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**Chair**

**Mr. Guy Lauzon**

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• (0900)

[Translation]

**The Chair (Mr. Guy Lauzon (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry, CPC)):** Good morning, ladies and gentlemen. Welcome to all our guests. Welcome back to members. I'd like to welcome the members who are new to this committee. We have quite a full schedule. We'll be hearing from six witnesses this morning. Let's try and remain concise.

We will start with Mr. Pierre Bélanger, President of the Réseau de développement économique et d'employabilité Canada. Mr. Bélanger, the floor is yours.

**Mr. Pierre Bélanger (President, Réseau de développement économique et d'employabilité (RDÉE) Canada):** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'm going to call on Roger Lavoie, the Director General of our organization, to make a short formal presentation. We would then be pleased to answer your questions.

**The Chair:** I'm going to ask that all the witnesses make their presentations before we have a question period.

**Mr. Pierre Bélanger:** Thank you.

**Mr. Roger Lavoie (Director General, Réseau de développement économique et d'employabilité (RDÉE) Canada):** Mr. Chair, honourable members, we'd like to thank you for inviting us to testify before your committee. Your initiative attests to the importance you attach to the economic development of Canada's francophone and Acadian communities. I'd like to make an opening statement and then hand the floor over to our President, Mr. Bélanger, who will be pleased to answer your questions.

I'd like to briefly tell you about who we are and give you an idea of what we do. The question period will undoubtedly be an opportunity to talk about the economic development issues facing francophone and Acadian communities. Without this economic development our communities quite simply wouldn't be sustainable. We'll also have an opportunity to tell you about the challenges we face and the help we need from you in this regard.

RDÉE Canada's inception dates back ten years. It was established in 1998 following one of the most innovative partnerships between the federal government and francophone and Acadian communities. This partnership was sealed by the signature of nine deputy ministers of federal institutions and representatives from RDÉE Canada. It became the model upon which further collaborative action was based, particularly in the areas of health and immigration. Economic development therefore paved the way for a new era of cooperation and shared governance between the federal government and minority communities.

RDÉE Canada, the Réseau de développement économique et d'employabilité, is a fairly new network which is now comprised of 12 provincial and territorial RDÉEs. There are 120 expert consultants working with the network who are increasingly the drivers for economic development. RDÉE Canada is part-funded by the Human Resources and Social Development Canada Enabling Fund.

Based on this, we are able to provide a whole array of services to communities and business people, services which were previously lacking, with the aim of promoting the creation of lasting employment and an entrepreneurial culture. Thanks to RDÉE Canada's work, a new generation of French-speaking entrepreneurs is springing up in rural and urban areas across Canada. This new generation is a ray of hope when it comes to developing our communities, and is a good sign of things to come.

As a result of our work, numerous partnerships with the private sector, community organizations and various provincial, territorial and federal departments, have been established. In most cases, memorandums of understanding to establish joint committees and frameworks have led to ongoing cooperation with the various orders of government. This is a practical way, in our opinion, of coordinating efforts and enhancing the effectiveness of measures supporting the economic development of these communities. These partnerships, along with RDÉE Canada's services, maximize the benefits deriving from economic development initiatives which are crucial to the sustainability of minority francophone communities.

In the small amount of time I have available, I'm going to give you one single example—the first, chronologically speaking—to show how successful we have been. After the flood of the century in 1998, the Economic Development Council for Manitoba Bilingual Municipalities, CDEM, adopted its first vision plan, a planning model for community economic development. Some 60 communities across Canada have undertaken a similar process. Over 300 organizations—including business alliances, community associations, research and educational institutions, co-ops, municipalities, provincial and federal ministries and departments, and community development assistance agencies—and more than 7,000 individuals were involved in public meetings on local planning. This unprecedented mobilization resulted in a number of projects which, in the province of Manitoba alone, from 1999 to 2005, generated unprecedented spinoffs: 225 new businesses, 3,746 temporary positions, 1,159 permanent positions, 1,33 community economic development projects, for a total investment of almost half a billion dollars. Each dollar invested had a leverage effect of 650 per cent. This was unheard of for our rural communities! If you're interested, we'd be glad to give you other examples.

Before really taking off in 1998, our communities' economic development was never the focus of a systematic effort by governments or the communities themselves. This is to say that we are still only at the embryonic stages of development. Catching up is no easy task and therefore requires considerable resources.

I have run out of time, Mr. Chair, so I'll conclude my brief overview there. We'd be glad to answer your questions. Thank you.

● (0905)

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

I will now call on Mr. Hubert, from Santé en français au Nunavut, to make his presentation.

**Mr. Daniel Hubert (Director, Santé en français au Nunavut, Association des francophones du Nunavut):** Thank you for inviting us to appear before you today. I am here in my capacity as Director of the Santé en français au Nunavut network, but also as a representative of the Association des francophones du Nunavut. It is in the latter capacity that I making the presentation, because Mr. Belleau, the President of the Association, could not be here today.

We have prepared a PowerPoint presentation that deals with the main points, which I will now summarize.

In a 2 million square kilometre area there are just over 30,000 people, including 24,000 Inuit, 5,000 anglophones and 1,000 francophones. Like all of the North, this is a rich land: rich in oil, diamonds, gold, iron and uranium. However, in terms of the human development indicators, Canada ranks 5<sup>th</sup> in the world, and Nunavut 77<sup>th</sup>. That is no surprise given that the rate of tuberculosis is 10 times higher in Nunavut than in Canada and the percentage of students who graduate from grade 12 is only 35%. We do not expect to rank first in the world. So we have a lot of catching up to do in social and economic terms in Nunavut.

Nevertheless, government economic and social policy in Nunavut and the values and principles of development have been well established. They have been set out in a document entitled *Pinasuaqtavut*. These policies seek to improve living and working conditions in a situation where only 65% of the positions in the public service have been staffed. That means many positions are vacant. In addition, the unemployment rate among the Inuit is 30%, compared to 3% for the non-Inuit population.

The *Pinasuaqtavut* talks about five basic policy thrusts: healthy communities physically, socially and economically; unity and simplicity, in other words easy access to the government and to social programs; emphasis on autonomy, that is a concerted effort on the part of communities and the government to take care of people, particularly those in need; life-long learning so that all the Nunavummiut can achieve their full potential; and, finally, the introduction of the Inuit language as the language of the public service by 2020. This is a major issue for us.

Among francophones, most of whom live in Iqaluit, the political capital, the level education is high, as is job mobility. People stay on average about three years, and the unemployment rate is virtually zero. The emerging reality is one involving Inuit-francophone exogamous families. As a result, francophones in Nunavut are

establishing some roots there and developing more and more cultural networks.

This year, 2007, is crucial for francophones in several regards: intense legislative activity within the Government of Nunavut, many administrative initiatives to provide service for francophones and possible significant progress on community projects. This includes three main areas of activity. This information was taken from the Overall Development Plan of the Association des francophones du Nunavut and the most recent decisions made at its general meeting, as well as a number of presentations made to interdepartmental committees in Ottawa.

Let us now turn to education and the management of our schools. We hope to add grade 10 to 12 to our high school education in French. At the moment, education in French is available from kindergarten to grade 9. We also hope that francophones will have full control of their school under the new education act which is currently being drafted. This is a key period in education for francophones.

I turn now to the official languages and the services that are well established. Two bills on the official languages in Nunavut are being tabled at the moment. One has to do with the protection and promotion of the Inuit language, and the other is on the official languages. This bill will eliminate the anachronism that occurred because Nunavut inherited the Northwest Territories official languages legislation when the territory was divided. Consequently, this updated legislation will be extremely important, because legal issues for francophones will arise, and in fact have already arisen.

As a corollary to this legislative decision, the Premier of Nunavut recently announced the establishment of a bipartite committee made up of government representatives and of the Association des francophones du Nunavut to report on services for francophones and to set the priorities and determine what needs to be done. At its general meeting, the Association voted to continue its efforts to get better front-line, high-quality services in French.

● (0910)

The issue of health services is well documented. There is a report in French, English and Inuktitut, which we will leave with you as a reference tool. The report is entitled *Des services de santé en français dans un nord en mutation. Un défi intercommunautaire*.

Why talk about intercommunity challenge? In a context of great poverty, the fact that francophones are demanding that a greater number of services be established and developed might appear selfish or like a grab for a larger share of the common good. We use the word "intercommunity" because francophone development has to go hand in hand with that of the other Nunavut communities. That is the challenge we have to meet if we want to be credible and achieve our objectives.

The last issue is the establishment of a *carrefour de la francophonie*, a new community centre that would allow us to merge existing Nunavut associations, organizations and institutions and increase their effectiveness tenfold. All documents will be available after the meeting.

