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—
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Mr. Guy Lauzon

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•(0905)

[Translation]

The Chair (Mr. Guy Lauzon (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry, CPC)): Good morning, ladies and gentlemen. Welcome to the Standing Committee on Official Languages. I also want to welcome our witnesses. Some of them are absent, because of the traffic, I believe. I hope they'll be joining us soon.

We'll be hearing from two witnesses this morning. Jean-Paul Perreault will speak for a few minutes. Then we'll ask Ms. Epnors to take the floor. Once the witnesses have spoken, we'll ask members to put questions to whomever they want.

Mr. Perreault, you may begin.

Mr. Jean-Paul Perreault (President, Impératif français): Mr. Chair, ladies and gentlemen members of the Standing Committee on Official Languages, we are obviously very pleased to accept the invitation to come and talk about the vitality of the official language minority communities.

Today I have with me a document entitled *Le financement des universités et la vitalité linguistique des communautés de langue officielle au Canada*, which was written by Frédéric Lacroix and Patrick Sabourin.

Table 6 shows the revenues of the minority university institutions for 2002-2003. In 2002-2003, the total revenues of the Anglophone minority university institutions—those of Quebec—were \$1,227,000,000, whereas the university institutions of the French minority community offering programs in French received only \$342 million. It can therefore be said that every English-speaking Quebecer receives six times more funding than every Francophone outside Quebec out of total revenues. The share allocated to English in Quebec represents \$1,227,000,000, nearly four times that allocated to French outside Quebec.

I also have with me a document that was published by Statistics Canada on December 19, 2006—it's very recent—that talks about the literacy of the official language minorities. I'll read you a few passages from that document.

Nationally, 42% of the adult population (16 to 65 years old) scored below Level 3 in prose literacy. Among Anglophones nationally, the proportion was 39%, but among Francophones, it was 56%. The gap was widest in New Brunswick.

I want to point out that Level 3 is the functional literacy threshold. At a lower level, we're talking about functional illiteracy.

I'd like to quote another passage from that same document:

The survey results indicate a challenge for Francophone minorities outside Quebec and New Brunswick: literacy in French. Outside Quebec, two-thirds of

Francophones did the literacy test in English, compared with only 2% of their counterparts inside Quebec.

The same document issued by Statistics Canada contains a table. If you look at the figures for Canada, less Quebec, you see that the functional illiteracy rate is 39% among Anglophones and 56% among Francophones. These statistics, which come from an international adult literacy and skills survey conducted in 2003, are reported by Statistics Canada.

In light of this situation, we've developed some recommendations.

The first is put the issue of numbers on the table and throw a spotlight on it.

When the Dion Plan was published, Impératif français pleaded to have numbers made one of the Plan's assessment criteria. It seemed logical that a language policy designed to support the Francophone communities should result in an increase in their numbers over a specified period. But this criterion was not chosen. However, the most fundamental right of Canada's Francophone communities is dependent on demographics, so much so that the Canadian Constitution contains the expression “where numbers warrant”. Numbers should therefore become one of the principal criteria for judging the health of the French-speaking minority in Canada and in Canada outside Quebec.

Our second recommendation is the proposed development of reparations for the Francophones of Canada contained in Canada's Constitution and referenced by the Supreme Court of Canada.

If Francophone communities have reached such tenuous numbers, it is in particular because, for a century, all the majority Anglophone provinces denied them their right to French-language education. The government proposed reparative policies for the Japanese and the preceding government had a whole program worth an estimated billion dollars to support the Aboriginal communities. Why not think about doing the same for the Francophones of Canada? That the Government of Canada develop a language policy based on the preservation and promotion of French.

•(0910)

The federal government has mainly based its language policy on the promotion of bilingualism. You will readily admit that the minority official language in the greatest trouble in Canada is French. We're asking the government to rethink its language policy so that it grants special treatment for the situation of the French language and Francophones, since the demographic statistics that are now being projected on the screen clearly show that French, across Canada, is undergoing a very disturbing retreat.

We also recommend that the federal government harmonize its language policy in Quebec as much as possible with the *Charte de la langue française* in order to stop working to anglicize Quebec.

In one of its reports, for example, the Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages mentions that the federal public service in Quebec must work in English with federal headquarters in Ottawa and that this contravenes the right of Francophone public servants in Quebec to work in their language in Quebec, as provided by the French-language Charter.

That the federal and Quebec governments participate, as equal partners, in a Canadian strategy to safeguard and promote French in Canada, based on support for the Francophone communities in Canada.

It is unheard of that Canada, a majority Anglophone country, is incapable of allying itself with the only Francophone state in the Americas, Quebec, to develop and implement a coherent and well-funded policy to ensure the survival of the French language and culture in Canada. It is well past time, given that the demographics clearly illustrate the decline of French in Canada, that the two states cooperated to benefit French on Canadian soil.

Mr. Chair, we'll be pleased to answer questions, as far as that is possible.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Perreault. We'll no doubt have questions to ask you later.

Now I want to welcome Mr. MacLeod.

[*English*]

Mr. MacLeod, you'll be making your presentation a little bit later, right after Ms. Epnerns.

I want to welcome Ms. Epnerns from the Quebec English Literacy Alliance. Perhaps you would like to make your presentation for a few minutes.

After all the presentations have been made, then we'll go on to questions.

Mrs. Ilze Epnerns (President, Quebec English Literacy Alliance): Thank you.

Mr. Lauzon, members of the committee, thank you for having me here this morning.

I represent the Quebec English Literacy Alliance, founded in 1997. The Quebec English Literacy Alliance is a coalition of English literacy service providers. I represent 300 active tutors and teachers from all corners of Quebec.

We know that almost 800 adult Quebeckers have less than a grade nine education, yet we have only approximately 800 students enrolled in literacy classes, either in the formal sector or with one-to-one tutoring in the non-formal sector. Far fewer adults participate in classes than those who need these services.

We know that one in five Quebeckers has difficulty reading and has few basic skills or strategies for decoding and working with text. Many parents at a level one cannot determine the correct dosage of medicine to administer to a sick child, read food safety tips, or read baby formula directions. 15% of Canadians have difficulty reading and have few basic skills. This is considered level one.

Unfortunately, parents with low literacy skills have difficulty helping their children with their homework. The literacy skills of parents directly affect the family's income, health, and overall quality of life. In my opinion, the most serious repercussion of having parents with low literacy skills is that their children are at far greater risk of having low literacy skills themselves, so the literacy problem self-perpetuates.

I was asked to share my thoughts on what could be done to improve the situation for the Quebec English Literacy Alliance. For years there has been an ongoing issue of core funding versus project funding. We know that project funding does not work. This was one of the conclusions of the report that the previous Minister of State for Human Resources Development, Claudette Bradshaw, concluded after her pan-Canadian round table consultations in 2005. Groups spend much time and energy trying to come up with new and innovative projects every year, when in reality they are already the experts. We all know what to do and how to do it, but we have been restricted by red tape, unrealistic guidelines, and timelines that are precarious at best. Each year we risk closing our doors, and we also risk losing quality resource people with years of experience each and every time we have to wait for funding, which we are not even sure we will get.

Another important point that needs to be mentioned is how a change of minister affects funding. Every time there is a new minister in charge of this dossier in the federal government, whether it is because of a change of government or just because of a switch in responsibilities, all grants come to a screeching halt and the process starts all over.

Funding was supposed to be confirmed and sent out last August 2006. But with the change in policy, obviously that delayed the issuing of funds. We then had a new minister who was unfamiliar with the English literacy situation in Quebec—a delay during the learning curve. Now we have yet another new minister, and again, another learning curve. Who knows when and if the funding will go through. So because of bureaucracy, many groups do not know whether they will exist or not.

But most important, we also risk losing students who will not come back if those doors are even temporarily closed.

The Quebec English Literacy Alliance needs financial stability in order to do what it does best: be the foundation for literacy efforts and initiatives in Quebec. Our initiatives are illiteracy prevention, family literacy, training of literacy trainers, and recruitment of individuals with weak literacy skills.

Core funding would allow the Quebec English Literacy Alliance to provide ongoing and much needed support to the learners most needing our services. 49% of our population needs literacy classes, yet there is no long-term plan in place to get them into training to acquire the nine essential skills defined by the HRSDC's research in 2005.

I must speak to you of how devastating the federal budget cuts have been to the Quebec English literacy community. We are a small community with huge needs, as we are spread far and wide in our province. It is all well, indeed, to say that literacy funding needs to get to the grassroots. But how would that happen in our English literacy community without a central organization to help recruit those who need those services? Many of our tutors and teachers are retiring. Who will be there to train new practitioners? Being a literacy teacher and tutor takes special training that is not available just anywhere. Some of the members of our organization have worked for a number of years to produce new materials to be used by our students. Such important work must continue.

