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**Thursday, May 15, 2008**

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**Chair**

**Mr. Steven Blaney**

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• (0905)

[Translation]

**The Chair (Mr. Steven Blaney (Lévis—Bellechasse, CPC)):** I invite committee members to take their places since this morning we have a long list of witnesses from across the country.

Welcome to the 33rd meeting of the Standing Committee on Official Languages.

Today, members and witnesses, we complete our hearing of the evidence of organizations from across the country on the Canada-community agreements. We are finishing—I would almost say—in a fireworks display of witnesses.

We have Mr. Comtois, who is here on behalf of Ms. Cadieux, from the Assemblée de la francophonie de l'Ontario. From the Fédération acadienne de la Nouvelle-Écosse, we have Mr. Jean Léger. From the Fédération des communautés francophones et acadienne du Canada, the FCFA, we welcome Ms. Diane Côté. From British Columbia, we have Mr. Stéphane Audet, from the Fédération des francophones de la Colombie-Britannique. Then we go back east to welcome Ms. Cyrilda Poirier, Director General of the Fédération des francophones de Terre-Neuve et du Labrador. Lastly, we have the Quebec Community Groups Network, represented by its President, Mr. Robert Donnelly, and its Director General, Ms. Sylvia Martin-Laforge.

I wish you all the warmest of welcomes.

We'll begin in reverse order of my introductions. The last will be first. The Quebec Community Groups Network will speak first, then we'll go up the list.

I invite you to tell the committee your comments and thoughts. That's how it will be for all our guests. Then members will be able to proceed with the discussion and question period.

So Mr. Donnelly and Ms. Martin-Laforge, from the Quebec Community Groups Network, please go ahead.

[English]

**Mr. Robert Donnelly (President, Quebec Community Groups Network):** *Monsieur, merci.*

Mr. Chairman, members of Parliament, colleagues, and friends from other official language minority communities, good morning. Thank you for this opportunity to start the day—fireworks, I guess, maybe, but a lot of speakers, yes.

It is a pleasure to be with you today. My name is Robert Donnelly, and I am president of the QCGN, Quebec Community Groups

Network. I'll talk about that a bit more in a minute. With me is Sylvia Martin-Laforge, our DG. I would also like to acknowledge Nancy Peppy, president of the Regional Association of West Quebecers, a member organization of the QCGN, who is with us in the audience today. I thank her for coming and taking the time to be here.

QCGN brings together 29 language community organizations across Quebec that are dedicated to supporting and assisting community development and enhancing the vitality of the English-speaking minority communities in Quebec. The QCGN encourages and promotes participation by government departments and agencies for the development of the English-language minority communities. We also aim to promote dialogue and mutual understanding between the linguistic communities in Canada.

The English-speaking communities of Quebec have evolved significantly over the years. Many communities have moved from identifying themselves as anglophone communities to now identifying themselves rather as English-speaking communities. More than semantics, this evolution in terminology reflects a move toward greater inclusiveness and recognition of generational, ethnic, linguistic, and socio-economic diversity.

Our member organizations are active throughout the regions of Quebec from just across the Ottawa River in the Gatineau Region to the Gaspé, from the West Island of Montreal to the Îles de la Madeleine to the Lower North Shore to the townships, and Quebec City—where I live—in sectors ranging from arts and culture to heritage and to health and social services, just to name three. The common thread woven through our organizations is a deep commitment to building strong English-speaking communities throughout Quebec.

The Canada-community agreements or collaboration accords have been an important tool for us and a satisfactory initial step for the QCGN, including recognizing the QCGN as the official interlocutor between the federal government and the English-speaking communities of Quebec. There have definitely been some positive results from these accords. The QCGN and our member organizations have been able to develop programs and policies that have had clear and direct positive results for our members and our communities.

As the government prepares for the future, we feel that there are some important changes that should be made to these arrangements that will help the English-speaking communities of Quebec to move forward. The QCGN is enjoying a period of growth. You heard me mention that we have now 29 member organizations. Less than a year ago, there were only 22 member organizations in the QCGN. We have completely restructured. We have a new set of bylaws, new governance, and a new head office in Montreal. This is a reflection of the growth in community awareness among Quebec's English speakers. There is also a growing public recognition for the work the QCGN does.

The following is a quote from a Montreal *Gazette* editorial piece entitled "Anglos need calm defenders", published on March 4, 2008:

We're happy to...acknowledge that the QCGN has been doing a calm and careful job of building the connections anglophones need.

No single voice can speak for all Quebec's anglophones, but different groups with energy and a pragmatic focus on what's important to us will carry us a long way, especially if they communicate and co-operate together. We need groups, plural, to protect and promote our community.

It is essential that the government provide us, thus, with adequate resources to nourish and sustain this growth and to support our community development.

Funding is of course important, but there are other resources that are equally as important, such as flexibility, access to key decision-makers, and, above all, equity. Under the current arrangement, the QCGN deals with the Department of Canadian Heritage at the regional level. We are seen as simply a regional provincial association. While it is true that our membership cannot by definition cross the borders of Quebec, we believe this is a limiting, restrictive implication for the QCGN and our member organizations and communities.

• (0910)

The English-speaking communities of Quebec have proven to be key partners for the government in promoting the Canadian values of linguistic duality and bilingualism. As the latest census data indicates, 70% of anglophone Quebecers were bilingual, almost double the level reported in the 1970s. Among the 15 to 24 age group, this figure jumped significantly to 84%.

In the promotion of these Canadian values of linguistic duality and bilingualism, the English-speaking communities of Quebec wish to be key partners with the federal government. We believe we have developed a certain expertise over the years that we want to share with our national partners in the federal government, as well as with key stakeholders at other levels of government and pan-Canadian organizations.

The QCGN met with Mr. Bernard Lord and presented him with a brief in his national consultations for renewal of the action plan on official languages. We were delighted to see some of our comments reflected in his report. We shared with him some of our expertise on issues that are important to members of our communities, and also, I believe, made a contribution to the national discussion on official languages.

We will continue to offer our expertise, opinions and, above all, our willingness to cooperate with the federal government in moving the national debate forward. It is important to remember that there

are English-speaking Quebecers also spread out across Canada who are interested in this debate. All of us are looking forward to Minister Verner's final report and decisions.

By placing the QCGN on the national stage, we think we will have a more effective partnership with the federal government. We, like the Fédération des communautés francophones et acadienne du Canada and Canadian Parents for French, need access to key decision-makers who help shape policy that directly affects individuals in our communities. The decision-makers in Ottawa would then be put in a more direct relationship with us and would have the opportunity and would have more policy input from us on how to promote these key Canadian values.

The English-speaking communities of Quebec are blessed with strong institutions that are deeply rooted in the province. It's the old cliché of "What's the problem? You're in Quebec. You have everything." Our health care and education institutions, for example, do play key roles in the lives of many people in our communities. It is seductive to think that simply because of our strong institutions our communities face no community development challenges.

**The Chair:** Mr. Donnelly, you have two minutes to go.

**Mr. Robert Donnelly:** Thank you.

In his presentation to this committee on April 3, Mr. Régis St-Pierre of the Association of franco-yukonnaise mentioned the research of Dr. Rodrigue Landry from the Canadian Institute for Research on Linguistic Minorities. Dr. Landry often states that institutional infrastructure does not necessarily equal community vitality, and that's what our interest is—community vitality. An empty school, an empty church is still an institution, but it cannot contribute to vitality.

The 2006 census definitely contained some good news for our communities. There was a net increase in population growth for Quebec's anglophones. At the same time, we need to consider a few points.

One, among anglophones aged 25 to 29 there was a net loss for our community of almost 1,000 people. These are no doubt some of our brightest well-educated community members.

Two, among Quebec's anglophones, 61% of those whose top university degree was a bachelor's degree had moved to other parts of Canada. Among those with a master's degree, it was 66%. Among those with a PhD, it was 73%. So who's staying? The category most likely to remain in Quebec, amongst the anglophone and English-speaking communities, is the high school dropout. Only 40% of those left. So you can see what it does to the community and the building of vitality.

I do not mean to sound alarmist or create a false sense of panic, but our communities do face serious challenges. The QCGN would like to add its voice to those of the many other groups that have presented to this committee in reiterating some key points.

One, one size does not fit all. The government must take into account the unique reality of each official language minority.

Secondly, regarding access to funds, these envelopes must be simplified. The government can play an important role by lightening the administrative load and simplifying the process. When an organization spends half its money filling out application forms and report forms, and the staff have time for only that, it hinders the ability to work and do well.

Finally, the QCGN is currently in discussions to move beyond being a regional client of the Department of Canadian Heritage, and consequently a regional client of all other Government of Canada departments, to become, we hope, an equal partner with the federal government and other stakeholders in national policy development. We are asking for your support, members of Parliament, in our efforts to be recognized at the national level, where the policy decisions that have such a profound impact on our ability to work on community vitality are made.

I would just like to take this opportunity to invite you, the members of this committee, to come for a few hours to Montreal if it can be fitted into your schedule. We would be happy to organize a meeting with a good cross-section of our 29 members so that you can hear firsthand portrayals and information on the issues and the concerns.

Thank you very much.

• (0915)

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Donnelly, for your testimony and your invitation. That will be taken into account.

[*Translation*]

We now go to Ms. Cyrilda Poirier and the Fédération des francophones de Terre-Neuve et du Labrador.