Thank you for your attention.

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

The next presentation will be given by Ms. Sandra St-Laurent.

**Mrs. Sandra St-Laurent (Coordinator, Partenariat communauté en santé du Yukon):** I want to thank the committee for inviting us today so that we can talk about the health related issues for francophones in the territories.

I want to talk about our circumstances and challenges. There are little or no health services offered in French in the territories. That is due to a number of factors, including the language barrier and agreements reached between Quebec and the territories for insured care. More often than not there is not active offer, and when there is it is a coincidence. Designated bilingual positions are few and far between, if not practically non-existent within the system.

We also face a greater problem. We know that there is a shortage of health care professionals across Canada. It is twice as great in our area because of the geographical remoteness and quite a significant turnover. To give you an idea of the situation, I would say that 50% of Yukon's population is renewed every five years, which places a great burden on the system and the network whose task it is to identify partners. As Daniel Hubert said during his presentation, the average stay of francophones in the territories is approximately three years. This means that there is a continuous turnover and many challenges facing us.

Concerning the response from francophones, I would say that between 70 and 80% of francophones in two of the territories would like to obtain health and social services in French. Unfortunately, they do not have access to them. Furthermore, many people are deprived of services for linguistic reasons.

However, we have to recognize that, despite the lack of services offered by the regional health authorities or the department, there is a truly dynamic community sector, which offers health services, workshops and promotion, similar to services provided to the rest of the community. In this regard, I would like to underscore the fact that it was the community sector that sponsored the creation of French language health networks, and thus achieve some progress in French language health services.

The networks identify the needs of francophones with regard to health and social services, mainly in mental health, substance abuse, family services—the population in the territories is very young—and emergency services. The networks also help francophones become aware of the importance of requesting services in French. We do a lot of work across the territories. For example, the three territories jointly manage an anti-smoking initiative for francophones. This is working out very well and achieving good results.

That also represents a first step towards greater cooperation in health care between the territories. Together with our departments, we do planning for the organization of health services. I would also like to point out that, in 2003, the government of Yukon sat down with people from the community and the network to establish a five-year plan for health and social services in the Yukon. That was the first time that the communities and the territories worked together. The plan was submitted to the federal government in October 2003, and we are still awaiting a response. We have not heard anything,

and that is of considerable concern to us, because we worked together to develop partnerships and want to continue doing so.

The networks also take part in identifying, recruiting and maintaining bilingual personnel in the territories.

The networks need to be able to provide services on a sustainable basis. Sustainability has to be addressed today because we want to ensure the networks ongoing work. The federal government supported the creation of the networks by establishing the Société Santé en français, and we have to continue working with our partners to ensure our credibility and the commitment by both orders of government to the health of francophones.

We also have to invest in the development of local skills and use best practices—such as the community approach—for the maturity and vitality of francophone communities in our territories. Increased support for the recruitment of health professionals is also needed.

In conclusion, I would like to say that we sincerely hope that territorial and federal authorities will take the necessary action to support the initiatives of the health and social services networks. Francophones in the territories are entitled to health and social services that are adapted to their language and culture. Those are all compelling reasons to pursue this option and maintain service delivery models developed by and for the territories. This all goes to show that communities want to improve their circumstances and health.

●(0915)

These are the challenges we both face in the North. As you can see, health is a hot topic that should not be put on ice.

Thank you for your attention.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, Ms. St-Laurent.

The last presentation will be given by Mr. Provencher.

**Mr. Léopold Provencher (Executive Director, Fédération Franco-Ténoise):** Mr. Chairman, committee members, thank you for your reception.

I have come here today to talk to you about the vitality of francophone communities in the Northwest Territories. I am speaking to you on behalf of the President of our federation, Fernand Denault, who apologizes for his absence. He has business today in Montreal. My name is Léopold Provencher and I am the Executive Director of the Fédération franco-ténoise.

I would like to give you some demographic data from the Northwest Territories. In 2005, despite the movement of some 5,000 people, the population increased by 1.8%, for a total of approximately 43,000 inhabitants. Francophones account for 2.5% of the population, or 1,200 people. Some 3,700 people speak French, or close to 9% of the population, making French the second most spoken language in the Northwest Territories.

The network of French language associations in the Northwest Territories is present in four communities, i.e., in Yellowknife, the capital, Inuvik, in the north, and Hay River and Fort Smith in the south. We are approaching a balance in the number of aboriginals and non-aboriginals, and the francophone population is stabilizing.

And now for some economic data. The economy is vibrant, and there are sizeable reserves of non-renewable resources, such as natural gas, oil, diamonds and gold. Government employment accounts for 38.8% of all jobs. Since 1999, the economy has grown by 71%. Our government's budget amounts to close to \$1 billion, and over 75% of that amount comes from the federal government.

Here are some social data. The rate of assimilation of francophones in the Northwest Territories is 63%, and that rate is increasing by 1% a year. The community in Yellowknife has had a francophone school since 1989. Its development was adversely affected by the lack of a gymnasium and specialized space, which also had a negative impact on the retention of high school students. The school owes its existence to court rulings, and its future expansion will be the result of a court order. The school currently has 99 students out of a potential pool of 250 candidates.

Elsewhere, French-language education in Hay River got off to a difficult start in 2000. The Boréale School in Hay River opened its permanent spaces in 2005. The school already has 71 children from kindergarten to 9<sup>th</sup> grade, and 18 preschoolers.

The community had to bring the two higher orders of government to court. In a very elaborate ruling handed down on April 25<sup>th</sup>, 2006, Justice Moreau highlighted evidence of systemic gaps and shortcomings with regard to the communications and services given to francophone citizens, and the absence of an implementation plan for the Territorial Official Languages Act.

We find that the federal government's *laissez-faire* approach and inaction with regard to its obligations is unacceptable, as is the territorial government's unwillingness, through its delegated official, to respect both its own Official Languages Act and the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

I would now like to make a few comments on the political structure of the Northwest Territories. We have a so-called consensus government, i.e., without any political parties. Its spending power is dependent on the territorial government's obligation to report to the federal government. The territory's Official Languages Act recognizes 11 official languages, and executive and administrative authorities claim that they have almost equal status.

And yet, there are only two official languages in Canada that have equal status, in which people can receive services of an equal quality and which have an obligation to produce results. Up until now, the devolution of authority has been done without any consultation with the francophone community, despite the 2002 Treasury Board policy. The Cooperation Agreement regarding French aboriginal languages in the Northwest Territories has not yet been signed with the federal government, and neither have the latest nor the previous Canada-communities agreements.

I would like to mention four of the main projects currently being considered. A community educational centre will be built in the short-term in Yellowknife, and a French post-secondary training institute will be established in cooperation with the Collège Éducentre in Vancouver and the Canadian Network of francophone CEGEPs and colleges, as well as with the Northwest Territories Economic Development Council.

● (0920)

Our third major undertaking is a field research project whose purpose is to identify the best way to revitalize our northern francophone communities, in partnership with the Yukon and Nunavut communities and in collaboration with the Canadian Institute for Research on Linguistic Minorities. We are currently seriously focusing on funding in order to achieve this important project. Our fourth undertaking is a consolidation of permanent positions within our francophone youth, literacy and health sectors.

This sums up the areas of support that we need and that we wanted to tell you about this morning. Our main undertakings are the community educational centre, a future college—we don't expect it to be built tomorrow morning but perhaps within the next 15 years—research that will focus on how to revitalize the communities over our three territories, support funding renewal, and, finally, protection of language rights.

Thank you for your attention. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.

● (0925)

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

All your presentations were very interesting. We will now move on to questions, beginning with Mr. Murphy.

**Mr. Brian Murphy (Moncton—Riverview—Dieppe, Lib.):** Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you to the witnesses for their presentations.

Last fall, some members of this committee travelled to western Canada. We heard testimony from groups in British Columbia, Alberta, Manitoba, Saskatchewan and some groups from the North. The elimination of the Court Challenges Program was obviously an area of concern. Throughout their travel, committee members heard many complaints over the decision to abolish that program.

The government has not changed its position, obviously, but there are still questions that we have not received concrete answers to, for example, whether or not the government can, in terms of minority language rights outside Quebec, take action to make up for the elimination of the Court Challenges Program. The role of this parliamentary committee consists in, among other things, assisting the government, especially with respect to the decision to abolish that program. This question is for all our witnesses. Are there any suggestions you think I should make? For example, you may want more authority to be given to the Commissioner, Mr. Fraser. That would be one solution. Do you have any suggestions other than a new court challenges program?

