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Mr. Steven Blaney

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• (0900)

[Translation]

The Chair (Mr. Steven Blaney (Lévis—Bellechasse, CPC)): While the committee members are getting settled, I would like to welcome you to the eighth meeting of the Standing Committee on Official Languages, and in particular our first meeting on postsecondary institutions and their efforts in promoting bilingualism in Canada. This is the first study our committee has undertaken.

We will begin this morning by hearing two witnesses. The witness who is joining us now is Jean-Gilles Pelletier, the Director of the Council of Ministers of Education of Canada, or the CMEC.

Good morning, Mr. Pelletier.

We also have François Charbonneau, the Director General of the Association des universités de la francophonie canadienne. I have been told that he went to school with our analyst, Mr. Paré.

Welcome to the committee, Mr. Charbonneau. We will start with you, if we may. As you know, you will be making a presentation and we will then move on to questions from the committee members.

Mr. François Charbonneau (Director General, Association des universités de la francophonie canadienne): Thank you for inviting me, particularly at this sombre moment: the Montreal Canadiens have just fired their trainer. So there are more pressing problems elsewhere.

Nonetheless I will try to answer your questions. I am going to make my presentation based on the document you have received. I hope that it will tell you what you want to hear this morning. It was not entirely clear to me what you want to examine, exactly, but we will be happy to answer all your questions and tell you what we can do, as an association and institution, to meet the needs of the Canadian public with respect to bilingualism and linguistic duality.

I am François Charbonneau, the Director General of the Association des universités de la francophonie canadienne. Our association consists of 13 institutions that deliver education entirely or partially in French in minority communities in Canada.

The network of universities in Francophone Canada has a presence in six provinces, with a total of 21,000 people studying in French. The students are not merely learning French as a second language; they are also taking mathematics and geography courses in French.

The mission of our association, which has existed since 1990 under various names, is to promote university education in Francophone communities. Obviously, the AIFC is pleased that the

committee has decided to look into opportunities for learning a second language at Canadian universities and the contribution made by Francophone universities to the development of official language minority communities.

The two objectives must not be confused. They are separate and, in part, complementary. Obviously, learning a second official language is extremely important for the Canadian public as a whole, and for Canada. It is important from an individual perspective, in terms of career prospects, and so that Canada will have a bilingual population that can build bridges between communities.

That is in fact why, and I put great emphasis on this, Canadian Francophone universities have long made a strong contribution to helping Anglophones in Canada experience genuine immersion, by studying alongside Francophone students, often near where they live, while learning French in special programs, taking several classes a week. Some of their classes are given in French. As well, special programs are offered, such as intensive summer programs. These programs have been operating for a very long time.

Our institutions are doing more than their share to enable young English speakers to improve their knowledge of French, and the Francophone universities of Canada obviously intend to continue offering an environment where French can be learned in many parts of Canada. However, I would note that the primary purpose of the vast majority of our institutions is to serve Francophone communities by offering them an opportunity to acquire a university education in French.

Francophones in Canada have taken the importance of bilingualism seriously. The 2006 post-censal survey tells us that Francophones outside Quebec are by far the most bilingual segment of the Canadian population. But obviously that is not the issue. The main issue is to determine whether it is possible to live in French in Canada outside Quebec. To live in French, you have to be able to go to school, you have to have access to theatre and legal services in French, and so on. Obviously, that calls for a solid university network to train teachers, actors, lawyers, etc.

The universities offer courses in French that are absolutely essential to the vitality of Francophone communities in Canada, and on that point, the Association des universités de la francophonie canadienne produced a document last year that is available in both official languages, concerning the impact of our institutions on their regions. It is essential reading. I will submit it.

In spite of that undeniable positive impact, we must acknowledge that the universities are to some extent the orphan children of the institutional fabric of Francophone Canada. We have some concerns regarding the manner in which funds are currently being invested in postsecondary institutions to meet the objectives of linguistic duality, and in particular in the knowledge economy, because it could exacerbate the disparities between minority institutions and majority institutions.

I am therefore talking about the two investments, the investments in linguistic duality in postsecondary education. Your committee should be asking some questions about this. I will then come to the question of larger investments in the knowledge economy, in which recent governments have been very eager to invest.

• (0905)

The federal government's investments in recent years, the investments laid out in the action plan or announced in the roadmap, are obviously welcome. It is very difficult to quantify them, however. We have been asked to do that, but it is very difficult, in fact, to be frank. This summer, we tried to determine exactly how much money was going to postsecondary institutions for second-language learning, and also for teaching in French at the university level. It is very difficult, given the way that money is invested in the provinces under the federal/provincial/territorial education agreements. Essentially, the funds are incorporated into the provinces' budgets.

Except in the case of one-time, specific projects, where there is a special agreement between the federal government and a university, or in cases where there is only one Francophone postsecondary institution in a province, it is very difficult to know how much money comes from the province and how much comes from the federal government, and how much the total envelope of money goes to the postsecondary level. We tried to get the answer to that question, but it was very difficult.

What is certain is that the 2003 action plan adopted the express objective of improving access to postsecondary education in French, that is, "expand the range of French-language programs in Francophone or bilingual colleges and universities". After the action plan was adopted, the universities that belong to the AUFC adopted their own action plan, of which I have a copy here, to see where it would be most useful to invest, and in particular to improve their programs and ensure that access to programs in French in Canada was available for local populations, obviously, but also for students coming from immersion streams. In some institutions, immersion students may account for a third of enrolments. But the institutions' action plan was not funded. The roadmap adopted this summer says virtually nothing about the postsecondary level, except for very specific fields. There are questions that need to be asked in this regard.

Moving on, we come to the funds invested in the knowledge economy. For several years, the federal government has chosen to invest in the knowledge economy by adopting numerous initiatives to help Canadian universities stay competitive during a transitional period for Canada's economy. This doesn't have to be explained. The universities in Francophone Canada are very pleased that the government is choosing to invest in Canadian universities, and we

agree with the Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada, which is overjoyed with the investments recently announced.

However, the manner in which the funds are invested often creates a risk of exacerbating the gap between Francophone majority institutions and Anglophone majority institutions. I can give you one example, but I have an entire list. The Vanier scholarships that were recently announced are intended to reward excellence in research. There are 500 doctoral scholarships of \$50,000 per year for students in Canada or abroad. This is excellent news, and in fact it makes me regret that I did my doctorate several ago rather than now. However, the distribution of the scholarships by the councils funded is based on the sum of the three-year rolling average used for the last Canada Research Chairs' calculations, that is, the funding that was received for the 2003-2004, 2004-2005 and 2005-2006 fiscal years. I would point out that the number of Canada Research Chairs was also allocated based on the institutions' ability to obtain research funding from the main funding bodies. While Quebec Anglophones can count on one of the most prestigious university research institutions, universities in Francophone Canada are most often, and not always, but in a large majority of cases, small institutions that do not have doctoral programs or do not have a tradition of obtaining research funding. Those institutions are put at a disadvantage by the present system. The obvious consequence is that the large institutions become more attractive to students in the major centres where there is not always the opportunity to study in French.

To conclude, I will say that the efforts made by the Government of Canada may have slowed the brain drain to the United States, which was the objective in the early part of this century. However, they have the potential of starting an internal brain drain, a brain drain from the regions to the major centres, and also from the minority institutions to the majority institutions.

• (0910)

While I don't want to be fatalistic, I would note that the idea is not to question the principle of investing in the knowledge economy. The government must support excellence. It is to be expected that the institutions in major centres will come out ahead of institutions located in places that are less suited to cutting edge research. However, we must pay attention to the impact of those investments on Francophone communities, which may end up worse off.

For example, the government could create compensatory programs that would apply to minority language institutions, but also to small institutions in the regions, because this is also important for them. The objective of the programs would be to enable the institutions to expand the programs they offer and improve their research capacity, and provide opportunities for pooling resources, among other things.

The Chair: Mr. Charbonneau, I would like to know whether you have a lot more to go.

Mr. François Charbonneau: I am finished, I have come to my conclusion, which is heart-stopping, you will see.

The Chair: Perfect.

Mr. François Charbonneau: In conclusion, the universities in Francophone Canada have taken to heart the spirit of the Official Languages Act, which is celebrating its fortieth anniversary this year. They provide opportunities to learn French as a second language for people who want that. They will continue to open their doors to anyone who wants to discover the treasures of the French language.

The primary mission of those institutions is to serve the Francophone communities of Canada, and they sometimes need a hand in fulfilling that mission. They did not get that hand in the Roadmap for Canada's Linguistic Duality, but it is never too late.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Charbonneau. You will have an opportunity to go into your recommendations in more detail when members ask you questions.

We will continue now with our second guest this morning, Jean-Gilles Pelletier, from the Council of Ministers of Education of Canada.

