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Chair

Mr. Steven Blaney

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• (0905)

[English]

The Chair (Mr. Steven Blaney (Lévis—Bellechasse, CPC)): Good morning, everybody. Welcome to the Standing Committee on Official Languages, meeting number 42. Pursuant to Standing Order 108(3), this is a study of the development of linguistic duality in northern Canada.

We have the pleasure of having a very important panel of witnesses this morning.

[Translation]

Allow me to welcome you to this extraordinary meeting of the Standing Committee on Official Languages, the first to be held in the Canadian high north since the committee was established more than 30 years ago. My colleagues from the main federal political parties and I are pleased to be here to witness the advancement and promotion of linguistic duality in the high north.

First, I would like to remind you that you have access to simultaneous interpretation equipment.

I would also like to mention to you that, as a result of the winter conditions, two committee members, Yvon Godin and Bernard Généreux, will be joining us later in the day. They will of course be able to follow the proceedings of our committee since all our conversations and exchanges will be entered in our records.

Without further ado, I would invite the representatives of the Government of Yukon to take the floor. I believe we will be hearing from Ms. Blais. I would like to thank you for helping to find the witnesses. We also have Ms. Moodie, deputy minister and Cabinet secretary, with us today. Thank you.

[English]

Thank you for being with us, Ms. Moodie.

[Translation]

We also have Ms. Pamela Hine, who is deputy minister of education, and Mr. Harvey Brooks, deputy minister of economic development.

[English]

Welcome to our committee.

[Translation]

We also have the manager of arts and cultural services from the Department of Tourism and Culture, Ms. Laurel Parry, and, lastly,

the director of communications and social marketing at the Department of Health and Social Services, Ms. Patricia Living.

Without further ado, I invite you to make your opening statements. Then we will continue with a discussion with committee members.

Ms. Blais, go ahead please.

Mrs. Francine Blais (Director, French Language Services Directorate, Government of Yukon): Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I would like to welcome all the members and the vice-chair to Yukon, to paradise.

In my presentation, I will outline the history of the francophone presence in Yukon and will then talk about the progress made and measures put in place.

A Francophone trader, François Xavier Mercier and his partner built the Fort Reliance trading post near the mouth of the Klondike in 1874. His efforts also resulted in the arrival of the first Oblate missionaries in the region. Francophone priests worked to develop education and health care services.

By the time of the 1898 Klondike gold rush, at the end of the 19th century, francophones were already well established in the area and newly arrived francophone professionals to Dawson and Mayo played an active role in the social and political life of these communities. However, outward migration at the end of the gold rush seriously reduced their numbers and the francophone presence in Yukon was greatly diminished until its gradual resurgence as young francophones from the rest of Canada strongly motivated to want to maintain their language worked tirelessly to win support from governments to develop services in French in Yukon.

Yukon's francophone community includes 1,245 persons who count French as their first official language. Although francophones can be found all over Yukon, by far the greatest percentage, 82%, live in Whitehorse. While francophones account for four percent of the population, over 11% of Yukoners can speak French, evidence of the growing linguistic duality in Yukon.

A strong and concerted effort on the part of the francophone community and the federal and territorial governments first led to the development, passage and gradual implementation of the Languages Act. Among other things, this act gave Yukon francophones the right to communicate with and receive services from the government in French at head or central offices. Our act in fact seems to presage the Roadmap for Canada's Linguistic Duality when it notes that the measures in this act are steps toward equality of status of English and French.

The Yukon accepts that English and French are the official languages of Canada and also accepts that measures set out in the act constitute important steps towards implementation of the equality of status of English and French in Yukon.

Now let's talk about the development of services in French. Implementation involved extensive consultations with the francophone community and funding agreements with the federal government for the development of French language services. In 1988, the agreement between the federal and territorial governments included an agreement by the federal government to bear all costs incurred in the development, enhancement and implementation of French language services. However, the first funding agreement did not include health services funding because certain health services were still a responsibility of the federal government and were devolved in 1993 well after the signing of the first funding agreement. Since that time, successive Yukon governments have contributed to the gradual development of health services in French despite the lack of federal funding.

However, it goes without saying that additional funding from the federal government to further develop these services would be welcomed by both the territorial government and the francophone community.

• (0910)

Relations between francophones and other Yukoners have been excellent. Governments, both federal and territorial, have worked with the community in various ways. To emphasize the importance of direct consultation with the francophone community, the Yukon government established the Advisory Committee on French Language Services to advise the Minister of the Executive Council Office on any matter related to the Languages Act and the implementation of government services in French.

To help guide employees in government in the implementation of French language services, several instruments have been developed: the French Language Policy, the Guidelines for Advertising, Publishing and Other Forms of Communications in French and the Guidelines for Staffing Bilingual Positions.

What is the touchstone that has been developed to measure French language services? A good service is one that is useful, that is one that meets the needs expressed by the community; is useable, that is to say is practical, accessible, consistently maintained and comparable in quality to English language services; and used by francophones free of charge. Where are the services? Well, they exist across government: court services, legislation and regulations, francophone school boards, driver's licences and counter service, bilingual social workers, advertising, forms, news releases, signs, websites, in fact everything involving communication with the

public. That's just a brief overview. I have made our activity report for 2008-2009 and 2009-2010 available to you. As you'll see, we've done a lot in those two years.