• (0915)

A recent United Nations study showed that a 1% increase in adult literacy levels would generate a 1.5% permanent increase in the GDP per capita. In Canada, this would amount to about \$18 billion a year that could be reinvested. Investing in the Quebec English Literacy Alliance is investing in Canada's workforce and its economic welfare, and as such it is a federal responsibility.

Economically this is an absolute emergency. Our Canadian demographic is aging, and in the future we will need every Canadian to be literate to fill the jobs of the next generation. A long-term financial commitment from our federal government and sustainable funding are vital if we are to make a significant dent in the low literacy statistics. Coalition core funding is an absolute must if we are to beat this serious problem together.

Thank you.

• (0920)

The Chair: Thank you very much, Ms. Epnors.

I believe Mr. MacLeod has had the opportunity to gather his thoughts and is prepared for his presentation.

As I explained to the other presenters, Mr. MacLeod, we'll expect a four- or five-minute presentation, and then we'll have questions.

Mr. Roderick MacLeod (Director, Quebec Protestant Education Research Project): Ladies and gentlemen, thank you very much for allowing me the opportunity to speak about schooling in Quebec.

This is something I enjoy doing, after having spent some years researching the history of the Protestant school system and producing a book called, *A Meeting of the People: School Boards and Protestant Communities in Quebec, 1801 -1998*, if you'd like further information.

As you can tell by the word "Protestant", this research did not cover all of what is now considered English education in Quebec and does include French Protestant education. Nevertheless, for the past quarter century or more, Protestant school boards in many regions of Quebec functioned as English boards, running an English system.

As you know, the English-speaking people of Quebec, or people who identify at some level with the English language, have been an extremely diverse group in ethnic, religious, and even linguistic terms. Nowhere has this diversity been so marked as in the domain of education. Since the Quiet Revolution, this group has more or less come to accept itself as a linguistic minority, and the creation of English school boards in 1998 was the logical, but problematic, culmination of this process.

Why was this problematic? I say so because it seems that the anglophone population in Quebec has never really had a clear sense of what it wants out of its English school system. In my experience, when anglophones are asked what it is they want their schools to do, they say, teach our kids French. When they think a little harder, most will acknowledge that they want a degree of English and a degree of French. In essence, they want their children to be bilingual: at home in Quebec and at home in North America. For them, the English school system in Quebec is a guarantee of this bilingualism.

The problem is that this English school system is in decline, and there is no way to stop the decline other than to have another baby boom. As you know, the law in Quebec prevents newcomers from outside Canada, regardless of their familiarity with the English language, from sending their children to Quebec's English school system. Now given how sensitive the issue is, most anglophones in Quebec are unwilling to challenge Bill 101, recognizing its role in protecting the French language. Yet as school populations decline, even as there are students ready and willing to enroll, and as schools continue to close down, frustration rises.

Given the current situation, it is only a matter of time before Quebec's English school system declines to the point of being unworkable. As the tax revenue shrinks, the cost of operating a system over huge territories spirals, as schools cannot be maintained, and books and other materials disappear.

What can the federal government do to alleviate this situation? Here are some suggestions.

Number one, continue to develop and publicize federal programs that schools may take advantage of, for example, Industry Canada's SchoolNet, or any program aimed at enabling schools to acquire up-to-date computers, and especially technical instruction. A great many English schools in Quebec have very limited funds for such vital tools and expertise.

Any help securing textbooks or translations of textbooks—the lack of which often deprives children in English schools of popular textbooks—through subsidies to publishers or existing literacy organizations would be most useful, as would the removal of the GST on the sale of books.

Number two, develop programs to assist in the repair and maintenance of schools, possibly through the medium of community organizations that often undertake such tasks as volunteers.

Number three, provide funds for community or parents' groups to hire extracurricular instructors, for both remedial and enriched instruction. A number of home and school associations hire additional specialists as part of a parent-sponsored program. Also, schools offering core English programs tend to attract children with special learning difficulties and are sorely in need of help.

Number four, support the English community's efforts to clarify eligibility requirements for English education. I am thinking particularly of the need to classify French immersion programs in any part of Canada as education in English. These programs are run by and for English speakers, not by French language schools or school boards, either inside or outside of Quebec. Parents who opt for French immersion do so out of a deep commitment to bilingualism and should not be penalized by having their children's rights restricted in Quebec.

Number five, negotiate a slight broadening of the terms of Bill 101 to include children from English-speaking countries and those with particular learning disabilities as eligible for admission to English schools.

• (0925)

I thank you for your time and look forward to your response.

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

We were supposed to have a fourth presenter, Mr. Guy Rodgers from English Language Arts Network. Apparently the weather or the location of our meeting room prevented Mr. Rodgers from being here, so we'll just go to the questioning, and possibly, if he comes a little bit later, we can include him in the discussion.

One of the privileges that the chair of this committee has, probably about the only privilege, is that occasionally he gets to ask a question. It's not really a question, Ms. Epnors, but I'd like to get some clarification. A statement that you made sort of surprised me, that 49% of the population needed literacy help. Did I hear that correctly?

Mrs. Ilze Epnors: Yes, you did. They're unfortunate statistics that are hard to swallow, but that is the truth, that 49% have literacy problems. There are different levels of literacy problems, but 49% of our population today has problems.

I don't know if you've read or heard of any of the statistics that just came out last week by the president of the Canadian Council on Learning. He actually found that 55% of Canadian adults misunderstood medical instructions, which is even more serious. We're finding now that senior citizens have a great deal of difficulty understanding their medication, all the things they need to do to maintain their health, understanding doctors. So the literacy issue goes much further than just 49%.

The really severe level ones, those who are total non-readers, for all intents and purposes—that's a level one—are at approximately 15% throughout Canada.

The Chair: That's shocking as well.

Mrs. Ilze Epnors: But 39% to 40%, which is one out of four, if you think of it, is the number of people who have absolutely no literacy skills, up to grade nine. Up to grade nine is not really efficient enough to be able to get a job, maintain it, teach your children, do all the things you need to do.

The Chair: We have some challenges.

Thank you very much for that clarification.

Now we'll start with our regular questioning. Our first round, incidentally, is for seven minutes. The way we proceed here is that the member asks you questions and the total time is seven minutes. I'm very rigorous about the seven minutes, so I might even stop you in mid-sentence.

[*Translation*]

We try to be fair to all members. I therefore ask Mr. Simard to begin the first round of seven minutes.

[*English*]

Hon. Raymond Simard (Saint Boniface, Lib.): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair, and welcome to all our guests this morning.

Ms. Epnors, along with the chair, I also was actually flabbergasted by some of these statistics. One of my first responsibilities when I came to Parliament four and a half years ago, as I sat on the human resources committee, was to do a four or five month study on literacy. When these numbers came up, 42%, it was almost unbelievable, but every witness who came forward did tell us that those were the statistics.

So I'd like to talk to you briefly about this. Literacy is something that is very interesting to me, that I've followed very closely and that I've supported in Manitoba. I know that in the small francophone communities of Manitoba, nine centres have closed lately under the auspices of Pluri-elles, a francophone group out there. We know how difficult it is to get people involved in the first place. There's a lot of shame involved with this. To get people out and even admit that there are some literacy problems is a big thing, so I wonder if you're going through the same thing.

Number one, people must be extremely disappointed. Are you losing staff? Are you losing counsellors, as we are in Manitoba, for instance, because of these funding cuts?

• (0930)

Mrs. Ilze Epnors: We definitely are. One person in particular, the coordinator of the Quebec Literacy Working Group, has spent her whole life in literacy. As of this week, her job expires and she has nothing. She has so much valued experience that she cannot be replaced. We can't expect her to wait until funding comes through. She's a single mother with two children, so she has to go on.

Yes, we're losing a lot of good, trained people because of the instability. It's not because they don't want to do it. It becomes a mission; it becomes a vocation when you become involved in adult literacy. But they just, for economic reasons, have to move on.

Hon. Raymond Simard: Is your organization Quebec-wide? Do you have regional organizations as well?

Mrs. Ilze Epnors: Yes. We completely serve the whole province through all of the school boards and all of the literacy councils. We have members who are from the Gaspé, from Hull, from the north shore. We have members who participate in the Quebec English Literacy Alliance throughout the province, which is why it would be so difficult, if funding were cut, for us to serve. It's very easy to serve the urban area of Montreal, because everybody can take their own transportation. But if we have to serve and train people throughout the province, there is no way we can do it without some sustained funding.

Hon. Raymond Simard: In the study we did a few years ago, there was talk of a national literacy strategy. It's not one size fits all. We found, for instance, that francophones outside Quebec had different challenges, actually more important challenges sometimes than in other communities.