**The Chair:** Who is the question for, Mr. Murphy?

**Mr. Brian Murphy:** The question is for everyone but we could begin with Mr. Provencher.

**Mr. Léopold Provencher:** There's a well known saying that if it isn't broken, don't fix it.

[English]

If it's not broken, don't change it.

[*Translation*]

In our area, over the past 20 years, the Court Challenges Program has been essential in establishing our community infrastructures. Without that program, we probably wouldn't have any schools. We certainly wouldn't have been able to have the communities' point of view heard before the Northwest Territories Supreme Court: we simply wouldn't have had the means to do so. The role of the program was to help those who did not have the means to plead their case. These are extremely important issues that affect a citizen's integrity.

Therefore, why look for something else? The program proved that it was able to see justice done and that it was effective in providing small communities access to justice within the Canadian democratic system. The results are there. A context was created where actions are measured in terms of their results. In fact, projects must be evaluated in terms of results. I think that that program led to very important results. In our case, it was essential. We could be creative and call it something else but that won't change the fact that what is fundamental is that the least powerful be given the means to see justice done in Canada, within this democratic system that we are so lucky to have.

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

Would any other witnesses like to respond to those questions?

Mr. Murphy, you have three minutes.

**Mr. Brian Murphy:** I have a few questions to ask Mr. Lavoie or Mr. Bélanger about networks.

Your annual report published about a year ago mentions an enabling fund of \$12 million per year over three years. Is that fund currently operational? Have there been any changes?

I also have a few questions to ask about directors. There are four directors: Mr. Deveau, Mr. Durepos, Ms. Montague and Ms. Lowther. Was there a change in directors?

• (0930)

**Mr. Roger Lavoie:** They're still the same people.

**Mr. Brian Murphy:** I see that you were the recipient of the Laurier Awards in May 2006. Do you expect to win those awards again this year?

**Mr. Pierre Bélanger:** You have given me a perfect opening, Mr. Murphy. You are invited to come here, to Ottawa, on the 10th of November for a Laurier Awards celebration for small- and medium-sized businesses in francophone and Acadian communities. This has been done in some provinces, in New Brunswick and in Ontario, with the *Chambre économique de l'Ontario*, but not at a national level. We think it's important to highlight the presence of these businesses in the world of business and economic performance.

I will turn quickly now to your first two questions, Mr. Murphy. The coordinating group on economic development and employability is an organization that is off the radar. It's huge. You referred to the annual budget. Roger mentioned earlier that 120 individuals now work full time as economic development professionals in francophone and Acadian communities. This is a first. They represent a small army of very efficient people working throughout

these communities, in nine provinces and three territories, and getting tangible results.

I won't bore you by reading all of this, but their work is similar to the work that is done in your communities, elsewhere in Canada by the Community Futures Development Corporations or the SADCs in Quebec, that are taking a new approach. In terms of linguistic or cultural equality, the federal government took a truly active approach to economic development. I'm not talking about the development of educational rights, cultural rights, or access to bilingual services, but rather the economic development of these communities.

You referred to the board. There were others. This is interesting because the Board of the Coordinating Group on Economic Development and Employability, by definition must be made up of business people or people from the francophone business sector in Canada.

**The Chair:** Thank you, your five minutes are up.

I will now call on the new member of our committee, Mr. Nadeau, to ask the next question.

**Mr. Richard Nadeau (Gatineau, BQ):** Thank you very much, Mr. Lauzon.

Good morning to you all from the far North.

I am particularly affected by some of the things you have said. This is Canada, a supposedly bilingual country with an Official Languages Act. The Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms has been in existence for 25 years, and article 23 of that Charter has been in existence for 25 years, and yet Nunavut and the Northwest Territories still do not have total school management. Have I understood you correctly?

Thus, in this great supposedly bilingual country, you are still fighting to get French-language schools, where French is the first language, in your territories.

In a country where French and English are supposedly equal, there's one that is more equal than the other—we agreed on that.

Mr. Hubert, could you tell us about any collaborative efforts that have been made with the Government of Nunavut to obtain high schools or, at least, French as a first language courses at the high school level?

**Mr. Daniel Hubert:** First, the *Trois-Soleils* school, a francophone school with francophone staff, offers schooling from kindergarten to grade 9. Parents from that community would like the school to offer a full high school program in order to make sure that the children remain within the francophone school network and do not switch over to the English school network, or have to return to their province or territory of origin.

In terms of collaboration with the government, we feel that a very important political move was made when a premier asked his deputy premier, as was done a few weeks ago, to strike a committee made up of deputy ministers from many departments to look into the issue of services.

The issue of education is unique. Several attempts were made to change education legislation. The anglophone, francophone and Inuit communities have still not reached a consensus on this. The government is aware of this. Because the Government of Nunavut works through consensus, because there are no political parties, reaching the broadest possible social agreement is critical. As long as that doesn't happen, we don't move forward.

● (0935)

**Mr. Richard Nadeau:** I see what you mean, Mr. Hubert.

What is happening with the federal government? The territories are creatures of the federal government and must report to the federal government in order to obtain funds and to be able to function the following year. Has the federal government assisted in establishing French schools or does it prefer to repeat that that is an area of provincial jurisdiction and that any assimilation issues or issues dealing with the French fact fall under the territories?

**Mr. Daniel Hubert:** I would say two things. People say that they are creatures of the federal government, but if you were to speak to the Inuit community, to the leaders who established Nunavut, who negotiated the agreement over 20 years, they would tell you that perhaps it is their creation as well.

**Mr. Richard Nadeau:** No, you misunderstood what I was saying. I want to know whether the federal government contributes to the discussions.

**Mr. Daniel Hubert:** As you probably know, 93% of the Nunavut government's budget comes from the federal government: that is one basic economic fact. Yes, there is an extremely important and crucial investment made by the federal government, and negotiations are under way at the moment. It would be better to ask the question of the Nunavut government regarding negotiations on fiscal transfers, on a new fiscal arrangement that people have been looking for for years.

**Mr. Richard Nadeau:** Mr. Provencher, can parents enrol their children in a French-language high school in the Northwest territories? What has been done so far?

**Mr. Léopold Provencher:** We have two schools at the moment. There has been one in Yellowknife since 1989, but enrollments have not increased in the last few years because of an inadequate infrastructure—there is no gymnasium and no specialized facilities. This problem should be corrected in 2007 because of a court case, and, if all goes well, in 2008 a gymnasium and other specialized facilities should be built. So we have a high school that is meeting its objective poorly, given that there are 99 students with a potential enrollment of 250. We think there is a problem.

The school in Hay River has been opened for just five or six years, and the high school will take shape gradually. However, the school will face the same problem—it does not have a gymnasium either. Clearly, there will be a shortage of specialized facilities. The education services are available from kindergarten to grade 12, but they are *[inaudible]*—

**Mr. Richard Nadeau:** It would be a good idea to tell the current conservative government that.

I fought for French schools in Saskatchewan. The Premier at the time, Mr. Romanow, told us—he represented the NDP—that education was in fact an area of provincial jurisdiction, but the

federal government had to pick up the tab. And we had to pay for the schools that were taken away from this in 1931; we had to buy them back between 1993 and 1995. It is rather sad. However, it remains that, at the time, it was the only federal government, regardless of political stripe, that agreed to give money to a province to establish French schools, in order to bring them back 64 years later.

Did the federal government say that it was prepared to invest to ensure that students—your children—would have a French-language high school in a so-called bilingual country where French and English are supposed to be equal?

**Mr. Léopold Provencher:** Your question is both relevant and important. I would reply that 75% of the budget comes from the federal government. Now we can say that the federal government has definitely invested in education at the primary and secondary levels in recent years. The problem is that it did so at the request of the territorial government. It has adopted a hands off policy, in other way it did not get involved and let everything to the government in place, which is responsible and is supposed to do its job. However, when it does not do its job, and this runs counter to the interest of the linguistic minority, things remain undone and things move forward in ten cent increments, when what we need is several million dollars. That is pretty much the situation.

**Mr. Richard Nadeau:** As for Saskatchewan, one of the things that had helped at the time—this happened between 1993 and 1995 — was the Meech Lake Accord, which gave Franco-Saskatchewan a number of political arguments and, also, a referendum was about to be held in Quebec. Whenever Quebec moves, the federal government takes notice, but it is not necessarily out of respect for the Francophonie in such situations.

Now, you want to implement an extremely important health care project that comes under both federal and provincial jurisdiction. Are the circumstances favourable? Are the planets aligned; can the federal government then push the territories into providing services in French where required?

