Assemblée de la francophonie de l'Ontario is not to replace the local organizations. For example, the work of the Centre culturel de Cornwall has nothing to do with us. The priorities that we set are to increase funding for all existing organizations and to increase French-language services provided by the provincial government. After all, we live in Ontario, and the provincial government has responsibilities too.

The local organizations respond to the needs of their own communities. We work with these organizations to move major provincial issues forward. The definition of the role of an organization in a specific community differs from ours.

Mr. Jean Comtois: It's somewhat like the FCFA in relation to the provinces and territories.

Mr. Pierre Lemieux: Yes.

Mr. Jean Comtois: There is the national FCFA, and then the provincial and territorial organizations. Here, we have the provincial organization and then there are the various regions—

Mrs. Mariette Carrier-Fraser: —who are members.

Mr. Jean Comtois: —who are members of the AFO.

Mr. Pierre Lemieux: Okay.

You said that you were a new association. You have my congratulations!

What are your medium-term goals and your goals between now and 2011 or 2012?

Mrs. Mariette Carrier-Fraser: The AFO set its priorities for an 18-month period, which is the end of my term in 2008. Collaboration and coordination between sectors, regions and racial minorities are a priority. It is a very important dimension. The groups are not very familiar with their role, and we need to establish what I like to call a parliament. We need to work together to help the community develop.

Communications are also a priority, because we are not aware of the success stories from elsewhere. We would like to boast about our accomplishment and not always complain about the problems and challenges we are faced with.

Increasing services in French, visibility and recognition from governments are other priorities. In fact, at the Government of Ontario and even the federal level, there has been a tendency in recent years to ignore us, because the organizations were not displaying very much solidarity.

We accept part of the blame for this, but now that we are there, we want to work with the governments to move things forward. We are responsible for the development and vitality of minority communities, but so is the government. The only way we will be able to progress is to pool our strengths. If we work against you or if you do nothing to help us, then we will not accomplish anything. This collaboration is very important.

An increase in financial resources and support from the government is also important. You spoke about funds from Citizenship and Immigration Canada, but there are other sources of funding as well, including in education. However, there is a lack of cohesion in this area.

I appeared before the provincial Citizenship and Immigration Steering Committee and before the Standing Committee on Education. At one point, as a volunteer—

• (1000)

Mr. Pierre Lemieux: You are correct. In some sectors—

The Chair: Excuse me, Mr. Lemieux, but your five minutes are already up.

Mr. Rodriguez.

Mr. Pablo Rodriguez: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I simply want to reiterate a number of facts for Mr. Lemieux's benefit.

Some cuts made during the 1990s were the result of the \$42.5 billion-deficit inherited from the Conservatives. It was unfortunate, but it stemmed from the economic circumstances. After that, we more than caught up by allocating the largest amount ever spent, \$850 million, under the Action Plan for Official Languages.

Mr. Chairman, I will describe the context, which is very useful. On the very day that it announced a \$16 billion-surplus, the Conservative government made drastic cuts in some sectors of our society. This shows one thing: these cuts are unrelated to financial needs but are rather ideological in nature. That is the problem. I am firmly convinced that people go into politics to strengthen the social fabric, and not to destroy it.

That said, some things are clearer. Repeatedly in the course of our consultations, witnesses told us that the action plan needed to be enhanced and reviewed as quickly as possible, so that people would know what to expect, and that it was necessary to spend more, including on arts and culture. I don't know how you see it. If I have understood properly, you spoke earlier of a framework agreement. Is that correct?

Mr. Pierre Bourbeau: That is one of the components. There are several parts to the current action plan, which includes health, economic development and education. We suggest adding arts and culture. This would bring the total number of components to four. There needs to be an official languages program in the cultural field. We suggest that a strategic action fund be established, along with a framework agreement. For this fourth component, we suggest that the role of the arts and culture be taken into consideration under the existing components of the plan, namely education, economic development, immigration, and health.

It is urgent to begin thinking about it now, because the action plan comes to term at the end of March 2008. There is barely a year and three months remaining. Once this time has gone by, it will be essential to quickly evaluate the existing plan and make projections for the next five years. The plan's objectives were very ambitious. It had been understood at the outset that they could not be achieved within 5 years, but rather 10 or 15 years.

We are now back again to emphasize the fact that the arts and culture are unfortunately still missing from the plan. The development of francophone and Acadian communities cannot be considered without including the artistic and cultural dimension. In our view, it is just as important as education.

Mr. Pablo Rodriguez: We are aware of this and that is why I asked the question. We would like to extend and enhance the Action Plan for Official Languages by including an arts and culture component.

Mr. Pierre Bourbeau: I feel that it would definitely be logical to enhance the plan by adding the arts and culture component. The aspects that we have been suggesting could be progressive. It definitely requires some thought. The celebrated official languages program, for example, requires some thought from the cultural standpoint. We feel that these basic features, which we presented in March 2003, are still applicable. They deserve to be looked into in greater detail and improved.

Mr. Pablo Rodriguez: I remember that last year, when we passed Bill S-3, people were optimistic. Mr. D'Amours was there, as was Mr. Lauzon. People were very happy and it had also been possible to do it before the election. There was the impression of finally succeeding in giving more teeth to Part VII of the Official Languages Act.

Today, I don't have the impression that things are moving forward. Is there progress being made in the field?

Mrs. Francine Brisebois: As a member of the francophone community, I definitely have high expectations of the act. When I read in the papers that it would take two years to implement it, I said to myself that after all this time, there would perhaps be no francophone culture or vitality left in our communities.