I think Ms. Bradshaw was on the right path, actually. Everything we've heard about the National Literacy Secretariat has been extremely positive. It's rare that you get witnesses coming here speaking almost 100% positively about a government agency.

We've found that their role has been put aside a little bit. Have you noticed that as well, or are they still very active?

Mrs. Ilze Epnors: The National Literacy Secretariat no longer exists.

Hon. Raymond Simard: But it exists under a different name.

Mrs. Ilze Epnors: A different name?

Right now, they're trying to catch up with all of the information that's coming, and they're trying to teach the new minister coming in—"teach"; that's my teacher coming in. They're trying to make him familiar with the whole dossier. Because of all of that, everything keeps coming to a dead halt. Once the minister understands the whole dossier and the purpose of it, then he can go through each and every one of the projects that have been submitted and decide whether it's going to happen or not.

[Translation]

Hon. Raymond Simard: Mr. Perreault, I noted the very interesting statistics on the assimilation rates of the communities outside Quebec, and I can assure you that we're very much aware of

the situation. As you live in French-speaking Manitoba, you recognize it as well.

However, for some time now, we've seen a new reality: immersion schools. Moreover, you or someone else talked about that. You said that there were 45,000 Francophones in Manitoba, but there were 110,000 persons there who spoke French. Outside Quebec, there are currently 2.6 million persons who speak French.

Those numbers are quite large. They're numbers that the FCFA gave us at the last meeting. Perhaps they should be checked.

Considering that there are some six million Francophones in Quebec and that we think our language is threatened, there are two options: we turn inward and protect what we have, or we create partnerships with other people who have the same objectives.

Is that something you're considering? For example, is *Impératif français* communicating with people outside Quebec for the purpose of creating alliances? In a North American context, it would make sense to add 50% to our numbers.

Mr. Jean-Paul Perreault: Thank you very much.

First, I'd like to clarify one point concerning functional illiteracy. Here I have statistics that were published by Statistics Canada following the 2003 International Adult Literacy and Skills Survey.

In Quebec, 43% of Anglophones of that province scored below Level 3 in prose literacy, compared to 55% of Francophones in Quebec. At Levels 3, 4 and 5, we're talking about literacy, and at Levels 2 and 3, about functional illiteracy.

I'd also like to recall the important statistic I gave you at the start of my presentation concerning university funding. In 2002-2003, the English-language universities in Quebec received 27.7% of funding for all universities in Quebec, although the Anglophone population of Quebec represents only 8.4% of total population. On the other hand, the universities in English Canada, outside Quebec, that offer programs in French only received \$342 million for their French-language programs. English-speaking Quebecers receive seven times more funding than Francophones outside Quebec.

So it's not surprising, when we talk about literacy and illiteracy, that the statistics very clearly show—and I'm citing only one example, university education—that there is a much higher level of illiteracy among Francophones across Canada, including Quebec, than among our English-language friends and compatriots.

• (0935)

The Chair: Mr. Perreault—

Mr. Jean-Paul Perreault: However, we still have to recognize that illiteracy is nevertheless unacceptable.

The Chair: Mr. Perreault, I have to stop you because the five minutes are already up.

[English]

I see our fourth presenter has arrived. I want to welcome Mr. Guy Rodgers, who's the executive director of the English Language Arts Network.

Mr. Rodgers, we're glad you've arrived.

We'll just have Mr. Rodgers make his presentation. We've only had one question so far. The way we're proceeding is this. We've had three presentations, so we'll have your presentation and then the members of Parliament will be posing questions to whomever.

If you can, give us a presentation of somewhere in the neighbourhood of four or five minutes.

Mr. Guy Rodgers (Executive Director, English Language Arts Network): It's a nice long drive to come here and speak to you folks.

I have a document here. I'm just going to summarize this because this would probably run on a little bit more than five minutes.

When we deal with people who work in the arts, there's often a lot of misunderstanding about the situation of the English language artist in Quebec. I just want to give you a little bit of historical context.

During the 1960s and 1970s, as you know, there was a lot of turmoil in Quebec, and people reacted to it in many different ways. It would be oversimplifying the situation to say that all the people who were unhappy with the change left, while all the people who stayed were totally ready to embrace the new situation. However, in the case of artists—because artists tend to be a lot more mobile than, say, factory workers—the artists who chose to stay in Quebec in general stayed there because they were very comfortable in the environment, they sought to become bilingual, they sought to fit into the environment, and they worked closely with their francophone colleagues.

In the early 1970s, you had the situation of this artist community trying to set down some roots and trying to establish itself in a completely different context from that of generations that had come before. You find a number of organizations coming together as these artists are trying to represent themselves, to express their new identity. In the document I list a number of different organizations that were founded. The theatre people founded first; in 1989 they formed the Quebec Drama Federation. One of the first things that the Quebec Drama Federation did was to establish a seat on the board of the

[Translation]

Conseil québécois du théâtre

[English]

so that there was a permanent dialogue between the anglophone and francophone artists.

Subsequently, you have the publishers form an organization, the writers form an organization, and then two years ago, all of the different artists who spoke English in Quebec came together to form what's called ELAN. ELAN is really a very new organization. Just by way of an anecdote, as we were trying to bring people together at a summit to see if there was an interest and a need to form an

organization to represent artists, we encountered a great deal of friction. People were very, very disinclined to identify themselves as anglophones. Most people, like myself, work largely in French.

[Translation]

My wife is Francophone and my children are being raised in French.

[English]

A lot of people were very, very reluctant to identify themselves as anglophones.

As I was giving the keynote speech at the summit, where people were still uncomfortable about whether they should be there, whether they wanted to be there, I told an anecdote about working with different producers.

● (0940)

[Translation]

I often find myself surrounded by Francophone producers and colleagues, and, at some point, people start talking about the nasty English. After a few minutes, I say that I'm English, and I ask them whether they really think I'm like that. Then they always answer that I'm not really English.

[English]

Voices: Oh, oh!

Mr. Guy Rodgers: When I said that, I got the same sort of reaction at the summit, and suddenly, barriers were broken down and people said, yes, that's exactly the same reaction I've had. I've been sort of living this closeted anglophone life for many, many years, not wanting to make waves, and instead of standing up in a militant way, maybe it's just time to re-address the stereotypes and look at who is the real anglophone in the 21st century.

That's the context. Over the last two years, ELAN has been very successful in building bridges with francophone colleagues and in reaching out to anglophone artists in all of the disciplines.

There are just a couple of points that I would like to raise before the committee that you might want to question when I'm finished.

How much time do I have left?

The Chair: A minute and a half.

Mr. Guy Rodgers: Good, there's plenty of time.

Everybody knows the PICLO agreement, which is IPOLC in English. We had it for two years, and it was largely through this IPOLC agreement that the funding was established between Canadian Heritage and Canada Council. They needed an oversight group to make sure the money was managed properly; they brought together people from the different disciplines, and it was because of that encountering of people in different disciplines, which had not happened before, that we decided maybe it was time to have this summit in 2004.

ELAN's been around for two years; we're just now starting to build some solid infrastructure, and this IPOLC agreement expires next year, so we would really like to recommend that it be extended for at least another three to four years.

In the film and television sector they're just now signing the first IPOLC agreement. Again, it's the same situation: it's almost going to be cancelled before it begins.

There is a second recommendation I'd like to make. When the support for official minority languages was structured, there were regional or provincial programs and there were national programs. To separate the small groups from the large groups in the national programs, in most cases there's a criterion for eligibility that says you have to be present in at least three provinces. That makes a lot of sense if you're francophone, but it doesn't make a lot of sense if you're anglophone.

We've actually had people say to us, "Well, are you present in three provinces or more?" We say, "Well, what other provinces can we be minority anglophones in?" We had a lot of trouble getting people to address this rule. I suspect that if we're going to include anglophones under the minority language provision, somebody should revisit that rule. When we went to get funding for our website, an exception was made, but we shouldn't have to do special pleading and lobbying just simply to be considered eligible for a program like that.

We know that in the francophone sector there have been a number of multipartite agreements. Those would be very helpful for us. We're sort of late getting started, but we'd find it very helpful.

We know that the National Arts Centre has been very supportive of minority languages in its Atlantic Scene and Alberta Scene. We're not so sure the minority community in Quebec is getting the same kind of attention, so that could be examined while the programming is still ongoing.

Finally, a number of work groups have been established in the francophone artistic community, and something similar would be very beneficial in helping the English community to get organized, make some contacts, and take its future in its own hands.

I trust I haven't gone too far over the five minutes. Thank you for your attention.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. Rodgers. We were a little slow on cutting the clock off because you were somewhat late, so we made a bit of an exception there.