Since 2006, the French Language Services Branch was raised to the status of a stand-alone department-like directorate reporting directly to a minister, another indication of the importance the government attaches to the delivery of French language services. Yukon has come a long way in the last 30 years in offering French-language services for the francophone community. That has meant focusing on several important areas that Canada's Roadmap identified and for which we have jurisdictional responsibility: investing in youth, improving access to services, capitalizing on economic benefits.

In terms of the support for youth, our government has supported the youth group, Espoir Jeunesse, and continues to support the Yukon francophone school board's delivery of education to francophone students. Yukon has also contributed to the economic development of the community, by investing in the francophone community centre, which opened in 1989, and in providing opportunities for francophone service deliverers to compete on services procurement.

Yukon today is more than just a land of awesome beauty and opportunity for all. It is also a place where francophones live and contribute to society by sharing their language and culture. It is also a place where they can live their life in French. We have journeyed together a great distance in the delivery of services in French. Allow me to quote from the report on Yukon francophones by the Fédération des communautés francophones et acadienne du Canada:

In Yukon, there are seven times more people who know French (alone or with English) than in 1951. Today, more than 3,545 people in the territory can speak French, representing an impressive 11.7 percent of the population. This is also an increase of 500 people over 2001. In 2006, 820 inhabitants of Yukon worked in French most often or at least regularly, representing 32.5 percent of the labour force with knowledge of French. In total, 4.3 percent of the labour force in Yukon uses French at least regularly at work.

• (0915)

While there is a distance to go, doing it with our federal and Franco-Yukonnais partners will make the voyage that much better.

Thank you for your attention.

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

Mr. Galipeau, go ahead please.

Mr. Royal Galipeau (Ottawa—Orléans, CPC): Thank you very much.

I would simply like to clarify one point. I very much appreciated your presentation, but as it is all entered in the official record, I would like to point out that, in the sixth last paragraph, you no doubt meant 1999, not 1989.

Mrs. Francine Blais: That's what I have in my notes. I made a mistake.

Mr. Royal Galipeau: But not—

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Galipeau.

Mrs. Francine Blais: It was indeed 1999. Thank you.

The Chair: That's noted.

We'll now go to the committee vice-chair, Mr. Bélanger.

Hon. Mauril Bélanger (Ottawa—Vanier, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Thank you all for being with us today. We have three deputy ministers in our midst. That's impressive. In the Parliament of Canada, we receive them only one at a time.

I'm going to try to start with some more general considerations and continue with some more specific questions.

Has the legislative framework adopted in 1988 with regard to the French language been amended since that time?

Mrs. Francine Blais: With regard to that framework, I believe the act cannot be amended without the federal government's consent.

Hon. Mauril Bélanger: All right. You say that the present act is a major step toward achieving equality of status for French and English in Yukon. Is there, somewhere in government, some sort of document providing details on the number of stages or the term of that plan for achieving equality of status?

Mrs. Francine Blais: We're working very hard on that, but we don't have a strategic plan, as such, spread out over three or five years, for example. We're currently consulting the community. We're proceeding more on a step-by-step basis, based on the needs expressed by the francophone community through the Advisory Committee on French-Language Services.

Hon. Mauril Bélanger: Can you tell me whether there are any challenges before the courts involving the francophone community that affect the offer of service or the status of the situation in Yukon?

• (0920)

Mrs. Francine Blais: I couldn't speak at any length about that or give you an in-depth answer—

Hon. Mauril Bélanger: I'm not asking you to comment on the nature of those challenges, if there are any.

Mrs. Francine Blais: The trial concerning the Yukon francophone school board has just come to an end and we're awaiting the decision.

Hon. Mauril Bélanger: Are there any others?

Mrs. Francine Blais: I couldn't tell you. To my knowledge, no.

Hon. Mauril Bélanger: All right.

Can you simply tell me about them in factual terms? I'm not talking about submissions by the community or the government. Could you talk a little about that for committee members and the people who will be following our proceedings, without prejudicing the government's position?

Mrs. Francine Blais: Pamela?

[English]

Ms. Pamela Hine (Deputy Minister, Department of Education, Government of Yukon): Good morning, and thank you for the opportunity to appear in front of the committee.

On the matter of the public schools, as you're aware, the Commission scolaire francophone du Yukon filed a suit against the Yukon government on February 18, 2009. The parties had invested significant efforts in an attempt to resolve the claim but were unsuccessful in bringing about an agreement. Following the filing of the lawsuit, the parties tried again, in good faith, to resolve the matters and avoid a trial, but the parties were unable to reach a mutually acceptable agreement. The court proceedings ended on February 3, 2011. It's unknown when the formal decision will be issued by the court.

The statement of claim is wide-reaching, but essentially I can give you a few of the items that are being considered by the judge.

They are looking for the transfer to the Commission scolaire francophone du Yukon of École Émilie-Tremblay and the parcel of land upon which the school is situated. These are currently public buildings. It's a public school system and publicly owned buildings and land.