Mr. Jean-Gilles Pelletier (Director, Administration and Communications, Official-Languages Programs, Council of Ministers of Education, Canada): Thank you.

My name is Jean-Gilles Pelletier, and I am the Director of Administration and Communications, Official-Languages Programs, with the Council of Ministers of Education of Canada.

I am pleased to be meeting with you again. I met a number of the committee members in Toronto a few years ago, when it was my pleasure to welcome you to the Centre francophone de Toronto, in my former capacity. In my current capacity, I am pleased to be making a presentation to you today in both official languages. Copies of my presentation have been circulated in English and French. My presentation itself will alternate between French and English.

You probably know that the Council of Ministers of Education, which is commonly called CMEC, was established in 1967, essentially to provide the ministers of education from all provinces, and now also from the territories, with an opportunity to work together and set common objectives, undertake joint initiatives and also speak with a single voice at the international level when they are representing Canada in education-related matters.

• (0915)

[English]

The focus of today's presentation, of course, is on post-secondary education, more specifically on minority language education and second language instruction at the post-secondary level.

As you all know, education in Canada is under the exclusive jurisdiction of the provinces and territories, a fact that allows for a great diversity in the delivery of minority language education and second language instruction at the post-secondary level. This shall be, to some extent, the focus of my presentation.

At the same time, however, there are common challenges, concerns, and approaches that all ministers of education share in the areas of official languages, education, and post-secondary education. Through their joint declaration, Learn Canada 2020, the

ministers have committed to a number of ambitious goals, namely, first, to increase the number of students pursuing post-secondary education by increasing the quality and accessibility of post-secondary education, and, second, promoting and implementing support programs for minority language education and second language instruction that are amongst the most comprehensive in the world. I'll be speaking briefly about these programs.

Furthermore, through their joint ratification of the Protocol for Agreements for Minority Language Education and Second Language Instruction, commonly called the protocol, signed through the CMEC with Canadian Heritage, all ministers of education have officially acknowledged the importance of supporting Canada's two official languages in education and of improving the quality of minority language education and second language instruction.

[Translation]

I am going to talk briefly about the Protocol for Agreement for Minority-Language Education and Second-Language Instruction.

In 1983, the Department of the Secretary of State, as it then was, and the provinces and territories, through CMEC, entered into the first Protocol for Agreements for Minority-Language Education and Second-Language Instruction. It was the first political document to establish pan-Canadian guidelines for federal-provincial/territorial cooperation in an area specifically under provincial/territorial jurisdiction. Through the Protocol, the federal government provided major contributions to help cover the costs incurred by the provinces and territories in the delivery of minority-language education and second-language instruction.

Since then, what is somewhat extraordinary—and this protocol is often referred to as one of the best-functioning agreements in Canada—is that the ministers and the federal government have signed four additional protocols. The last protocol offers approximately \$258 million, \$30 million of which is for national programs in the provinces and territories, per year. So these are substantial amounts going to the provinces under agreements signed, first and foremost, on a pan-Canadian basis, and then, secondly, on a bilateral basis, with the provinces.

Since mid-2008, CMEC and Canadian Heritage have been working together to address these changing circumstances, and the hope is that a new protocol will be ratified in the very near future. In fact, the protocol is in the works as we speak. I am pleased to tell you that if ratified, the new protocol will include a very specific outcomes framework that will define common outcome areas for each language objective, that is, minority-language education and second-language education, and offer examples of indicators for each area. This time, and this is a challenge that Mr. Charbonneau also mentioned earlier, there will be a specific area for post-secondary education, and the outcome areas in question will relate specifically to access to postsecondary education, that is, indicators that can be used to monitor progress in that regard somewhat, and support for teaching personnel and research.

So as complicated and difficult as it may sometimes be to identify exactly what is being done in the provinces, given that each jurisdiction has full control over secondary and postsecondary education, in this case, the effort is being made to assign indicators that can be used to monitor progress on outcomes.

[English]

I'll briefly give you some examples of what has taken place over the last few years. Again, these examples have been extracted from an interim report that has just recently been published, covering 2005 to 2007. The current protocol ends in 2009, and, as I indicated, we're just about to ratify the renewed protocol.

Under the general framework provided by the protocol, each province and territory negotiates with the federal government a separate bilateral agreement, which is more specific in meeting the unique priorities of their jurisdiction. Each jurisdiction also writes an action plan linked to its bilateral agreement. Although commonalities exist in areas of outcomes or objectives across the country, the bilateral agreements and action plans allow for pan-Canadian diversity and activities and initiatives, and in the funding that is allocated to those activities and initiatives.

I'll give you a few examples of what has been happening. I'll go from New Brunswick to British Columbia, for lack of time, but there are a number of different examples that appear in the report. New Brunswick has moved towards increasing the availability of teaching materials in French for adult literacy and for training and specialized trades; has increased the number of French language resources and reference and computer services in public libraries; has strengthened, through technology and distance education, the links between post-secondary institutions and local businesses and organizations; has continued to support French as a second language and French immersion instructor training programs offered at the University of New Brunswick; and so on.

● (0920)

[Translation]

I'm going to give you a few examples for British Columbia.

British Columbia committed itself to make ongoing efforts to support the Collège Éducentre, which provides support for the families of its refugee and immigrant students, taking a holistic family-based approach to getting and keeping Francophone students in their up-grading, certificate and diploma programs.

So these initiatives and the initiatives of the other provinces and territories in official languages in education depend on the continued support of the federal government.

Here are a few figures taken from the report and from our own reports. Between 2005 and 2009, under the existing Protocol, about \$130 million in federal funding was allocated to postsecondary initiatives; approximately \$97 million for minority-language post-secondary education and approximately \$33 million for second-language education. Once again, this is money that was effectively transferred to the provinces in a field that is under their jurisdiction. The bilateral agreements with all the provinces and territories are in fact available on the website, so that everyone can consult them.

Now I want to talk briefly about national programs. To promote the learning of official languages in Canada, CMEC, in cooperation with the provinces and territories, administers two federally-funded bursary programs and two language-assistant programs also funded by the federal government, by Canadian Heritage, that provide our youth in Canada with opportunities for exchanges and summer study to enhance their language skills. These have become virtually historic programs. The second-language bursary program celebrated its 35th anniversary last year, and we are very proud of it.

In 2007-2008, the most recent year for which we have figures, the language bursary program enabled more than 8,000 young people and adults to attend sessions offered by over 40 language schools, mostly through colleges and universities, as a result of bursaries totalling \$18 million. That year, the monitor program provided language assistants to more than 250 school boards across the country, representing more than \$9.5 million in funding. These are significant amounts and they have an impact on postsecondary institutions.

In conclusion, it is a CMEC policy to keep education partners and the general public informed of CMEC activities and initiatives. The CMEC website has a great deal of information that is available to the general public. CMEC is grateful for the support it receives from the Government of Canada and is happy to provide this update on minority-language education and second-language instruction at the postsecondary level. We look forward to the continued support of the Government of Canada in the delivery of quality minority-language education and second-language instruction at the postsecondary level in every province and territory.

Forgive me if my conclusion is less resounding than my predecessor's. I will be happy to answer your questions.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Pelletier. When I was a secondary school student, I had the good fortune of receiving a bursary to study at Glendon College. You can see the results today.

We will start the first round with Ms. Folco.

Ms. Raymonde Folco (Laval—Les Îles, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

You undoubtedly know that this committee used to meeting people like you. I am not officially a member of this committee, but I was a year or a year and a half ago, when we had to deal with a rather difficult situation. We understood the extent to which the rights of official language minority groups all across Canada were being undermined in terms of the Court Challenges Program. From this side of the table, it made us very critical of the government's agenda. We are looking to the future. That could be why we asked you to quantify all this, to the extent possible. Mr. Charbonneau, I understand your answer regarding the relationship between the federal government and the provincial governments.

My question is for Mr. Charbonneau and Mr. Pelletier. You have programs underway and you certainly intend to continue those programs and improve them if possible, first. Second, Mr. Pelletier, you have a protocol that the provinces and the federal government have to write and sign in the very near future. What are you hoping for? What are you asking the federal government for? Given what you understand or see from the federal government's response to other groups, how do you foresee the chances of continuing and improving your programs?

I would just like to add a little aside, even if it does take more of my time. In Bill C-10, we saw the extent to which things in the Conservative government's budget will slash programs and agreements among groups. I am talking in particular about the agreements the government has signed with the unions, for example the Public Service Alliance of Canada. How do you foresee your talks with the government going? Be as concrete as possible so that we on this side of the table can do something, if it is necessary, in a timely manner.

Thank you.

● (0925)

The Chair: Go ahead, you have two whole minutes.

Ms. Raymonde Folco: That is my question.