**Mrs. Cyrilda Poirier (Director General, Fédération des francophones de Terre-Neuve et du Labrador):** Mr. Chairman, first I would like to thank you for the opportunity to appear before this committee today. Knowing that I couldn't add anything new to the list of complaints you've already received, I preferred this morning to share with you examples of what managing the collaboration agreement and contribution agreements in Newfoundland and Labrador represents for us in terms of time and energy. I also wanted my presentation to be brief, preferring to develop the subject during the question period.

Before coming here, I took the time to read our collaboration agreement carefully. I stopped for a long time at paragraph 17, which recognizes the contribution of the Canadian community sector, which remains, and I quote: "[...] a key provider of services in the minority official language". The question that comes to mind is this: if we are recognized as a provider of services, shouldn't we be given the necessary tools and resources to be able to provide those services? Let's not forget that the government has ultimate responsibility for official languages. The obligation to provide services falls to it. For decades, the government has shirked that obligation by simply handing it over to the volunteer sector and non-profit organizations, without however giving them, or giving us, the necessary financial resources to do the job. We have never been greedy in our demands. We simply want reasonable financial resources to enable us to carry out our mandate as a "provider of services".

One of the aspects of the collaboration agreement that it is hard for us to understand is the mechanism for allocating funding to the province. The francophone and Acadian community of Newfoundland and Labrador has a global development plan that the community organizations have developed together. However, the community has no impact on the decision regarding funding for the various programs or projects submitted by it. Instead, authorities have preferred to put in place an evaluation and recommendation committee consisting of people who are well intentioned, I'm sure, but who don't know us, are not active in our community and very probably have not taken the time to read our GDP. And it is they who are asked to make decisions that will affect our resources, our actions and our synergy for one year, by giving them the mandate to decide on our priorities, to determine funding levels and to make decisions that will have an impact on the vitality of and sustainable social change in our community. In our opinion, the community itself is in the best position to understand its needs in order to define priorities and ensure strategic, sustainable social change. We can no longer afford to operate in this manner with an entity that does not communicate with us, that does not come and gather more information, that does not take the trouble to explain its decisions to us.

The section of the collaboration agreement entitled "Canadian Heritage's Responsibilities", paragraph 179, on page 32, also drew my attention, and I quote: "Canadian Heritage is responsible for determining procedures and tools relating to the presentation and analysis of requests [...] Tools will be developed with due attention to simplifying the administrative requirements [...]" Our collaboration agreement was signed in late October 2004, and to my knowledge, the funding request forms have not changed since they were imposed on us some 15 years ago. Whether it's for one or 10 requests submitted during the year, whether the amount requested is \$250,000 or \$25,000, the application forms and administrative requirements are the same. Every request must be accompanied by Appendix A, the information in which changes little or not at all during the year, which must be accompanied by the minutes of the annual general meeting, the statutes and by-laws, the latest audited financial statements, and letters of support from partners. Compiling all those documents and completing the information section can take an average of half a day per request.

Here's a concrete example: Appendix B of my organization's operating funding application takes me an average of 15 days to complete, and it takes another 10 days or so, twice a year, to complete the report on results, or, if you will, Appendix F. In the circumstances, can you tell me where you can see the notion of simplifying and a concern to lighten the administrative load? It must be understood that a number of our organizations do not have the human resources at their disposal to complete these applications and are right to find it abnormal that so much time and energy should be spent on completing these forms.

• (0920)

In addition to the collaboration agreement, I also read with a great deal of attention the contribution agreement for our 2007-2009 programming. And by the way, Mr. Chairman, I would like to congratulate the Department of Canadian Heritage for making the wise decision in 2007 to grant us a multi-year contribution. This operating method enables us, as managers, to adopt a longer-term vision and to better invest our time and energy. However, it is still unfortunate that we are not granted a small reserve at the end of the year to cover delays in payment by Canadian Heritage. Those delays cost us an average of \$15,000 a year in interest charges. That's \$15,000 that we can claim from Canadian Heritage, \$15,000 that we could, without any problem, invest elsewhere for the benefit of our organizations.

In rereading the contribution agreement, I got stuck on section 12, on page 9, which reads: "Any overpayment remaining owing and unpaid shall carry interest calculated and compounded [...]" So it's completely ironic to read that we could be asked to pay interest if we were late in remitting overpayments, when Canadian Heritage can afford to delay payments, force us to negotiate lines of credit or, as I have had to do myself, advance funds to my organization from my personal line of credit in order to pay our employees' salaries.

In conclusion, Mr. Chairman, to help not only my own, but also all the other official language minority communities in pursuing our mandate as service providers, Canadian Heritage, first and foremost, need only increase the programming support fund, lighten the managerial and administrative load related to the collaboration agreement, ensure that funding is accessible at the start of the fiscal year and ensure that there is a strategic and efficient use of funding to guarantee the vitality of our communities.

Thank you.

• (0925)

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, Ms. Poirier.

Now from the Atlantic, we go to the Pacific to hear from the Fédération des francophones de la Colombie-Britannique and its director general, Mr. Stéphane Audet.

**Mr. Stéphane Audet (Executive Director, Fédération des francophones de la Colombie-Britannique):** Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

On behalf of the board of directors of the Fédération des francophones de la Colombie-Britannique, I would like to offer my very sincere thanks to the members of the standing committee for the enlightened, determined and proactive leadership they have shown to date in their proceedings during this 2nd Session of the 39th Parliament. The entire community is monitoring your proceedings, and we assure our organizations are well aware of your efforts and of the enormous job you have done and of the subjects you have covered. We appreciate that, and I wanted to acknowledge it on behalf of our community. It goes straight to the heart.

Our federation is a coalition of 35 institutions and organizations, both francophone and francophile—I want to tell you this—that are dedicated to increasing the offer of services and activities in French.

In British Columbia, we are going through a particularly accelerated development cycle. Our francophone community is undergoing explosive change. Our community infrastructure, however, is still very young, as you must know. We have been in catch-up mode for the past 10 to 15 years. Our institutions are young, our progress is recent and, in some instances, uncertain.

At the same time, we are experiencing significant demographic changes with the arrival of numerous interprovincial migrants and immigrants who have specific needs.

Our population is increasing, as are the expectations and needs of our community: nearly 300,000 British Columbians report that they have a good knowledge of French. Three hundred thousand people is a lot, and the number is constantly increasing. A new francophone identity is being born in British Columbia, a francophone identity of the Pacific, which is very interesting and different from what is found elsewhere in the country: not better, but definitely different.

The Fédération des francophones de la Colombie-Britannique plays a special role in this infrastructure. Our federation has a mandate and responsibility to negotiate, sign, manage and evaluate the present collaboration agreement with the Department of Canadian Heritage, which was signed in 2005. The community voted to give us the same mandate for the previous two Canada-Community Agreements.

We are about to complete an evaluation of the agreement and resulting mechanisms. Consequently, today I am able to present some findings and conclusions validated not only by our federation, but by all our regions, sectors and target groups as well.

In general, everyone agrees on the importance of signing agreements that formalize the partnership between the federal government and the francophone community and guide their actions toward strategic issues and priority actions.

For our francophone community, these agreements constitute a public commitment to act and be responsible for achieving results that are deemed significant for the French-speaking citizens of our province.

The community sector agrees that there has been a re-expansion of the francophone community in British Columbia since the first Canada-community agreement was signed in 1994. All our main sectors—education and training, arts and culture, economic development, health and immigration, to name only a few—have experienced accelerated development.

The community has managed to diversify its partners. The federal departments and agencies subject to section 41 of the Official Languages Act are now investing more in our community every year than Canadian Heritage. In 2006-2007, those departments invested nearly \$5 million. Canadian Heritage has invested approximately \$2.6 million a year in our community.

The community has also benefited from a strengthening of its ties with provincial government departments through the federal government's signing of the first Canada-British Columbia Agreement on the Promotion of Official Languages in 2001. A francophone affairs program was established at the province's Intergovernmental Relations Secretariat. An elected representative was made responsible for francophone affairs. The second agreement, for 2006-2009, was signed and is about to expire. The renewal of that agreement is of capital importance for us.

Those are the positive aspects.

However, the community has identified many deficiencies in the last collaboration agreement that we think must be corrected. We must have a Canada-community agreement, not merely an agreement that contains no multi-year financial commitment. The annual budget granted by Canadian Heritage, which now fluctuates between \$2.6 million and \$3 million a year, is inadequate. Taking inflation into account, that budget has not increased since 1999.

● (0930)

The Bank of Canada website shows the amount of funding granted by Canadian Heritage for francophone affairs in 1999. The current amount is lower than that. And obviously the community has vastly evolved since that time.

The administrative processes are too complicated and application processing too slow. My colleague from Newfoundland and Labrador told us about interest charges. In 2005-2006, our association paid \$60,000 in interest, which represents approximately 12% of the annual project budget for British Columbia. That's a waste of public funds.

These factors limit our ability to plan for the medium and long terms. They also result in the exhaustion of our staff and considerable uncertainty about our future as francophones and as builders in the heart of the Pacific francophone community.

Our civil society is exhausted. We are unable to pay our staff well. On Monday, I received the findings of a study on the working conditions of our francophone community staff. They are overwhelming. The average salary of managers in our network is \$44,000 a year. And yet 96% of employees have a postsecondary education, and 36% have done postgraduate work. The turnover rate in our francophone community is 62% over two years. Try to plan for the medium and long terms when you constantly have to start over. Sixty-two per cent of employees work overtime on a regular basis. A large percentage of our organization's employees work on a volunteer basis. A number of leaders lend money to their association and use their personal credit cards and lines of credit to enable activities to continue, whether it's in the area of training or services offered to citizens.