We are part of a country that has two official languages. This is deficient in the minority francophone communities. The vitality of francophone communities has been demonstrated over the years. If we have been able to get where we are now, if we succeeded in surviving—

•(1005)

Mr. Pablo Rodriguez: What do you have to hang on to? If—

The Chair: Excuse me, Mr. Rodriguez, but your time is up.

We will now move on to Ms. Boucher.

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: Good morning everyone.

It has been very interesting to hear everything you have had to say. A great deal has been said about the challenges that the communities must meet and the expectations they have of our government.

On the other hand, I would like to hear about some of the accomplishments you are proud of. Mr. Bourbeau, if you were asked to mention one accomplishment that you are proud of, which would it be? Could it constitute a potential avenue for another program?

Mr. Pierre Bourbeau: The achievement that comes immediately to mind is what French-Canadian producers have been able to do with the Canadian Television Fund. They obtained an agreement that guaranteed that 10% of the \$100 million for Canadian production would really be dedicated to French-Canadian production. Excuse

me for having said that it was \$100 million; it is now only \$89 million.

It began as a basic principle, but it is now an integral part of the agreement with Canadian Heritage and the Canadian Television Fund. This 10% constitutes a floor and not a ceiling under the agreement.

I think that is an achievement because it currently guarantees \$8.9 million for French-Canadian producers. It gives them an opportunity to create cultural products that reflect our reality and that will be aired on different networks, because the producers are no longer dealing only with the CBC, but also with TVA, ARTV and various specialty channels.

However, as I said somewhat earlier, these products still do not have a large enough viewership. There is not enough distribution, and a way needs to be found, with the CBC among others, to ensure that these quality programs are distributed more effectively to the Canadian francophonie. Furthermore, some Acadians have said that they were not very much aware of what was happening in the West, and I would say that some Quebeckers are not very much aware of what is happening in the Canadian francophonie. So these are examples of successful achievements, but there are other challenges to be met; we need to be able to take things still further.

While still on this topic, producers in the film industry consider that a dollar spent by the government makes it possible to obtain \$5 or \$6 from other sources, and that creates jobs.

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: To make people aware of francophone vitality outside Quebec, you need a broadcaster. The CBC was mentioned, but it could be another network that could help you—

Mr. Pierre Bourbeau: We need very specific clauses that would require the cultural agencies, in the same way as MUSICACTION, to factor in the special challenges of the Canadian francophonie. In addition, we are talking about the cultural industry, where very often programming criteria are developed on the basis of conditions in Quebec or English Canada.

We therefore need to demonstrate that we can develop a cultural industry that is different with the Canadian francophonie. In fact, we could develop all kinds of more interesting products to showcase all of the Canadian francophonie's diversity.

The Chair: Have you finished?

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: I would like to ask Ms. Carrier-Fraser the same question.

Mrs. Mariette Carrier-Fraser: Let's take the example of health. A great deal of work was done by the Société Santé en français. In Ontario, four organizations that are part of the Alliance des réseaux ontariens des services de santé en français did unbelievable work thanks to funding from the federal government. In the justice field, great advances were made in terms of the services in French as a result of collaboration between the federal and provincial governments.

Community radio stations received some funding from the Government of Canada. We need much more still. The CBC is mentioned, but I think that our community radio stations have a crucial role to play in terms of the arts, culture, communications, etc. For example, the RDÉE, the coordinating group on economic development and employability, and existing collaborations with Quebec and the province in terms of economic development have had an amazing impact, and are continuing to do so.

These are very positive things that we hope will continue. We also hope that funding will continue. This would promote the growth of the community in several sectors, including health, the arts and culture. Community radio stations, communications, and the RDÉE and the whole economic sector, whether tourism or other areas, are all part of it. These things have an impact.

•(1010)

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Carrier-Fraser and Ms. Boucher.

We will now ask Ms. Brunelle to continue.

Ms. Paule Brunelle: My question is for Ms. Carrier-Fraser or Mr. Bourbeau.

You were successful thanks to government grants. In the current state of things, is this still possible? Can you continue along the same path?

Mrs. Mariette Carrier-Fraser: With respect to the RDÉE and economic development, the grants still appear to be there, because I feel there has been a renewal in Ontario so that the services can continue.

The alliance of health networks is perhaps less stable at this time because the funding will stop at the end of March. There is therefore some concern because the Ontario French Language Services Act has been amended. At the moment, we are not at all certain about what will happen to our networks at the end of March. God knows.

As for community radio stations, there is still some work to be done. Today in fact someone is meeting the Canadian Heritage representatives to determine whether we will be receiving some funding for a community radio station in the Gatineau-Ottawa region.

Ms. Paule Brunelle: Mr. Bourbeau, you said something that I found intriguing. We know how important it is to preserve language and culture. You painted an interesting picture for us by speaking to us about various language-related aspects. Studies in Japan have even shown that people should continue to work in their mother tongue. Indeed, even from the business standpoint, it generates people's creativity and develops their full potential. That being the case, the language must indeed be preserved, and culture is a part of it. It is intrinsically bound up with it.

You spoke to us about a framework agreement for arts and culture. I believe there is a Culture Department in Ontario. Is this not a field of provincial jurisdiction and are you not duplicating things that are already being done?

Mr. Pierre Bourbeau: I don't think that there is any duplication. We are supporting what is already being done. That is why we drew the analogy with what was happening in the education field. Education is another area of provincial jurisdiction, except that, to

ensure that people living in official language minority communities rights are respected, the federal government injected some money for education in the mother tongue.