[*Translation*]

We're going to continue with Mr. Nadeau.

Mr. Richard Nadeau (Gatineau, BQ): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Good morning, Ms. Eppers, Mr. MacLeod, Mr. Perreault, Mr. Rodgers.

We only have five minutes, and the subject is very broad. I want to emphasize that, in the early 1990s, I worked at the Fédération de la jeunesse canadienne-française with Roger Bernard, who is no longer with us. That man from Hearst and professor at the University of Ottawa had published a document entitled *Vision d'avenir* for the federation. In four volumes, he told the old story of how "the fruit of our womb is blessed". I'm from the Franco-Ontarian world, and I lived in Saskatchewan, among the Fransaskois, for a long time. He talked about what the federal government should consider doing to remedy the horrors of the past and the horrors that still exist today in

regard to political will, through the inaction of provincial and federal governments, which close their eyes to this matter, in order to set out on the path toward assimilation.

The statistics on assimilation in Table 5 of the document provided by Impératif français are aberrant. Unions seeing 74% of their workers dying on the job site would do something. In Saskatchewan, the assimilation rate is 74%. In a country that calls itself official bilingual, it's heartbreaking to see the community die out that much in Saskatchewan; we're talking about 37% or 50%. Even in New Brunswick, the rate is 9%. These figures are appalling.

Mr. Perreault, from Impératif français, has raised this question, and it's an issue that has been around for nearly 20 years now. Even the Supreme Court has ruled on this subject.

Mr. Perreault, could you explain to us the reparations approach that should be adopted so that French is considered an element that should be revived or at least put back on the rails relative to bilingualism?

• (0945)

Mr. Jean-Paul Perreault: If you look at the statistics on the screen, you'll see that Francophone assimilation and defrancization are dramatic in all provinces outside Quebec. This has been going on for centuries. In 30 years, from one census to another, this trend has not declined, on the contrary. Despite the federal official languages policy, the situation has become even more dramatic.

That's why Impératif français urges the Canadian government to rethink its language policy, to make room for a new policy focusing on the protection and promotion of French across Canada. This does not imply that the bilingualism policy should be excluded, but it is clear that one of the two official languages is a minority language. Within the Canadian federation and in the North American context, the situation is asymmetrical from the outset, as a result of which we cannot consider these two languages as equals: one of them requires more resources than the other.

The federal government's bilingualism policy has had a defrancizing effect. In Quebec, where there are 590,000 Anglophones, 60% of federal government jobs require knowledge of English. In Ontario, just next door, only 10% of federal jobs require knowledge of French, for a virtually equivalent number of Francophones, that is 510,000. As a result of this kind of aberration, for centuries now, Francophones across the country have been anglicizing. It is in this context that we urge the government to act responsibly with regard to our cultural heritage, which includes La Francophonie, of course, and to implement programs to provide more support for the minority official language, which is in trouble even in Quebec.

Considering the language transfers in Quebec, the language that dominates isn't French. In 2001, the importance of the language of Quebec's Anglophone community increased by 26% as a result of language transfers. In the Canadian and North American context, despite legislation designed to protect the French language, we are unable to protect it, even in Quebec. English is still the language that dominates in Quebec. So imagine the dramatic effects felt by our countrymen and countrywomen who are members of the French-language communities outside Quebec.

In one way or another, the federal government will have to consider implementing a cross-Canada policy based on the promotion of French, together with the necessary resources. I invite you to think about that. The energy could initially be generated by the Standing Committee on Official Languages. This is an obvious need. We cannot continue to live in these kinds of situations. These figures don't come from our organization, but from the federal agency: Statistics Canada. The situation is dramatic. One cannot, you cannot, we cannot not understand why this requires restorative measures. The Constitution of Canada recognizes the possibility of implementing restorative programs. This is necessary.

• (0950)

Mr. Richard Nadeau: Earlier my colleague from Manitoba talked about making alliances. If I understood correctly, he wanted to know the number of FL1s in the immersion schools, that is people whose first language is French. In my opinion, the role of immersion schools is to enable Anglophones whose first language is English to learn French. That's laudable; that's the way to do things. However, for Francophones, immersion school is a school of assimilation. Studies show that this language then becomes the norm for students.

Perhaps we'll have the time to address the question of numbers in another round, provided there is one more.

You say that the Dion Plan didn't respect the numbers-based approach. Furthermore, the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms states "where numbers warrant". But no one even wants to address the question of numbers. That reminds me of the comment by Sheila Copps, who said there was no more assimilation in Canada. Of course, if you don't take numbers into consideration, the reality becomes artificial.

Can you give us a minute so that we can talk about it?

The Chair: It won't even be a minute, but roughly 10 seconds.

Mr. Jean-Paul Perreault: As for the vitality of the French-language communities, the trend must necessarily be measured by means of indicators. It's not enough to develop policies; you also have to measure the results of those policies. In that regard, the most important indicator, although not the only one, is numbers. The figures clearly showed us that a little earlier: the federal policy is producing inadequate results. In fact, they are dramatic, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Perreault.

I'm going to ask Mr. Godin to ask the next question.

Mr. Yvon Godin (Acadie—Bathurst, NDP): Thank you, Mr. Chair. Welcome to our witnesses.

[*English*]

Welcome to all the witnesses here this morning.

[*Translation*]

I'd like to start with Mr. Perreault. Table 5 shows the percentage losses among Francophones outside Quebec; Table 6 shows the gains for the Quebec Anglophone community.

In the latter case, are these Francophones who have opted for English?

Mr. Jean-Paul Perreault: That's the net balance, the net gains. The net gains are linguistic transfers. For example, in Quebec, according to the 2001 census, 591,000 citizens reported that their mother tongue was English, whereas 746,892 citizens declared that English was the language they used in the home, which shows what, in demographics, are called language transfers. There are people who have abandoned their mother tongue in order to speak mainly other languages in the home.

Mr. Yvon Godin: Is that or would that be as a result of immigration?

Mr. Jean-Paul Perreault: No. The comparison may come from Allophones who opt for English in the home and perhaps Francophones who opt for English as the language they use in the home. That's a net gain.

Mr. Yvon Godin: Because—

Mr. Jean-Paul Perreault: That's part of the assimilation phenomenon, because it's either Allophones or Francophones who are responsible for this increase.

Mr. Yvon Godin: According to Mr. MacLeod,

[*English*]

if I get you right, I think you said in relation to the immigration in Quebec that when they bring people in, they have to go to the French school—

Mr. Roderick MacLeod: That's correct.

Mr. Yvon Godin: —and if it's that, where is this number going to happen then? Did you see those numbers?

Mr. Roderick MacLeod: I don't understand these numbers; I'm sorry.

There is no way that the immigrant population, if we want to call it that, can increase numbers in any substantial way to the English school system. It is possible that francophones do attend English schools in Quebec; in fact, in some parts of the province there are considerable numbers of them because of a parent or grandparent who went to school in English. It means that English school systems rely, as I think I said, on people from outside the narrow community in order to fill their schools.

I still don't understand how that fits into the statistics, though. We'd have to have a much more detailed breakdown in order to understand that.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Yvon Godin: Is there an explanation?

Mr. Jean-Paul Perreault: Despite the requirement...

[English]

Mr. Yvon Godin: I don't want to start a debate, but I think we're all here for that—to understand. If we're going to write a report, we want to understand what's happening.

[Translation]

Mr. Jean-Paul Perreault: I think I can give you the explanation, Mr. Godin. In addition to the requirement imposed on immigration children by the French-language Charter of attending the French-language school system in Quebec, having regard to the North American context, you will understand that the asymmetry between the languages requires additional measures in Quebec and Canada to protect and promote French. Quebec understood this and put the French-language Charter in place, and there's an obligation for immigrant children to attend the French-language school system.

However, despite this obligation, Mr. Godin—and this is where you should all ask yourselves the question—when you measure all of society in Quebec, all demographic movements on a linguistic basis, you clearly see the dominance of the English language, since English is the language that benefits most from language transfers, the one gaining ground through the contributions of Allophones and Francophones, as a result of which, through language transfers, the Anglophone community has grown from 22% in 1991 to 26%, despite the measures which, I would point out, have proven to be distinctly inadequate. Quebec and the Canadian government should adopt a language policy based on the promotion of French both in Quebec and, even more, outside Quebec. This is an emergency. We're facing a situation. The setbacks that French has suffered call for reparations, and to ensure reparations, responsible measures are needed. After all, the heritages of Canada and Quebec are at stake.