For some time now, Canadian Heritage has systematically violated our agreement and our cooperation mechanisms, which were established jointly with that department. Funding is granted, often to our surprise, without it being consistent with community priorities. Those funds managed by the Ottawa office of Canadian Heritage do not comply with our project evaluation mechanisms. Those investments do not have the structural effects that the funding

of Canadian Heritage and community priorities under the present agreement would have.

Accountability is still based far too much on activities rather than results. Reports must focus on the achievement of medium and long-term results. We need to focus more on the strategic effects, transformation and impact of our actions on citizens, not just evaluate how many citizens have taken part in a given activity.

Our agreement provides for a joint evaluation. As there appeared to be little haste or interest on the department's part in proceeding with that evaluation, we had to hire an independent evaluation firm to do it. We have therefore begun the evaluation because it was important for us to be accountable and to see whether we had met our commitments. We hope Canadian Heritage will do the same.

In our community, there are two solutions. First, there is an interest in greater regional independence. The government should enable the regions to innovate and adapt their intervention model to their situation and to the needs of their population. In that way, the regional offices and the community can work together and develop innovative ways to serve citizens.

Lastly, there is a lot of talk about grants. We are becoming service providers. We believe that the federal government should create an investment fund in each province and territory to promote the capitalization of economic projects that will enable the francophone community to be a credible economic partner at the municipal and regional levels.

We must go beyond grants and provide the communities with the financial means to take charge of themselves, to invest in projects and to contribute to the economic development of their municipalities, regions and provinces. That will enable us to have more influence and impact on citizens and to ensure our continued existence.

I'll stop here. Thank you for your attention.

● (0935)

**The Chair:** Thank you very much for your presentation, Mr. Audet.

We'll now hear from Ms. Diane Côté, the representative of the Fédération des communautés francophones et acadienne du Canada, and its Director of Community and Government Liaison.

**Ms. Diane Côté (Director, Community and Government Liaison, Fédération des communautés francophones et acadienne du Canada):** Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I'm pleased to be here today to talk to you about FCFA's perspective on the collaboration agreements. As I am very much aware of the limited time that is allotted to me, I would like to refer you to the brief that we have submitted, and here I will merely provide an overview of the main issues.

The Fédération des communautés francophones et acadienne du Canada, or FCFA, represents 12 provincial and territorial organizations that currently deal with the federal government under the collaboration agreements. FCFA's membership also includes nine national organizations, some of which also receive support under the Community Life - Cooperation with the Community Sector component of the Official Languages Support Program.

The FCFA therefore plays a support role for its provincial and territorial members in the implementation of the agreements and a liaison role with the department's national office. It works to increase the awareness of the administrative and political machinery to the need for greater investment in order to enable community organizations to better serve their clientele. We also work with the department identifying agreement implementation issues and examining other collaboration models that could meet needs more effectively.

The component of the Official Languages Support Program dedicated to collaboration agreements and support for national organizations representing francophone and Acadian communities has had an annual budget of \$27 million since 2005-2006. That amount has been increased by a portion of the \$30 million investment over two years, that is only about \$3.5 million a year, announced in the 2006 budget.

In anticipation of the renewal of the agreements in 2005, the francophone and Acadian communities put the cost of meeting their minimum needs at \$42 million a year. A quick calculation shows a shortfall of \$11.5 million that is growing steadily because of the impact of inflation and a higher cost of living on the real value of those amounts.

Those investments represent an extremely important lever for the community institutions and organizations. They provide them with a funding base that they can use to form other partnerships and look for other sources of funding to support their community.

Here are some of the main impacts of the funding shortfall. It is becoming increasingly difficult for the communities to meet the growing public demand for services, activities and programs in French, and the communities are facing a large number of burn-out cases and experiencing difficulty renewing their leadership. You've heard some of my colleagues mention that to you.

In early spring 2007, the FCFA, with the support of Canadian Heritage, conducted a consultation aimed specifically at identifying the challenges involved in implementing the collaboration agreements and possible short- and medium-term solutions.

Except for the level of investment issue, which was not on the agenda during those discussions, and which we've just talked about, we can sum up the consensus on problems related to the agreements in three broad categories: first, a step backward in terms of control and autonomy; second, administrative burden in terms of both application processes and accountability; and, third, the need for a more flexible approach that meets the unique development needs and situations of each provincial or territorial community.

Let's start with the issue of control and autonomy. One of the biggest changes brought about by the collaboration agreements was the elimination of joint committees. Under the Canada-community

agreements, the community and the department discussed and jointly decided on funding recommendations, but the collaboration agreements call for the creation of a community recommendation committee. The communities view this change from a decision-making body to a purely advisory body as a major step backward that gives the department the freedom to independently review applications and make funding decisions that could ultimately be at odds with the communities' recommendations. The communities fully understand ministerial prerogative, but some also go so far as to question the role and the real importance of funding recommendation committees because their impression is that the Department of Canadian Heritage will act alone regardless.

● (0940)

Second, administrative load and delays are major irritants for the communities and community organizations. Since the Policy on Transfer Payments was adopted in 2000, the department has undertaken a full review of the way it deals with community organizations. The new imposed procedures have significantly increased the amount of time organizations have to spend on funding applications and reporting and have also increased processing times for applications and delayed the issuing of cheques. The communities fully appreciate the importance of accountability. However, they would like to see more flexibility and decisions based on real risk management rather than arbitrary and universal rules.

Lastly, since we're talking about greater flexibility, it must be emphasized that, despite the consensus on the main themes applicable to all francophone and Acadian community organizations, the day-to-day reality of each organization is anchored in its particular geographic, political, cultural and social circumstances. It is important that the department take these differences into account in designing its programs. Together with the department, the FCFA is currently overseeing a study to identify other collaboration models that would enable the communities to progress at their own rate while meeting departmental accountability requirements.

In closing, we will say that it is essential to identify the mechanisms that will make it possible to meet the challenges involved in implementing the collaboration agreements, particularly as regards better recognition, in practice, of the symmetry of needs and realities, better control by the community of its own development and a lighter administrative burden in terms of management and accountability processes. The federal government must also act quickly to stabilize the organizations' funding and to put in place measures that will enable it to work with the communities in future to evaluate and adjust investments as needs require.

I will be pleased to answer your questions.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, Ms. Côté.

Even though there are a lot of witnesses this morning, we can see a certain agreement on the issues.

Now we'll go to the Fédération acadienne de la Nouvelle-Écosse.

Mr. Léger, go ahead please.



**Mr. Jean Léger (Executive Director, Fédération acadienne de la Nouvelle-Écosse):** Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Committee members, colleagues, thank you for having me today. I want to pass on the greetings of our Acadian and francophone community and of the president of the Fédération acadienne de la Nouvelle-Écosse, Mr. Désiré Boudreau.

As you know, our community comprises slightly less than 33,000 francophones and nearly 100,000 non-French speakers. Our organization, FANE plays the role of mouthpiece of the Acadian and francophone community and represents 26 organizations representing most of the aspects of our society and all its regions. All these organizations, like FANE, play a role and work tirelessly for the community's development through the major support of many volunteers, not to forget, of course, that of the federal government and provincial government.

You have asked us to share with you our reaction to the Canada-community agreements or collaboration agreements. As you may know, the community in our province was the last to sign the new generation of binding agreements between the Department of Canadian Heritage and the community. My argument will enable you to get a better understanding of the reasons why we did not sign the agreements as soon as the other provinces. I will also explain the changes that we wanted to make to what was proposed to us. I will make comments on the agreements signed in the past, and I will also have suggestions to make to improve the government's performance and to enhance the benefits for the community and the federal government with a view to the next round of agreements.

I could entitle my presentation, "What's in a Name?" an English expression that I think says a great deal. The community used to sign Canada-community agreements. Now they are collaboration agreements. The differences between the two are many and significant. The major difference lies in the fact that the Canada-community agreements were signed by the Government of Canada, represented by Canadian Heritage. Now the collaboration agreements are signed by Canadian Heritage. Does this mean a withdrawal on the part of the federal government? Do we really want to make it so only one department has responsibilities toward the community? Where did Canada go?

In the Canada-community agreements, the government signed with the community, whereas, in the collaboration agreements, it's signing instead with the community sector. To my knowledge, we're still talking about official language communities, not official language community sectors. Was the idea to downplay the importance of the document and of the community's potential recourse for enforcing the agreements? I believe there was a legal commitment that the Government of Canada no longer wanted to bear. We would probably have to talk to Crown attorneys or Canadian Heritage in order to get the inside story.

Under the Canada-community agreements, amounts of money were allocated, but that is not the case under the collaboration agreements. Mr. Lussier and Mr. Lafontaine emphasized that fact this week before this committee. This is important. With respect to funding allocated to the communities, any flexibility in negotiations in order to link it solely to program funding through the contribution

agreements is taken away, with all the complications that can have for the organizations.

Furthermore, the new agreements do not address a number of aspects that are important for our community, which is a major deficiency for us, a stumbling block that we have tried to avoid through very tough negotiations at the political and bureaucratic levels. First, we wanted to include provisions to reduce the burden on us of the complex funding applications process, for both applications approval and reporting forms. This point was very clearly highlighted by my colleague from Newfoundland.

We also wanted to obtain a review mechanism for the amounts allocated by Canadian Heritage, the purpose being for organizations whose funding applications are denied to be able to have their applications reviewed before a final decision is announced by the Minister of Canadian Heritage.