They are asking for the authority to build a new secondary school on the EET land, the school land, which could accommodate up to 200 students. I should mention that the school currently on the site is a pre-K to 12 school.

They're looking for the capital budget to build the school, estimated at the trial to be in the range between some \$15 million to \$45 million, again, depending on what the outcome is going to be, and the right to manage the EET land, the schools that would be situated upon it, and the operation and maintenance budget required to manage them.

They're also looking for added human and financial resources and the transfer of the authority to the school board so that the school board becomes the employer of the director general, the school principal, the teachers, assistants, and technical support staff of the school.

I assure you that the Yukon Department of Education understands its legal obligations to support French first language education to right holders' children and to remain committed to continuing its strong support to our francophone students. Francophone students enjoy an excellent level of education and a well-equipped school that currently operates at 60% to 62% of its recommended capacity. They are enjoying strong levels of funding and student-teacher ratios that are among the lowest not only in the Yukon but in Canada.

The Yukon government believes that the level of management and control exercised by right holders in the Yukon, through the Commission scolaire—the only school board in the Yukon—meets and exceeds the legal requirements. We will continue to work with the francophone board to provide excellent French education to right holders' children. As well, the Department of Education is committed to continuing its support to the other groups of students, including French immersion students, first nation citizens, Catholic students, and students with special needs.

Thank you.

[Translation]

Hon. Mauril Bélanger: That's fine.

The Chair: Mr. Bélanger, you have a little time left.

Hon. Mauril Bélanger: Thank you, Ms. Hine.

Could you briefly tell me when the agreement with the Government of Canada will expire?

Mrs. Francine Blais: In 2013.

Hon. Mauril Bélanger: Is it a public document? May we have a copy of it?

Mrs. Francine Blais: We don't yet have it on our website, but it's a public—

• (0925)

Hon. Mauril Bélanger: —document.

Mrs. Francine Blais: It's on the federal government website. We submitted the document in late March. It's being reviewed by the financial services of Canadian Heritage. I don't know whether there will be any other questions. That's why we haven't yet made it public. It's coming. I can ask if I can submit it to you.

Hon. Mauril Bélanger: Thank you.

The Chair: In the documents submitted to you, you should check the documents relating to the agreements.

Hon. Mauril Bélanger: Yes, I know there are documents relating to that, but I'd like to see the document itself.

Mrs. Francine Blais: I'll enquire about it and bring it to you, as my office isn't far away.

Hon. Mauril Bélanger: Thank you, madam.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Bélanger.

We'll continue with Ms. Guay.

Ms. Monique Guay (Rivière-du-Nord, BQ): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. It's a pleasure to meet you. Thank you for coming in such great numbers to meet with us and to inform us about what is happening in the francophone community in Whitehorse. I have a lot of questions to ask. So I'll start right away and come back later on.

You said that 82% of francophones live in Whitehorse. How many individuals does that represent?

Mrs. Francine Blais: I don't have the—

Ms. Monique Guay: Generally speaking, how many people live in Whitehorse?

Mrs. Francine Blais: It varies. Sometimes it's 25,000, sometimes 28,000. I don't know.

Ms. Monique Guay: It's between 25,000 and 28,000 inhabitants.

Mrs. Francine Blais: That's correct. There are approximately 34,000 inhabitants spread across the territory as a whole, among Dawson, Mayo, Watson Lake and all the other places.

Ms. Monique Guay: The majority are concentrated here.

You said that 82% of francophones live in Whitehorse. That means approximately how many francophones in Whitehorse?

[English]

Ms. Janet Moodie (Deputy Minister and Cabinet Secretary, Executive Council Office, Government of Yukon): I would say about 1,000 or 1,200.

[Translation]

Ms. Monique Guay: Roughly 1,200.

Mrs. Francine Blais: As I said, it's about 1,245 persons.

Ms. Monique Guay: It's important for us to have figures because that gives us an idea of the evaluation.

You also say that 11% of residents speak French.

Mrs. Francine Blais: Indeed. Approximately 3,545 persons can speak both languages.

Ms. Monique Guay: Do you offer services in French in all areas, at Passport Canada, among others? I also saw that you're having problems offering health services in French.

Mrs. Francine Blais: I could hand over to Mr. Living, who represents the Department of Health.

Passports are more a federal matter. As for health, health services used to be provided by the federal government. As no agreement had been reached with Canada, there was no money when the services were transferred to the Government of Yukon.

We've done everything since 1997. We've met with representatives of Canadian Heritage and Health Canada. We consulted the community. We prepared a lot of implementation plans. In spite of that, we have had no success on the funding end.

Ms. Monique Guay: Ultimately, health powers were transferred to you, but not the necessary money to exercise them.

Mrs. Francine Blais: Exactly.

Perhaps Ms. Living could—

Ms. Monique Guay: Please, Ms. Living, go ahead if you have anything to add.

[English]

Ms. Francine Blais: Do you have anything to add?