● (0940)

**The Chair:** I would ask you to answer in a word or two.

**Mr. Léopold Provencher:** I'll be quick. I think that the federal government has an extremely important role to play in terms of supporting a territorial government, but I would say that it is monitoring or having responsibility, in an almost paternalistic role. "Paternity" may not be the best word. What's the current best word?

**An Hon. Member:** "Parenting".

**Mr. Léopold Provencher:** Parenting. The federal government has to be a good parent to a government that is making small steps forward in health. We have, nonetheless, invested in various services, and the community is happy to have more services in French.

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

Mr. Godin will ask the next question.

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

I want to welcome you, and all our guests, during this new 2007 session.



As our colleague from Moncton, Mr. Murphy, said we have just travelled across Canada. These are the final weeks during which we will hear from witnesses before drafting the report.

I just want to make a comment. It's unfortunate to see where things are. There is an unfair fight between francophones and anglophones. Both languages are officially recognized in the Constitution, but not in reality. It is also unfortunate to hear the comment my Bloc Québécois colleague just made, about this taking 68 years, I think—

**Mr. Richard Nadeau:** It was 64 years.

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** During our tour, francophones told us that the schools that they inherited were facilities that anglophone had shut down. They are currently repairing and renovating them to make them operational again.

It's also unfortunate to hear Mr. Provencher tell us that there are not adequate gymnasiums in the schools. The excuse given by the federal government is that they did not receive an application from the territories and it leads francophones to believe that if they were to challenge this, what they have gained could be withdrawn.

Excuse me, but I must say that you are not barking very loud today. Right now, in New Brunswick, court cases are being prepared concerning the court challenges program. In my opinion, if the francophone minorities of Canada have made gains, it is thanks to the Court Challenges Program. The only reason we might not win is because Quebec is not involved here. Indeed, there are no court challenges in Quebec because of the Quebec Charter. Anglophones cannot use the court challenge process. If Quebec could use it, but didn't win anyway, the Prime Minister of Canada might decide not to touch Quebec once again. With all due respect to Quebecers, I am stating clearly what I feel. It's totally regrettable and unacceptable.

I find that you are not barking loud enough out in the field. You're loosing your tools. The little you did obtain, you got through the Court Challenges Program. Last night, when I put a question in the House of Commons, I was told they couldn't answer because the matter was before the court. Imagine that!

We are forced to go to court to obtain the right to have a court challenges program in order to defend a minority whose rights have always been trampled and that has to fight hard. There are French schools in Prince Edward Island, in British Columbia, in Saskatchewan, in Manitoba, in Alberta and throughout Ontario, including Sudbury, and if the cause of the Montfort Hospital in Ottawa was won, it was thanks to the court challenges program.

That's the key. If you want to focus on that objectives, I invite you to do so. If you don't, you're going to miss the boat. If you don't mobilize to tell the Harper government that this state of affairs is unacceptable and is a slap in the face to the francophone community, you are going to miss the boat.

Having said that, \$700 million were allocated for these programs. How do you see this in the future? How did this help you in your regions? I'm talking about the action plan.

**Mr. Léopold Provencher:** That's a question that requires a very detailed answer.

Would you allow me a comment on the first part of what you've just said?

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** Yes, comments are always welcome.

**Mr. Léopold Provencher:** We started to bark, to use your expression, two years before we decided to go before the courts. We filed over 100 complaints with the language commissioner of the Northwest Territories before we started legal proceedings. At the time the community decided that it was essential that we proceed in this manner.

The community expressed its views through the democratic means that it had at its disposal. It still does so today because as a last resort, the issue had to be settled before the courts. The community therefore undertook proceedings in 1999 and in early 2000. This process is still under way. We've gone before the Supreme Court. We spent nine weeks in front of judges, we put forward our case, that we had prepared adequately, and we explained what did happen. We did demonstrate.

We did bark a bit, and we're not quite finished. The appeal procedure will take place in May.

• (0945)

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** I just want to clarify one thing. What I mean is that you will no longer be able to bring your cases before the courts now because of the elimination of the Court Challenges Program.

**Mr. Léopold Provencher:** That's correct.

We have had several opportunities to make comments, at the interdepartmental level, on the evolution of the Action Plan for Official Languages. We think that a great deal of work has been done to implement the action plan, but we face enormous challenges related to the federal bureaucracy. A number of departments are involved. Harmonization among departments is not always obvious. Much remains to be done on that front.

I think the money has been well invested. However, there isn't enough of it. We were given an 11% readjustment. But we wanted 75%. We had tabled global action and development plans for our communities. They were motivated. What we're missing is the money and the means.

However, steps have been taken in the right direction when it comes to the responsibility required of all officials and community sector people regarding the implementation of action plans to improve services.

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** Some francophones in my province go to your region to work for four weeks in gold and diamond mines and then come home. They will then leave for approximately two months and come back again.

Are these people factored into studies calculating the number of francophones in the Northwest Territories? They also need services. If they are not being considered, they should be. They practically live in the Northwest Territories more often than they do at home, but they are not residents.

**Mr. Daniel Hubert:** Perhaps Sandra could better explain how the agreements between governments work with respect to eligibility rules. Health care cards and the rules to facilitate receiving services are important, given that there are good agreements between the provinces and the territories. It is true that significant population mobility puts pressure on the health care system.

These people often work in the services sector, for instance as taxi drivers or hotel and restaurant employees, in areas where people frequently have small accidents or wounds, like cuts. When a person who doesn't speak English well goes to the hospital with a cut to their finger and the doctor or nurse can't understand them, it's difficult. It is important to obtain services in one's own language. The issue, for a professional, is to be understood.

We are conscious of the fact that part of our community is very well settled. These people have been living here for a long time. In some cases, they know the doctors well. They've established a relationship with a given health care professional. However, not everyone is in that situation. That is why we need to add and create services to meet these needs.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Hubert and Mr. Godin.

The next question will be asked by Ms. Boucher.

**Mrs. Sylvie Boucher (Beauport—Limoilou, CPC):** Welcome everyone. I am pleased to see some people here today whom I met during our trip.

As you know, we did a tour across Canada. We have listened to communities and have understood their message. The committee in the future will be able to work together to target what has worked and see what has not worked.

I would also like to mention to some people around the table that the federal government is currently working with the Northwest Territories to support the territories with French-language services. This is very important to us. We expect to reach an agreement soon. Actually, negotiations between the Northwest Territories and the federal government are doing very well. In fact they are ongoing.

I do not know whether some people have read this. But last December 2nd the Government of Canada and the Northwest Territories announced an agreement regarding increasing the size of the Alain-St-Cyr school in Yellowknife. That is another step. We want to work with you. For my part, I can say that I am eternally optimistic. I know that when it comes to the Francophonie, we still have a number of challenges to meet. When you do a cross-country tour, you see that things are not always that obvious.

What I would like to know from each of you, in your respective fields, is what you think the main challenges will be for communities over the next ten years. As a government, how could we help you improve the situation and find possible solutions, not on a short-term basis, but rather over the long term? We like to hear your suggestions.

• (0950)

**The Chair:** Ms. St-Laurent, do you want to start? No?

**Mr. Jean de Dieu Tuyishime (Coordinator, Réseau TNO Santé en français):** I would mainly like to deal with the field of health care in the Northwest Territories. It has to be said that we have managed

to set up a network with several partners, including healthcare professionals, healthcare facility managers and people from the departments and healthcare administration. I think that the greatest challenge now is to ensure the network's sustainability. What is going to happen?

So far, it has been maintained thanks to funds allocated under specific projects. Now that we have built up a relationship of trust, we wonder whether we will always have to rely on small projects. How do we avoid violating the trust we have spent time building? Ensuring the network's sustainability in the territories is key to maintaining that relationship.

**Mrs. Sandra St-Laurent:** I concur. We work with five partners: training institutions, healthcare professionals, the two levels of government and hospital managers. This is a large group of people we manage to bring to the same table in order to discuss health care. Honestly, I've got to say that if it weren't for this network, there would be nothing in the territories when it comes to healthcare services in French. Yesterday we calculated that in the Yukon, at any given moment, there is only the equivalent of 1.25 people working to offer bilingual services, which includes a person working from 8 a. m. to noon in the hospital to provide interpretation services. In the Yukon, you can only get sick in French in the morning. That gives you an idea of the situation.

There are no other services towards which you can direct these people. There are areas where the required percentage of services in French is not met. It is essential to maintain the network and even to increase its ability to act in the field. We have been mature and effective: we have managed to reach out to all of these people despite turnover of key people in the field. Without this network, people would not have access to services in French. We are offering these services until such time as the government assumes its responsibilities and takes care of it.

**The Chair:** You have a minute and a half left Ms. Boucher if you want to ask another question.

**Mrs. Sylvie Boucher:** I would like Mr. Bélanger to answer this question. We have heard very little about the economic component of all of this.