Mr. François Charbonneau: That's fine. My answer is that the universities in francophone Canada have quantified their needs very precisely, for example with regard to technology. We have to understand that the universities in francophone Canada were not born yesterday. The Collège universitaire de Saint-Boniface will be 200 years old in a decade or so. These institutions did not just appear in the landscape; they have existed for a long time. Programs are in place and missions are gradually changing.

That being said, the current issue in the knowledge economy is the ability to attract instructors into the regions, first. It must be noted that most of our institutions are in the regions. Second, we have to have the ability to communicate among ourselves. In fact, several years ago, investment in technology was quantified. There have probably been some changes.

Ms. Raymonde Folco: How do you see the federal government's response in this regard, Mr. Charbonneau? That is the question I am asking.

Mr. François Charbonneau: The universities in francophone Canada, first, are pleased with the investments in postsecondary education in general. It's a step in the right direction. That being said, we should perhaps be a little more sensitive to the impact of those systemic investments in programs aimed at excellence. And really, this all started quite some time ago. It favours the big institutions and attracts our students to the major centres. I am thinking about the Canada Research Chairs, the Vanier scholarships, the Canadian Foundation for Innovation, Genome Canada, and so on. The ability to respond to the needs of the communities is lacking.

I will give you a very concrete example. In the Hearst region, a very significant francophone region in northern Ontario, 50% of graduates received their diploma from the Collège universitaire de Hearst—170 students. That figure sounds insignificant, but if the bottom falls out, 50% of the graduates in the region will be affected and the brain drain will speed up.

You asked me to give you a concrete example: \$8 million is going to be invested in scholarships to study translation, for example. That's fine. Why not spend part of that money to set up translation programs where we have long been asking for them, such as in Hearst? The two things are not mutually exclusive. That would allow all Canadians access to them. In places where there is specific demand, we can expand the programs. I think that's what is essential.

● (0930)

The Chair: Perfect. Thank you, Ms. Folco.

Ms. Raymonde Folco: Could I suggest to Mr. Pelletier, who has not had an opportunity to answer my question, that he do it later.

The Chair: We will continue with Mr. Nadeau.

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

Good morning, Mr. Pelletier, Mr. Charbonneau.

In the late 1980s and early 1990s, when I was working at the Fédération de la jeunesse canadienne-française, I had the pleasure of piloting a study on access to postsecondary education in French outside Quebec. One of the major factors that puts postsecondary level education at a disadvantage, in the case of both FL1 and FL2, that is, French as a first language, or language of use, and French as a second language, related to the use of the money that was at that time allocated out of the Department of the Secretary of State, now Canadian Heritage, to the provinces with francophone minorities. In some cases, the money did not go to the right place; in others, it was not used for immersion or for French as a second language. I am thinking of British Columbia, for example, where we could not identify any transfer to education.

I am going to ask Mr. Charbonneau to answer first, given that this relates directly to the institutions he represents. I would then like to hear Mr. Pelletier. These days, does 100% of the funds transferred to the provinces with francophone minorities go to the intended recipients, that is, the universities, whether it be Université Sainte-Anne, the Collège universitaire de Saint-Boniface, the Faculté Saint-Jean or another institution? Is there money that is not getting to them?

Mr. François Charbonneau: It would be extremely difficult for me to answer that question. We can do calculations and we assume good faith on the part of everyone involved. Agreements are signed, but the only way to know for sure is to check back with the institutions in the provinces where there is only one intended recipient. That is how we can check. I am not saying that the figures don't exist; it's just that these are the only figures we can get.

For example, in the case of the Collège universitaire de Saint-Boniface, we know that for one year the amount was about \$2 million, but the figures are consolidated. We can't separate out the money used for first language learning from the money used for second language learning. In some cases, there may be overlap, for example, when a certain number of instructors are hired to teach French as a first language and also as a second language. Sometimes it makes sense to consolidate them.

In Ontario, there are seven or eight institutions. It is inconceivable that we could identify where the money is going. I do not have the skills required to answer more precisely.

Mr. Jean-Gilles Pelletier: I am going to try to answer the question. To some extent, and to the extent I am able, this might also answer Ms. Folco's question.

I think there have actually been problems in terms of accountability in the past, in the case of transfers of funds, and I am talking strictly about funds under the Protocol. We are not talking about transfers to the provinces in the context of general transfers, for social services and so on. That is not my field.

In terms of the Protocol, I understand that in the past, in fact, there may have been a need for improvement in terms of accountability, concerning transfers from the government to the intended recipients. I think we have made enormous progress in the last Protocol, and I hope that we will make significant progress in the next one, so that we and all the partners in this agreement are better able to understand and measure the progress made.

Will we be able to reach a level of exactitude that will allow us to identify the institutions or tell them what to do? No, that is clear from the basic principle. In other words, the provincial governments obviously want to retain the ability to be masters in their own houses when it comes to postsecondary education. I am confident, however, in terms of accountability, that the next protocol will contain objectives, targets and performance indicators that will effectively target postsecondary education in the areas you mentioned, FL1 and FL2, that is, in relation to teaching the minority language and the second language.

I think this is a very important accomplishment. Listen, I don't want to be counting any chickens before they have hatched, but I think we are on track to signing an agreement that will in fact satisfy you in terms of how to monitor progress in future.

• (0935)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Pelletier. We will continue with Mr. Godin.

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

Good morning, Mr. Charbonneau.

Mr. Pelletier, it is a pleasure to see you again.

Mr. Jean-Gilles Pelletier: Absolutely.

Mr. Yvon Godin: As you said, you are not in the same job now.

This country is officially bilingual. We are talking about second language education. It is all very well to say that we have to promote it, but that isn't happening, because we still have the same problem.

Would it not be possible for the universities to say that if someone chooses this program or that program, if the person wants to learn a particular profession, he or she will have to learn French, or English? I think the biggest problem relates to learning French. We are talking about the francophone minorities in Canada. When the time comes to fill a position, the problem is that Anglophones can't speak French. We argue about this constantly. It is a major problem, particularly in the public service. Personally, I introduced a bill

calling for Supreme Court judges to be bilingual because the laws are written in French and English. They aren't written in English and translated into French. This is a serious problem. How could we help to solve this problem, at the postsecondary level?

I congratulate Mr. Chong in this regard, because he has always brought this subject to our committee. We are now examining it, and I want to congratulate him. He has always said that this had to be done in the schools, that it had to be done at the postsecondary level. If our institutions are to function properly, we have to start educating people so they can speak both of Canada's official languages.

Mr. Jean-Gilles Pelletier: I don't want to sound like a broken record, but...

Mr. Yvon Godin: No problem. I think this is the first time I have heard you speak in this position. We will listen to what is on your record.

Mr. Jean-Gilles Pelletier: Perfect. What I was saying is that there are different ways of influencing individual bilingualism. The one you have identified is to establish certain institutional criteria to ensure that graduates of a postsecondary program are bilingual.

It is difficult for a government to institute this across the country and it is difficult for a government, even a provincial government that essentially has responsibility for universities and colleges, to require that of all postsecondary institutions in the province. One approach is often to buy peace. The tools we have for doing this are generally budgetary tools, financial tools, to...

Mr. Yvon Godin: What I would like to know is why it is so difficult. Let's take the broken record off and try something else. Why is it so difficult?

For example, if someone is attending a community college to become a welder, the person will learn certain things. If the person wants to work in the public service, he or she has to learn certain things. This is a bilingual country. This could be one of the criteria for working in the public service. It would mean establishing criteria because this country is officially bilingual.

Mr. Jean-Gilles Pelletier: It would take a lot of time to try to understand just how independent universities and colleges are. Colleges have a different degree of latitude from universities, which have very broad latitude. One thing we do know is that the way to influence the development and implementation of postsecondary programs at the university level is often through financial support programs, that essentially allow for new requirements to be developed.

Let me speak briefly to what could be done to expand official and individual bilingualism.

Good morning, Mr. Lemieux. I am pleased to see you again. Mr. Lemieux had an opportunity to participate in the celebrations for the 35th anniversary of the Explore program in Quebec City in September of last year.

The programs that CMEC administers across Canada are programs to allow young people who are enrolled in postsecondary programs to improve their language skills in both official languages. Every year, about 5,000 young Anglophones and 3,000 young francophones travel all across the country to learn the other official language and spend five weeks in an immersion situation. You probably all know about these programs or know someone who has taken part once or twice or even three times, and for whom it has made an incredible difference, both in terms of their desire to continue learning a second language and continuing to learn the second language and in terms of their practical skills in using the second language.

I don't want to give a long speech about how difficult it is to get the universities to move in this or that direction. There are things in place. The programs are practical tools—we were talking about concrete assistance—that are there to enhance individuals' bilingual capacity.