In our opinion, the community mechanisms, particularly the global development plan, which is very important for the communities—it is in fact our community road map—enable the community to establish its priorities. However, this has been eliminated under the collaboration agreements, as well as the funding that was associated with the agreements. Under the new agreements, no additional amounts are available for this purpose, which could well impose an additional burden on the community, which does not have the resources to bear it.

● (0945)

Now let's talk about collaboration. The collaboration agreements between the community and the Department of Canadian Heritage are associated with the management of a few programs, including the community component of the Official Languages Support Program. Under section 42 of the Official Languages Act, the interdepartmental role of the Department of Canadian Heritage in government is, in principle, carried out under the newly signed agreements. Unfortunately, this isn't being put into practice, for lack of time and money, on both the community and Department of Canadian Heritage side. Consequently, the implementation of section 42 of the Official Languages Act, again from a community perspective, must be more clearly defined and the new agreements could be useful in achieving that objective.

The next agreements should also contain evaluation mechanisms for identifying the advantages and disadvantages that those agreements have brought to the community. This is an essential procedure because, if results under those agreements were not good, that would mean that the agreements were indispensable to the Department of Canadian Heritage for internal administrative reasons, but not necessarily for the community. I hope I'm wrong, but that remains to be determined.

We signed the agreement only six months ago. The short period of time during which our community has been part of the agreement is not the best indicator of success. In spite of that, nothing has really changed in the past six months. As you will understand, the community and the government would like these agreements to produce tangible results for community development and vitality.

There should also be specific provisions in the agreements for the organizations' operation and essential survival needs. In our view, with inadequate funding, a number of organizations are having trouble carrying out their mandates and are becoming a burden to manage for the community as a whole, while, of course, burning out volunteers. These operating problems exhaust staff, thus causing staff turnover and a burden for the community. This isn't a good investment even for the government.

There should also be provisions for multi-year funding for the organizations and budgets indexed to the cost of living. That would enable them to manage their funding more effectively and to live in less uncertainty when the agreements approach expiry. The agreements should provide a better framework for the federal government's commitment to support the official languages communities as provided by subsections 41(1) and (2) of the Official Languages Act.

Lastly, the federal government should codify the implementation of these aspects of the act. These agreements could help do precisely that. They could also permit sectoral community development. The idea would be to develop specific agreements by sector under the aegis of this new umbrella agreement with the new generation Government of Canada. Thus, each of the federal departments and agencies would support the needs of the communities with specific programs that would meet the needs of the major sectors mentioned in the global development plan which, I would recall, is our main community road map.

• (0950)

**The Chair:** You have two minutes left, Mr. Léger.

**Mr. Jean Léger:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

In Nova Scotia, if the funding goes well, this plan will be developed by April 1, 2009. That proposal would be advantageous for the federal government, since it would make it possible to establish clear parameters for the departments and agencies that have responsibilities with regard to the implementation of section 41, which provides that the government must establish positive measures for the official language minorities in Canada. The communities, for their part, would know what to expect from their relations with the departments and agencies as a whole. That would reduce unforeseen situations and ad hoc efforts on both sides. In short, all that would guarantee greater efficiency and better chances for achieving positive results for the community and the government. We obviously advise that agreements be signed with the federal government as a whole, since a precedent was set with the voluntary sector in 2001.

In conclusion, Mr. Chairman, the next agreements should promote the development of parameters to allow full implementation of sections 41 and 42 of the Official Languages Act by the Canadian government as a whole.

Thank you very much.

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

We'll now finish off with the vice-president of the Assemblée de la francophonie de l'Ontario, Mr. Jean Comtois.

**Mr. Jean Comtois (Vice-President, Assemblée de la francophonie de l'Ontario):** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I am vice-president of the Assemblée de la francophonie de l'Ontario.

First, I'll say a brief word about the Assemblée de la francophonie de l'Ontario, which was established only three years ago through the combination of two major organizations: the Association canadienne-française de l'Ontario, which was founded in 1910 and was originally called the Association canadienne-française d'Éducation d'Ontario, and the Direction d'entente Canada-communauté Ontario, the DECCO, which was established in 1999 to negotiate the second agreement, the 1999-2004 agreement with the federal government for French-speaking Ontario.

AFO is a new organization that has been in existence for only three years and represents 14 clientele sectors such as seniors, women and youth, and activity sectors, such as the economic community, the health community, the cooperative community and so on. It also represents five regions; Ontario is very large. To promote our collaboration, cohesion and coordination, we've divided Ontario into five major regions.

Our organization also includes—and this is very important—four representatives of the ethno-cultural minorities. Those four representatives are elected by members of those communities. The old stock community thus has nothing to say about the election of those four members; it is the members of those communities who elect them. So that is a general picture of what AFO is.

Very soon, in June, we will be holding our third general meeting. Our meeting today is very appropriate and comes at the right time. If the collaboration agreements are maintained, we will obviously start discussing the new agreement at that meeting. However, we are still lacking any major statements from the government.

The first concerns what is happening with the Action Plan for Official Languages. We have the Lord Report, but no statement has been made about the next plan. It is essential for us to know what is happening because that plan will enable us to develop our own provincial and national plan more effectively.

We must also know whether there will be any agreements. If that is the case, will they be negotiated? We must know that so we can prepare properly.

We've begun to evaluate our activities over the past three years. The collaboration agreement very specifically states that it must be evaluated by both Canadian Heritage and the community. To date, we haven't received any information concerning that evaluation; it hasn't been done. As we are preparing to negotiate the next collaboration agreement, we need to know how useful the present agreement is in order to establish the next collaboration agreement.

I would remind you of an important statement that Ms. Josée Verner made on January 24 last, that the federal government recognizes and wishes to encourage linguistic duality by renewing the Action Plan for Official Languages. It would be helpful to translate that statement into action and for us to know where that action plan will take us.

I'm not going to expand on what the previous speaker, my colleague Jean Léger, said about the previous Canada-community agreements and collaboration agreements. I wouldn't want to repeat what he said so well. I can't speak for my colleagues from the other provinces, but what he said is extremely important, particularly in Ontario. Cyrilda also mentioned a few factors.

I'm going to focus on a few challenges in order to give you a better understanding of what French-speaking Ontario feels about the collaboration agreements.

The first challenge—and the FCFA representative referred to this—concerns the joint committees. The Canada-community agreements provided for a committee to analyze funding requests and recommendations. We had such a committee in French-speaking Ontario during the 1999-2004 agreement and we evaluated it. Since the community representatives who sat on that joint committee didn't have any influence or decision-making power in the analysis of requests and funding allocation recommendations, we wondered whether we should continue to take part in it.

● (0955)

We had a very serious problem at that point as a result of that, and, under the current collaboration agreement, we withdrew from that process. The community does not take part in the analysis of requests or in allocation recommendations because we didn't really feel we were a participant in the process. There were words, but no actions, no decision-making.

That process should be reviewed. We are not at all sure that going back to the joint committees we used to have is the appropriate solution. If that were the case, we would have to ensure that the community really takes part in the decision-making because that wasn't the case under the previous agreements.

The second challenge raised by the collaboration agreement and the current funding process is the great diversity we have in Ontario. Perhaps I should talk to you about that briefly. You are aware how big Ontario is. You are aware of Ontario's diversity. You are aware of the specific regions of French-speaking Ontario, such as Prescott-Russell, Ottawa, Toronto, Sudbury.

But when you go to Thunder Bay and you see the Thunder Bay area, you see where the francophones in that area are and the territory that an organization called the Association des francophones du nord-ouest de l'Ontario, AFNOO, must serve, that becomes a problem. People say Ontario is very well off. That's true to a certain extent, but look at the diversity, the geographic distribution of French-speaking Ontario. The needs of francophones in Ottawa, as a result of their proximity to one another, are not the same as in northwestern Ontario.

I don't want to dwell on the subject because I won't have enough time. However, I think this very important aspect has to be taken into account, along with the number of francophone newcomers to French-speaking Ontario. That has a very big impact. Look at the number of these newcomers in Toronto and Ottawa. It is our responsibility to serve them: they are part of our community in general.

In many cases, under the framework of the collaboration agreement and the funding we have, funding is lacking to subsidize the programming of those organizations. What happens? We fund specific projects of very limited duration. Things go well for the year when we have the project, but what happens to the organization in question the following year? So we are wondering about project funding and emphasize the importance of multi-year funding for programming, to enable the organizations to plan for the longer term.

We've spoken about global development. I don't want to go back to that. We are evaluating the last global plan. We're going to develop a new one, but the problem is the relationship between our global plan objectives and the objectives we use to make requests. There's no real matching at that level. I don't have the time to dwell on that further.

I'll move on to the last subject I would like to talk about. When the collaboration agreement is redone, if there is another one, let's be very serious about the way that agreement is managed. I encourage you to consult a report that was published not very long ago by Éric Forgues, of the Université de Moncton. Mr. Forgues studied the Canada-community agreements. What he says about the Canada-community agreements is also very valid for the collaboration agreements.

In summary, because I'm short of time—I'm nearly finished—Éric Forgues says that what was done and what was insisted on for the collaboration agreements, that is horizontal management in which the Department of Canadian Heritage and the community took part, was as though someone had said or written something without implementing it. That's important because, through this kind of management in which we must take part because we have a collaboration agreement and because we promote collaboration, partnerships and so on with Canadian Heritage and government officers, we in a way are becoming officers of Canadian Heritage and losing our independence. I think it is and will be important to look at that issue.