**Mr. Pierre Bélanger:** They are fascinating topics, but unfortunately I specialize in economic development. As with anyone else, I'm engaged in many other activities, and this includes involvement with school boards.

Financially speaking, we have a huge organization, and it works well. The federal government as shown some willingness to support us. It is committed to ongoing funding through to next year, 2008. But not everybody seems to be singing from the same hymn book, despite attending the same service. You could call on the federal government to adopt an economic development framework policy. What I mean is that we have a joint committee comprised of representatives from 10 federal departments and agencies including FedNor, ACOA, Industry Canada and Fisheries and Oceans Canada. One way or another, these organizations are linked to the economic health of our francophone communities.

However, the fact that departments provide brochures and registration forms to programs in French is still considered by many people as being an official languages advocacy issue. Some organizations already go a lot further by incorporating active offer, for example Industry Canada and the Canadian Tourism Commission. We would appreciate if you would recommend other departments to adopt this approach. Community economic development really has to be targeted and also focussed separately on Quebec's anglophones and francophones throughout the rest of the country. This seems to be what happens some of the time in some departments, but it depends who is in charge at the time.

We have a joint roundtable, and all structure is there. I don't know if you understand the distinction I am making between those people who still believe that official languages in Canada is limited to the passive provision of services, and everybody else. We really focus on economic development because we want to ensure that everybody benefits.

• (0955)

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Bélanger and Ms. Boucher.

We will now start a second round of five minutes. Mr. Jean-Claude D'Amours.

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

I am going to proceed rather quickly because I have a lot of questions.

Mr. Provencher, you said that you went to court over a number of issues. Was that through the Court Challenges Program? Without it, would you have had the money to do what you did?

**Mr. Léopold Provencher:** No, not at all.

**Mr. Jean-Claude D'Amours:** You won some court cases. Could you tell us what you won in concrete terms? You mentioned a gymnasium, but what concrete results were achieved with respect to infrastructure?

**Mr. Léopold Provencher:** The first thing we got was primary and secondary schools in Yellowknife and Hay River. The second was the expansion of Alain-St-Cyr school, which will take place in 2007 and 2008.

**Mr. Jean-Claude D'Amours:** When was that announced?

**Mr. Léopold Provencher:** The budget commitment was confirmed in December.

**Mr. Jean-Claude D'Amours:** You just made the connection.

Government members said earlier that they understood. I do not know what they understood, because the Court Challenges Program has been cut. I hope there will be an announcement today that the program has been reinstated. They announce that the program was abolished, and yet they say they understood. They give themselves the credit for expanding a school, and this was only possible because you were able to take the case to court and because you won.

It is shameful that the government is trying to take the credit for expanding this school at the expense of francophones outside Quebec who find themselves in similar situations. It is shameful that the government dares take the credit for that, when it was because of

this program that you were able to defend yourself. And yet they say they understand.

**Mr. Léopold Provencher:** I think they will have an opportunity to make up for this in the very near future, because there are many things that need to be done to improve the offer of services in the Northwest Territories. There are other steps to be taken with respect to education. We are demonstrating openness in the discussions we are having at the moment on increasing the offer of services, in particular by combining community matters and education matters. The proposal is being quite favourably received and active discussions are under way.

**Mr. Jean-Claude D'Amours:** Beyond these possibilities, Mr. Provencher, if you could take other steps to enhance the rights of francophones in your region, what would you do?

You said that there were 99 students in one high school, but the capacity was about 250 students. Is it not true that the cancellation of the Court Challenges Program gives the government an opportunity to disregard its obligation with respect to official languages services?

**Mr. Léopold Provencher:** If there were nothing to replace it, some procedure ordinary people could use to defend their rights on issues that are important for the community, then definitely, we will have miss the boat.

• (1000)

**Mr. Jean-Claude D'Amours:** The future of education services in French is in jeopardy, because you have no recourse at the moment.

I agree with my New Brunswick colleague, Mr. Godin, when he says that perhaps you should bark a little louder if you want government representatives to understand—the very people who say they do understand. If they hadn't said this morning that they understand, I might have let it go. But how can we accept their saying that they understand, when they cut this program on the one hand and give themselves credit on the other? Had it not been for the court challenges program, you would not have won your case, because you could not have afforded to take it to court. You said that earlier.

They're taking the credit for a program that existed under the previous government.

**Mr. Léopold Provencher:** There is a definitely a danger, and it has been around for a long time. We have demonstrated that the level of services and communications in French was very much inadequate in the community. It is true that the role played by the federal government with the territorial government was too understated. The *laissez-faire* policy of trusting the other level of government did not work, as the courts have shown and as the Supreme Court will demonstrate in a few years.

There is a problem. Very little or no progress is being made in developing communication and services in French. We are facing a great threat: assimilation is growing at the rate of 63%, and we have no effective plan in place to counter this phenomenon.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Provencher. The five minutes are up already.

I'm going to ask Mr. Lemieux, a Franco-Ontarian member of Parliament to ask the next question.

**Mr. Pierre Lemieux (Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, CPC):** Thank you very much and good morning.

I am the member of Parliament for Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, which is located right next to Ottawa. Sixty-five thousand Franco-Ontarians live in my riding.

I would like to ask a question of the coordinating group on economic development and employability, the RDÉE. I know you represent RDÉE Canada, but there is also an RDÉE Ontario, whose office is located in my riding. I also noted in your annual report that you make a few references to programs in place in my riding. This is a rural constituency where francophone companies are really important, particularly the small- and medium-sized enterprises.

I would like to know if you could tell us about the success you have had in other provinces that you would like to repeat in the provinces where there are no such success stories. Can you tell us about some projects that were very successful?

**Mr. Pierre Bélanger:** Yes.

You are right, I do represent RDÉE Canada, but I will ask Roger Lavoie whether he can provide some details about what we have done in your region.

While he is collecting his notes, I would just say that generally speaking francophones live more in rural communities than in urban centres, and the figures are almost inversely proportional to those for anglophones.

A large percentage of our work has to do with regional disparity and regional economic development both in Acadia and in northern Ontario, where we work with FedNor.

Roger, could you talk about some of the projects in the region around Ottawa?

**Mr. Roger Lavoie:** In this region, RDEE Ontario worked with people from the community to build a slaughterhouse. RDEE Ontario works closely with communities to develop plans which we called Vision plans. Several communities were consulted on that matter, but compare to what happened in Manitoba, there really was no follow up in Ontario, because there was no federal economic development organization at the regional level in Ontario. There is FedNor in the North, but there is no other organization to look after the rest of Ontario. As a result, RDEE Ontario cannot really work directly with business people today. It does not have the authority to do so because of the funding it receives from Human Resources Canada. So that's a problem for us.

A little earlier, there was talk of a framework economic development policy for all communities. There are regions throughout the country. In western Canada, for instance, western economic diversification funds the four RDEE. Agreements were also reached with the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency, or ACOA, for Prince Edward Island and Nova Scotia. These organizations and provinces can therefore work directly with companies, but other provinces, such as Ontario, Newfoundland and the three territories, do not have the right to do so for now.

We are therefore continuing to work with Industry Canada, among others, to bring the department to the table, so that it can find solutions with us. Unless I am mistaken, Industry Canada is

responsible for economic development in the rest of Ontario. There is FedNor—

• (1005)

**Mr. Pierre Lemieux:** As for the rest, there is the Community Futures Development Corporation.

**Mr. Roger Lavoie:** Yes. There are development corporations, the Community Futures Development Corporations, or CFDCs, which operate in rural areas.

**Mr. Pierre Lemieux:** Exactly.

**Mr. Roger Lavoie:** And the RDEEs work with these people.

**Mr. Pierre Lemieux:** That's right.

**Mr. Pierre Bélanger:** In any case, we are not trying to repeat what is already been done. Across Canada, it varies depending on the structure of each region. We certainly are not trying to do what others are doing already or to interfere with their accomplishments.

We are also working with the Collège d'Alfred, on other agricultural projects, and with *L'écho d'un peuple*.

**Mr. Pierre Bélanger:** Our development agents are helping these people restructure and refinance their organizations. For us, all of this has to do with the development of employability and with the economic development of communities. It is very productive.

I will give you a quick example if I have time, Mr. Chairman. You are motioning in my direction. You're scaring me.