• (0955)

Mr. Yvon Godin: We gathered sound bites to that effect when we did our cross-Canada tour. For example, some provinces, following the court challenges, recognized the right for Francophones to have their own schools in minority regions. The schools they got were those that the Anglophone community had closed in order to open new ones. The closed school was reopened in order to give it to Francophones. There wasn't even a gymnasium, absolutely nothing.

On Tuesday, we heard from the people from the Northwest Territories. They've been fighting for two years, despite the fact that they won the right, in court, to have their own French-language schools. They're still fighting to get a gymnasium.

That's not a very pretty situation. There's nothing to be proud of there. I'm a person, honestly, who promotes both languages. If we believe in the act that states that English and French are the two official languages of Canada, then both should be treated in the same way, whether in Quebec or in the rest of Canada. For my part, being a Francophone outside Quebec, I find it abnormal that we're still talking about this.

I don't know whether you know Antonine Maillet, who is originally from back home. I don't want to take up too much of my time; I just want to address this subject briefly. She said that, when the English left England and the French France, two great nations travelled across the water, fought when they left Europe until they arrived here and, 400 years later, one would say they're still fighting each other.

There are countries where people learn six languages and where there's no language problem. We only have two languages, and we're still fighting.

So I'd like to know, briefly, whether you'd like to make any specific recommendations, because that's what we want to put in the reports. For example, an illiteracy rate of 49% is unacceptable. A rate of 54% is unacceptable. What kind of programs do you think should be put in place to help our people?

The Chair: You'll have to answer in about 20 seconds.

Mme Ilze Epnors: Twenty seconds?

Mr. Yvon Godin: It's just as well to wait for the next round, madam. Please keep your answer until then.

[English]

Mrs. Ilze Epnors: I can do it quickly.

[Translation]

Mr. Yvon Godin: I think that—

[English]

Mrs. Ilze Epnors: I can do it very quickly. We have to have a national program where all the 10 provinces and the federal government sit down and have a national plan that is not underfunded, that is funded to the point where they can have results. In the last 10 years, 20 years, adult literacy has been very underfunded. It's been project, project, project, underfunded. So there's no national plan, funded. After 10 years of proper funding and having a national plan, I personally believe we would see results.

The Chair: Thank you. That was very brief.

[Translation]

The next question will be asked by Mr. Harvey.

Mr. Luc Harvey (Louis-Hébert, CPC): I've had a little trouble following the discussion, until now, not because it's being conducted in English and French, but rather because first we talked about literacy, then about assimilation, and then it was mentioned that too much money was allocated to the English language universities in Quebec because the numbers ratios are different. I find it hard to include all these elements in a whole. I'm in a way looking for a common theme among our witnesses, and I'm trying to determine what problem or subject we're discussing today.

With regard to literacy, as far as I know, education is mandatory until the age of 16, at least here in Canada. Upon turning 16, a person will have attended school for 10 or 11 years before being able to drop out legally. So if we've wound up with an illiteracy rate of 49%, perhaps you're speaking to the wrong people, because primary and secondary education are a provincial jurisdiction. If the failure rate is 49%, monitoring should have been done at the provincial level so that illiterates would not represent more than 10 or 15% of the population of Canada.

• (1000)

Mrs. Ilze Epnors: May I respond?

Mr. Luc Harvey: Yes, please.

[English]

Mrs. Ilze Epnors: Yes, there is a problem, and I agree 100% that the school system somewhere isn't doing its job. That's a provincial jurisdiction, and I'm not going to go there because it's provincial.

But I also think we have to look at what happens to literacy. Literacy is an economic problem for all of Canada. Anything that is economic and that touches our workforce becomes a federal problem. Our children are not going to be able to learn to read if their parents do not learn to read, and that is where the issue comes. Parents have to be literate to be able to have a family that becomes literate. We can say, okay, it's now the problem of the schools, but the problem starts from a long time ago. It's a self-perpetuating problem.

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Harvey: Theoretically, parents shouldn't be more than 40 years of age. The vast majority of people who today have children attending primary and secondary schools are roughly perhaps 45 years old. Since education has been mandatory since 1970, if I'm not mistaken, that means that, if they started in 1970, some parents are 37 years old. The percentage of illiterate parents that you're telling us about should be very low compared to the children who do not have any support at home.

Mrs. Ilze Epnors: Look beyond that. Why are these 35-year-old parents illiterate? Because their parents were illiterate. This isn't a problem that will be solved in one or two generations. The same thing applies to people who are on welfare. The attitude doesn't change in one generation. It takes four or five generations to change attitudes and to be ready to go off welfare.

The same is true with illiteracy. This affects a number of generations. If a child sees neither of his parents reading at home, if there are no books in the house... It's very hard for you to understand that because you all know how to read. It's impossible for you to understand. It isn't simply a matter of picking up a book and reading it; it's a comprehensive approach.

[English]

You need to have a completely holistic approach.

When kids come from families where there is no reading at all, there is a complete difference in self-worth. It becomes holistic, and you can't say, "Okay, learn a, b, c, and d." It is a holistic approach to teaching people to become literate.

That's from generation to generation. Don't expect it to be fixed in one generation.

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Harvey: The problem is that the discussion could take a lot of time, but I only have seven minutes. We're trying to deal with this situation.

Mr. Perreault, you're trying to establish a relationship between a literacy problem and a lack of money at the universities. At what point should we learn to read and write in any school system?

Mr. Jean-Paul Perreault: What I'm going to say will probably enlighten you.

The 2003 International Adult Literacy and Skills Survey that Statistics Canada refers to was based on four tests, not study levels. Based on the results of those four tests, Levels 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 were established. Levels 3, 4 and 5 are equivalent to literacy. Below those levels, we're talking about functional illiteracy.

The four tests concern the following areas: comprehension of prose texts, comprehension of document texts, that is charts and tables, numeracy and problem-solving or analytical reasoning. The tests were administered to 23,000 Canadians—this is an international survey—and, in view of the fact that there are fewer Francophones, the Francophone sample was increased in order to establish comparative statistics.

It's not only the study level that determines this; it's the results based on the four tests administered by the International Literacy Survey.

• (1005)

Mr. Luc Harvey: My question concerned the relationship between university funding and—

Mr. Jean-Paul Perreault: I'm getting there. If university prospects are non-existent or virtually impossible for a Francophone, if access to postsecondary education is limited, you'll agree with us that the Francophone results on these four tests will be inferior. Prospects, access to postsecondary education, are limited in many cases in Canada outside Quebec, and Quebec's Anglophone universities receive 25% of funding for a Francophone population of 8%.

This is so much the case in Quebec that there are higher levels of illiteracy among Quebec Francophones than there are among Quebec Anglophones, and the disproportionate figures in Canada outside Quebec are disturbing. When you do not have any postsecondary education prospects, and given the assimilation statistics such as those projected earlier, you'll agree with us that, in many cases, young people don't see themselves going—

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Perreault. You've gone way beyond the allotted time.

We'll continue our five-minute round.

[English]

Our next round is five minutes.

We have a special guest with us, Mr. Ken Boshcoff.

Mr. Ken Boshcoff (Thunder Bay—Rainy River, Lib.): Thank you.

My question will focus again on this literacy aspect, because I believe we have an opportunity here with your presentations to make the government understand how deep and severe the impacts of the cuts have been to people in all provinces and territories, and hopefully through your presentation today to actually help convince the government to restore those in the next budget.

In Ontario, even small cuts affected many organizations, because if it was \$5,000 out of a \$90,000 budget, it's essentially the same as \$500,000 to a larger budget. A lot of federal funding depends on provincial support, and it is triggered and supported in such a way. Is it the same in the province of Quebec?

Mrs. Ilze Epnors: In the province of Quebec we had a special entente with the federal government. It was the interprovincial entente

[*Translation*]

for literacy.

[*English*]

All the money came and was distributed to the province's different literacy organizations. That was one way of being funded.

The other way we were funded was the Quebec English Literacy Alliance. It was directly funded by the old NLS. We wrote projects and got money for our projects, which were all short-term projects and could never be repeated.

Yes, it definitely did hurt us, because the Quebec English Literacy Alliance, now that they are directly funded by the NLS, are in jeopardy of being 100% cut. We do not know yet. We haven't been notified one way or the other, so we don't know. We're just living on a shoestring, hoping we will survive. The other organizations, the volunteer sector, still had funding for this year but had to cut back drastically.

Mr. Ken Boshcoff: Is it the umbrella or the *parapluie* organizations that would essentially speak for many different smaller groups throughout the province? When the umbrella organization is lost, then it means that the smaller groups, the community organizations, have to try to make the same pitch with much fewer resources, and there is a huge multiplicity of similar messages being sent, whereas the umbrella organizations could speak for everybody. Is that—?