● (1000)

In conclusion, I would say that the collaboration accords have not had only negative effects. They have also had some every positive effects on our community. They have led us to work more in partnership, to establish greater collaboration between Canadian Heritage and the community.

There will also have to be a focus on the entire interdepartmental issue because there are resources there that the community could use, and that includes the intergovernmental aspect. These two aspects should be included in the collaboration agreement. That would get the other departments more involved, in view of this new act that requires the departments to support the official language minorities more effectively.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

**The Chair:** It is I who thank you, Mr. Comtois. You made your presentation with a great deal of passion.

I'd like us to do three rounds. So things will be quite tight. We'll start immediately with Mr. D'Amours, from the official opposition.

● (1005)

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

First I'd like to make a brief comment.

It would have been interesting to hear from slightly fewer witnesses today so that we could ask our questions. A lot of things have been mentioned, but, given the large number of witnesses, I'm afraid we won't be able to ask questions on those subjects. We should no doubt consider this kind of thing in future.

The agreements will expire shortly, and I would like to know whether you have begun talks with the government, the department, regarding the next round of funding. Do you think your recommendations, which you've presented to us this morning, have been listened to and considered? Anyone may answer.

**Ms. Diane Côté:** Discussions concerning the structure of the agreements are underway, as well as a study on other collaboration methods used in government. As regards funding, talks have taken place. We made it known that we needed an increase, but we haven't yet received a response.

**Mr. Jean-Claude D'Amours:** Mr. Comtois.

**Mr. Jean Comtois:** No, we've received no information and we've had no talks on the subject. We should do that before long if we want to sign any collaboration agreements. For the moment, however, it's total silence.

**Mr. Jean-Claude D'Amours:** Ms. Martin-Laforge?

**Mrs. Sylvia Martin-Laforge (Director General, Quebec Community Groups Network):** In Quebec, we've begun our first round of talks with the people from Canadian Heritage at the national level. The QCGN and our people in the regions are using a kind of hybrid model right now.

[*English*]

With no money put aside for evaluation, our fundamental problem is that we have not had an opportunity to properly evaluate our collaboration accord. We were not included in the original evaluation that was done of the other communities, and the francophones outside of Quebec were not included. We are in an extreme disadvantage in Quebec right now because we have no evaluation.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Jean-Claude D'Amours:** Ms. Poirier.

**Mrs. Cyrilda Poirier:** The situation is the same for us. No negotiations or evaluations have been started.

**Mr. Jean-Claude D'Amours:** Mr. Audet.

**Mr. Stéphane Audet:** It seems to us that the officials in the regions are as uninformed as we are. There has been no contact. And yet they know that we've already started our work.

With regard to the evaluations, only yesterday we received an e-mail from Ottawa including an evaluation exercise. That on-line exercise was carried out by a major Montreal firm. Everything is being done at the last minute. It's really strange. We are partners, but sometimes we wonder whether we really are.

**Mr. Jean-Claude D'Amours:** I'm going to go to my second question, since I only have two minutes left.

The government has had more than two years to renew and announce the action plan. The old one expired on March 31. A new plan therefore should have been implemented on April 1. Your agreements will expire in less than two years. In fact, we're talking about months. As you know, we're no longer talking about the same thing. But are we talking about: a new structure?

Since this has taken so much time, but has not been resolved, are you afraid, with respect to your funding, that the agreements between the federal government and the communities aren't ready?

We know that interest charges are high because the federal government, in particular, doesn't want to make its payments.

I'll let you answer.

**Mr. Stéphane Audet:** I can answer that briefly.

It's a big concern, and we are also concerned about the impact that has on the funding granted by other departments. I'm thinking of the Department of Citizenship and Immigration, the Department of Western Economic Diversification and the Department of Health. The fact that the action plan still isn't known greatly delays the continuation of activities and services provided. So there's very great uncertainty and a number of departments are currently holding back funding. The activities are therefore not being renewed and it's very troubling for us.

**Mr. Jean-Claude D'Amours:** You're not receiving the funding, and the activities can't take place, but those activities have nevertheless been approved. You've done your job, and your projects have been accepted, but you aren't being given the money so you can carry out your activities.

•(1010)

**Mr. Stéphane Audet:** The departments are waiting for the Department of Canadian Heritage to make its action plan known first before—

**Mr. Jean-Claude D'Amours:** And it's not making it known.

**Mr. Stéphane Audet:** And it's not making it known. So everyone is waiting for some leadership.

**Mr. Jean-Claude D'Amours:** In conclusion, there's no leadership, and the francophone and anglophone linguistic communities are waiting to be able to advance their rights.

Mr. Comtois, do you want to add something?

**Mr. Jean Comtois:** The important aspect of what you're saying is that, on the one hand, we don't have the action plan, and, on the other, we're being asked to develop a global development plan. It would be helpful to know what the major—

**Mr. Jean-Claude D'Amours:** The major directions—

**Mr. Jean Comtois:** —the outlines of that action plan are so that we can match our projects to the plan, since those criteria are very important when we submit funding requests.

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

**Mr. Jean-Claude D'Amours:** Mr. Chairman, that's proof that we're really short of time. There are too many witnesses, and it's unfair for them that there are six presentations. This penalizes them, in view of the importance of this issue.

**The Chair:** The only alternative available to us is to do a first round of seven minutes as well, provided members are in agreement.

Would you prefer that we operate that way?

**Mrs. Maria Mourani (Ahuntsic, BQ):** I would prefer an equal round because I'll also have something to say.

**The Chair:** All right.

We're already at six minutes. That isn't very different from the usual round.

It's now the Bloc Québécois' turn.

Mr. Gravel, you may start.

**Mr. Raymond Gravel (Repentigny, BQ):** Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

It's true there are a lot of people.

With respect to the agreements signed between the federal government and the communities, is the situation the same in Quebec? Is it the same in the case of the agreements between the anglophone community and the federal government?

**Mrs. Sylvia Martin-Laforge:** Indeed, the Quebec Community Groups Network has established a collaboration agreement with the federal government.

**Mr. Raymond Gravel:** So it's the same thing.

Mr. Audet, earlier you said that 300,000 persons in British Columbia understood French or lived in French. I assume they don't live in French but that they understand French. Is that correct?

**Mr. Stéphane Audet:** In fact, 300,000 British Columbians can or say they can speak French. The community consists of 64,000 francophones, but we have a vision of a much broader community than that.

**Mr. Raymond Gravel:** You said that, if the situation didn't change, French would be threatened more or less across Canada, except in Quebec. However, French would be threatened elsewhere in Canada.

**Mr. Stéphane Audet:** We're currently seeing that pressure is being exercised services in French: the schools are overflowing, and people from across the country and elsewhere in the world want to enter Canadian society. So they need services at the college level in order to get a postsecondary education. However, those institutions don't even exist. We therefore have to meet the demand, and that's where we have a problem. We can't even properly integrate these people because we are unable to offer them adequate services.

**Mr. Raymond Gravel:** So that means that francophones are increasingly anglicizing.

**Mr. Stéphane Audet:** Absolutely, and that's a crime. Our francophones are anglicizing and losing their language because assimilation rates are unacceptable.

**Mr. Raymond Gravel:** Is the situation of Quebec anglophones the same? Do anglophones feel threatened in Quebec?

[English]

**Mrs. Sylvia Martin-Laforge:** In Quebec the issue is, of course, different. In Quebec it's not an issue of language. Of course English-speaking community individuals want to be served in the language, in English. The notion for Quebec is more along community development and the communities—long-standing communities—that want to remain vital in Quebec and in Canada.

For example, in the Eastern Townships, in Quebec City, where my president comes from, there are vital communities of people who speak English, who have learned French, who have stayed in Quebec, who wish to remain in Quebec, but wish to have their services in English.

So there's not the same dynamic; we would not give it the same conceptual frame. But the problem is as grave, if you will, in the

Lower North Shore, in Blanc-Sablon. There are people there who have learned French but still want access to services in English. They want their communities, long-standing heritage communities, to survive. That's what the issue is.

So the issues are different, and we must not look at them from the same policy and program lens. But it is critical.

•(1015)

[Translation]

**Mr. Raymond Gravel:** If francophones outside Quebec, in Ontario, Saskatchewan and Alberta, were treated in the same way as Quebec anglophones, that would be good.

Do you believe that anglophones in Quebec are well treated compared to you, who are outside Quebec?

**Mrs. Cyrilda Poirier:** May I speak?

My colleague talked about the problems of the small anglophone communities in the Eastern Townships. What we're lacking on the Port-au-Port Peninsula and in the Eastern Townships are services, whether in English or in French. My community on the Port-au-Port Peninsula currently doesn't have a medical clinic or a doctor. At this stage, our community is losing not only its strength—the workers are going to Alberta—but also its seniors, who are leaving the Port-au-Port Peninsula to go and settle in Stephenville in order to have access to medical care.

The vitality of a community is in danger. Whether it's in English or in French, the small communities need services.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

**Mr. Stéphane Audet:** It's a matter of rights. We have to be able to live linguistic duality across the country. Quebec anglophones have a right to their institutions and strong communities. I absolutely agree on the points that have been raised by my colleague and counterpart from Newfoundland and Labrador. It's a question of rights, equality and justice. They've built those institutions and they have considerable interest in protecting them. Back home, we're creating institutions, and I hope we'll be able to keep them.

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

We'll now go to Mr. Godin.