**Mr. Pierre Lemieux:** It's a good five minutes.

**Mr. Pierre Bélanger:** You are a good troop leader.

**The Chair:** You have 30 seconds.

**Mr. Pierre Bélanger:** Speaking of active offer, Mr. Lavoie referred to the Agriculture Canada Vision program. The program involved giving a small grant of \$25,000 to rural communities to hire a professional consultant who would help them define their assets, their needs, what the future held, what threats they faced, and to basically get organized. The program was not used by francophone communities. When we realized this, we took advantage of meetings with representatives from the federal government to tell them that we could perhaps promote the program for them. We certainly promote it a lot: we raised \$1.5 million in grants, which represented 60 Vision programs in all. Communities had no problems with this, and it yielded fantastic benefits for Manitoba. So now, communities have a real structure.

As for follow-up, Industry Canada manages 153 programs targeting small- and medium-sized businesses. Do both anglophones and francophones take advantage of all these programs? Surely not. Our officials would like to work with the department to target relevant programs to francophone communities. That's basically the work we do. So, in our case, we are not so concerned with the court challenges, as is Mr. Godin, although they do have their place. Rather, our interest lies with the value added of official languages, of the francophonie throughout Canada, from an economic point of view. And we do a fairly good job of it.

**The Chair:** Mr. Bélanger, it's a little over—

**Mr. Pierre Bélanger:** —over 30 seconds?

**The Chair:** Just a bit

**Mr. Pierre Bélanger:** It's a complex subject.

**The Chair:** We will ask Luc Malo to ask the next question.

**Mr. Luc Malo (Verchères—Les Patriotes, BQ):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Earlier, Mr. Bélanger, you said that you wanted the government to make an active rather than a passive offer, which would consist in simply providing information. In your experience, has an active offer already been attempted?

**Mr. Pierre Bélanger:** I don't think so, at least not with specific targets. I think that this was done, but with Canadians generally. If we agree that we need to target minority communities and that sometimes we need to refine the program or provide an active offer, and promote that offer, it's more about promoting and using the program, and this work is done by our officers. We need to want to do it. If we take a bureaucratic position, meaning that the program is available for francophones, anglophones, allophones, immigrants and that they need only ask for it, I would say that this is a neutral offer. An active offer means ensuring that the program is used and that we maximize the spinoffs. I don't think this was done most of the time.

**Mr. Roger Lavoie:** May I answer that question, Mr. Chair?

I want to use the example of Agriculture Canada's Vision program. At the time, we identified this program, we went to see the people at Agriculture Canada and we talked with them. We said that this program could benefit the francophone and Acadian communities, and that only a few aspects needed to be changed to make it relevant to our communities. The department agreed to the changes. To some extent, the program was co-managed with our network. Why wasn't this experience repeated? Often, we realize one of the reasons things work is because there is an assistant deputy minister who believes in it and who does the work. But once that individual leaves, we have to start all over again. Often, it depends on a single person within the department.

With regard to the active offer, I would say that one of the departments doing an excellent job is Human Resources and Social Development. We have been working with these people for a number of years. They presented a brief to cabinet, they have ensured that we are closely associated with their work and that we are consulted. We shared our objectives, etc. The program that resulted from the brief to Cabinet is not perfect, but it is still a step in the right direction. Thank you.

• (1010)

**Mr. Luc Malo:** Earlier, Mr. Provencher, you said that one of the challenges you would face over the coming years was community revitalization. I know that next March, the Yukon will host the Canada Games. Are you associated with this event as a francophone community and will it enable you to revitalize the community to some extent, in preparation for the Games?

**Mr. Léopold Provencher:** We have a delegation that will take part, and the Franco-People of the North youth committee obtained sufficient financial support to make a significant contribution to the Games being held in March in the Yukon. So, a delegation from our region will attend and people from the Yukon will go to Hay River. This is a major contribution. This is a tool for revitalization, clearly focused more on youth, but yes, it has been well received.

**Mr. Luc Malo:** Will these events have intermediate and long-term spinoffs?

**Mr. Léopold Provencher:** It is difficult to quantify the spinoffs of various events for youth. I think that investing in young people so they can see things, forge ties, open their minds to new realities and host people is good for the future. It is a good investment, even if it is not easy to measure the benefits.

**Mr. Luc Malo:** Ms. St-Laurent, you painted a fairly bleak picture of the situation in health care not only in the francophone community but for everyone in the Yukon.

Based on your comments, there really is no light at the end of the tunnel. Could you explain this in greater detail?

**Mrs. Sandra St-Laurent:** In the Territories, it's dark half the year, but light the other half.

Mr. Yvon Godin: Is that a light?

Mrs. Sandra St-Laurent: Yes, that's the light.

We had time to tell you about our needs, but we didn't have time to tell you about our success stories. For three years now, we've had a territory-wide anti-smoking program, and it's a first. The anglophones in the three Territories can't even work together on the issue of smoking.

The networks allow us to hold workshops and share resources. We have opened public health resource centres. We provide training and support to new families. The average age our people become parents is 25 to 35. So we're talking about very young families. We provide them with support because, often, they come from across Canada and even from francophone Europe.

All these services are made possible by the networks. Today, I am not representing the Association franco-yukonnaise but rather the network. I can however tell you that this association is working to obtain more health care services. The creation of the networks in 2003 has allowed us to provide the services. We are not able to provide the community with all the necessary services, but there are services.

There is a certain level of mobilization in this area. I have been in the Territories for nine years now and I see significant progress in this area. In the past, no representative of the territorial and federal governments sat at our table but now several of them do. This progress has been made possible by the creation of these networks.

**The Chair:** Unfortunately, Ms. St-Laurent, we have exceeded the allotted time.

Mr. Godin.

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** Mr. Chairman, I want to begin by making another comment.

I think it is unfortunate that you started fighting two years in advance. The Liberals were in power at the time, and thanks to the Court Challenges Program, you were able to win your case. They had nothing to brag about, because sometimes going before the courts is essential. Since the Conservatives decided that they no longer want you to go before the courts, they cut the program. But let's not talk about that right now.

With regard to the 1.25-person equivalent and the fact that service in French is provided only in the morning, what do you suggest we do? In my opinion, the fact that this service is provided only before noon contravenes the Official Languages Act. You already won another case. This means that perhaps you could challenge in court the fact that there is only 1.25 person-years and that the service is only available in the morning, and win again.

People cannot get services in our language in the afternoon. It's true that some people speak a language other than French or English and are unable to obtain services in that language. Be that as it may, Canada is a bilingual country with two official languages. Although this fact has been recognized for years, we're still forced to fight. No one can slap himself on the back and take the credit, because there is little credit to take.

What could we suggest in our report to rectify the situation?

• (1015)

**Mrs. Sandra St-Laurent:** Mr. Tuyishime referred to project-based subsidies. One of the projects recently funded by the Société Santé en français was to plan health and social services in French in our Territories. We sat at the table with the Territories and we talked about a minimum number of services that needed to be provided. The result of this planning exercise has been tabled. We need to implement the services and that is why we are telling you that we need permanent funding.

We also need a five-year health care plan for the Yukon. I am talking about my region, my parish. Since 2003, we have answered all your questions, with statistics to support those answers. They were developed with our communication and we have yet to hear anything.

Mr. Yvon Godin: He still haven't heard anything?

Mrs. Sandra St-Laurent: No, we've heard nothing for three years, because this is the fourth budget that will be passed. The file is active and that's all I know.

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** Since when?

**Mrs. Sandra St-Laurent:** For the past three years. We have been trying to find solutions for a long time. I too would like to know where we are at.

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** You have come to see us, we have invited you, etc. I do not want you to leave here thinking that the meeting was simply grandstanding and that everyone was self-congratulatory

That is the reality. It does not make sense. The act is clear and is not being followed. It's a matter of money or respect for the two founding peoples of this country who joined the aboriginal peoples. It's as simple as that. If what you were saying is true—and I think that is the case—francophone students in the Northwest Territories who attend school don't even have classes in their language when

they get to a certain level. They have to attend English school instead of continuing to learn their language. That is a lack of respect for our culture.

**Mr. Daniel Hubert:** I would like to answer the question that you have asked us twice. The committee supported the action taken by the Société Santé en français. You adopted an approach and it must be maintained. The Société Santé en français has requested that its budget be renewed so that it can continue its work in the various provincial and territorial networks.

A few days ago, we found out that the minister had provided an official response to our request that funding be renewed to enable us to develop primary health care services throughout Canada. The response was not positive. Funding was suspended. This is important. I would suggest that you obtain some information on that matter.

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** The government said that there had been some conflict during the visit. When was your letter dated?

**Mr. Daniel Hubert:** The letter is dated January 17 and we received it on the 22. It is essential that we continue supporting the initiatives of the Société Santé en français, which provides us with the means and the leaders to take action.