Mrs. Ilze Epnors: That's exactly it, and remember that the umbrella organization does all the training. The training is huge, because a regular teacher cannot teach a literacy student; it requires special training. The umbrella organization is the one that does the training. The umbrella organization is the one that has the funding to write material so that we have materials, because there are no materials you can just go out and buy for teaching literacy.

That alone is a reason for the umbrella organization to exist. If the umbrella organization is no longer there, they will not be there to feed all of that to the little tiny organizations that are in the—

• (1010)

Mr. Ken Boshcoff: I'm hoping that your presentation makes some sense to the reasonable members of the government side, so that they can carry this message to the Treasury Board and the Minister of Finance.

How much time is left, Monsieur?

The Chair: You have a minute.

Mr. Ken Boshcoff: You talked about ministerial turnover. Is there not some method whereby the public service at least provides some kind of continuity, or does it flip the waters every time?

Mrs. Ilze Epnors: It flips every time. If we have submitted a project for funding and we hear an election is coming, all we do is pray that our funding will come through before the election, because if there is a change in government, it takes far longer. If there is a change in minister, it takes a certain length of time. Right now,

because nobody has had any funding since last summer, you can well imagine that people have been laid off, offices have been closed, and students have gone. To get those students back is going to be impossible, because once they're gone, they're disillusioned; they say, "You didn't really care anyway." To get them back is impossible.

The Chair: I think we'll stop you there. Thank you very much.

We'll ask Mr. Chong to ask the next question.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Michael Chong (Wellington—Halton Hills, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'd like to ask Mr. Perreault two questions. My first question concerns your Table 7. You say there are only 2,000 bilingual Canadian government positions in Ontario. Where did you get that statistic? I don't think that's correct. I believe there are 2,000 bilingual persons on Parliament Hill alone.

[*English*]

To say that there are only 2,000 positions in the Government of Canada that require knowledge of both English and French in Ontario, out of the hundreds of thousands of public servants in this province employed by the Government of Canada, doesn't seem to me to be correct. I think there are probably on Parliament Hill alone 2,000 positions that require knowledge of both English and French.

So I don't know where these statistics are coming from.

[*Translation*]

The second thing I want to say concerns the statistics on Quebec's English-language universities.

[*English*]

My view is that your interpretation of those statistics is not entirely accurate either, in that a very similar situation exists in Nova Scotia. The fact is that in Nova Scotia we have King's College, we have Dalhousie University, we have St. Mary's University, we have Acadia University, we have a number of other universities and colleges in Nova Scotia—disproportionately far more in relation to the population in Nova Scotia, and they disproportionately educate graduates of high schools from the United States and from Ontario, and it's been a long-standing policy of the province to subsidize those students.

The same thing goes on in Quebec with Bishop's, with McGill, with other English universities where they receive a disproportionate number of graduates from the United States and from other Canadian provinces, and therefore the Government of Quebec, in a very similar fashion, has subsidized those universities.

It has nothing to do with the proportion of English-speaking graduates or anglophone graduates from English-speaking high schools in Quebec. It has to do with the fact that there is a disproportionate number of graduates from other provinces and from other countries who are attending those universities.

So I think your view on those statistics isn't entirely correct, and I'd be interested to see in this particular case where these statistics are coming from.

•(1015)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jean-Paul Perreault: In response to your first question, the statistics in Table 7 come from the 2004-2005 annual report of Treasury Board Canada. They aren't figures that we made up; they're figures that we took from a report by the federal government, by the Treasury Board. I invite you to consult the 2004-2005 annual report; you'll find these figures there.

These figures are very clear, and they tell the truth. This is a statistical instrument for measuring language knowledge in the federal public service. It comes from the Canadian government.

62% of federal public service positions in Quebec — excluding those in the Quebec portion of the National Capital Region — require knowledge of English, for a population of 590,000 Anglophones.

Let's compare the situation to that prevailing on the other side of the river. In Ontario, 10% of federal positions — excluding those in the Ontario part of the National Capital Region — require knowledge of French, for a roughly identical Francophone population of 510,000 inhabitants.

These statistics are issued by Treasury Board Canada. They are not statistics that come from us or a federal agency.

In response to your question on university funding, if you compare funding received by Quebec's English-language universities with that received by university institutions outside Quebec offering programs in French, you'll see that English-speaking Quebecers are funded and received seven times more university funding than Francophones outside Quebec. They receive seven times more!

Mr. Chong, I'm sure that, if you also compare the number of Anglophone students to the number of Francophone students, this won't change a great deal. You'll see that Francophones are at a disadvantage at the university level, whether it be in Quebec or outside Quebec.

The Chair: I have to stop you, Mr. Perreault, because the time is up. Mr. Malo will ask the next question.

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

Good morning, ladies and gentlemen.

My first question is for Mr. MacLeod. A little earlier you said that there was a decline in the number of Anglophone students in Quebec schools. I wonder whether that's indeed a language-related problem, since, in other Francophone communities, we're seeing that we also have to close schools as a result of declining birth rates.

[*English*]

Mr. Roderick MacLeod: There is a demographic problem everywhere; that's not an issue. Part of the issue is that 40 or 50 years ago there were a large number of schools built across Quebec. A large number of them are now part of the English school system, more than the population can sustain clearly. That is true across the

board, but it is particularly true in the English school systems, wherever they happen to be.

I repeat the point I made, and that is that the French school system in Quebec can replenish itself quite apart from the natural evolution of numbers. As generations pass, it can replenish itself with immigrants and people coming from other parts of the world. If you want to look at it, that is a way that schooling in most parts of Canada, to a certain extent, and certainly in Quebec, relies on to keep going, but it's not an option open to the English schools in Quebec.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Malo: As Mr. Godin and Mr. Nadeau pointed out earlier, we heard certain groups from other regions of Canada, people from the Francophone minority. They told us that they had to fight and go to court to get access to French-language schools. After long, hard court battles, they managed, in certain cases, but still not everywhere, to get often antiquated French-language schools. In the Atlantic region, I believe some children are going to school in a bar. I wonder whether the Quebec Anglophone community endures or has to conduct these kinds of battles to get schools.

•(1020)

[*English*]

Mr. Roderick MacLeod: The francophones outside of Quebec have worked extremely hard for a long period of time simply to create schools, let alone school systems. More or less, the anglophones in Quebec have had a school system for generations and generations. I hesitate because as I began speaking...there is the Protestant-Catholic distinction, which means we can't, technically speaking, talk about the English school system. Nevertheless, anglophones in Quebec have never had any problems having access to a schooling institution. We don't have to reinvent the wheel; no one is arguing that.

For various reasons, including, I'm sorry to say, a legal one, English speakers in Quebec are restrained in a school system that is getting progressively smaller. I would hope to find recourse not so much in ongoing legal struggles, which will get out of hand if they are undertaken—It will be very hard to focus such an issue specifically on the issue of the survival of schools.

I would much prefer to see money available through other programs, which is why I mentioned literacy and all kinds of community organizations, which now, more than ever, are working with the school systems and with their schools, literally to keep them alive. I'm not familiar with this elsewhere. Certainly many schools in Quebec in the English school system are surrounded by communities that are spending all kinds of time and effort, and even fundraising money, in order to keep their schools alive, to the point where they are picking up paint brushes and doing the work that school boards should be doing.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. MacLeod. I have to stop you there.

[*Translation*]

We're going to ask Mr. Godin to ask the next question.

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

I don't know what my colleague Luc Malo thinks when someone says that people in the Atlantic attend school in bars. Let's hope that doesn't increase the alcoholism problem.

My colleague Luc Harvey

[English]

was saying—maybe I got him wrong, and I hope I did—what really are you doing here because of literacy? What does it have to do with official languages? It's education and it is provincial jurisdiction.

[Translation]

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher (Beauport—Limoulu, CPC): That's not what he said.

[English]

Mr. Yvon Godin: Then I'm happy. That's not what you said.

It is federal jurisdiction, because part VII of the Official Languages Act is very clear in sections 41, 42, and 43 that it is the responsibility of the federal government to promote the two languages of our country. By doing that, they have the power to invest money in the provinces and then leave the provinces, through their law, to administer education.

When we look at literacy, I must say, I agree. I just cannot see how a student can go home where the parent has a grade six education and is trying to help the student. It takes generations and generations. There I could say that people go to school in church basements. There I say that students go to school in halls, as we have in New Brunswick, where they don't even have any heat and some teachers have to pay for toilet paper for the students and bring it to the school. We heard all of that, and it is a shame. It is a shame in our country that we don't have a program.

You have been invited here to talk to us about what types of recommendations there are, and, if I heard you right, you're saying there should be a serious national program for literacy and that we should stop the red tape, stop all of what we're doing and put money in for education. Is that what I heard from you?