● (0940)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Pelletier, Mr. Godin.

We often think of government as legislator, but in this case, the federal public service is the universities' employer. So it is a client of our universities.

We will now move on to someone who, as Mr. Godin said, is a passionate advocate for this cause. It is therefore my pleasure to give the floor to my hon. colleague, Michael Chong.

[*English*]

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

I want to build on what Monsieur Godin was saying about our education system in Canada.

Clearly, the number one challenge with respect to the French fact in Canada is that the long-term trends are not good. The percentage of francophones in Canada is on the decline, has been for decades, and will be for future decades. This is the number one challenge we're facing.

I've always been of the view that we can take a defensive posture about this or an offensive posture. The defensive posture is simply to protect the number of francophones that we have in the country. The offensive position would be to say let's try to increase the number of bilingual Canadians, those who can speak both official languages. When you look at our education system, the building block for it is the public education system, our high schools and primary schools, which feed into the university system.

My question is directed to CMEC because the Canadian government, under the previous action plan developed by Mr. Dion and recommitted to by our government, provided over \$1 billion through the protocol through your organization to provinces to promote not only minority language instruction but second language instruction. One of the key targets that was established back in 2005 was that by 2013 the number of bilingual graduates from Canadian high schools would double. From what I'm hearing, only four years from that target, we are not going to meet it.

My first question is why that is. Why are we not going to meet the commitment that the federal and provincial governments made through bilateral agreements and through action plans to double the number of bilingual graduates in Canada?

Mr. Jean-Gilles Pelletier: I was not there when that commitment was made, so it's hard for me to explain the context under which such a figure would have been arrived at. It is, to some extent, mystifying, but I can see why politicians set themselves really high objectives. Doing so captures the public imagination, and trying to focus on such really incredible goals does work to gather energies and create synergies.

On the other hand, practically speaking, what I can speak about is the fact that the number of bilingual Canadians graduating from high school is increasing in the extreme across the country. This is something to be very proud of. Official bilingualism is not going down, it's going up, and at a furious pace in some jurisdictions such as British Columbia and Alberta, and in provinces that you think don't have significant, strong programs in the official languages. The French immersion programs in British Columbia and Alberta are absolutely booming, and it has been a bone of contention that we've had to wrestle with in the context of renegotiation of the new protocol. You can just imagine.

Hon. Michael Chong: When will the new protocol be signed?

Mr. Jean-Gilles Pelletier: I can't speculate. At this point in time—

Hon. Michael Chong: It's supposed to take effect in 2009.

Mr. Jean-Gilles Pelletier: It's in the process of being ratified as we speak. The negotiation process is ongoing.

All this is to say that at this point in time it looks very good. The federal government last spring committed to reconvene the sums allocated to *la Feuille de route*, and I believe at that time the sum looked at was \$258 million per year for a period of four years. It is a very significant commitment, and, as I explained a little bit earlier, it is my hope that the next protocol will be able to provide tools for policy-makers to track the progress and the achievements that we will have made.

● (0945)

Hon. Michael Chong: I have a second comment. We have difficulty, as a government, as Monsieur Godin was saying earlier, in hiring bilingual public servants. We end up having to retrain thousands if not tens of thousands of public servants who are newly graduated from Canadian universities because they don't know the other official language.

I know provinces don't have direct control over what universities do, but just as the federal government has spending power, which it uses to control provinces and territories into doing things a certain way, the provinces throughout this country have spending power with respect to their universities, and what provinces indicate to the universities as to their preferences makes a huge difference. I would put to you that the protocols in the admissions standards with respect to other languages have declined in recent years. The admission standards for Canadian universities are not as stringent as they once were with respect to having another language, and they aren't as stringent as they once were with respect to graduating. It used to be that you had to know a second language to graduate from a Canadian university. That is no longer the case.

I just put that to you as a comment.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Chong. You have used your time well.

We'll turn to the second round, with Monsieur Pablo Rodriguez.

[*Translation*]

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

I would like to congratulate Mr. Chong on his tenacity. He has been raising this subject for some time now.

Thank you for being with us today.

Mr. Charbonneau, I have to gather my thoughts, I am so startled by the conclusions you stated. I was really struck by them. All joking aside, you said at the outset that you were not certain you know what the objective of our study was. We know the broad outlines, but I would like to know what you think we should be focusing, exactly.

Mr. François Charbonneau: I think the Commissioner of Official Languages is in the process of doing exactly what some of you would like to see happen, that is, opportunities for second language learning, particularly in anglophone postsecondary institutions. That is exactly what he is doing. We are at the table so we can participate in that initiative. The question is whether there is duplication of efforts.

Mr. Pablo Rodriguez: That is not exactly it. Rather, I would like to know whether there are factors we should be focusing on in our study. Are there questions we should be asking you?

Mr. François Charbonneau: I will take this opportunity to answer one of the questions from your colleague opposite. I do not take an offensive vs. defensive view of Canadian linguistic duality. We don't choose to assist francophones outside Quebec while saying that because they are disappearing in any event, we should opt for all Canadians to be bilingual. Spending more money in one place than another doesn't make sense. We have to do both, for all sorts of self-evident reasons.

You could ask this question. It is important but it has not been explored. It relates to francophone universities outside Quebec, but also to small institutions. It goes somewhat beyond your terms of reference. The federal government is investing a lot of money in the Canadian university system, and that is excellent news. However, it systematically puts small institutions at a disadvantage. Francophones outside Quebec have more small institutions. In the

circumstances, it becomes extremely difficult to retain instructors in those institutions.

If you are interested in postsecondary education and opportunities to learn in French, you have to understand that the institutions of francophone Canada want to offer as complete a spectrum of courses as possible. There therefore have to be certain needs, including the need for offering joint courses to be organized among various provinces. These things are complicated, but we are starting to implement them. In western Canada, a master's in education program has just been established, thanks to the Western Economic Diversification program. Four francophone and bilingual universities—Simon Fraser, the Collège universitaire de Saint-Boniface...

Mr. Pablo Rodriguez: I am going to interrupt you because I don't have a lot of time left.

Mr. François Charbonneau: I'm sorry. So the message is that there are opportunities.

Mr. Pablo Rodriguez: Mr. Pelletier, does the Council of Ministers have set meetings with the federal government, whether it be every three months, once a year, or at some other interval?

Mr. Jean-Gilles Pelletier: The Council of Ministers and the Secretariat are two separate things. I am going to talk about the Secretariat because the administration of the Protocol is really handled by it. There is a team that essentially administers the agreements, the national scholarship program and the language assistant program. For the overall functioning of the Protocol, there are annual meetings to discuss current issues with the federal government. The bilateral agreements also provide for periodic agreements between the federal government and the parties involved, for example to adjust targets from year to year.

● (0950)

Mr. Pablo Rodriguez: Mr. Charbonneau, it must be difficult to attract instructors to the regions, particularly on the French side.

Mr. François Charbonneau: It is a challenge that is becoming greater now that the profession is experiencing retirements and replacements. In the late 1990s it was a little easier because the universities in Quebec weren't hiring. That is not the case now.

Mr. Pablo Rodriguez: Do you have access to all the books you need in French?

Mr. François Charbonneau: That is not where the problems lie. The problem in terms of textbooks relates more to the elementary and secondary levels. In many cases, they are specific textbooks. At the university level, for all sorts of reasons, teaching in French is possible...

Mr. Pablo Rodriguez: That's fine. That answers my question.

Mr. François Charbonneau: Resources can be used to get access to international journals.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Rodriguez.

We will now move on to Mr. Nadeau.

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

We need to encourage English Canadians to learn French in order to become bilingual. I know that at some point we had developed programs. The University of British Columbia, for one, offered courses in French, regardless of the subject, under pilot projects. They realized that for a lot of university students their level of French was not adequate for taking a course in everyday French. Those students had taken immersion programs, but they were not sufficiently familiar with the ins and outs of the language. So the stopped offering those courses, because the students who were fluent in French found that they were wasting their time.

I know that you work in postsecondary education, apart from CMEC, which also involves postsecondary education. I know that some anglophone school boards are removing basic French courses for anglophones from their curricula, or simply eliminating immersion programs. If we do away with French as a second language courses at the secondary level, how can we consider teaching people in French in the anglophone world, when the students have only a basic knowledge of French when they enter university?

Mr. Jean-Gilles Pelletier: You're entirely right. That's indeed an issue. You've described the drop in the number of core French instruction and French immersion programs. We, on the other hand, have observed a significant and promising increase across Canada in the number of graduates who have taken not only a core French program, that is to say a second-language introductory program, but also an immersion program. It's really the immersion programs that will enable a larger number of Canadians, both anglophone and francophone, to speak the other official language. These programs are increasingly popular across Canada, and that's very promising.