Currently, the federal government spends \$135 million every year—a significant figure—only on people whose mother tongue is French. Furthermore, a great deal of money has been spent on French as a second language. Thanks to this model, the federal government has become a leader and a catalyst in encouraging the provinces to spend more on official languages and education. We would like to draw inspiration from this model and try to do something similar in the field of culture. Thus there could be agreements signed with the culture ministries, for example to encourage the provinces to spend more on arts and culture, and specifically on the official languages environment.

Ms. Paule Brunelle: Does the Ontario Ministry of Culture specifically recognize and support a francophone community in Ontario?

Mr. Pierre Bourbeau: Yes, absolutely. I will ask Ms. Carrier-Fraser to speak about it, because she is the expert in this field.

Mrs. Mariette Carrier-Fraser: The answer is yes, definitely. The Minister Responsible for Francophone Affairs was also the Minister of Culture. There is therefore recognition that it exists.

As for grants, there are not that many in Ontario. Grants are not paid out to various organizations. That is something we would like to undertake to ensure that the Ontario government is made accountable to francophones. We are nevertheless a large community of over 500,000 people in Ontario. There should therefore be programs specifically for Ontario's francophone communities.

Ms. Paule Brunelle: We were speaking earlier of television. When you look at the Quebec model, you can definitely see typical Quebec *téléromans* (serial drama programming). It provides a great deal of work for people, our actors and our artists. It is really invaluable for the promotion of our culture because it's about us.

•(1015)

Mrs. Mariette Carrier-Fraser: Let's look at TFO, for example—

Ms. Paule Brunelle: If you had more original versions—

Mrs. Mariette Carrier-Fraser: TFO will become an independent network in January.

Ms. Paule Brunelle: Yes.

Mrs. Mariette Carrier-Fraser: TFO has in fact just begun to produce *téléromans* with Franco-Ontarian producers and actors, and these are being shot in Franco-Ontarian settings. Some are being produced in Prescott-Russell and in Sudbury.

Ms. Paule Brunelle: That should give you a solid boost.

Mrs. Mariette Carrier-Fraser: Yes indeed. Now TFO broadcasts all around the country. Its airwaves are received in several western provinces and even in some parts of Quebec.

Ms. Paule Brunelle: But—

The Chair: Unfortunately, your time is already up.

Mr. Godin.

Mr. Yvon Godin: For the purposes of the report, the surplus was not \$16 billion, but \$13.2 billion, with \$2 billion coming from workers who had already lost their job. There was a \$2 billion employment insurance surplus. That was simply a point of information. That was in the 1996 cuts. I can't remember which government was in power in 1996.

Mr. Pablo Rodriguez: Certainly not the NDP.

Mr. Yvon Godin: No, because we don't like making cuts.

Returning to official languages cuts now. Mr. Lemieux said that there had not been any cuts in this area. There were perhaps not any budget cuts in the action plan, but if cuts are made to literacy, in the communities, and to volunteers—

Mrs. Francine Brisebois: —status of women—

Mr. Yvon Godin: —status of women, the Court Challenges Program. Not to mention in passing that Montfort Hospital would not have won its case had it not been for this program.

We could go on. Were these not official languages cuts?

Mrs. Mariette Carrier-Fraser: These are definitely cuts that had an impact on official language minority communities. For example, some organizations have responsibilities with respect to the status of women. The Court Challenges Program was used frequently. In Ontario, the program was used to oppose the provincial government, and to move a number of our causes forward, whether they had to do with French-language school boards, French-language schools, or Montfort Hospital. The fifth anniversary of the Montfort Hospital was just celebrated last week in Hearst.

Mr. Yvon Godin: Ms. Carrier-Fraser, you spoke about TFO. I would like to congratulate Ontario francophones, because they have their own radio and television stations. We receive the TFO signal where we live, but the people from TFO do not come to Caraquet to find artists. It is true that Canada will be able to see on TFO what is happening in Ontario, and that's great. I often watch that channel and find it terrific to be able to see other francophones.

Our committee has existed for 25 years now, but we had never undertaken a national tour like this one. Our trip enabled us to learn that there were francophones in every region of the country. I knew this personally, but some people apparently did not. We met truly lively communities; it was interesting.

We do not have a network in New Brunswick or in British Columbia like TFO. There is no TVA and no French-television network. It is the CBC's responsibility.

I return yet again to the CBC. I have been picking on this organization since this morning. It's as if the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation had given itself the mandate of telling everyone about where France is located and indeed every other country in the world, but not to show our own country. It doesn't want to show that there are francophones everywhere in Canada and the charming things we were able to see everywhere we went. I was amazed to see everything that francophones have done.

Mr. Bourbeau, you are being very polite towards the CBC, but it is not the work of TFO, TVA or TQS. Will the CBC help you? What should the government do to play a role in the region and help culture and the arts?

Mr. Pierre Bourbeau: The CBC is the public broadcaster. Our public television is sick at the moment because it has over the years come to play the same role as the private networks, which is to generate funds from advertising. The end result is that the State television network depends on ratings and is thus prevented from playing its role.

Mr. Godin, the CBC needs better financing, and we need to know exactly what its role is supposed to be. In our own jargon, we call the CBC "Radio-Montréal". That's what it shows us. We also argue that additional funds should be provided to promote enhanced regional production. Even in Alberta and New Brunswick, the CBC would do well to reflect the lives of Acadians where they live and then show this reality to the rest of Canada.

Mr. Yvon Godin: The budget cuts at the CBC were made in previous years under the Liberal government, and even after. The Liberals deserve some credit perhaps, because they had many things to do, including reducing the deficit. You mentioned the NDP, but we have never been in power. So we can't boast about putting the country into debt to the tune of \$565 billion.