Ms. Patricia Living (Director, Communications and Social Marketing, Department of Health and Social Services, Government of Yukon): No, I think that's sufficient. As Francine said, the agreement was written well before the federal government transferred both the hospital responsibility and universal health program. We've been working since then with the French language directorate and in response to some requests from the community to try to increase our services. We are able to provide some, but certainly not to the level the community would prefer.

[Translation]

Ms. Monique Guay: Regarding the francophone schools issue, how many francophone primary schools do you have, both public and private?

[English]

Ms. Pamela Hine: There's just the one francophone school in the Yukon, located here in Whitehorse. It is pre-kindergarten to grade 12.

[Translation]

Ms. Monique Guay: So it includes primary and secondary.

[English]

Ms. Pamela Hine: Yes, it's combined.

[Translation]

Ms. Monique Guay: How many students do you have in total?

[English]

Ms. Pamela Hine: In total, in the Yukon, there are 5,000 students. There are approximately 184 attending the francophone school.

[Translation]

Ms. Monique Guay: Do you have the demand for more education in French? With 184 out of 500 students, that's not a lot. Do you have the demand?

• (0930)

Mrs. Francine Blais: I'm not in a position to answer that because the Education Act is separate from the Official Languages Act, and let's say that my—

Ms. Monique Guay: Perhaps Ms. Hine can answer me.

[English]

Ms. Pamela Hine: Yes. When I say 184 students, that's the number of students attending the francophone school, but out of the 5,000 students, there are approximately 2,600 students who are enrolled in French second language programs, so more than half are attending French as a second language or are involved with French as a second language. Some of that would be French immersion, core French, or intensive French. We have a number of second language French programs.

But when I mentioned 184, those are the right holders attending the actual French first language school.

[Translation]

Ms. Monique Guay: Since the federal government transferred the powers to you without providing money, have other steps been taken with regard to health? Have you submitted any requests to government?

Mrs. Francine Blais: We haven't stopped since 1997.

Ms. Monique Guay: And you've never received an answer.

Mrs. Francine Blais: No, absolutely not.

Ms. Monique Guay: Mr. Chairman, when we get back, we'll have to examine this matter in our report so that these services are provided. There's nothing worse, when you're a francophone, than speaking French and, when you go into a health service, being served in English and understanding nothing. That's really something!

Mrs. Francine Blais: Exactly.

I believe that, if we could get a little funding, we could definitely work with the community and prepare a kind of implementation plan that would meet their needs.

Ms. Monique Guay: Right now you can't even make any plans since you don't have any negotiations.

Mrs. Francine Blais: Correct.

I know that the deputy minister of health, whom Ms. Living represents, recently went to Ottawa and spoke to representatives of Health Canada and Canadian Heritage. I believe certain individuals are prepared to come to Yukon to talk about needs. However, nothing concrete has happened.

Ms. Monique Guay: Nothing yet, and it's been a long time, since 1997. This is 2011.

Ms. Francine Blais: Yes, madam.

Ms. Monique Guay: Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Guay.

We'll now continue with Mr. Galipeau, who is carefully monitoring our proceedings this morning.

Mr. Royal Galipeau: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I'd like to thank the Yukon people for welcoming us to Whitehorse today.

[English]

I am grateful that the senior executive of the government has chosen to come and meet us and to educate us this morning, and I thank you.

[Translation]

We arrived in Whitehorse around 4:00 p.m. yesterday. I had occasion to visit two book stores before they closed, where I found shelves of books in French, and I bought some.

[English]

I didn't visit the public library, but I noticed that the signage is in both official languages, so I felt it was welcoming.

[Translation]

Following the report that Ms. Blais gave us earlier, I, like Ms. Guay, would like to finish up on the matter of health administration.

Unless I'm mistaken, bilingualism in the Northwest Territories stems from the Northwest Territories Act of 1892.

Is that correct?

Mrs. Francine Blais: We don't have the same act as in the Northwest Territories. We have the Act respecting—

Mr. Royal Galipeau: You were detached from the Northwest Territories at one point. So that goes back to the same 1892 decree, doesn't it?

Mrs. Francine Blais: I'm sorry. To be quite frank, I didn't know. So I can't answer your question.

However, I can answer answer—

Mr. Royal Galipeau: Let's continue with the health issue.

Unless I'm mistaken, in 1993, the federal government, in its great wisdom, transferred responsibility for health from the federal government to the territory. I assume the federal government transferred financial resources for all those aspects, except the administration of French-language services. However, in 1993, the federal government neglected to transfer the funding necessary to provide health services in French. However, you nevertheless continued to offer health services in French.

Mrs. Francine Blais: Not on the same scale as we would have to if we had all the money.

Mr. Royal Galipeau: Ultimately, to do that successfully, you had to find money elsewhere and to cut other services.

• (0935)

Ms. Francine Blais: That is to say that—

Mr. Royal Galipeau: How much money are we talking about?

In 1997, you appeared before the federal government to sound the alarm and to tell it that you had been trying to provide health services in French for four years and that you could not do so.

How much money did you ask for?

Mrs. Francine Blais: I wasn't there. However, we received \$1 million for each year of a four-year agreement, so \$4 million.

Since then, funding has increased to \$1.75 million under the new 2009-2013 agreement.