However, I want to make an incidental remark in connection with what you just mentioned. We hope that the next MOU will give us more guidance so that we can better understand the impact of the funding invested. However, we have to be realistic. Out of the \$100 billion that the provincial and territorial governments invest in education every year, the agreement I'm referring to today represents \$250 million. That's a drop in the ocean. It's through much more societal efforts that we'll be able to move things forward. It's important to raise the issue, to ensure that these social issues come to the surface. I find the kind of debate you're conducting here absolutely important. The kind of relation—

Mr. Richard Nadeau: Allow me to interrupt you, Mr. Pelletier. I have about a minute left.

The Chair: You have about a minute left, sir.

Mr. Richard Nadeau: I would like Mr. Charbonneau to take over.

Isn't it paradoxical—there are a lot of paradoxes in society and we try to resolve them—that we invest so much money in instruction in French as a second language, whereas we don't invest enough in teaching French as a first language in the minority communities? While the pan-Canadian and Acadian francophone community is declining, the number of bilingual anglophones is increasing. Don't you see in this paradox indicators that will help you correct this decline in one language relative to the other, without opposing them as a whole?

● (0955)

Mr. François Charbonneau: This is clearly the challenge of francophone communities outside Quebec. As Roger Bernard said, the issue of the francophone community in Quebec is number. As long as we are numerous enough, we'll be there. That's always the issue.

It's obviously somewhat paradoxical, and matters have to be resolved in that area. However, we must nevertheless be careful because our institutions are also admitting students who come from the immersion sector. To return to the example cited earlier, 25% of students at the Collège universitaire de Saint-Boniface have previously taken an immersion program. However, they don't stop offering certain courses because students are apparently unable to follow them. On the contrary, they improve them. In fact, this is exactly what we're looking for, that is to say integration into the francophone community, learning French and diplomas that have some value.

The fact remains that this is much harder in certain parts of the country where you don't necessarily have this proximity of francophone communities. It goes back to what I was saying earlier: we have to do both. Despite their fragility, the francophone communities are also ready to do their share to assist in French-language instruction. In any case, nearly all our institutions, with one exception, offer French-as-a-second-language courses or special integration.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Nadeau and Mr. Charbonneau.

Now we'll go to the parliamentary secretary, Ms. Shelly Glover.

Mrs. Shelly Glover (Saint Boniface, CPC): Welcome. It's really a pleasure to have you here.

I want to share my story. I'm an anglophone. I went through the first immersion program in Saint-Boniface. The teachers at the time were really good. We also did our studies with Francophones. We were in the same school. I believe that, as Mr. Nadeau said, the basis of French-language instruction in the primary and secondary immersion schools has changed. Parents interfered in the immersion programs because they wanted their children to speak English more often, which meant they did not practise French. I have three children who earned diplomas taking their courses in immersion programs.

The base has changed at university. Do you have any influence, Mr. Pelletier? Once students get to university, they get what's there. Do you speak with the primary and secondary schools?

Mr. Jean-Gilles Pelletier: Cross-Canada discussions are underway. They are focusing on the official languages, but also on academic fields, to establish equivalencies and correspondences between a grade 6 math program in British Columbia and the equivalent in Nova Scotia.

Mrs. Shelly Glover: We see that French-language instruction has changed.

Mr. Jean-Gilles Pelletier: CMEC is continuing its initiatives by bringing to the table the various stakeholders responsible for curriculum and test development across the country. How will we gradually go about raising the bar? Of course, pilot projects are being conducted to see how we could, for example, analyze the implementation of the European common framework, which essentially establishes a language learning standard for the entire country.

This won't be done in a single day, but pilot projects are underway, which is promising. People and resources are being mobilized to analyze this kind of situation. This will give us a much more objective measurement of the progress our students make in learning their second language.

That said, this is still a strictly provincial and territorial area of jurisdiction. This isn't a single program, like the programs managed by CMEC and the bilateral agreements, which will have an overnight impact on all programs in all provinces. Whatever the case may be, we're striving to establish a kind of pan-Canadian benchmark for second-language learning programs.

• (1000)

Mrs. Shelly Glover: I encourage you to continue because, like Mr. Nadeau, I'm concerned about the subject of our base.

Mr. Charbonneau, I have a question about francophone post-secondary schools. As you said, you are admitting anglophones. Are the courses given to anglophones in institutions that admit anglophones and francophones different? Are anglophones and francophones put in the same classes?

Mr. François Charbonneau: In our institutions, anglophones and francophones take the same courses. It should be pointed out here that these are bilingual institutions. For example, students attending the University of Ottawa could take all their courses in English only. Anglophone students who choose to take their courses in French are entitled to the same courses as anyone else, but will obviously be facing the challenges that presents.

Mrs. Shelly Glover: Do you see a difference between the graduates of programs attended by anglophones and francophones and those of French programs attended by anglophones only, where francophones are graduates? Do you see a difference in the quality of their French when they enter the labour market?

Mr. François Charbonneau: I don't have any statistics on that. I suppose someone who takes the trouble to take courses will have higher-quality French.

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

We'll now begin our third round.

Ms. Zarac.

Mrs. Lise Zarac (LaSalle—Émard, Lib.): Thank you for being with us.

As a new member—

The Chair: I'm sorry Ms. Zarac, but I made a mistake. In my eagerness, I forgot to let our second Vice-Chair speak. We will therefore complete our second round.

Mr. Godin.

Mr. Yvon Godin: Thank you.

Mr. Charbonneau, you said earlier that there was nothing from the Roadmap for Canada's Linguistic Duality last year.

Mr. François Charbonneau: There was very little for the postsecondary level.

Mr. Yvon Godin: Mr. Pelletier, you said there was a lot of money, all kinds of money to spend. It's as though there were millions and millions of dollars. And yet Mr. Charbonneau says there was very little.

Can you explain to me what is going on?

Mr. Jean-Gilles Pelletier: I'm going to draw a distinction with regard to what I said earlier. The federal government has committed to maintaining its funding under the Roadmap. As it concerns us, we're talking about \$258 million a year over the next four years.

Mr. Yvon Godin: We're talking about a drop of water in the Bay of Chaleur.

Mr. Jean-Gilles Pelletier: That's correct. That's what I meant, essentially.

When we talk about money, we're talking about a major commitment, but the total amounts allocated to instruction and education in Canada are not gigantic. To a certain point, it's commensurate with the federal government's jurisdiction in education.

Mr. Yvon Godin: That's what you're referring to, Mr. Charbonneau, the drop of water in the Bay of Chaleur.

Mr. François Charbonneau: To date, I can't put a figure on what will go to postsecondary education from those amounts. The Roadmap states nothing specific regarding the amounts intended for the objectives, that is mother tongue education and second-language instruction.

Mr. Yvon Godin: The federal government has a responsibility with respect to official languages. Here I'm talking about Part VII of the Official Languages Act. Funding is allocated to the communities for the promotion of official languages. Mr. Pelletier says that the situation has improved, relative to other years, but it's as though we don't know where the money went. I remember that was the case in Nova Scotia and that the issue was a serious one. We wondered whether the funding had gone to the schools or elsewhere. Funding is granted, and the provinces do what they want with it. They can't do that. There is Part VII of the Official Languages Act. So we have to stop hitting the ball back and forth. New Brunswick is supposedly recognized as bilingual. Other provinces may perhaps want to defend themselves and say that they have jurisdiction in everything. If the federal government has money to offer to assist the communities, we must send it to the right place. I won't be going to defend the government of New Brunswick if it doesn't do so.

You say this has improved, but what does that mean? The matter isn't resolved. Funding is transferred to the provinces and it's as though we let them do what they want with it. Part VII of the Official Languages Act is clear: the federal government allocates funding. However, when it allocates funding to a province, it should ensure that it knows where that money goes.

Do you agree?

•(1005)

Mr. François Charbonneau: I do 100%.

Obviously, once those amounts are—

Mr. Yvon Godin: I'm talking about Part VII.

Mr. François Charbonneau: Of course, but it's the same thing. Part VII could also apply to all funding invested in the knowledge economy. In that case, Part VII disappears, in a way.

Mr. Yvon Godin: Telling the provinces what courses they should offer or how to go about it is out of the question, but if funding goes to education, I want to invoke Part VII. It refers to the promotion that the federal government must do. This aspect is part of a federal act, and funding is earmarked for that. It's been said that things are improving, but we don't know where the funding is going. This is a provincial jurisdiction.

Mr. Jean-Gilles Pelletier: I can tell you that, in the case of the last MOU, federal investments, from Canadian Heritage, corresponded to approximately 60% in the minority language area and 40% in the second language area across the country. I'm telling you this very clearly: the federal government is saying the same thing as you right now. It wants to see vibrant and vital official language communities. That's why the federal government is continuing—and this is fantastic—to invest in an area of provincial jurisdiction.