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

I would like to welcome you to the committee.

[English]

I would like to welcome you to our committee on official languages.

[Translation]

I'd like to ring an alarm bell and tell the minority communities of Canada that they aren't quitters. You're using your credit cards to run your communities in Canada. That's wrong, insulting and unacceptable.

You're working so hard to lend vitality to your communities across the country, whether they be anglophone in Quebec or francophone in the rest of the country. They say there's a budget, but that the money will be coming later. There's also an action plan, that will be coming later as well. You've used your personal lines of credit. I'm prepared to tip my hat to you because, if I were in your shoes, I wouldn't have done that. I find this unacceptable.

[English]

Did the anglophone community in Quebec have to do the same thing? Did you have to use your own line of credit?

[Translation]

**Mr. Robert Donnelly:** Listening to my colleague Cyrilda's presentation, I thought I could name five of the 22 organizations that experienced the same situation last summer. They have to close offices for two months because the cheque is supposed to arrive in September. We've just asked when the agreement will be put in place. We can do nothing before the agreement is signed. They always say it's 99% guaranteed, but the money isn't there until it's signed. Some people close their offices for two or three months during the summer because there isn't any money. Sometimes there are lines of credit, but most often they use personal lines of credit. That's the reality.

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** We're talking about interest that can amount to \$15,000. You can use that money for the community, can't you?

• (1020)

**Mr. Jean Léger:** Mr. Godin, we get the money in September. I'm an organization administrator. I receive 25% of my funding in early April. Canadian Heritage boasted that it gave at least that.

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** I want to go back to that, because I'd like to hear what you have to say on that subject. That would have been my next question.

**Mr. Jean Léger:** As a result, I, as an administrator, don't know my budget until September. So what do I do? Well, I put my foot on the brake. So my organization puts on the brakes until September. I don't know how much money I'll have. Perhaps I'll get a letter in July or August, Mr. Godin, telling me that my organization has suffered cuts. I've already spent the money; I was absolutely unable to do my budget planning. I believe this is an aberration, a bad investment for the Canadian government, since we're doing our job, not 12 months a year like any other company, business or department, but in seven months. So how can we "deliver the goods"—pardon the expression. We do it in seven months, whereas we should be doing it over 12 months. We do everything quickly. We put an enormous amount of pressure on staff and volunteers. That creates the turnover rates that Mr. Audet mentioned a little earlier.

**Mr. Jean Comtois:** I have a brief comment. That's true not just for our provincial organizations, but also for all organizations that are funded in each of the provinces and territories. In Ontario, there are nearly 90 organizations, I think, and they are facing the same problem. If you take that as a whole, they're forced to rely on lines of credit, and, if you calculate the interest all those organizations pay on that credit, it comes to an enormous amount, significant, which we could use in our work. But we can't because, as Jean said, it works the way it works.

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** I've been here on the Standing Committee on Official Languages since 1998, and this isn't the first time we've heard that. The communities have been waiting for their cheques for a long time. That didn't start in 2006, 2004 or 2003. It's always been that way. So there hasn't yet been a government that stopped and ultimately said they were going to solve this problem once and for all. Do you agree with me?

**Mr. Robert Donnelly:** Every year we're asked to organize a work plan based on a 12-month budget, and the money doesn't come until six months later, if it comes at all. However, we have to hire people, and we don't know what the total grant will be. We hire people not even knowing whether they'll be there for six or 12 months. If the budget is smaller than the previous year, we have to cut activities. We change our plan from month to month.

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** How much time do I have left, Mr. Chairman?

**The Chair:** You have one minute left.

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** You represent virtually all the regions of the country. What do you think about the appointment of judges to the Supreme Court? Should they be bilingual or not? Quickly, there are only 30 seconds left.

**Mr. Jean Léger:** Nova Scotia says yes.

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** Do Quebec anglophones say yes?

**Mrs. Sylvia Martin-Laforge:** We even published a document on the subject today.

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** Francophones in the rest of the country say yes with the representatives of the two official language communities. So let's hope the government takes note of that.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

**The Chair:** You're welcome, Mr. Godin. Thank you for being so brief and thanks as well to our witnesses for their cooperation.

We'll now go to the government and Mr. Denis Lebel.

**Mr. Denis Lebel (Roberval—Lac-Saint-Jean, CPC):** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. First of all, good morning and welcome. All of your testimony was equally interesting. It's given us a good idea of the situation in which you have to manage your organizations.

Like most people here, I haven't been around since 1998, like Mr. Godin, but, in the few months I have been here, I've heard all about the organizations' priorities. As our government is shouldering its responsibilities and making decisions to improve Canadians' lives, we hear everything that has been said here this morning.

One of the biggest points to emerge from the testimony I heard concerns the one-size-fits-all idea. From what I know, and based on the information we have, the territorial characteristics of the country were respected when the first agreements were signed.

With respect to Manitoba, the Société franco-manitobaine recently told us it had a project called "Agrandir l'espace francophone" in Manitoba. That's part of the agreement, and I think that very much respected local characteristics.

As for British Columbia, Mr. Audet, in its 2004-2009 global development plan, according to the information I have, the federation was able to give that agreement some local flavour. I understand it may not be perfect, but this is already a process of opening up.

I know that the Fédération des communautés francophones et acadienne has gone to great lengths to express its concern about that. It believes that's not enough, that it has to go further. I'd like to hear what you have to say on that subject. How far should it go; I would like to ask all the partners—we are lucky to have people—to tell me a little about their agreement in relation to local characteristics.

I heard Mr. Léger say that he had signed an agreement six months ago. Was he able to find some local colour in what was done or is it still one size fits all?

I'm listening to you, ladies and gentlemen.

• (1025)

**Ms. Diane Côté:** I think there's a difference between local projects that are respected by the agreements and the design of the agreements. In the brief we submitted, there are a few more details on the subject, but perhaps I can cite some examples.

Some provincial and territorial communities would like to sign much broader agreements with the Government of Canada and the provincial governments. That's not currently the case, but that's one of the possibilities we would like to explore.

As Mr. Comtois said earlier, other communities would like an agreement actually signed between the Canadian government and the provincial and territorial community. That would involve not only the commitment of the Department of Canadian Heritage through its Official Languages Support Program, but also all the programs that support the development of the provincial and territorial communities. So that would involve the commitment of Health Canada, Citizenship and Immigration Canada, Human Resources and Social Development Canada, economic departments and so on. All that should be in an actual agreement. That's what we mean by asymmetry.

**Mr. Stéphane Audet:** From our perspective, there have definitely been some regional variations that were much appreciated, and we expect to be able to continue this positive effort with the Department of Canadian Heritage. The mechanisms of the agreement that were established jointly with the Department of Canadian Heritage work very well. The community is satisfied with those mechanisms. It isn't the Fédération des francophones de la Colombie-Britannique itself that is responsible; it receives a mandate to execute them. There is a vast community forum that includes the member associations of the federation and non-members. There are indeed more informal groups. The cooperation is thus even greater. We have a big legislative assembly that deliberates, and a provincial cooperation committee is then elected. We've developed mechanisms, and that works well.

The Department of Canadian Heritage has let us negotiate with it, and we are very satisfied with that. We are very much attached to a particular situation in British Columbia: one person among us works for the community, and her goal is to achieve greater interdepartmental cooperation. So we have an employee, in the context of this

agreement, whose work is to assist the Department of Canadian Heritage in achieving greater cooperation among the various federal departments. That's very useful. A bridge is being built between one person from the Department of Canadian Heritage and another from the community. That's very effective. It helps the departments and the community to stay in touch, to see what the priorities are and to collaborate better.

We have another situation that is dear to us: we are building ever closer ties with our provincial government. It is very important for British Columbia that we be able to innovate and be a bastion of innovation and that we test new approaches that go beyond the usual framework. We are convinced that the department shares our opinion on that.

[English]

**Mrs. Sylvia Martin-Laforge:** To answer your question about how there hasn't been a one-size-fits-all or how it hasn't worked in Quebec, I think one has to look at the investment in English-speaking communities of Quebec of the action plan on official languages in 2003, which, relative to other sectors, was quite negligible. We did well in health, but other than that the investment was poor.

Why did that happen? That happened for a number of different reasons, not the only one being that the community was not ready for, and could not answer, the important questions being posed to it about how much and what it needed to make it real. For the collaboration agreement or accords that regionalize Quebec, it's hard for Quebec communities to engage with the Government of Canada on what is needed in Quebec. For us, there has not been enough creative thinking around how Quebec's collaboration accord could fit into a national and a regional perspective so that we have both pieces.

• (1030)

[Translation]

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

Now we'll begin our second round with Ms. Marlene Jennings.

Welcome to the committee, Ms. Jennings.

Pardon me, there has been a change. It's the turn of Mr. Rodriguez instead.

**Mr. Pablo Rodriguez (Honoré-Mercier, Lib.):** Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Good morning everyone. Listening to you, I get the impression that the consultation has suffered a certain setback. That comes up regularly. I don't sense that you feel the government is treating you like full-fledged partners. I don't sense that at all.

As regards the one-size-fits-all issue, I asked Mr. Hubert Lussier the question when he appeared the day before yesterday. He answered that there were five components in the agreements. The first three are identical for everyone because they concern general terms. However, the last two necessarily take into account the situation of each province or territory because they address objectives.

Is that in fact how you see it?