● (1020)

Mr. Pierre Bourbeau: That in fact is why we were happy about the recommendations made by the Standing Committee on Finance. One of the recommendations said clearly that the CBC should receive more funds. We applaud this recommendation. We feel that if the CBC were to receive additional funding, it could then really properly play—

Mr. Yvon Godin: Would you like this mentioned in our report on official languages?

Mr. Pierre Bourbeau: Absolutely. I think that we could go even farther and say that it is essential from now on to clearly identify what this extra money should be used for. We need to be able to properly identify the current flaws at the CBC.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Bourbeau and Mr. Godin.

We will now end with a third round of questions. Each of you will have three minutes. We begin with Mr. Jean-Claude D'Amours.

Mr. Jean-Claude D'Amours: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The three minutes will go by quickly.

I'll be frank with you. I've been listening to what the government members have been saying. They seem to be trying to say that they haven't made any cuts and that they have done nothing but good things. Their behaviour reminds me think of an ostrich with its head in the sand to avoid seeing the facts around them, when in fact there were cuts of \$1.1 billion not so long ago. It had a direct impact on the official language community.

Later, after we have finished with the testimony, you will be voting on a motion that I presented to ask the government to reinstate the Publications Assistance Program. That will have an impact on your communities.

Looking at the situation, we find that we also previously voted on a motion asking the government to give 5.4% of the advertising budget to community radio stations. We have not yet heard anything about this, know absolutely nothing, and the government has not moved.

All three of you talked about culture. In this connection, the community radio stations are not community radio stations, but rather radio stations run by the community.

Earlier, Ms. Brisebois, you were saying something about programming mandates. Among other things, the community radio stations have this mandate of including culture-related components in their programming, in order to provide our official language communities with tools to help them develop. However, we are not even able to obtain from the Conservative federal government the 5.4% of the advertising funds to be able to help the community radio stations provide programming as well.

At the end of the line, how can the community radio stations and your organizations fulfil their mandate if student projects and grants are cut? What are you going to use in the end?

If the government slashes and does not provide the funds needed, what will happen to your organizations in the short or medium term? Who will be there to offer community activities?

Mrs. Mariette Carrier-Fraser: Our organizations are going to become threatened species because, unfortunately, funding will continue. The overall funding was increased. As for official languages in Ontario, the amount was increased by 11% last year, but the number of francophones in Ontario also increased, as did the number of organizations for meeting the needs of the communities. The amount of money for each of the organizations is therefore decreasing steadily. That is one of the reasons why many are closing their doors. There are no longer any funds to hire people. And as there is no one left to do the work, the volunteers become exhausted because they are busy in various other areas as well. Our organizations are therefore disappearing, and the programs and the cultural activities no longer exist. Representation to the governments about various issues are becoming increasingly limited, because there is no one left to do the job. So it becomes—

Mr. Jean-Claude D'Amours: The government doesn't want you to make representations—

The Chair: Unfortunately, Mr. D'Amours, your three minutes are already up.

I will ask Ms. Barbot to ask a question now.

Mrs. Vivian Barbot: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I have a comment to make. We have now been discussing this issue of funding, among others, for several weeks now. Our understanding of the issue is of course improving, because of what you have been telling us and what you have specifically been doing. However, it highlights the failure of the government to meet its obligations to francophones outside Quebec. That is what is worrying me.

In my view, no matter who is running the government, it has a duty to maintain what has been accomplished thus far. If something completely ridiculous was done by a previous government, then of course the government can exercise its prerogatives to change things. However, there ought not to be wholesale changes that threaten entire communities for purely ideological reasons.

We, the members of the committee, in such an instance have a duty to send a very clear message, which is to say that the continued

existence of francophones outside Quebec is being threatened by unilateral actions on the part of this government. I am extremely worried about this and I understand why you are equally worried.

Cutting the lifeline to organizations here and there may hurt, but then perhaps there were certain problems that made it necessary. However, at the moment, everything is being cut; it's widespread and it's absolutely inadmissible. We, those who were elected by local populations, need to inform people that we have our hands tied because we have a government that does not listen, that does not consult and that does whatever it feels like, and that is not why people elected us or elected the machinery of government in general.

I want to assure you that as far as we are concerned, we are going to tell people about what you have told us and will make sure that our local communities know as well, so that they too can see just how untenable the situation is.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

• (1025)

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Lemieux.

Mr. Pierre Lemieux: We are listening to you. We are sitting on this committee that has travelled for the first time in 25 or 26 years. This was done under our government, and we toured Canada to speak to people in the communities. I find the comments that we just heard rather extreme.

Mr. Bourbeau, I think that your federation has a critical role to play, particularly in the field of cultural events. I would like to know how you deal with local events and performances.

Where I live, for example, there is *L'Écho d'un peuple*, which is a big show. It is a lively presentation of our heritage. The show has been going for three or four years now, but last year was difficult.

I would like to know how you are going to support a show like *L'Écho d'un peuple*? What are you doing to promote it and to ensure that shows like this can continue?

Mr. Pierre Bourbeau: I will give a two-part answer. For us, working with events on the scale of *L'Écho d'un peuple* is one of the components of our future vision. The FCCF will have to find a way of working more closely with everyone involved in large-scale cultural festivals and events.

However, we need to have the means to do so. I am going to assume for the moment that it is more the Franco-Ontarian community and the province than the cultural federation as such that are providing support to *L'Écho d'un peuple*. I want that to be very clear: our ability to establish a network of all the major cultural events in the country is part of our vision for the future.