Mr. Royal Galipeau: So I had misunderstood. I thought the federal government had granted no funding.

Mrs. Francine Blais: Not for health. It was for the general implementation of all French-language services.

With that \$1.75 million, it's impossible to carry out an implementation plan because that amount covers management expenses. Then funding is granted to create bilingual positions.

Don't forget that the federal government made a commitment to pay for everything, to pay 100% of implementation costs. There are a few dollars left that we distribute among 14 departments and corporations for implementation purposes, to provide services for signage, advertising and so on.

Mr. Royal Galipeau: What is the shortfall?

Mrs. Francine Blais: We haven't yet conducted a study to determine how much full implementation of French-language services would cost. I believe the only province that has done so to date is Nova Scotia. I enquired and we have not yet begun to establish the overall cost.

Mr. Royal Galipeau: That may be one of the reasons why the federal government, that is to say the previous and present administrations, have not gone any further either. When you don't know how much it costs, it's hard to do it.

Mrs. Francine Blais: Let's say that French-language services are being implemented gradually in the Yukon.

Mr. Royal Galipeau: Ah, the incremental approach!

Mrs. Francine Blais: I must say that, when I negotiated the 2009-2013 agreement, even though I was very well prepared, we requested additional funding and were told that was impossible.

[English]

Mr. Royal Galipeau: How much?

[Translation]

Mrs. Francine Blais: We requested nearly \$800,000 more to create other positions.

Mr. Royal Galipeau: Was that \$800,000 a year?

Mrs. Francine Blais: Yes.

Mr. Royal Galipeau: Starting when?

Mrs. Francine Blais: Starting in 2009.

Mr. Royal Galipeau: That's good.

Mrs. Francine Blais: That wouldn't have enabled us to do everything, but—

Mr. Royal Galipeau: How much did you ask for in 1997?

Mrs. Francine Blais: I wasn't there, but we got the same amount, \$1,750,000.

Mr. Royal Galipeau: Yes, but it wasn't related to French.

Mrs. Francine Blais: Yes.

Mr. Royal Galipeau: Yes! You received it!

Mrs. Francine Blais: Yes, but it was for everything.

[English]

Mr. Royal Galipeau: I'm being shut down, but I'll have another turn.

[Translation]

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Galipeau.

We'll begin our second round with Mr. Murphy.

Mr. Murphy, go ahead please.

Mr. Brian Murphy (Moncton—Riverview—Dieppe, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Thank you, ladies and gentlemen.

This is my first visit to the Yukon. It's incredible. I'm delighted to be here. I come from the east. I come from Moncton, New Brunswick.

There is federal official languages legislation in New Brunswick, of course. We were the first officially bilingual province with the provincial act of 1982. We established an order on bilingualism at the city of Moncton.

When I arrived here, I saw that you had the Languages Act. If I understand correctly, that means that this act respects the fact that there are two official languages in Canada. However, nothing is said about the official language of Yukon.

If I understand correctly, there is no act respecting official languages—English, French or other—in Yukon. Is that correct?

• (0940)

Mrs. Francine Blais: Yes. We say that Yukon accepts English and French as the official languages, but the act does not concern the official languages.

Mr. Brian Murphy: Consequently, there's no commissioner of official languages here either.

Mrs. Francine Blais: Pardon me?

Mr. Brian Murphy: If I understand correctly, it's somewhat different in the Territories. We'll see in Yellowknife tomorrow. This is a very large legal field and I wonder why not. I apologize to everyone, but I'm a lawyer. However, the Supreme Court decisions state that we have a federal act respecting official languages. It may be time for Yukon to have the same status. I'm going to continue in English.

[English]

The Canadian Constitution does not contain any provisions relating to jurisdictions in matters of language, but in 1988 the Supreme Court reaffirmed that language is not an independent matter of legislation; it is rather ancillary to the exercise of jurisdiction with respect to some classes of subject matter assigned to Parliament. In other words, they're saying it's quite all right for provincial legislatures and city councils to adopt language charters or laws.

I wonder what you think of whether the time has arrived for the Yukon to have its own official languages act. I know you have a languages act, but as far as your own legislature, you're not saying whether English or French, or any other languages, are official languages in your bustling and vibrant territory.

What do you individually think of that? If you'd step out there, that would be much appreciated.

Ms. Janet Moodie: The government of the late 1980s provided some political direction, and the legislature acceded to that. I think that is a matter that would fall within the elected officials' realm of activity in terms of determining a direction for the territory. Certainly at that time, in the late 1980s, there was recognition of not only the francophone community in the Yukon but a significant first nations population.

The Languages Act makes some comments with respect to aboriginal languages, and I think it contains some provisions with respect to aboriginal language services. Through our discussions with the first nation citizens in the Yukon, I think the emphasis with respect to aboriginal languages was put on revitalization and preservation. While there are significant levels of fluency in a couple of areas, there have been impacts on the health of other aboriginal languages, so it has charted a bit of a different course.

I think part of the reality in the Yukon is not only the francophone community but the first nations community as well. We have made efforts in both areas, as a government.

Mr. Brian Murphy: Thank you.