What do we do with the money we receive? In Nunavut, we receive \$50,000. Ten thousand dollars is spent hiring health professionals, remedial teachers and speech therapists who assess children with difficulties. We look for professionals throughout Canada, but there aren't any. What do we do? We take action and enter into agreements with the Department of Health to recruit doctors. How many doctors speak French in Nunavut? Zero. How long has this been the case? For many years. How many doctors are available in Canada? Currently, there are 60,612 of these doctors. We do not have any. Recruiting is the big issue.

Recently, the current federal government announced a program to recruit health professionals because they are in short supply everywhere. There is a general shortage. A program is now being developed.

• (1020)

**The Chair:** I am going to stop you, Mr. Hubert, because your time is up.

We will begin our third five-minute round. Mr. Simard will ask the first question.

**Hon. Raymond Simard (Saint Boniface, Lib.):** Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I would like to welcome our witnesses.

I would like to correct what Mr. Godin was saying. During the course of the two weeks when we were travelling in the communities, we were able to see that certain aspects of the Dion plan had worked very well whereas others had not fared so well. That is why we are here now.

I have a question regarding economic development. Roger, I think that you have created a monster, in the positive sense of the word. For example, in Manitoba, the CDEM, the Conseil de développement économique des municipalités bilingues du Manitoba, has become indispensable. If we were ever to lose it... We have put all of our eggs in the same basket. Beforehand, we had nothing with respect to economic development, and that is probably more or less the same situation throughout the country. What is of most concern to the people is the long-term funding, which is so precarious.

Moreover, you said that the funding was available until 2008. What are we going to do post-2008? As a result of the horizontal strategy, departments such as WD, for instance, are starting to say that they no longer want to be involved in community development. That concerns us a great deal. If we were to develop a new Dion plan—perhaps we will call it by another name—should the funding be provided by one department, such as, for instance, Heritage Canada? We would therefore have funding for economic development. Otherwise, should we continue the horizontal strategy or ask the Department of Health or the Department of Industry to fund certain initiatives?

**Mr. Pierre Bélanger:** I will ask Mr. Lavoie to answer in my place. I appreciate your question. Unfortunately, I miscalculated my time this morning and I have to attend a very important meeting that is starting at 10:30 a.m. They are going to be waiting for me. I really do apologize. I am enjoying the discussion and it is very important for us. I am not saying that everything is perfect or that nothing needs to be rectified. But we do also want to talk to you about the wonderful economic development accomplishments that have occurred in francophone or Acadian communities. We are really coming into our own. We need to see and recognize what is going on in Manitoba.

May I ask the committee members' permission to have Roger answer for me? I really do apologize, but I miscalculated my time. Thank you for your time and attention. Roger is a very good lawyer and a good advocate for economic development.

**Mr. Roger Lavoie:** Thank you Pierre.

If I may, I would like to answer the question, Mr. Chairman. For the past 15 years I have been working with francophone and Acadian communities and the government in the area of economic development and if there is one thing that I have learned it is that the government is complicated. It is very, very complicated. Should we have one policy or one program? I don't know.

We have to look at the whole issue of horizontality on its vertical axis. We talk a great deal about horizontality but, as far as we are concerned, in the economic sector where I work, we can identify the important players within the federal and provincial governments because the provincial governments also have a role to play.

So we have to take into account the current programs that can meet the needs of francophone and Acadian communities, now that they have been identified. We then have to see how we can change and modify these programs and policies to meet the needs of the communities.

In other words, we should do what we did with Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada: we identified a program, we took it apart and

then suggested that such and such a comma or word be changed, that this or that be changed, so that it could meet the requirements of the francophone and Acadian communities.

I don't know if that answers your question.

**Hon. Raymond Simard:** Yes, thank you.

As far as health is concerned, Mr. Hubert, if I am not mistaken, you or Sandra said that negotiations had taken place over a three-year period, that you had reached an agreement, but that you have been waiting for more than a year for this agreement to be signed. Is this in fact the program you are talking about?

• (1025)

**Mrs. Sandra St-Laurent:** The report was tabled in October 2003, and for the past three years, the community has been trying to find out where the file is sitting.

**Hon. Raymond Simard:** You received the answer a few days ago.

**Mrs. Sandra St-Laurent:** No, that is something else.

**Hon. Raymond Simard:** They are two different things? I would like to understand what is going on.

**Mrs. Sandra St-Laurent:** The five-year health services plan for the Yukon was developed in accordance with the transfer of health and hospital programs from the federal to the territorial level. When these transfers occurred, in 1993 and 1997, the agreement did not include any linguistic clauses. That gave the territorial governments a pretext for not providing health services in French, whereas in fact this is an obligation to all Canadians, regardless of whether they live in a territory or province.

At that time, we met with the government, which then assigned a resource person to work with us, and we prepared a plan to determine the minimum level of services in French that would be acceptable for francophones in the Yukon.

Prior to that, in 2002, we had done a study on health care needs for francophones in the Yukon.

**Hon. Raymond Simard:** Is my time up?

**The Chair:** Yes, your time is already up.

I will now ask Mr. Nadeau to ask another question.

**Mr. Richard Nadeau:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Hubert, earlier, did you have something else you wanted to say before you were told that your five minutes were over? Please continue.

**Mr. Daniel Hubert:** I was in the process of explaining what you could do from your end. One thing that the committee can do is to continue drafting well-written reports analyzing the situation. A well-structured analysis can help people who want to understand how the Official Languages Act is being applied.

Secondly, there is vigilance. You must be vigilant, because that is your role. I will give you just one example. If ever there was an important problem, it certainly is the scarcity of human resources in the health sector. We are fighting—and this is our daily hell—to find personnel, to try to sign agreements, etc. The government wants to take action in this area, we have programs, and an initiative is underway to recruit health personnel outside of Canada.

If this program description includes a condition specifying that, in recruiting personnel, the requirements of the various communities need to be taken into account, what do we do? We will also recruit francophones. That will make our job with the territorial government much easier because we will be able to say that a portion of this \$300,000 must be used to recruit francophone staff.

You could compare this to a lever. The fact that this is an essential issue must be acknowledged. How else can we ensure that francophones are also going to benefit from part of these initiatives? We need a doctor, a nurse and a social worker to form a team. That isn't very much, is it, but we don't have it. We have to go out and get it.

You need to be vigilant with respect to health care initiatives. It would help us a great deal if we had minimum conditions to strengthen health care initiatives by ensuring that the linguistic aspect was given consideration. This is not the only item, but it is important.

**Mr. Richard Nadeau:** I would like to point something out. I also see that you need tools to ensure that the government understands certain things. Indeed, the Canadian government does not respect its own Constitution and does not support you as it should. I was talking to some Conservative colleagues before the holidays, and some of them were confusing the Court Challenges Program and legal aid.

I spoke to Mr. Rioux, the president of the Fédération des communautés francophones et acadienne du Canada. I told him that we needed to educate government members and teach them the difference between these two programs. The Court Challenges Program is not used only by crooks in prison. The disabled have used it as well, and it enabled them to get changes making it possible for them to enter buildings, for instance, or move about. Had this program not existed, we might still be in the stone age as far as that is concerned. This is important.

In addition, we need to be very persuasive. As you know, the current Conservative government includes in its ranks ministers such as Mr. Baird, Mr. Flaherty and Mr. Clement who were part of the Harris government. They are the ones who wanted to shut down the Montfort Hospital. That was an incredible fight. Gisèle Lalonde and company, as well as the Franco-Ontarians, had to stand up and keep standing. They had to draw upon the assistance of the entire North American francophonie in order to show this government—after four years—that it didn't even recognize the Canadian Constitution by disrespecting these rights. Perhaps you do not have enough critical mass, but you are citizens of a country that is supposed to help you in that area. You have our support, at least.

I would like to know something. Anyone can answer, be it Mr. Provencher, Ms. St-Laurent, Mr. Hubert or another colleague, Mr. Lavoie or Mr. Jean de Dieu. When you talked about community development, you talked about the relationship between the family,

school and community. I would like to know if something is missing from the picture. Communities are very broad things, but we still have the base forming this community: the family, the opportunity to speak French, the use of French as the language spoken at home, the ability to do business in French, securing schools right up to the secondary and post-secondary level, as well as scholarships. Where are we as far as that is concerned? What aspects are still missing?

• (1030)

**The Chair:** Mr. Provencher, you have about 15 seconds because Mr. Nadeau used up all of the time.

**Mr. Léopold Provencher:** A wonderful research paper was done on the issue. We believe that, in a minority community, the rules are not the same as they are in a majority community. We need to put together many development factors. Uniting the family, the community and the school is a winning strategy. There is abundant research to show that this is the case and it is a good approach. We bear this in mind when we think about a school community centre.