Now, on a smaller scale, we are working very closely with what is called the presenter's dimension. There is a presentation network in the West, in Ontario and in the Atlantic provinces, and we are working closely with these people in order to be able to make economies of scale, so that artists products can gain wider audiences, not only at the local, regional and interprovincial levels, but throughout all of Canada.

Mr. Pierre Lemieux: The network is important. I think that for a few events or shows, the organizers find themselves somewhat isolated. A network is necessary in order to be able to identify what worked well here and worked well there. These are things that we would like to do here.

Mr. Pierre Bourbeau: We have a good example of this in Ontario. The FCCF depends on strong provincial structures. Ontario cultural centres existed before the Assemblée des centres culturels de l'Ontario. Unfortunately, the association no longer exists. It continues its work in the form of an issue table, simply because it did not receive the resources it needed and the volunteers burned themselves out with all the work they were doing. There is no doubt whatever that a direct link with 33 cultural centres is not as strong as it was before.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Bourbeau and Mr. Lemieux.

The final question will be asked by Mr. Godin.

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

I would like first to clarify a number of facts. Our committee did not travel thanks to the Conservative government. It was decided upon by the members of the four political parties represented in Parliament during the 39th Parliament. We are a parliamentary committee, and not a government committee.

• (1030)

Mr. Pierre Lemieux: Did I say that?

Mr. Daniel Petit (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): You said it other words.

Mr. Yvon Godin: Yes, sir, you said it. So you're going to have to go to confession.

In British Columbia, we were told that we needed to give culture and the arts a chance. I think that you just said so and it is important. We should also give them an opportunity to communicate with others, to be able to perform elsewhere, particularly to help the smallest communities that do not have an opportunity to have access to the arts, culture or shows in their own language, etc.

What have you got to suggest?

Mr. Pierre Bourbeau: Mr. Godin, I hope that I will be able to answer your question. When it is suggested that an official languages program for culture be established, it is specifically in the sense of strengthening all of the provincial arts and culture structures.

We are very much aware of the fact that they have an enormous amount of positioning work vis-à-vis their government, their Ministry of Culture, their province's arts council and their municipality. They must also forge strategic ties with the majority anglophone environment. We know very well that the arts and culture are an excellent tool for establishing constructive ties with the anglophone majority.

Mr. Yvon Godin: Look, for example, at the infrastructures of performance venues. I recall that in Caraquet, a performance hall had just been built. It had a real impact in the community.

Mr. Pierre Bourbeau: It's absolutely wonderful.

Mr. Yvon Godin: That is when the community can get involved. It gives young people a place to go. They don't have to go to Montreal.

Mrs. Francine Brisebois: I would like to comment as the director of a cultural centre. When you work in a community to develop and maintain the vitality of the francophone community, you need to work long hours, promote culture, educate people and make sure young people are integrated into our communities so that they can develop in French.

Cornwall too, among other places, needs a cultural and infrastructure centre. There are infrastructure problems and problems with everyday resources. There was discussion of volunteers and of integrating volunteers. Well, I am a volunteer working at a cultural centre. I am the executive director of a cultural centre that has existed for 45 years, and that operates on only \$25,000 per year. Even before beginning to work, I have to be able to figure out how to maintain the vitality of my francophone community, determine why and for whom I am working, how we are going to survive, pay the telephone bills and pay for the liability insurance.

The fewer services there are in the francophone community, the fewer will be the number of people who use them and grow. This is important from the standpoint of performances. There was discussion of culture, but what is the definition of culture and of the vitality of francophone communities? That happens in the field and vitality is something that happens in the local communities.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Brisebois.

Mr. Godin, it is unfortunate, but our meeting is now over. We will thus have to suspend our work for a few minutes. I would then ask the committee members to return to discuss committee matters.

Thank you.

- _____ (Pause) _____
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- (1035)

The Chair: We are now resuming our work. The first subject is Mr. D'Amours' motion.

Do you wish to discuss this motion?

Mr. Jean-Claude D'Amours: Mr. Chairman, I would like to discuss this motion.

As you know, over the past few weeks and months, we discussed the status of official language communities within the committee. When we were in Sudbury, the question was raised by the editor and chief of the newspaper *Le Voyageur*. I was not aware of this matter until then.

In order to assist the official language communities, Canada Post contributed funds that allowed for a variety of things, including for publications mailed to receive a subsidy to lower the cost of mailing out newspapers and magazines.

It is definitely very important to our communities, because they are often located in rural areas and do not necessarily have much money. If the subsidy is no longer paid by Canada Post, it would mean one of two things: either we would have to stop publishing, and hence eliminate some services to the people, or else increase costs, which would mean that people would have to pay more for access to the publications.

That is then the subject of my motion.

The Chair: Do you have any comments?

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: Can he read his motion?

Mr. Jean-Claude D'Amours: Yes, I can read it. I move that the Standing Committee on Official Languages recommends that the government maintains the funding provided by the Canada Post Corporation for the Publications Assistance Program for rural communities and official language communities.

The Acting Chair (Hon. Raymond Simard): Mr. Chairman, I would like to move an amendment. I don't know if it is logical, but at the end of the motion where it says: "...for the Publications Assistance Program for rural communities and official language communities," I would move that we add the words "living in a minority community."

I believe that this is important. Otherwise, if no amendments are made, it applies to all francophones and all anglophones in the country. The amendment makes it clear that it applies to francophones outside Quebec and anglophones in Quebec.

In my view, the following should also be added: "and that the report on the adoption of this motion should be prepared by the Chair of the committee in the House as soon as possible." I also believe that it is important to report to the House on it. I would therefore move this amendment to Mr. D'Amours' motion.

• (1040)

The Chair: Are there any comments? Discussion?