**Some voices:** Yes.

**Mr. Pablo Rodriguez:** All right. My next question is for the anglophone representatives from Quebec. When I recently spoke with some senior members of the community, I noted a certain concern about health services in their language. Some concerns emerged from those discussions. It's when they consult a doctor that they feel most vulnerable.

In my view, there are two areas where the official languages are really important: health and justice. When something makes us nervous or concerned, we would like to be understood in our language. In the case of health in particular, I've personally heard a lot about that. The aging community wonders whether they will have access to services in their language so that they are well understood when they need it.

Is that widespread?

**Mr. Robert Donnelly:** As regards quality, that's one of the sectors where there has been the most progress in recent years, thanks to the Community Health and Social Services Network (CHSSH), one of our members, which works with Health Canada. A lot of money is invested in that field. In the very isolated rural communities, a lot of progress has been made on this issue, particularly on ways of obtaining services in English for people, especially seniors. We know that's fundamentally important. You can say that's been productive.

To get back to your question on the one-size-fits-all issue, we've discussed that more at the national level. I'll take the liberty of talking about it at the regional and municipal levels. There is a strategy for retaining youth, and that's the Vitality Community program. Youth are important. We must retain young people, and a strategy that works in Gatineau won't necessarily work in Gaspé or the Magdalen Islands, where the situation is different.

**Mr. Pablo Rodriguez:** Thank you.

Mr. Audet, is your organization a partner or was it consulted on the Olympic Games? Are you working with the organization responsible for preparing for the games with respect to bilingualism?

**Mr. Stéphane Audet:** The francophone community of British Columbia was involved before the games were even won. We sat on the committee in order to ensure that Canada and Vancouver could get the games. We're very directly involved as a partner.

**Mr. Pablo Rodriguez:** Are you satisfied?

**Mr. Stéphane Audet:** We have a collaboration agreement with the Vancouver Organizing Committee for the 2010 Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games (VANOC). We're working virtually on a daily basis with games organizers to ensure that bilingualism is respected in every area of activity, in every activity that is carried out during the games. We're getting excellent cooperation in that regard.

•(1035)

**Mr. Pablo Rodriguez:** Do you think we'll have games that respect linguistic duality and that are held in both official languages?

**Mr. Stéphane Audet:** To date, in terms of planning, VANOC has been peerless. It has managed to develop an official languages reflex. Currently we're seeing a possible slide between planning and actual

implementation operations. We have some concerns in certain areas: health, safety and services for athletes and families.

VANOC is a very well managed organization, and Canadian citizens can be very proud of that. However, the extensive use of private sector contractors and subcontractors is a major concern. When the games begin, will those contractors and subcontractors be able to provide the services? On that day, citizens won't be able to tell the difference between a VANOC employee and one from a private company. So we have some concerns, but we're working with these people virtually every day to ensure that everything goes well. These games belong to all Canadians. We didn't want to be just a watchdog, but rather a partner in the success of those games.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much.

Mr. Petit, go ahead please.

**Mr. Daniel Petit (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC):** Good morning and thank you for being here today. I'll try to ask a brief question in order to allow everyone to speak.

I had the opportunity to visit mainly eastern Canada. I met Mr. Donnelly at one point. Submissions were made to the government.

You say you are no longer partners; you seem to be "outside officials" of Canadian Heritage. That's what I understood. That seems to irritate you, and I understand your situation.

You nevertheless have some freedom in the approach you take in your requests. There are a number of levels, and you do business with a number of departments. Mr. Audet, Mr. Comtois or Mr. Léger spoke about that earlier. Someone even said that he was only receiving \$2 million from Canadian Heritage, but \$5 million from the other side.

You seem to be saying that you are indirectly officials of Canadian Heritage, but what is your relationship with the other departments that deal with you, such as Citizenship and Immigration and Health Canada? Do you feel free or not at all? You seem to be demanding a little more room and to be criticizing the fact that the money doesn't come. That problem seems to have been around for many years. I wasn't here before. You seem to criticize the bureaucracy for being slow. We won't hide it from you: I come from the private sector and I understand you. I won't make a big deal out of it; I did that for long enough.

How do you operate? Could someone give us an idea?

**Mr. Jean Léger:** I'd like to draw an analogy with the automotive industry. As Henry Ford said, you can have any colour Ford, as long as it's black. The collaboration accord consisted of five parts. Parts I, II and III were unchanging, and Parts IV and V made it possible to add little stickers here and there. That's the first thing.



One of the important aspects of the agreement was working with the other departments. That's what we want to do, because we are still limited to working with Canadian Heritage. That's fine, it's making some effort, and we've had a relationship with it for a number of years. The situation isn't ideal, but it's going well enough because it nevertheless gives us some funding. We're working on the global development of our communities. We must talk about immigration, health and all that, but the discussions, the dialogue or the collaboration with the other departments remains to be developed. There isn't any real involvement by those departments. We would like Canadian Heritage to support us in that respect, but it doesn't know how to position itself. There's a contextual problem.

The Action Plan for Official Languages has expired, and we're going through a major period of uncertainty. Those departments don't know at all what to do with the communities. I'm afraid, and I'm calling on the government to come out with the Action Plan for Official Languages. The government's lack of action is literally killing the communities. I wouldn't like the government to use the coming issuing of the Action Plan for Official Languages as a carrot. We need it now, not in six months or after the next election. Otherwise we'll lose the collaboration already underway under the Action Plan for Official Languages that has expired, and everything will have to start over. That's a bad investment for the communities and for the government.

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

Ms. Mourani.

**Mrs. Maria Mourani:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Thank you all for being here today. I admit that you've enlightened me enormously.

I'm going to present my questions and comments all together, and you can then respond to them. I'm speaking to Ms. Poirier, Ms. Martin-Laforge and Mr. Donnelly.

Earlier Ms. Poirier and Ms. Martin-Laforge said that the problem is really services in the regions. I would tell you that the services in the regions unfortunately don't concern only anglophones, but francophones as well. It seems to me to be more of a problem of services in the region than a linguistic problem. That's my opinion; you can elaborate on that subject. However, Mr. Donnelly said that there was a lot of progress on health in the area of services in English in the regions. So it seems to me that some services have nevertheless been improved, and I congratulate the organization in question.

Let's also consider Quebec's situation as a whole: primary schools, secondary schools, universities, hospitals, research centres, community centres and businesses where people don't even speak French. I know of them personally. Montreal should normally be a French city, but it isn't; it is distinctly regressing with respect to French. It is hard to be served in French in Montreal, hard to get an answer in French first, and in English second, as though the first language was English and French came afterward. I have a lot of difficulty understanding and even believing that there is a danger for English in Quebec.

Furthermore, when I check the grants that were made by the Department of Canadian Heritage to the Quebec Community Groups Network, we're talking about a collaboration agreement, from 2005

to 2009, of \$13.5 million. On August 13, 2007, \$684,390 was given in the form of grants, and \$558,250 was announced on February 29 of this year. As far as money goes, I think that's not bad for a Quebec group that represents about 27 or 29 organizations.

In conclusion, I admit, Mr. Martin-Laforge, that I find it hard to understand your presence here as a representative of the Quebec Community Groups Network—it's a pressure group, a lobby group, in a way—and your appointment to the Conseil supérieur de la langue française. What I can't understand is how you can advise Minister Saint-Pierre and therefore defend the French language and at the same time defend anglophone minorities. I find it hard to understand all that.

Thank you.

● (1040)

**The Chair:** Thank you, Ms. Mourani.

For the information of committee members, the division bell rings at 10 in the morning when the House resumes its proceedings and normally at the end of the day. When it rings that way in the middle of the day, it may mean that parliamentarians are being called to vote. We'll check. In the meantime, we'll continue our proceedings, and I'll keep you informed.

**Mrs. Sylvia Martin-Laforge:** I don't think I have a choice but to answer at least part of that question.

[English]

With respect to my nomination as a member of the Conseil supérieur de la langue française, I have been nominated as a Quebecker, as an independent person—we are meeting tomorrow, in fact—and as a person who brings advice, counsel, and long-time expertise to that place of work. There are colleagues around the table who know that I have worked tirelessly in Ontario as a director of policy *au ministère de l'Éducation de langue française en Ontario*.

So I believe it's a question of equity. I believe I have an opportunity to bring my experience to work on language policy, whether it be in English or in French. For that I think I am well-suited. The minister has said I was well-suited and has offered me the opportunity to be a member. I have a deal with them: if I believe that at some point we would say something that would be in conflict with the council, we have an arrangement where I would either take a leave of absence or leave. But I think they regard my presence as an opportunity to hear both sides of the story.

That's number one. Secondly, around Montreal, and around what is happening in Quebec, there was a greater Montreal community development initiative in Montreal. There was a wide report. There are many statistics that float around regarding English-speaking communities. I think it would be a mistake to pin the blame on English-speaking communities about what is happening in Montreal. It's an economic issue. It's a much more complex issue. It has nothing to do, really, with the communities we are serving.

We are working in community development. We have lots of opportunity to see that people are leaving. We have young people who are poor, who are disenfranchised. We have old people who can't get access. There are lots of experiences.

•(1045)

[Translation]

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, Ms. Martin-Laforge.

[English]

We will now move on to Mr. Godin.

I'm still waiting for more information on this ringing bell.

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** The ringing bell is a call for a vote. I just checked it.

[Translation]

I'm checking the time it will take. In 30 minutes, Mr. Chairman, we have the time.