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

It is now Mr. Harvey's turn to ask a question.

**Mr. Luc Harvey (Louis-Hébert, CPC):** Ms. St-Laurent, I would like to know whether or not the hospitals have what they need. With respect to the current hospital labour plans, whether they be anglophone, Indian or francophone, have the needs been met? In other words, do we have all of the resources that are required?

**Mrs. Sandra St-Laurent:** The last time I met with the individuals in charge of human resources at the hospital, I was told that 40% of the nurses were going to retire over the next three years. Considering that we do not train any nurses there, recruiting is a tremendous challenge for us. We are still looking.

**Mr. Luc Harvey:** If I understand correctly, this 40% figure applies to all employees, regardless of language. That is fine.

A little earlier, it was said that francophones have full employment. We therefore have to attract other francophones to your region. That is the big difficulty.

I would like to ask Mr. Jean de Dieu a question. Who amongst you originally comes from the Territories? Indeed, you have all decided to settle there. Could you give us the recipe so that we can attract other francophones to go there? We cannot force people to do this. This is not a concentration camp, it is a life choice that we make. If there are not enough people there, what is the problem? I do not think that that can be resolved through a court challenge.



**Mr. Daniel Hubert:** There is only one answer, and it is brief. We have to lobby in French if we want to attract people to a given place. Let me give you an example: the Department of Health has already tried to recruit doctors to serve the francophone community, but in vain. That's because the department's personnel are unilingual anglophones. However, there are job fairs in the area of health care which are organized in French. There are health care conventions. I go and meet people, we exchange cards, I talk about Nunavut, about its problems and major challenges, as well as about the fact that going there is an opportunity to learn about another culture, that life is simpler up there and that it is a different type of professional experience. We exchange business cards. I even got the names of a few nurses. One doctor was interested, but there are administrative rules which govern medical professional associations. That is all. It is just a matter of doing what it takes. Again, the important thing is to have lobbying and recruitment programs, as well as programs which promote health care in French, and to integrate them all.

I would like to make a final point. We might do all that and succeed, but if these new people are not integrated into a service organization which works for the French community, it will all have been in vain. Therefore, from this moment on, we must negotiate with the government to indicate that giving a shift to a French-speaking doctor in a hospital will not get us very far. Francophones rarely go to the hospital, because that is not what they need. What they really need is access to a family physician. That can be done, and we have to negotiate the organization of these services. It is not a question of law, but applying the laws governing health care, in my view. So we need to find out how to organize the services for Canadians by respecting and continually adapting the services to the language spoken by the people, including work schedules, the availability of services, recruitment and retention.

So, on the whole, the point is to convince people to work in a place where it is cold. It is  $-50^{\circ}$  up there right now. If you come, bring your mitts, but rest assured that you will experience something new and will have a lot of work to do.

• (1035)

**Mrs. Sandra St-Laurent:** I would like to add that another of our strategies is to increase local capacity in French. We now have a project to support health care professionals which has allowed us to organize workshops on medical jargon with people whose mother tongue is French and who have not spoken French in a long time, or for anglophones whose French is at the advanced intermediate level, to help them answer questions from francophones. We try to empower francophones at the community level by providing professional services.

Further, we are in touch with people from the Réseau de développement économique et d'employabilité, or the RDEE Yukon, and from the tourism sector to organize joint recruiting drives, because they have their own special way of presenting the Yukon.

**Mr. Luc Harvey:** I have a final, very brief question. Nunavut's territory is 2,093,000 km<sup>2</sup> and it has a population of 27,000 inhabitants, of which about 6,000 are under the age of 18, and who therefore go to school. How do these kids get to school?

**Mr. Léopold Provencher:** I am less familiar with Nunavut. Perhaps you should ask that question of someone else.

**Mr. Luc Harvey:** I am sorry, the question is for Mr. Hubert.

**Mr. Daniel Hubert:** You want to know how the kids get to school?

**Mr. Luc Harvey:** How do you manage this, given the size of the territory and the low population density?

**Mr. Daniel Hubert:** As far as the francophone population is concerned, the vast majority of them live in Iqaluit. So there is a school there. Since Iqaluit is no more than five kilometres long, that would be easy to organize.

There are also francophones in other Nunavut communities, such as Pangnirtung and Kimmirut, for instance, but these are tiny places with only a few people. During the last general assembly a few weeks ago, there was discussion about a project with the French school board of Nunavut to provide services online, to provide Internet base training, including for young people, as a complement to the education which francophone parents would like to maintain, even though they live in a community which is 99.9% anglophone.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Hubert and Mr. Harvey.

Mr. Godin will ask the final question.

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

Earlier, you said that you faced challenges, but that you also achieved some good things. We know that good things have been done. The problem lies with what has not been achieved. If you write a report for the government saying that it has done a lot of good, you won't get very far. The government will simply rest on its laurels. Indeed, we realize that good things have been accomplished but you yourself have done great things and I want to congratulate you for that. Don't stop.

Further, as far as we are concerned, in our report, we must also address what has not been working. For example, you told us that you have a program, that you sent a letter asking for the program to be renewed, and that you were turned down. We need to know this in order to report it to the House and to help you promote that program. There are good programs in place. For instance, in Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario, people are working to bring all the different organizations under one roof, so that people can meet and realize that there are many programs out there.

I found interesting the fact that in Saint-Boniface, Manitoba, municipal, provincial and federal programs are all under the same roof. People go there and receive all the services they need.

Our responsibility, our mandate, is to report to the House on issues we can improve, or which already work well, and on ways to keep them or further improve them.

People have talked about getting doctors to work in the Far North. As you yourself said, you have to “sell your stuff”: the weather is great, the snow is beautiful, for people who like day light, there is sunshine 24 hours a day, and they can come back when it gets dark again. Are there programs adapted to your particular region, because, after all, it is a particular region, as there are in Northern Ontario and Northern Quebec? The territories represent a particular region. Could the government not provide incentives, that is, financial incentives, to attract doctors? A doctor might leave from Montreal, Moncton, Caraquet or Bathurst, and move to the Far North, on the condition that the doctor could practice the same type of medicine he or she would elsewhere. If the government acknowledged the problem and wanted to do something about it... There are young doctors finishing medical school who would like to experience the Far North, and they would be happy to do so because they would also receive a bonus. Do you have any suggestions for what we could include in our report?

• (1040)

**Mr. Daniel Hubert:** The Société Santé en français is working on the entire human resource issue and looking for ways to facilitate the mobility of personnel in the health sector. The work is underway and you will certainly be receiving recommendations on the subject. Yes, this is a possible option. At first sight, I do not think that it is merely a question of money—I am giving you my personal opinion, because you requested it. The mobility of personnel must be facilitated, and there are some bureaucratic barriers to remove so that these people can work in the community as a French speaking team. This is the real issue. You know what happens in places—

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** However, if we could recruit people from other provinces and bring them to the territories, let us say for two months, and if they could go home for a few weeks... If we could do this in the diamond and gold mining sectors, could we not do the same in the health sector?

**Mr. Daniel Hubert:** Yes, we could do it. Quebec uses Nunavik, the northern—

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** I am talking about mobility.

**Mr. Daniel Hubert:** Yes, there are agreements between the Nunavik regional government in Northern Quebec where the Inuit population lives, the Quebec Ministry of Health regarding this type of rotation. The Nunavut Health Department is open to the idea.

However, it will be more costly. The important issue for Iqaluit is the housing shortage. There is a major housing shortage. A one and one-half room apartment costs \$1,700. Welcome to the Iqaluit cost of living! Yes, there are differences, and above all, there is a housing shortage. However, if the community comes to an agreement, something can be done about it.

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** Would the situation call for a special program?

**Mr. Daniel Hubert:** Yes, because of the remoteness of the communities, but this problem has nothing to do with critical mass. A population of 1,200 requires a certain amount of health services, school services for families, children, etc.

We must note that there is a critical mass. We hear a great deal about the current environmental issues in the North. However, the social issue for the people is the recognition of the specific needs of all these small remote communities comprising first nations and Inuit communities that need tools and programs.

You did not come to the North. We had hoped that you would come. We made the trip because we had to speak to you. This often happens to our organizations and networks. People travel everywhere in Canada except to the North because they feel that it is too far and too costly for their means. We are always considered as too costly and too remote.

Yes, we must take this factor into account. If you could suggest a strategy for programs in the North, we would be ready, together with all the MPs, to get to work on it.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Hubert and Mr. Godin.

I also want to thank all our witnesses. I think we learned some very interesting facts. The members who want to raise personal questions can stay a bit longer if they have the time.

The meeting is adjourned.







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