• (1025)

Mrs. Ilze Epnors: Yes, sir. We absolutely need to have a pan-Canadian program, a plan that's not for one year, not for two, but for a minimum of ten years, which is properly funded, not project funded, because project funding doesn't work. It starts and stops; it starts and it stops. We need a core program nationally.

Mr. Yvon Godin: Then, if I hear you right, you're saying it's almost like building a solid institution that exists and not a project, because with projects—

Mrs. Ilze Epnors: They don't work.

Mr. Yvon Godin: —you are losing more time trying to get the project on the go and wondering when are you going to get the money—always with *incertitude*—than in doing the real work.

Mrs. Ilze Epnors: The worst part with a project is that you start it and it's a six-month project and then it's over. Then you have to make up another project. In the meanwhile, it all has to do with something that helps literacy. You start a nice program, you get everything going, money runs out, and then what do you do? How can you sustain it?

We know that project funding doesn't work. We've proven that over and over again. There have been many studies done. We know it is a core program that is going to help, and it has to be pan-Canadian. It has to have a plan.

Mr. Yvon Godin: Mr. MacLeod, are you a teacher?

Mr. Roderick MacLeod: Yes.

Mr. Yvon Godin: What do you think about what was just said? If you're teaching students and they go back home, as we heard from the previous witnesses, and the parents just cannot give them a hand—do you see that first-hand?

Mr. Roderick MacLeod: I've taught at CEGEP and at university, and, yes, I do see it, and it is very discouraging even when you get to the level of university and there is still the low level of what we'd call literacy.

As a parent, though, I'm even more struck by this. If I may say, I teach at university, therefore I expect to be able to help my children with the kind of work they bring home. Sometimes I wonder if I'm doing that. I can only imagine if I lacked those skills how difficult it would be.

I also know people who tutor, and they are often stunned by the level of difficulty children have. Some of it is learning disability, and we have to be very...

Mrs. Ilze Epnors: Careful.

Mr. Roderick MacLeod: Well, we have to be attentive to this as a global thing. It's not—

A voice: There are all kinds of reasons.

Mr. Yvon Godin: Do you feel, then, that the federal government has a role to play?

The Chair: Excuse me, Mr. Godin, but—

Mr. Yvon Godin: Is it that fast? I think you're on fast time. You must be on Ottawa time, not New Brunswick time.

The Chair: You know, when you're asking interesting questions, it really runs by quickly.

Mr. Yvon Godin: Okay, well, give me another five minutes, then?

The Chair: Okay. We're going to continue with—

Mr. Yvon Godin: We all agree?

The Chair: We're going to continue with Mr. Simard.

[Translation]

Hon. Raymond Simard: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Perreault, I can tell you that you've made me think this morning. In fact, our committee recently toured across the country to explore somewhat the vitality of the communities.

You are right: the Dion Plan mainly targeted French as a second language. The \$750 million, \$360 million of which was allocated to immersion programs, has produced good results. We admit that people from British Columbia are prepared to spend the night on the sidewalk to register their children in immersion. But that doesn't mean that the next Dion Plan or any other plan might not target Francophone communities to a greater degree.

During our trip, we observed that, when the community education centres are given the necessary tools, they work; they have their own schools. In French-speaking Manitoba, when they build a French-language school, it's full to overflowing in two or three years. When they're given the tools and infrastructures, it works extremely well.

I think we should look at the possibility of adopting a strategy for the Francophone community concerning French. That's something interesting.

Could you comment on that?

Mr. Jean-Paul Perreault: Only 9% of English-speaking Canadians are bilingual. That's what the figures show. In French-speaking Canada, including Quebec, the rate is 45%. You can clearly see that the bilingualism policy has much more anglicizing effects on Francophones, which the statistics moreover show, since those effects go as far as assimilation, whereas it has virtually no effect on the Anglophone community.

The request we're making that the federal government adopt a language policy based on the promotion of French is consistent with your remarks, but it's mainly targeted at Canada outside Quebec, so that an exclusionary unilingualism is not practised there that does not recognize our situation, but focuses on learning the other reality, which is ours. That's how the bilingualism policy, together with a French promotion policy, could produce results.

Going back to Mr. Chong's question on the Treasury Board statistics, there are only 6,490 designated unilingual French positions in the federal public service across Canada, compared to 484,200 designated unilingual English positions. One French position for 11 English positions, whereas Anglophones—

•(1030)

Hon. Raymond Simard: Mr. Perreault, could you get back to my question, please?

I also want to talk to you briefly about the cultural and demographic situation of the communities outside Quebec. Back home in Manitoba, 80% of couples are exogamous. This is increasingly the situation. Our Francophones are marrying Anglophones. We're also talking about literacy and all kinds of interesting challenges that we're facing. So this isn't as simple as that.

Mr. Jean-Paul Perreault: Mr. Simard, I'll respond to your judicious comment by saying that what we observe in Canada outside Quebec is also being observed among Francophones in Quebec. Linguistic dominance in exogamous couples always, or nearly always, works in favour of... That's why we're telling the government that there's another issue and that it must therefore establish a genuine policy based on the promotion of French in both languages in a North American context. In the Canadian context, there's one minority language that requires more resources.

In Quebec, the illiteracy that we're talking about is much higher among Francophones. When Mr. Godin talks about assisting the Anglophone community in addressing illiteracy, I entirely agree with him. But let's not forget: in Quebec, there's much illiteracy among Francophones. Imagine then what it is outside Quebec.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Perreault.

We'll continue with Mr. Nadeau.

Mr. Richard Nadeau: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

My question is for Mr. MacLeod. You're a teacher; I am as well. You're a university professor, isn't that correct?

Mr. Roderick MacLeod: I teach at McGill University.

Mr. Richard Nadeau: Teaching is a field that concerns me very much. I taught high school among the Métis and Fransaskois in the west and among the Franco-Ontarians and Quebecers. In the west, we had to fight to get our schools, as I mentioned last Tuesday. Governments denied us for 64 years, but we ultimately got them. Now we're way behind.

I'm going to ask you a simple question. If a Canadian settles in Quebec with school-aged children, can he, anywhere in the province, enroll them in a school where English is the first language? Are there places where that's impossible because there are no English-language schools?

Mr. Roderick MacLeod: No.

Mr. Richard Nadeau: I'm going to give you an example. In Saskatchewan, there are nine areas. Those who don't live in one of those areas may not attend a French-language school. That's the situation. And yet they say that schools management is already underway.

I understand what you're doing. You're protecting your community. There are problems, but really when you look at the Francophone community outside Quebec, you realize that it's absolutely not the same thing: these are two different worlds. The Canadian government closes its eyes to that, on the ground that that's a provincial jurisdiction.

It becomes hard to find solutions because we don't have any leadership. These provinces aren't penalized. Imagine if Quebec refused to grant English-language schools to Anglophones, as French-language schools were denied to Francophones in Saskatchewan. They'd empty Afghanistan and send all the troops to Quebec. And yet, in the case of Saskatchewan, no one ways a word. My example may be appropriate, but I hope that doesn't occur.

•(1035)

Mr. Yvon Godin: We'd close the bars.

Mr. Richard Nadeau: That's another story, my friend.

Since this is the last round, I'd like to talk about a group from back home called Le Tremplin. It receives \$14,000 a year to do literacy work. I visited that group. All the teachers work on a volunteer basis. In fact, they are retired teachers. This is in Quebec, in Gatineau, in the basement of Saint-Jean-Marie-Vianney Church. Some Franco-Ontarian students even attend the place because this service still is not available where they live. The people there are of all ages; it's surprising. There are about 12 people on average.

I'd like to ask each of you your opinion about what should absolutely be included in the report on the fight against illiteracy. You mentioned a national program, but are there more specific solutions that we should consider?

Mrs. Ilze Epners: I must honestly say that we're not lacking the manpower, the will or the expertise. We're lacking money.

Mr. Richard Nadeau: So it's a matter of political will.

Earlier one colleague said he was completely surprised to learn that these things happened in our country. However, this is a situation that exists and that we have to deal with. We find it across Canada, and the anti-illiteracy groups have reasons for seeking aid.

Mr. Perreault, your three recommendations concern the issue of numbers, reparations and the accent that should be placed on francization rather than bilingualism.

There are three, perhaps four minutes left, Mr. Chair?

The Chair: Perhaps one.

Mr. Richard Nadeau: I'm going to let Mr. Perreault tell us the key recommendations that should be included in the report.

The Chair: You have 30 seconds, Mr. Perreault.

Mr. Jean-Paul Perreault: First, I'm going to insist, once again, in view of the linguistic asymmetry, on the need to develop a federal language policy based on the promotion of French, providing the resources to achieve results. That's absolutely necessary.