Mrs. Vivian Barbot: Mr. Chairman, we are in favour of adopting the motion as amended, including the suggestion about reporting it to the House. It seems fully acceptable.

The Chair: Are you all in agreement?

Mr. Daniel Petit: I have a question for the mover of the motion.

When you say: "...for publications for official language communities...", you mean in the country? That is what you are referring to, right?

And for the official language communities, do you mean that this also applies to Quebec?

Mr. Jean-Claude D'Amours: When we refer to rural communities, it means the regions.

Mr. Daniel Petit: But when we speak of official language communities, does that apply to Quebec?

Mr. Jean-Claude D'Amours: When we talk about rural communities, we are talking about regions and when we talk about official language communities, it means francophones outside Quebec and anglophones in Quebec.

Mr. Daniel Petit: Right. But there are rural communities everywhere in Canada.

Mr. Jean-Claude D'Amours: Yes, it's broader.

Mr. Daniel Petit: Are you merging rural communities and official language communities? Does it mean you need to be an official language rural community or a rural community—

Mr. Jean-Claude D'Amours: No, because there is an "and" which means "also".

Mr. Daniel Petit: Okay.

Mr. Jean-Claude D'Amours: To the words "official language communities", my colleague Raymond Simard added the words: "living in a minority community" and what comes afterwards, but we are talking about the conjunction "and". It that right?

So, it would be worded as follows: "...for publications serving rural communities and official language minority communities."

The Chair: Are you satisfied, Mr. Petit?

Mr. Daniel Petit: I understand.

The Chair: Mr. Lemieux.

Mr. Pierre Lemieux: I believe that I am asking the same question. We are sitting on the Standing Committee on Official Languages and I agree with this motion concerning the official language communities.

We can find official language minority communities, but the word "rural" is less specific. What is the real meaning of the word "rural"?

For example, if a city newspaper is an urban one, but part of its circulation is rural, does it count? What is the definition of rural? Why are we speaking of rural communities here at the Standing Committee on Official Languages?

The Chair: Mr. D'Amours, do you have any comments?

Mrs. Vivian Barbot: Isn't it the name of the program, Mr. Chairman?

The Chair: Excuse me?

Mrs. Vivian Barbot: Is the name of the program not the Publications Assistance Program for publications serving rural communities? No. You are telling me that that is not the name of the program.

The name of the program is the Publications Assistance Program?

Mr. Jean-Rodrigue Paré: Yes.

Ms. Paule Brunelle: Does it apply only to rural communities?

Mr. Jean-Rodrigue Paré: No.

Mr. Jean-Claude D'Amours: As far as I know, the program currently applies to any publications being mailed out: whether a magazine or a newspaper. That is the current situation.

Mr. Jean-Rodrigue Paré: In English and in French.

Mr. Jean-Claude D'Amours: English and French, provided that it is mailed. The program was linked to Canada Post. Thus, all these publications would benefit from this arrangement.

For example, if a newspaper were distributed in what is called ad-bags, and was not delivered by Canada Post, then my understanding is that it would not be eligible for the funds because there were no mailing-related costs involved.

Ms. Paule Brunelle: Why then specify “rural”? Are there no urban needs?

Mr. Jean-Claude D'Amours: Most official language communities are rural. However, I would not want to exclude the Toronto region, where there are francophones, and other major centres where there are also francophones.

On the other hand, the rural issue was important to me because there are small publications in rural areas that do not necessarily have a large circulation. It is therefore very difficult for them to serve their communities. Consequently, my motion was intended to provide assistance for the delivery of publications to people's homes.

The Chair: Mr. Godin.

Mr. Yvon Godin: That could sometimes cause confusion. Indeed, in the first motion it is said that “Publications Assistance Program for official language communities”. And now it says: “...for publications serving rural communities and official language communities.”

I do not think, for example, that Moncton is rural.

• (1045)

Ms. Paule Brunelle: It is not rural. No.

Mr. Jean-Claude D'Amours: Yes, because the population is below 250,000.

Please, Mr. Chairman, I was basing what I said on an assumption. For example, one could try to divide it up and talk about a certain number of publications, but it would not be accurate.

I brought in the question of rurality to determine whether a city or a town in Canada was urban or rural. Unless I am mistaken, the threshold is around a population of 250,000.

The Chair: The researchers will help us on this.

Mr. Jean-Rodrigue Paré: The technical term is, “official language minority communities.” So the francophones in Moncton are included.

Mr. Yvon Godin: Does the word “rural” not lead to confusion?

Mr. Jean-Rodrigue Paré: The word “rural” is something else again. It is a category that is used or that can be used by Statistics Canada to define—

Mr. Yvon Godin: All right.

On the one hand we say: “for publications serving rural communities”. And on the other hand if we say “and official language communities”, it would include Toronto as well.

Mr. Jean-Rodrigue Paré: Yes.

Mr. Yvon Godin: Even if it's urban?

Mr. Jean-Rodrigue Paré: Yes, it applies to official language communities in Toronto.

Mr. Yvon Godin: Yes, there are official language communities in Toronto. They are a minority.

The Chair: Yes, living in a minority community.

Mr. Jean-Claude D'Amours: If this strikes you as too complicated and confusing, my objective is for official language minority communities to be included.

Mr. Yvon Godin: I am—

Mr. Jean-Claude D'Amours: It's clear in my mind, but I can understand that—

Mr. Yvon Godin: It's clear for me too, until you add the word “rural”.

Mrs. Vivian Barbot: We could move an amendment.

Mr. Jean-Claude D'Amours: We could—

Mr. Yvon Godin: No, let's go back to the first motion.