The Chair: You still have two minutes.

Mr. Brian Murphy: I understand it's a bit of a political decision, but you're in the trenches. I wonder what you think of this, then.

If I understand the funding agreements that have been signed—there was one signed last year with your territory—there was some money put forward for implementation of official languages policy in the Northwest Territories, which is a larger land mass and all that sort of thing. According to the documents, I think it received grants of a larger amount than the Yukon. They have an official languages act, a commissioner, and all that. Do you think it has anything to do with that?

• (0945)

Ms. Francine Blais: I cannot talk on behalf of the Northwest Territories. I know the Northwest Territories is putting its own money into the implementation of French language offices, and it may be because there are three languages as well. You have the first nations, the francophones, and all that. So maybe that's....

[Translation]

Perhaps that's why the budget envelope is a little bigger, a little larger.

[English]

The Chair: *Merci.* Thank you, Mr. Murphy.

Now we'll go on.

[Translation]

We'll continue with Ms. Guay.

Ms. Monique Guay: It's my turn? It's true, I usually have a colleague with me.

The Chair: It's true. Mr. Godin isn't here.

Ms. Monique Guay: I wonder about the fact that there is no commissioner or system to verify the situation and prepare annual reports as is done at the federal level. As you know, I'm from Quebec, where we have Bill 101, which protects the French language, and it works well. We have to work hard to keep it working well because there's always a risk of assimilation, the possibility that French may fall back. It would be good for you to have tools to analyze your progress every year. Do you have that? You say there is no commissioner. Who does that work? Who conducts those assessments?

Mrs. Francine Blais: At the end of every fiscal year, we prepare a report on our activities. Of course, management is part of the government. It isn't an entirely independent office. We wouldn't be able to make those kinds of recommendations because we would be virtually in conflict of interest. In the evaluations, we discuss issues, we prepare a report and we have a committee of deputy ministers to discuss French-language services. We see what we can do and what we can't do, but there's no independent mechanism, if that's your question.

Ms. Monique Guay: Would it be desirable for there to be one?

Mrs. Francine Blais: I can't answer that question.

Ms. Monique Guay: You might have more accurate information every year on changes in the situation and the needs in the various departments.

Mrs. Francine Blais: That's definitely something we can discuss in our internal committee. I'm even going to put that issue on the agenda.

Ms. Monique Guay: I think you should note it down because it would be helpful for you. If you request federal funding to promote the French language here based on the departments where there are really flagrant deficits, that would enable us to put pressure on the various governments, regardless of who is in power, so that you could get the money you need. You can't implement projects if you don't have any money.

Mrs. Francine Blais: No, because—

Ms. Monique Guay: It really surprises me that you only get \$1.7 million. That's peanuts.

Mrs. Francine Blais: Yes.

Ms. Monique Guay: And your request wasn't extraordinary either. Eight hundred thousand dollars a year is—

Mrs. Francine Blais: No. That would have helped a little more, but not enormously.

Ms. Monique Guay: Are there any social groups within the francophone community? Do groups meet? Are there community centres for francophones? Do they work well?

Mrs. Francine Blais: Very, very well. The Centre de la francophonie organizes a lot of activities for the francophone community. There are coffee clubs on Fridays. The centre is very, very active.

Ms. Monique Guay: It's very active?

● (0950)

Ms. Francine Blais: Very active, and it does very good things.

Ms. Monique Guay: As regards children learning French, do they retain it or are they eventually assimilated by another language, English, among others?

Mrs. Francine Blais: I think they retain it, I don't know whether

—
[English]

Pam would like to respond to that.

[Translation]

In my opinion, they retain it.

[English]

Ms. Pamela Hine: As I mentioned before, in addition to the French first language school, we have French immersion schools as well that go all the way up to grade 12. So again it becomes a parental and student choice as to where they want to move forward. But we have a lot of opportunities for students to take French language.

Just as an example from funding, because of the Department of Education, we enter into a separate bilateral agreement with the federal government on French education. We just renewed our new agreement, which runs from 2009 to 2014. Again, we have the same issue where the money is limited. We just renewed the agreement in 2009, but the actual value was the same as it was in the previous agreement, although we have increased costs when you look at the cost of increases for your teachers, your cost of running your schools, and the number of students we have.

Just to give you a breakdown so you have an idea of the amount of funding, the bilateral agreement is approximately \$2.2 million annually from Canada and approximately \$6 million annually for the Yukon over the five-year period. So for French first language, Canada provides \$1.2 million, while the Yukon contributes \$2.3 million. For French second language, the federal contribution is just under \$1 million, and the Yukon contributes \$3.7 million annually over that five-year agreement. That's just to give you an indication of the level of funding that's coming into the Department of Education for French schools.

The other part of it that makes it a little unique is that the Department of Education performs many functions that most jurisdictions would delegate to school boards or school districts. As I mentioned, the francophone school board is the only school board in the Yukon. So the department has a dual role, the ministry

and department. A lot of the services we provide are outside of what would normally be covered in other jurisdictions in the bilateral. We provide these services, again, at our own cost.