Second, I recommend that numbers henceforth be considered as a central indicator in measuring the results of federal policies. There won't be the least amount of vitality in the minority language communities if we don't proceed in this manner. Numbers must be central to measuring results.

The other recommendation is obviously that we ensure that the Canadian government stops putting the two languages on the same footing. There is an asymmetry. At the outset, the thinking must always be done taking the asymmetry between the two linguistic situations for granted. At all times, this asymmetry will have to be compensated for by additional resources, policies, directives and programs.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Perreault.

If I understand correctly, Ms. Boucher and Mr. Lemieux will be sharing the five minutes reserved for the Conservatives?

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: Yes.

Good morning, everyone. I'm pleased that you're here today and to see how interesting the discussion is, although it's also a little confused. Everyone was a little lost at one point or another.

I'd like to go back to your table, Mr. Perreault, because I have figures that contradict yours.

In Quebec, as regards the Anglophone population, you advanced the figure of 590,000 Anglophones, whereas my sources tell me there are 918,000.

Mr. Jean-Paul Perreault: How many?

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: In Quebec, there are 918,955 Anglophones in the official language minority.

Mr. Jean-Paul Perreault: You say 918,000?

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: Exactly. Those are the figures I have in hand here.

Mr. Luc Harvey: Those are Statistics Canada's figures.

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: My friend the analyst provided them to me.

In Ontario, the linguistic minority, that is to say the French-language minority, comprises 527,710 Francophones. There are a number of things—

Mr. Jean-Paul Perreault: You say there are 527,000 in Ontario?

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: Yes. Wait. My glasses are fine; that's what I have here.

Mr. Jean-Paul Perreault: The statistics you have...

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: This is entitled: "Minority population by province or territory [...]".

Mr. Jean-Paul Perreault: Yes. And by mother tongue, language knowledge—

• (1040)

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: Official language minorities.

Mr. Jean-Paul Perreault: Pardon me, Ms. Boucher, but no.

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: Fine, all right.

Mr. Jean-Rodrigue Paré (Committee Researcher): It's very simple. In offering its services, the federal government relies on the first official language spoken criterion—

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: Precisely.

Mr. Jean-Rodrigue Paré: —which isn't the same thing as mother tongue.

Mr. Jean-Paul Perreault: So that's language knowledge.

Mr. Jean-Rodrigue Paré: No, it's not knowledge, it's the first official language spoken. That may be the mother tongue, but not necessarily. That means, for example, that, in Quebec, given the large percentage of immigrants—

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: Correct. Who speak French.

Mr. Jean-Rodrigue Paré: ... for whom English is the first language spoken, as a result of which the statistics on mother tongue don't accurately reflect the situation of Anglophones in Quebec. So the federal government relies on the first official language spoken criterion.

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: That's the explanation.

Mr. Jean-Rodrigue Paré: That corresponds to approximately 920,000 persons in Quebec, according to the 2001 census...

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: That was in 2001.

Mr. Jean-Rodrigue Paré: ...and to approximately the same percentage of Francophones outside Quebec, also according to the 2001 census.

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: It's simply that I got lost at one point.

Le président: Then we'll continue with Ms. Boucher.

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: I'd like to say that we've done a lot of work. Our committee has travelled. As my friend Mr. Godin said so well, we've travelled around, done a cross-Canada tour and heard a lot of evidence as well.

I'm an eternal optimist, and I think we're on the right track. The entire team here, whether it be one party or another, wants to move forward.

Our committee was set up to evaluate the Action Plan for Official Languages. Has the action plan worked? Has it not worked? First, I'd like to know, in your opinion, Ms. Epners, what the deficiencies of the plan were. Are you familiar with Bill S-3? What aspects of the plan should be improved, in your opinion?

[English]

Mrs. Ilze Epners: When you say action plan, what action plan are you referring to?

[Translation]

The action plan...?

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: We're talking about the Dion Plan. It was called the Dion Plan. There was Bill S-3 as well, wasn't there? Anglophones in Quebec aren't affected by that. Is that correct?

Hon. Raymond Simard: Literacy.

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: In that case, Mr. Perreault...

Mr. Jean-Paul Perreault: I have a comment to make. When you refer to the first official language spoken, you'll understand that we're not talking about the same statistics.

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: No, no.

Mr. Jean-Paul Perreault: Statistics Canada, as far as we're concerned, referred...

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: I merely wanted to tell you to what extent you can play with figures.

Mr. Jean-Paul Perreault: Except, Ms. Boucher, that let's not play with the figures; let's draw the necessary conclusions.

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: All right.

Mr. Jean-Paul Perreault: The dominance of English is much greater based on your statistics than on those that I used...

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: That's not the question I asked. What I want to know is what you think of the action plan.

Mr. Jean-Paul Perreault: ... since my figures tell me that there are 591,000 Anglophones, based on mother tongue in Quebec, and that yours tell you that there 900,000.

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: Mr. Perreault...

The Chair: Mr. Perreault—

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: Mr. Perreault—

Le président: Mr. Perreault, I think Ms. Boucher wants an answer to her question.

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: I want to know, because I work on this committee, what are the deficiencies of the action plan — if you're familiar with it — and what aspects of the plan should be improved.

Mr. Jean-Paul Perreault: First, Ms. Boucher, it must be recognized that the action plan needs to be developed further, that a lot more resources should be added to it. I don't think the resources

under the Dion Plan would allow for reparations. We're talking about considerable resources for correcting centuries of injustice toward Canada's French-speaking community.

If you look at the figures we've published, the comparison between mother tongues and spoken languages, the statistics we use to measure assimilation, you'll clearly see that, in the case of French in Canada, outside Quebec, it's the English language that... Francophones are "defrancized". I don't think the Dion Plan can be considered a reparations plan.

The Chair: Mr. Perreault, I have to stop you because the time allotted to Ms. Boucher is up.

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: Yes.

The Chair: The last question will be asked by Mr. Godin. You have six minutes.

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

Mr. Perreault, you say the Dion Plan won't really right the wrongs. However, Ms. Boucher said she is optimistic and that we're on the right track. And yet her government has just cut the Court Challenges Program.

Can you draw a parallel between those two elements?

Mr. Jean-Paul Perreault: Let's be clear on this: the Dion Plan will never be the reparations plan we're talking about. It's distinctly inadequate. We're talking about reparations for Francophones for centuries of injustice, injustice that continues, according to some of the evidence I've heard today. Don't consider the Dion Plan as providing for the reparations that we're seeking today. Believe me that will take a real language policy based on French, to end with a genuine plan to correct the injustices suffered by Francophones. That will take a very serious approach on our part.

• (1045)

Mr. Yvon Godin: I find it terrible, insulting and unacceptable that we're still talking about plans and building a school or gymnasium, when we have an Official Languages Act and it applies to both peoples.

Mr. Jean-Paul Perreault: You're right.

Mr. Yvon Godin: That's what you're saying.

Mr. Jean-Paul Perreault: How is it that the committee, whose mandate concerns official languages, is concerned by this situation 30 years after the Official Languages Act was passed? How is it that we are still dealing with a situation like the one we're describing? I believe you have some serious thinking to do about your mandate, and I invite you to do it because the results, when you consider the numbers, since we're talking about numbers and statistics here, clearly show that the last 30 years haven't produced the desired results in terms of numbers.

Mr. Yvon Godin: Since we're talking about political will, I just want to make a comment. It's taken 25 years for the committee to travel within Canada and to go and see what's going on in the field. That means that the political will wasn't there, even to show that there was a problem. But there is a problem, and it's serious.

Mr. Jean-Paul Perreault: And for 30 years, the annual reports of the Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages have repeated, year after year, that the situation of Francophones is deteriorating, that the situation is dramatic. 85% of complaints filed with the Office come from Francophones, not Anglophones. It can be clearly seen that the Francophone community is in a difficult situation. And the Commissioner's office is in some way directly related to the Official Languages Committee.

Mr. Yvon Godin: In Montreal, for example, Francophone students who study French at the college level are forced to go to McGill University to consult books that they have to study in English.

Mr. Jean-Paul Perreault: Here at the University of Ottawa, students in third year or at the master's level will have to take their courses in English.

Mr. Yvon Godin: So it's simple. Your recommendations are clear: we have to stop beating around the bush and

[*English*]

the red tape, as you said. Put the money in and just go ahead. Right?

Thank you.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jean-Paul Perreault: Let's stop the disinformation.

Mr. Yvon Godin: Thank you.

Le président: Thank you, Mr. Perreault. In fact, thanks to all the witnesses and all members. The meeting has been very interesting.

Next Tuesday, we'll be holding a one-hour meeting in camera, without witnesses, to discuss our future business. We intend to start studying the report on Thursday.

The meeting is adjourned.

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