Mr. Yvon Godin: But it isn't enough.

Mr. Jean-Gilles Pelletier: We appreciate that the federal government, in the very difficult economic circumstances we are experiencing, made a commitment in June of last year to maintain its funding at the same levels as in 2007 and 2008. That's a very significant commitment in the current context.

Mr. Yvon Godin: On the other hand, if it isn't done in the schools, the public service will have to take charge of it. The Canadian act provides that service must be given in both official languages.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Godin.

We're now beginning the third round.

Ms. Zarac, you have the floor.

Mrs. Lise Zarac: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Good morning once again. Thank you for being here today. As a new committee member, I learned a great deal from your presentations, and I thank you for that.

I have a question for Mr. Pelletier on national programs. The promotion of bilingualism is one thing, but I know that, to improve skills in one language, you have to have an opportunity to speak it. You said that these programs are very popular and that there could be further investment in them. Is the purpose of these programs only to promote exchange between anglophones and francophones, or do they also give people who live in a minority setting the opportunity to practise their language?

Mr. Jean-Gilles Pelletier: The purpose of the Destination Clic program is precisely to enable minority francophones to further develop their language skills.

Mrs. Lise Zarac: That's excellent. Thank you very much.

Mr. Jean-Gilles Pelletier: You're welcome.

Mrs. Lise Zarac: My second question is for Mr. Charbonneau. In talking about investment in the knowledge economy, you mentioned that francophone institutions were at a disadvantage. You spoke about that briefly. I would like you to talk more about the impact of that situation on francophone institutions, and to know what recommendations you would make to the committee to offset that impact.

Mr. François Charbonneau: When the federal government decides to invest in the knowledge economy... We know that investments will be made in infrastructure. Of the funding allocated to the Canada Research Chairs Program and to the Vanier Canada Graduate Scholarships, very little is invested in francophone institutions because most of them don't have doctoral programs. They definitely will not receive any funding. In concrete terms, what are the consequences? The institution continues to exist, but it's the institution of the majority next door that will expand increasingly because it will be able to attract more promising researchers and so on.

The objective is really not to withdraw the funding we want to invest, but rather to see how, through compensatory programs, we can do simple things like invest in research and support the researchers at university institutions who, historically, must teach.

We do very little research. However, the teaching body is being renewed. Thirty years ago, it was normal for a professor in the region to engage solely in teaching. Today, young doctorate holders want to continue doing research. They need assistance and go to institutions where they'll give six new courses over three years, for example. An investigation conducted by the Commissioner of Official Languages two years ago on granting agencies provides figures on this. Unfortunately, the recommendations it contained were not followed. It was very specific: eight recommendations were designed to assist minority anglophones and francophones. Bishop's University could resemble what can happen for the minority francophone communities, where assistance can also be provided, in research in particular. There are other examples like these.

•(1010)

Mrs. Lise Zarac: Do I have any time left?

The Chair: You have two minutes left.

Mrs. Lise Zarac: The government's budget includes a program for researchers. Does that complicate matters?

Mr. François Charbonneau: You're referring to—

Mrs. Lise Zarac: I'm referring to the program that concerns researchers only in business programs.

Mr. François Charbonneau: That's a specific issue. The decision was made to increase the funding allocated to the granting agencies such as the SSHRC. I don't want to talk nonsense, but I think priority will be given to research.

I would find it hard to make a direct connection with the issue of minority francophones. Certainly, from the moment you decide on specific topics, you give the research an orientation, which raises other considerations, because that isn't the only research that's important in understanding the Canadian reality and our international competitiveness. Moreover, Canada has expertise in the field of linguistic minorities, particularly in research. Our researchers give international conferences on the subject.

In deciding that this isn't a priority for Canada and that it's only business, we're not developing our major strengths. Francophones aren't the only ones considering this issue; some anglophones are also experts on the issue of minority francophones. I'm thinking of Michael Behiels, of the University of Ottawa, who has written an extraordinary book on francophone rights. He's an anglophone. His research should be promoted just as much as other research focusing directly on business.

Mrs. Lise Zarac: Thank you.

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

Now we'll continue with Mr. Galipeau.

Mr. Royal Galipeau (Ottawa—Orléans, CPC): Good morning, Mr. Charbonneau. Thank you for coming. Don't go thinking that I'll be taking too much time to ask my question. You'll have all the time you need to answer it. My question is for Mr. Charbonneau first, but Mr. Pelletier could enlighten us as well, if he wants.

Mr. Charbonneau, could you give us some indication of the success the institutions you represent are having in retaining minority francophone students? We know that English has a very real power of attraction. I'd like to know whether you have any figures on minority francophone students who choose to pursue their university education in French.

Then I'll have a second question to ask you.

Mr. François Charbonneau: I don't have the specific figure you're expecting. The theme of rights holders no longer exists at the university level. I don't have the figures on that subject. Perhaps the people from... No, you don't have them either.

Mr. Royal Galipeau: That seems to me to be quite an important statistic for assessing the institutions' success. Would it be possible to send that information to the clerk?

Mr. François Charbonneau: That's obviously a statistical challenge, but I agree it would be important to have the answer to that question.

Mr. Royal Galipeau: If you can't assess the situation quantitatively, can you do so qualitatively?

Apart from the proximity of an institution serving the French-speaking population, what factors influence language minority youths who have to choose a college or university? What strategies have been developed by French-language universities to ensure they retain students from their community?

• (1015)

Mr. François Charbonneau: That's an excellent question. In all the studies on factors that may attract students, the language question is obvious. It may prove difficult to study in one's second language. Students may have perfect mastery of another language without being comfortable enough to study a specific subject in it. There are many other factors, such as the quality of instruction, the supply of courses and the opportunity to take a specific program. We know that some programs are offered only at certain university institutions. The prestige of the institution often plays an important role, as does the institution's proximity and educational costs.

Mr. Royal Galipeau: You will have noticed today that people on both sides of the table share the same concern on this point. We see

the same thing all across Canada, but it's quite particular here in Ottawa. There are 120,000 francophones in Ottawa. Half of them are in exogamous unions and therefore speak French only when they speak to each other. Furthermore, 180,000 anglophones can't speak French. Anglophones are being trained so that they can speak French and ultimately become francophiles. Like others on both sides of the table, I'm concerned about the fact that many francophones feel beaten down by their status as minority francophones, to the point where they are less motivated than anglophones to continue their training in French.

The questions I asked you about strategies are relevant. I would like you to be able to answer them in your next appearance before our committee.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Galipeau.

We'll continue with Mr. Nadeau.

But first I would like to point out that Statistics Canada may be able to provide some of the figures requested. We should check with them.

We have a new member of our committee this morning. Ms. Bourgeois, go ahead, please.

Ms. Diane Bourgeois (Terrebonne—Blainville, BQ): Good morning, gentlemen.

As you both noted, education is an area of provincial jurisdiction. You seem to agree on the fact that, with respect to investment, it is hard to specify amounts, that the budgets for instruction in one language are combined with those of the provinces. That seems to be an extremely significant difficulty.

My first question is for Mr. Pelletier.

I imagine that, in past years, the Council of Ministers of Education established action plans to promote English or French, but especially French in the other provinces. My impression is that Quebec attaches more importance to learning English than the other provinces attach to learning French.

Am I mistaken?

Mr. Jean-Gilles Pelletier: The difference between what Quebec invests in the second language and what the other provinces invest in the same field is not enormous.

Ms. Diane Bourgeois: All right. That's what I wanted to know. The fact remains that action plans are designed before the investment is made. Would it be possible for you to submit the action plans from past years to the committee?

Mr. Jean-Gilles Pelletier: I would like to recall, for those who can hear us, that administration of the MOU is what CMEC does. It is on behalf of all the provinces and territories that CMEC signs the MOU with the federal government. Once again, we're talking about a relatively small amount. Out of the \$100 billion invested, this is an amount of \$258 million a year. The provinces and territories each have an action plan that states their strategic priorities with respect to education, whether it be at the elementary, secondary or post-secondary level, in early childhood or continuing education. The action plans prepared as part of CMEC's work are all available. They are part of the bilateral agreements that the provinces and territories enter into with the federal government under the MOU. These agreements are all available on the Internet.

●(1020)

Ms. Diane Bourgeois: Mr. Pelletier, I'm asking you for the action plans because they are generally accompanied by an evaluation. For example, you mentioned an immersion program that you manage, that is to say a student exchange program that takes place during the summer. Did I understand correctly?

Mr. Jean-Gilles Pelletier: I'm going to draw a distinction in an attempt to clarify the situation.

Ms. Diane Bourgeois: Yes.