**The Chair:** I'll explain the procedure. The vote will be held in 30 minutes, won't it?

**An hon. member:** Yes.

**The Chair:** According to the normal procedure, I need unanimous consent by committee members to continue the proceedings. The vote will be held in 30 minutes. Our meeting must end at 11 o'clock, and the vote is scheduled, if I'm not mistaken, for between 11:10 and 11:15.

Do I have unanimous consent to continue? I'm going to check.

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** Mr. Chairman, that's not the agreement. Being the whip of a party—

**The Chair:** Mr. Godin has a point of order.

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** I have a point of order. We have to agree to stay here during the vote or to leave.

A vote will be held in half an hour. If members can't get to the other building in less than 15 minutes, that's because they have problems with their legs or they don't want to hear the witnesses.

I recommend we continue until 11 o'clock, when we must stop the meeting.

**The Chair:** So you're proposing that the meeting continue until 11 o'clock and that we then adjourn. To do that, I need unanimous consent.

**Some hon. members:** Yes.

**The Chair:** So we'll continue to 11 o'clock.

**Mr. Daniel Petit:** You don't have my consent.

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** Mr. Chairman, on that point of order...

**An hon. member:** We're stopping at 11 o'clock. We don't want to fight in front of the witnesses.

**The Chair:** Do I have unanimous consent?

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** Mr. Chairman, I have a point of order.

You don't need to request unanimous consent: we'll be there in time to vote. You're mistaken, Mr. Chairman.

**The Chair:** Mr. Godin, I have to get unanimous consent. Do I have unanimous consent?

**Some hon. members:** Yes.

**The Chair:** Perfect. We'll continue, and we'll hurry because we have to adjourn the meeting at 11:00 a.m., and I'd like us to have a third round. There are people who haven't yet asked any questions. Let's go ahead.

Mr. Godin.

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

I'm going back to the agreements because that's why we invited you here. On Tuesday, representatives from Canadian Heritage told the committee that the organizations should be satisfied with the 25% that department is giving them.

Are you satisfied with that amount, pending the agreements, or does that hurt the communities?

**Mr. Robert Donnelly:** We can't be satisfied when we only get 25% of the annual budget. We're told to start the year with that money. We aren't given the total budget planned. We don't know where we're headed. In six months, the \$150,000 budgeted may only be \$100,000, and we'll have hired people when we shouldn't have done so.

**Mr. Stéphane Audet:** Some of our communities receive confirmation in October. So 25% is distinctly inadequate.

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** Now let's talk about the action plan. You said you met with Mr. Lord. In his report, Mr. Lord recommended that \$1 billion be reinvested. Both that report and Recommendation 32 or 34 of our report on official languages propose that the arts and culture be added to the action plan.

Considering the \$810 million that was given to the communities and the addition of arts and culture, the new action plan makes no provision for increased funding if the minister decides to head in that direction. Is that correct?

I'm putting the question to Ms. Côté.

•(1050)

**Ms. Diane Côté:** I don't know. I can't foresee what the government will propose. We requested increases for community development, but we don't have any indication.

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** I'm not talking about what the minister will do. The minister's messenger, Mr. Lord, who went and did a little in camera tour, recommends \$1 billion.

If the minister decided to recommend the same thing as Mr. Lord, that is \$1 billion, would that be enough, especially if we had arts and culture, which we have promoted as well?

**Mr. Stéphane Audet:** That wouldn't be sufficient or acceptable. I can tell you about communities located in the northwestern part of the province, such as Campbell River, Nelson, Comox and Kitimat. They have branches. For your information, if you're interested, there are jobs in branches that offer \$15 to \$18 an hour. You have to be an expert in the management of non-profit organizations, planning and financial management. You have to be able to take charge of accounting records, do a little maintenance in the building, do cultural integration and be a librarian. You have to take over the management of a mobile library and its computer system.

People are exhausted. Some who are on the job now want to retire, but can't. They know that the day they leave, no one else will agree to replace them, to do all that for \$15 an hour. I'm very concerned. If there isn't any new money, it will be like in Saskatchewan and elsewhere in the country: a large number of communities will lose their one and only employee, and some will disappear. That would be tragic.

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** You lost an association in Sault Ste. Marie and elsewhere as well because of deficiencies of that kind. Can you tell us a bit about that?

**Mr. Jean Comtois:** I obviously agree with Stéphane. I represent Ontario, and it's far from enough in the case of that province. It doesn't guarantee that we'll be able to continue supporting the organizations that we fund. Organizations have to close their doors because of a lack of funding. The fact that 25% of funding is allocated to the organizations and that they don't know how much they'll have left for the rest of the year is a fundamental problem. The organizations can't operate that way. People ultimately get discouraged. They are burnt out and can no longer function. This then has a revolving door effect: people stay for a year, then leave. In those conditions, how can we ensure continuity in the organizations so that they can plan and meet the needs of the community over the long term?

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

Now we'll go to Ms. Jennings. Then if there are no other speakers, we can adjourn the meeting.

Mr. Jennings.

[*English*]

**Hon. Marlene Jennings (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine, Lib.):** Thank you very much, Chair.

I apologize for not having been here to hear the actual presentations. I'm not a member of this committee, but I'm particularly interested in the issue of our official languages minorities, being a member of one myself, in Quebec.

Madame Martin-Laforge, you and Madame Poirier both talked about one of the issues being the exodus of our young people. I know there have been studies, whether by Jack Jedwab and his policy think tank, about some of the reasons why.

Isn't one of the main reasons, although not the only reason, that you have an exodus of English-speaking young people—well educated, and for whom all Quebecers have paid taxes to put them through school and keep them healthy—because the main employers in Quebec are virtually closed to them, whether it be the provincial public service or the federal public service in Quebec? Look at the statistics; isn't the best place they can find jobs in the private sector and, within the private sector, within the federally regulated private sector? The Commissioner of Official Languages came out with a report that laid that out.

If we're going to keep our communities vital, whether it be in Montreal or outside of Montreal, in the regions, we have to be able to provide an opportunity, a future to our young people. We already know that francophones living in rural areas in the regions are exiting the regions because of lack of employment. It is even worse for the English-speaking.

How does this program—in the way it's set up, you have to deal with virtually only Heritage Canada for the agreement—actually help to develop services and programs that will allow work with the provincial government and the federal government on the employment, to open it up, to make sure there is real equity in access for the English-speaking minority in Quebec within those major employers? And there's the municipal government; don't forget the municipal government.

• (1055)

**Mrs. Cyrilda Poirier:** What you say is really interesting. In Labrador City there is one major employer, which is IOC. Because the management is English-speaking, our francophone youth, for some strange reason, are put aside when they are applying for jobs. They are not hired over the English-speaking population.

Where else can they turn? If they want to live, they have to exit, and they have to go wherever the jobs are offered.

On the Port-au-Port Peninsula, which is our really rural area, I don't think it's a question of service. It's long-standing; with the moratorium on the fisheries, for instance, that was the beginning of our youth leaving the population.

What really got me a couple of years ago was when I learned that not only were our youth leaving, but our elderly were also leaving the population. That is my preoccupation right now.

**The Chair:** Madame Laforge, very succinctly, and then we'll move on.

**Mrs. Sylvia Martin-Laforge:** Yes.

Monsieur Rodriguez mentioned health. With the action plan there was quite an investment in health in Quebec. It's not rosy, but it's a little bit better.

Employment is a major, major issue in Quebec—employment in the federal civil service, which is not high enough, and employment in the provincial civil service. Last week a report came out of the provincial civil service, and 0.08% of the provincial civil service has anglophones. It's incredible.

Employment is incredibly important, so people leave because they can't find employment. And they can't find employment maybe because their levels of language are not high enough, not because they don't want to speak French.

[*Translation*]

Everyone wants to speak French, but, in many cases, for complex reasons, those people don't pass the tests or their application isn't accepted for jobs in the private or public sector.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, Ms. Jennings.

Mr. Lemieux, would you like to have a final word?

**Mr. Pierre Lemieux (Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, CPC):** Thank you for your presentations. I really appreciated your comments.

I think the challenge is to find amicable solutions that could work. We're talking about \$30 million here. Accountability mechanisms are therefore necessary. There also have to be results, in view of the fact that this is taxpayers' money.

As Mr. Petit mentioned, \$30 million has been allocated, but, under the last action plan, \$750 million was granted to assist the official language minority communities. In reality, \$810 million has been spent. In education, there are agreements targeting the official languages amounting to \$1 million. There are also measures in immigration. There are a number of programs. I think that getting an overview of all that from the perspective of funding for the official language minority communities is really a challenge. A lot of money comes from various places.

How could you get that overview?

**The Chair:** We're going to ask one witness whose viewpoint represents that of the group as a whole to answer that question.

**Mr. Jean Léger:** Mr. Lemieux, do we have the report on the Action Plan for Official Languages? Do we know where the money was spent on official language? Was it spent for the communities or to help the government do its job better internally? We don't really know. So how can we answer that question?

● (1100)

**The Chair:** I would ask Mr. Audet to answer, but then we'll have to adjourn the meeting.

**Mr. Stéphane Audet:** In British Columbia, the francophone community has definitely been significantly expanded as a result of that action plan. However, I see that, in the regions, the officials responsible for official languages under Part VII of the Official Languages Act are disadvantaged. They don't have the necessary resources or, in many cases, the training necessary to carry out their role effectively. We have a federal council, the Pacific Federal Council, but it doesn't have enough money.

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

Witnesses, this was a very productive and very intense meeting. I thank you for coming. We will be presenting our report to you shortly. Thank you, everyone.

The meeting is adjourned.

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