Just as an example, some of our translation costs that would not be covered under the bilateral would run between \$40,000 to \$50,000 a year, which is coming from the Department of Education budget because of our unique aspect. So we go forward with our numbers and bring our case forward. We show the number of students that are enrolled in French first language, almost 50% of our students who are enrolled in the second language, and yet the numbers remain the same.

The Chair: Thank you.

[Translation]

Thank you, Ms. Guay.

[English]

Thank you, Ms. Hine, for all that information.

[Translation]

I'd like to give all committee members the opportunity to speak. We still have Mr. Lauzon and Ms. Zarac who have not done so. Mr. Lauzon, go ahead please.

Mr. Guy Lauzon (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'm going to ask one or two very brief questions. I want to share my allotted time with Mr. Galipeau because he has other questions to ask.

Ms. Blais, you said that there are 1,245 francophones in Yukon. Has that number increased or declined in the past 10 years?

Mrs. Francine Blais: There are now 500 more French speakers in Yukon. I'm going to try to find out since what year that has been. I think I'm getting too old to remember all the figures.

Mr. Guy Lauzon: Five hundred more persons?

Mrs. Francine Blais: Five hundred more persons since—

Mr. Guy Lauzon: 2001.

Mrs. Francine Blais: That's correct.

Mr. Guy Lauzon: In the past 10 years?

Mrs. Francine Blais: Yes.

Mr. Guy Lauzon: The number of francophones who live in Yukon has virtually doubled. Is there a reason for that increase?

Mrs. Francine Blais: I can't speak on behalf of the people who come and settle here, but I suppose that, as was my case, they come and work for a few months and don't want to leave.

Mr. Guy Lauzon: Can those 1,245 individuals live in French in Yukon?

Mrs. Francine Blais: That's a question that the francophone community, through the AFY, could answer better than I could. These people have access to many government services in French. They speak French. When you talk around Whitehorse, you hear a lot of people speaking French. So we have to continue our efforts to improve services. However, we obviously still have a lot of work to do on health services, as I explained to you earlier.

•(0955)

Mr. Guy Lauzon: Thank you. I'm going to hand over to Mr. Galipeau.

Mr. Royal Galipeau: Thank you, Mr. Lauzon.

Earlier I referred to the fact that the status of the official languages in Yukon stems from the Northwest Territories Act. Yukon was detached from the Territories in 1898, in the same way as Nunavut was detached from the Northwest Territories in 1999, Manitoba in 1870 and Alberta and Saskatchewan in 1905. All that used to be part of the Northwest Territories, which were immensely larger than now.

Earlier, Ms. Hine,
[English]

you mentioned that more than half of the 5,000 students were in either French as a second language or French immersion. How many are in French immersion?

Ms. Pamela Hine: I don't have the exact number. There are probably around 500 to 600, when you look at elementary school and high school, but that's just my guess.

Mr. Royal Galipeau: I find that in many areas where French is a minority language, more and more there are as many anglophones who can speak French as there are francophones who can speak French—or sometimes more. In Ottawa, where we're from, there are about 125,000 francophones who can speak French, but there are close to 200,000 anglophones who can speak French. Of course, that's the result of French immersion over the last 40 to 45 years.

Is that having an impact here too?

[Translation]

Mrs. Francine Blais: There are 1,245 francophones and 3,545 persons who speak French, so virtually three times as many. So that must be the result of learning French as a second language.

Mr. Royal Galipeau: Yes. Thank you very much.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Galipeau.

Before closing, Mr. Bélanger would like some information.

Hon. Mauril Bélanger: Ms. Blais, earlier I asked you for a copy of the agreement on services. We have it here, but it's missing Annex B, the one concerning the strategic plan. That's probably very important. It comes from Yukon. Could you send it to us?

In addition, the agreement on education, which we also have, is missing Annex 3 as well. That's the action plan, the one from Yukon as well. The entire agreement is based on the action plan. Could you also send us the action plan?

Lastly, with regard to education, I would like to get a breakdown of certain figures. There are amounts for various components, but I imagine the breakdown must be quite easy to do. As for services, I agree with my colleague, Mr. Galipeau, that \$1.75 million a year is not an extraordinary amount, particularly since, from what I can see, it's not indexed.

Mrs. Francine Blais: It has been since 1988. The amount increased from \$1 million to \$1.2 million—

Hon. Mauril Bélanger: Yes, but the 2009-2013 agreement states \$1.75 million a year. There's no indexing. So that means that there's

a reduction every year. Whatever the case may be, is it possible to get a breakdown of this as well?

Mrs. Francine Blais: On how the funding is distributed?

Hon. Mauril Bélanger: Yes. According to the agreement, you have to report on how the money has been used. Can you send us that breakdown, that report?

Mrs. Francine Blais: With your permission, I'm going to contact the people at Canadian Heritage because they are still preparing the cheque.

The Chair: Thank you.

Before leaving our witnesses, who have to leave us very soon, we'll go to Ms. Zarac.

Mrs. Lise Zarac (LaSalle—Émard, Lib.): I'm going to discuss another topic.

In the case of the remote regions, it is important to find solutions to bring citizens closer. I'm talking about the Internet and especially about high speed Internet.