Mr. Jean-Gilles Pelletier: CMEC manages, on behalf of all the provinces and territories, four national programs which are outside the bilateral agreements as such.

Ms. Diane Bourgeois: All right.

Mr. Jean-Gilles Pelletier: Those agreements, which represent \$228 million, are intended for the provinces and territories. Of that amount, \$30 million is allocated to management of the national programs Explore, Odyssey, Accent and Destination Clic. That enables individual learning, whether it be monitors or scholarships.

Ms. Diane Bourgeois: All right.

Mr. Jean-Gilles Pelletier: These two things are a bit different. The \$228 million is attached to the bilateral agreements. Under those agreements, every province and territory receives financial support from the federal government that must be matched in order to meet certain objectives.

Ms. Diane Bourgeois: You've been saying for some time now that a lot of money is being allocated to various programs, that the provinces are being helped and so on, but I want to ensure that the money winds up in the right place. The action plans include obligations of result, and the programs are also necessarily results-based. One may wonder, for example, whether the immersion program has achieved its goal in past years and whether it's still worth the trouble to invest funding in it.

You also talked about a new protocol between the federal government and the provinces. I would like to know whether, to your knowledge, the provinces will be able to opt out. Education is a provincial jurisdiction. You'll understand that Quebec stands by that.

Mr. Jean-Gilles Pelletier: Absolutely. I don't want to take a position on that, but I can tell you that Quebec is currently an active partner in the renegotiation process. The results frameworks, the performance areas are developed in full agreement with the government of Quebec. I think that will essentially enable the government of Quebec to achieve its own strategic education

objectives at the elementary, second and postsecondary levels. All the provinces and territories are parties to this renegotiation process, which should be very productive for both Quebec and the other provinces.

Ms. Diane Bourgeois: Thank you very much.

Mr. Jean-Gilles Pelletier: You're welcome.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Bourgeois.

We'll now go to the fourth round. I'm going to go around to the political parties in order and see whether some want to speak. For the government, Mr. Lemieux told me he wanted to do so.

Mr. Lemieux.

Mr. Pierre Lemieux (Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, CPC): There are clearly two somewhat different but complementary issues: official languages and postsecondary education, on the one hand, and bilingualism, on the other. It is important that postsecondary students be able to study in the official language of their choice. If they want to make progress and get good marks, it's preferable that they study in their mother tongue. On the other hand, we would like graduates to be more bilingual. Those are two different matters. A university or college can offer courses in French in Ontario, for example, but not promote bilingualism.

[English]

What I'd like to know is, from a CMEC perspective—and the ministers who come together from different provinces—are these two issues discussed, and how they relate, and the different solutions needed for different results? From a strategy perspective, are they actually discussed by provinces?

●(1025)

Mr. Jean-Gilles Pelletier: What I can tell you is that in the course of assessing what has happened in the past—and this speaks to the point that was made earlier—and in determining priorities for the future, the ministers of the jurisdictions are looking to reach and implement objectives in six domains at the elementary, secondary, and post-secondary levels with both linguistic objectives, i.e. minority language education and second language instruction.

So what we would hope to achieve are clear indicators in those two areas. So, for example, to respond to your question more specifically, we would expect post-secondary indicators that would reflect minority language post-secondary education and second language instruction at the post-secondary level. We would hope to raise the bar in these two areas.

Mr. Pierre Lemieux: Which takes priority? My assessment would be that education in the official language takes priority over bilingualism. Would that be a correct assessment?

Mr. Jean-Gilles Pelletier: Again, what I'm going to tell you is that to a large extent, that call is made by provinces and territories.

Mr. Pierre Lemieux: Yes, I'm just asking what the reality is.

Mr. Jean-Gilles Pelletier: The reality is... I'll repeat what I mentioned earlier to Mr. Godin, in that at this point in time, what we've seen is that the percentage of minority language versus second language in the program that CMEC is involved with—again, it's a really small proportion of the overall investment in education—is about 60-40, that is, 60% for minority, 40% for second language.

Mr. Pierre Lemieux: Right, and when it comes down to second language education, I think part of the point Mr. Chong was making was that there is no obligation placed upon students to improve or to continue their bilingual efforts. It's more that if they so choose, they may go down that stream. I think what Mr. Chong and Mr. Godin were mentioning was that it might be beneficial to have some sort of an obligation. I'm not specifying what that obligation should be, but there should be an obligation placed upon students to have a level of bilingualism, which is in fact a skill set that makes them more employable, particularly in the public service, but I'm sure in all sectors across our economy as well.

Mr. Jean-Gilles Pelletier: It speaks a bit to the point you made earlier in regard to raising the bar for ability levels, both at the spoken and written levels for individuals who graduate, not only at the secondary level from immersion programs, but also those who may continue on and graduate from university. All I can tell you is that you make a very valid point, and there are pan-Canadian discussions as to how to raise that bar.

Now, between discussions and achievements, obviously there is what other members here on the committee have mentioned, namely, that there will be a progression. Things will just take place one step at a time.

[Translation]

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. Lemieux. Listening to you, I remember that I took four compulsory courses in philosophy at the Cegep, but no second language courses.

That said, I'm going to go to the official opposition. Would you like to add other points? Is that fine?

Mr. Pablo Rodriguez: I have perhaps two brief questions.

The Chair: Mr. Rodriguez.

Mr. Pablo Rodriguez: Is there enough money for research in French?

Mr. François Charbonneau: I'll answer briefly but differently. The Commissioner of Official Languages has clearly shown that there are special challenges for small institutions that want to request funding for research. When applications are filed in French, it's extremely difficult to establish committees of peers, and so on. Research is a very broad issue, but there are special challenges if you want to conduct research in French in Canada, absolutely.

Mr. Pablo Rodriguez: Has the change in Part VII of the act, the passage of Bill S-3 at the time, had an impact for you?

Mr. François Charbonneau: We're talking about the improvement of 2006?

Mr. Pablo Rodriguez: Pardon me?

Mr. François Charbonneau: We're talking about the improvement of 2006?

Mr. Pablo Rodriguez: Yes, you can call it an improvement. In fact, we've also recently witnessed the first judgment by the Supreme

Court stating that the government must consider the needs of the communities, but it must also ensure that services of equal quality are offered in both official languages, not merely say that services are offered in both languages, very good in English...

Mr. François Charbonneau: That's correct.

Mr. Pablo Rodriguez: ... and poor in French.

In general, it was a great moment for the committee when Bill S-3 was passed, when Part VII was amended, but I don't sense any change every day. No one talks about it.

Is there a difference for you? Do you feel something?

• (1030)

Mr. François Charbonneau: I could say that we feel some kind of change as a result of that. You couldn't talk about a before and after, then target specific programs that had been altered, absolutely not.

Mr. Pablo Rodriguez: In the agreements with the federal government, does no new obligation follow from the changes to Part VII? Nothing has changed?

Mr. Jean-Gilles Pelletier: There are no obligations apart from those that already existed, which were nevertheless significant obligations.

Mr. Pablo Rodriguez: And yet it seems to me we should have gone a little further when we improved Part VII of the act. That's something that should perhaps be explored, Mr. Chairman.

Were you consulted during Mr. Lord's tour to prepare the Roadmap for Canada's Linguistic Duality? Was one of you consulted, or was your organization consulted?

Mr. François Charbonneau: Our association wasn't consulted directly; some presidents were consulted personally.

Mr. Pablo Rodriguez: But not your association. And you?

Mr. Jean-Gilles Pelletier: I can't speak on behalf of CMEC, because I unfortunately wasn't there at the time. I don't know the answer; I'm sorry.

Mr. Pablo Rodriguez: All right, but from memory, you don't know?

Mr. Jean-Gilles Pelletier: I can't tell you.

Mr. Pablo Rodriguez: Mr. Charbonneau, you said—and I'll close with this—that there isn't really any help in the Roadmap. What would you have liked: funding, an orientation?

Mr. François Charbonneau: The Roadmap could have contained certain elements. One of the recommendations of the Commissioner of Official Languages, in particular, was that funding that had been around for a certain period of time, in research, among other areas, could have been invested in research on linguistic duality and the official languages. That recommendation was not accepted. That's a concrete example of something that could have been included and that could be done by all researchers in Canada. As many researchers in francophone universities in Canada are interested in these issues, that could have provided some help. That's a concrete example.

French Canadian universities have developed an action plan, particularly for introducing translation programs. Lastly, we had suggested a set of measures, but they weren't directly accepted; priorities were different.

Mr. Pablo Rodriguez: All right.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

If I remember correctly, Mr. Godin wanted to add something.

Mr. Yvon Godin: You didn't consult your list; you remembered; that's good.