Mr. Jean-Claude D'Amours: Perhaps if—

Ms. Paule Brunelle: We take the first and add the words “living in a minority community”.

Mr. Jean-Claude D'Amours: We could perhaps—

The Chair: Mr. D'Amours and Ms. Barbot.

Mr. Jean-Claude D'Amours: It says: “...publications serving official language communities...”. In my view, the word “serving” is important for one simple reason: some publications, although not small, are going to provide the service. So they will nevertheless be serving official language communities.

However, perhaps my colleague Mr. Simard would be prepared to change the amendment that he submitted earlier so that we can make a comprehensive change meaning that there would be only one amendment, if everyone is in agreement.

The Chair: Ms. Barbot.

Mrs. Vivian Barbot: What was written was: “official language minority communities”?

The Chair: Wait a minute.

Ms. Barbot.

Mrs. Vivian Barbot: If I have understood it properly, it would read as follows: “...for publications serving official language minority communities...”

Ms. Paule Brunelle: “...and report to the House.”

Mr. Jean-Claude D'Amours: “...and that the Chair of the Committee report the adoption of this motion to the House of Commons as soon as possible.”

The Chair: The clerk will reread the motion.

The Clerk: It reads as follows:

That the Standing Committee on Official Languages recommends that the government maintains the funding provided by Canada Post Corporation for the Publications Assistance Program for publications serving official language minority communities and that the Chair of the Committee report the adoption of this motion to the House of Commons as soon as possible.

Hon. Raymond Simard: That's excellent.

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: I have just been told that as a government, we will take into account all recent amendments to the Official Languages Act that require the federal government to take impacts on the communities into consideration.

So we are in favour of it.

The Chair: Is everyone in agreement?

Hon. Raymond Simard: All right.

The Chair: It is not necessary to vote.

(The motion is adopted.)

Mr. Daniel Petit: Does that happen sometimes?

The Chair: The next motion comes from Ms. Barbot.

Mrs. Vivian Barbot: Mr. Chairman, the next motion—

The Chair: Ms. Barbot.

Mrs. Vivian Barbot: We have somewhat amended the initial motion for two reasons. First of all, the determination of the Official Languages Support Fund was somewhat confusing. Then, the figure included in the motion had been put forward by the FCFA, who had arrived at the amount by amalgamating several programs. This was not clear enough for us. That is why we made a change. They have agreed to the motion as presented.

In the second paragraph, you have the amendment as currently presented.

That, pursuant to Standing Order 108(2), the Standing Committee on Official Languages recommend that the government increase its overall funding to the Cooperation with the Community Sector component of the Canadian Heritage official languages support programs; and ensure stable funding for organizations affected by this funding in order to support the vitality of francophone communities outside Quebec in the short-, medium- and long-term and that the Chair of the Committee report the adoption of this motion to the House of Commons as soon as possible.

• (1050)

The Chair: Ms. Barbot, you made some rather significant changes; however, I did not receive the 48 hours notice.

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: There was a change.

Mrs. Vivian Barbot: The change could easily be considered an amendment to the motion. We did not change the basic spirit of the motion.

The Chair: Mr. Petit.

Mr. Daniel Petit: Excuse me—

Mrs. Vivian Barbot: It's the same spirit.

The Chair: Mr. Petit.

Mr. Daniel Petit: Mr. Chairman, I only received the amendment this morning. I also worked on the first motion that we received, which referred to the "Official Languages Support Fund". I have checked, and this fund does not exist. Even though we can see what is involved in it, the fact remains that the fund does not exist. If the first motion does not exist, why make an amendment to a non-existent motion? I think that the amendment that has just been made becomes a motion on its own. We are entitled to 48 hours notice. They can come back in 48 hours.

The Chair: I think that the member is correct.

Mrs. Vivian Barbot: It's really—

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: He is right.

Mrs. Vivian Barbot: It's completely ridiculous.

The Chair: No, it's—

Mrs. Vivian Barbot: The purpose of the motion is exactly the same. We are not even adding any details, but simply extending the motion so that it is more precise, because it refers to an element that does not exist. The change does not really destroy the motion and does not make it invalid. It simply broadens the framework in which it applies. I therefore do not see why we would want to eliminate it.

We checked with the people involved and in our view, there is no reason to say that the motion was not presented. If we had moved different objectives, then I would agree that it should be eliminated, but this is not the case here.

The Chair: Mr. Petit.

Mr. Daniel Petit: Mr. Chairman, I am speaking to you. The first motion that we received reads as follows:

That, pursuant to Standing Order 108(2), the Standing Committee on Official Languages recommend that the government increase the Official Languages Support Fund from \$24 million annually to \$42 million annually and ensure stable funding for organizations affected by this funding in order to support the vitality of francophone communities outside Quebec in the short-, medium- and long-term and that the Chair of the Committee report the adoption of this motion to the House of Commons as soon as possible.

It's the substance of the motion. The "Fund" does not exist. It's a bottomless pit. Then, a second motion was made, and I am beginning to understand. But the first motion is not substantive. I'm sorry, but you cannot amend a motion that is not substantive. That's the rule.

Mrs. Vivian Barbot: It's not that the motion is not substantive, it is that the "Fund" does not exist. The motion nevertheless exists. I can't understand how a lawyer could say such things. That makes fun of people.

Mr. Daniel Petit: The Official Languages Support Fund, which was to be increased from \$24 million to \$42 million, does not exist. I'm sorry, but it does not exist. There is no purpose served by creating it.

The Chair: Ms. Brunelle, you have the floor.

Ms. Paule Brunelle: There are two parts to the motion, hence the semicolon. It is already there in the first motion, and virtually the same terms are used. Indeed, I will read it and I quote: "...and ensure stable funding for organizations affected by this funding in order to support the vitality of francophone communities outside Quebec...". The whole of the second part, after the semicolon, concerns the same thing. The amendment is only a few lines, like the previous motion that was adopted with an amendment of a few lines. The basic meaning is not change. I cannot see why it should be withdrawn.

The Chair: Mr. Godin, over to you.

Mr. Yvon Godin: Mr. Chairman, the first motion is the main motion, and I would suggest that the second paragraph constitutes an amendment to the main motion. I consider the main motion to be expressed in the following words: "...and ensure stable funding for organizations affected by this funding in order to support the vitality of francophone communities outside Quebec...". Let us consider the first motion. You are saying that an amendment is being made, and I quote: "following its obligations to support the development of Official Languages Communities, the government increased its overall funding to the Cooperation with the Community Sector component of the Canadian Heritage Official Languages Support Programs."

The amendment is admissible because one has the right to present an amendment to the motion. You can't just read the first three lines of a motion and say that it is the main motion. A main motion is the whole thing and the amendment is what comes afterwards. It is up to the committee to decide whether it agrees to adopt the amendment.

• (1055)

The Chair: Mr. Simard, you have the floor.

Hon. Raymond Simard: Mr. Chairman, I would like to ask our researcher whether a similar motion was introduced last year.

Mr. Jean-Rodrigue Paré: There was something similar in the—

Hon. Raymond Simard: The francophone communities were attempting to obtain additional funds. It seems to me that they were getting \$19 million and that they wanted to increase this amount to \$42 million. A motion to this effect had been prepared. I do not know whether it would be possible to find it. I prefer the first to the second. If you are going to introduce something, then I find the second very vague. The whole thing could be increased by a million dollars and then people could say that they had done their work, but I would like to communicate with the communities to check whether indeed they want to have \$42 million. After that, then a motion to this effect could be introduced, or the motion that had been introduced last year could be reintroduced.

The Chair: Ms. Barbot, you have the floor.

Mrs. Vivian Barbot: The problem is with the numbers—and that is why we are taking them out—the same persons who gave them were unable to explain to us clearly where they came from. It was compilation of several factors. It certainly means that the amount should increase. When we speak specifically of \$42 million, it is a request, but in relation to what? It's a bit nebulous. We were unable to get an answer. That is why, with their support, we introduced a motion like this one. For your information, we are also removing the "Official Languages Support Fund", which does not exist.

The Chair: Are there any other comments?

Mr. Pierre Lemieux: It isn't just that a short sentence was added or a few words removed, but rather that the content of the motion was changed. There is the first motion and the second motion. The initial sentences constitute the introduction, and the final sentences are the conclusion, and in the middle is the motion. It's completely changed.

The Chair: Ms. Barbot, you have the floor.

Mrs. Vivian Barbot: The first part is the way of achieving the end, which is identical and which aims at ensuring stable funding. Saying that the motion has been transformed because we changed the initial factor is dishonest. It is inaccurate; the core of the motion is intact. In my view, nothing has changed.

The Chair: If there are no other comments, I will inform you of my decision. I think that Mr. Petit is correct. There is a principle according to which 48 hours notice is required. You can therefore introduce another motion for study at the next meeting.

Mr. Yvon Godin: But Mr. Chairman—

The Chair: The decision has been made, Mr. Godin.

Mr. Yvon Godin: Mr. Chairman, we are speaking of an amendment.

The Chair: No, there is no amendment.

Mr. Yvon Godin: All it will do is put the matter off until January. We will be better organized.

The Chair: Yes.

Mr. Yvon Godin: If it is impossible to cooperate in presenting something to Parliament, it will simply put it off until the month of January.

The Chair: Mr. Godin, we must apply the principle requiring 48 hours notice.

Mr. Yvon Godin: Okay.

Mrs. Vivian Barbot: The motion was introduced within the required time, was it not?

The Chair: Yes.

Mrs. Vivian Barbot: And we are discussing this motion, are we not?

The Chair: Yes, but it was not admissible.

Mrs. Vivian Barbot: Why?

The Chair: Because the program of which you spoke was not mentioned in the motion.

Ms. Paule Brunelle: In the motion as amended.

Mrs. Vivian Barbot: What you are telling me is that it was not admissible as amended.

The Chair: No. Mr. Petit said that for 48 hours notice was required before the introduction of the motion.

Mrs. Vivian Barbot: Yes, but the main motion, the first one, was introduced in due form.

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: But it was not admissible.

The Chair: It was not admissible. You cannot amend a motion that is not admissible.

Mrs. Vivian Barbot: It is up to the committee to decide whether it is admissible or not. Allow me to explain.

We introduced the first motion within the required time, in due form. The Conservatives are telling us that it is not admissible because the "Fund" does not exist. We can, as a committee, decide to amend it.

• (1100)

The Chair: But if it is not admissible, we cannot amend it.

Mrs. Vivian Barbot: But why would it not be admissible? That is the point on which I am in disagreement with you.

Mr. Pablo Rodriguez: I think that we are playing with words. It was admissible.

The Chair: You told me that it was not.

Mr. Yvon Godin: It is.

Mr. Pierre Lemieux: We took a decision.

Mrs. Vivian Barbot: No, we are discussing it.

The Chair: There could be a call.

Mr. Pierre Lemieux: It's simple: 48 hours notice is required.

The Chair: Are there any other questions?

Mrs. Vivian Barbot: We're talking about 48 hours notice when we're ending tomorrow morning. You're making fun of me.

The Chair: The committee is adjourned.

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