We're talking about the provinces and provincial areas of jurisdiction. Wouldn't we also need a message from the federal government? I'm going to throw out an idea and I would like to have your opinion on the subject. One example of a message is that the government is currently appointing deputy ministers who are not bilingual. How can you ask a province to do its duty when the federal government appoints deputy ministers who aren't bilingual? I would like to hear your opinion on that subject. You needn't feel uncomfortable.

I've previously said that I had introduced a bill concerning the Supreme Court. The Supreme Court of Canada doesn't have an obligation to appoint a bilingual judge, although the law is written in English and French. Shouldn't the federal government start by sending itself a message as an employer, through these appointments? As I mentioned earlier, whether we're talking about a welder or a mechanic, the employer can tell the college that the mechanic it wants to hire needs to know this and that. He must learn it in four years or else he won't be a mechanic. Shouldn't the employer, the government, do the same in the case of its training and education institutions? That's not interference in fields of provincial jurisdiction. The government presents itself as the employer and specifically states what it takes to work for it. If people want to work for the government or apply for a job, that's what they will have to do. That would be the law.

We shouldn't do like New Brunswick, which has an Official Languages Act and which fights in court for it not to apply in the health field. That's like saying that there's no obligation for the francophone community in the health field, but that there is a law for the rest. Whatever the case may be, we're going to debate that in court, and I believe we'll win the battle, once again. We have to fight in order to win our cases. I'm offering you a little food for thought as to where the government stands on Canada's official languages.

Mr. Jean-Gilles Pelletier: Mr. Godin, I very much appreciate your question.

Mr. Yvon Godin: You're welcome.

Mr. Jean-Gilles Pelletier: I'll take the liberty of answering essentially by citing the example of CMEC. That's all I can—

• (1035)

Mr. Yvon Godin: What is CMEC doing?

Mr. Jean-Gilles Pelletier: For the past 40 years, CMEC has ensured that all its discussions across Canada have been conducted in both official languages, that all its publications are written in both official languages.

Mr. Yvon Godin: Congratulations.

Mr. Jean-Gilles Pelletier: We're talking about an organization that belongs to the provinces and territories. Forty years ago, the provinces and territories established an organization to collaborate and represent education internationally. There is a commitment to ensure that the organization that serves them operates completely and perfectly in both official languages. That is the message that CMEC gives people who observe its work.

Mr. Yvon Godin: Now I would like to hear the representative of the universities on that subject.

Mr. François Charbonneau: A positive message is being sent in the fact that we renewed the Roadmap. That's recognized. It was possible that that funding might not be reinvested. Obviously, we could still—

Mr. Yvon Godin: Pardon me. Does it make sense for a judge to be appointed to the Supreme Court of Canada if he's not bilingual?

Mr. François Charbonneau: I don't know whether I'm qualified to answer on behalf of the members of my association—

Mr. Yvon Godin: Do it personally.

Mr. François Charbonneau: That indeed raises a number of challenges, that you have clearly expressed.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Godin.

Mr. Nadeau would like to speak to complete the round.

Mr. Richard Nadeau: I believe that Mr. Pelletier and Mr. Charbonneau would be excellent deputy ministers. The mere fact that they're already bilingual would correct the deficiency rightly pointed out by Mr. Godin.

I would like to ask Mr. Charbonneau a more basic question. I don't know whether Mr. d'Entremont is still President of Université Sainte-Anne. Whatever the case may be, I met him a few years ago, and he spoke to me about one of his fears. Since Université Sainte-Anne is a French-language university in Church Point, in southern Nova Scotia, many immersion students enroll in it, students from Yarmouth, Pubnico and southern Nova Scotia. That institution was to compete with other university institutions in Nova Scotia, of which there are 10, I believe. The words he used struck me. He was afraid that the Université Sainte-Anne might become a big high school for anglophones who want to learn French at university.

This is a small Acadian institution with a rich history; it offers courses in its own selected fields. However, it finds itself in a situation in which the surrounding community is becoming anglophone, and the French aspect of the university is being lost. It is somewhat like, on another scale, the Université Laval becoming an anglophone campus if the majority of its students ever came from the anglophone world.

We want to train anglophones in small institutions in very anglophone environments. Those institutions are trying to make do as best they can to keep the Acadian character of the place.

Doesn't this challenge present a danger for these small institutions?

Mr. François Charbonneau: That's obviously a challenge. We have to do a real balancing act so as not to fall into the situation you describe. French Canadian university institutions have made the choice to open their doors to all those from the majority who have the merit of wanting to learn in French. To my knowledge, no university has chosen to restrict itself to a target population. All those who want to learn and take the courses that are given are welcome at our institutions.

In some cases, the segment of anglophones who come from the immersion side is essential to the survival of those institutions. It's a challenge to ensure that French life is maintained, as francophones tend to be polite and switch to English. This requires efforts to create awareness. However, the doors of the institutions are open to enable them to meet that challenge. In any case, these places where there is a francophone majority, apart from Quebec's institutions, make it easier to learn the second language.

• (1040)

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

The Chair: Thank you very much.

That completes our business.

Mr. Petit hasn't yet had an opportunity to speak and would like to do so. If committee members agree, we could let him go ahead.

Mr. Daniel Petit (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): How much time may I have?

The Chair: Two or three minutes.

Mr. Daniel Petit: Two or three minutes, no more?

Mr. Yvon Godin: It doesn't trouble me if we give him five minutes.

The Chair: Ask your questions and we'll see.

Mr. Yvon Godin: I wouldn't want to give him 10 or 15 minutes, but five minutes, like the others.

The Chair: Thank you. You see how the committee works well.

Mr. Richard Nadeau: We're going to fight for you, Mr. Petit.

An hon. member: You're going to owe them.

Mr. Daniel Petit: I'm not sure they'll be pleased to have let me speak after this.

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

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Daniel Petit: Mr. Charbonneau and Mr. Pelletier, thank you for coming to meet with us.

I saw you in Toronto, when we visited your centre. That was where I learned that there were 192,000 francophones in Toronto and that the second language was Chinese, no longer French, as a result of which the questions we asked you were very strange.

Coming back to you, Mr. Charbonneau. I come from Quebec, and my children have studied in Alberta. They are Franco-Albertans. My four children attended primary school, and English was not systematically taught. In some public colleges, English was even literally banished. At one time—my children are in their thirties—people took a very dim view of English. So I know both system.

My children then attended private teaching institutions. There was an improvement, but there was still a lot of reluctance. Then we went to live in Alberta, and they attended the École Saint-Jean, which subsequently became the Faculté Saint-Jean. As a member of the Association des universités de la francophonie canadienne, you know that we managed to have that school become a faculty.

In that place, the funding that the Edmonton School Board allocates to francophones exceeds, on a population basis, the funding that certain Quebec school commissions allocate to francophones. We're always told that Alberta is rich, but I believe that political decisions also come into play.

I'll bring you back to Quebec. You saw what they did on the other side. In Quebec, everything falls under provincial jurisdiction. The message that must be sent to the provinces—and on this point, I agree with Mr. Rodriguez—on the subject of second language instruction in a minority situation is that we have no control over the funding allocated for that purpose. The provincial government receives the funding and, in some cases, we try to see whether it's correct.

I wonder about Quebec. If English is virtually swept under the carpet at the primary and secondary levels, students will have a problem when they start professional or college studies because there's no training. The situation is even worse at the university level: there are second-language illiterates. We can tell you a lot of things, but if the basics aren't working, it serves no purpose.

Mr. Charbonneau, you who represent the Association des universités de la francophonie canadienne, can you suggest to us what we could do to enable students to continue their studies in their second language at francophone universities? In Quebec's francophone universities, the same difficulty arises for English as a second language. Some universities, like McGill University, are anglophone first of all and have trouble teaching French as a second language.

What do we do now?

Mr. François Charbonneau: Quebec universities have their own association, the CREPUQ. I can't speak on behalf of the Quebec universities.

Ms. Diane Bourgeois: Mr. Chairman, may I rise on a point of order or request clarification?

The Chair: I recognize you, Ms. Bourgeois.

Ms. Diane Bourgeois: What Mr. Petit has just said is completely false. I taught in the public education system in Quebec for 30 years. I'm sorry, but it's not true that students there don't learn English. Mr. Petit has confused primary and postsecondary education.

That's the point I wanted to make, Mr. Chairman.

• (1045)

The Chair: Ms. Bourgeois, that is not a point of order.

Mr. Daniel Petit: Then ask Pauline Marois. So stop exaggerating.

Ms. Diane Bourgeois: That's not a problem. I'm at least offering that information because he's talking through his hat.

The Chair: We're going to continue in the same vein next Thursday. We'll be hearing from six witnesses from four different organizations.

Allow me to thank both of our guests this morning, who did a good job of kicking off the subject.

Mr. Jean-Gilles Pelletier: Thank you, everyone.

The Chair: The meeting is adjourned.

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