Do you know whether that service is adequately provided, whether it is accessible and whether it meets people's needs?

•(1000)

Mrs. Francine Blais: Are you talking about websites?

Mrs. Lise Zarac: No. I'm talking about access to high speed Internet service.

Are there any places where that's a problem?

Mrs. Francine Blais: I'm not sure.

[English]

Dr. Harvey Brooks (Deputy Minister, Department of Economic Development, Government of Yukon): Every community is connected. We have about 98% connectivity to communities and families, so we are extremely well served. Price and competition are issues, but access is very good.

Mrs. Lise Zarac: [Inaudible—Editor]

Dr. Harvey Brooks: Yes.

Mrs. Lise Zarac: Okay. Thank you.

The Chair: Then it's as good as in my home neighbourhood.

We are now coming to the conclusion of this first meeting. I would like to thank you for this massive delegation of representatives of the Government of Yukon. We are glad you were able to give us a profile of the services you are providing and your efforts in the development of linguistic duality.

I was pleased to know, Ms. Hine, that almost half of the students of the Yukon are somehow learning French, added to those who are specifically in a French program. That's very interesting.

Once again, thank you. The members will be pleased if you have any more information you are willing to forward.

[Translation]

Thank you very much.

Some voices: Thank you.

•(1015)

The Chair: We'll continue our meeting.

I simply want to inform committee members that a francophone representative of the Franco-Yukonnais newspaper, *L'Aurore boréale*, is with us. She has requested permission to take a few pictures during our proceedings. If committee members agree, I will let her show us in our best light.

Before introducing the following witnesses, Mr. St-Pierre reminded me during the break that my grandmother's father, Émel Decaut, came from Yukon. He apparently brought back a few gold nuggets since, when he returned to his village of Saint-Patrice, he was able to buy a sawmill and secure his children's prosperity. I am here to attest to that fact. So there was a gold rush, and today it's a rush to promote linguistic duality.

To do that, we have the president of the Association franco-yukonnaise, Angélique Bernard. Thank you for being with us, Ms. Bernard. She is accompanied by Ms. St-Pierre, the co-executive director, who reminded me that she had testified before our committee in Ottawa. This time, we have come to meet you. We also have Roch Nadon, director of culture and youth. Welcome, everyone.

Without further ado, I invite you to give your opening address.

•(1020)

Ms. Angélique Bernard (President, Association franco-yukonnaise): Mr. Chairman, committee members, it is a pleasure to welcome you to Yukon. It's an honour and privilege to have you among us. On behalf of the AFY, thank you for your invitation. I am accompanied by Régis St-Pierre and Roch Nadon.

More than 100 years ago, in 1899, Paul Dumais surveyed the first site of Whitehorse on the east bank of the Yukon River. In 1900, Alexandre Prud'homme became the first Conservative member elected in Yukon.

In 1983, the AFY received an initial grant of \$5,170 from the Department of Canadian Heritage, or the Secretary of State as it was called at the time, and created its first community development tools. Teachers and member parents of the AFY requested the support of the school committees of the eight Whitehorse schools to establish a French framework program in Whitehorse. Four committees responded positively. A survey revealed that 67 students were eligible to register in French. The AFY asked the department of education to establish the French framework program. Today, more than 180 students are registered at the École Émilie-Tremblay, the only French-language school in Yukon.

L'Aurore boréale, a bi-monthly paper intended for francophones and francophiles, focuses not only on francophone news, but also on government affairs and northern issues. The French section of the municipal library was officially opened by the minister of education in November 1983, long before Yukon's Languages Act. In 1992, after 12 years of demands, the community finally received Radio-Canada's French signal from Montreal at no cost. Since 1997, the community has been receiving CBUF-FM from Vancouver. Even today, the AFY is Radio-Canada's rebroadcaster.

Today, our population is growing and our community structures have proven themselves. With regard to adequately meeting our needs, the ball is now in the governments' court. For example, the federal government, through bilateral agreements on French-language services for the Franco-Yukonnais minority, funds the costs associated with implementation of the Yukon government's French-language services. The purpose of that agreement, it should not be forgotten, is to meet the needs of French-speaking Yukoners. We believe this funding creates a fiduciary obligation between the Yukon government and the Franco-Yukonnais community.

The federal government also has an obligation to ensure this agreement complies with the spirit and letter of Yukon's Languages Act. It is essential that the Canadian government perform a direct audit and consultation function with the francophone communities in our territory. It is also important to support francophone population growth to ensure our community's survival. It is fundamentally important that the federal system understand our situation. For example, why are the services provided in Yukon to immigrants by service providers who have signed contracts with the federal government in English only? Why does the RCMP, which is required to provide services in French, communicate in English only with the population of Yukon in its press releases?

Community development cannot be carried out without developing solid institutions, which requires a genuine partnership between the community and the government. The Supreme Court of Canada issued a clear decision in the Desrochers case. It held that government programs must be established based on the priorities and needs of the official language communities. A genuine partnership for genuine equality is what we consider a modern way to view the matter.

In closing, let us never forget that the Canadian north is above all, far beyond the mineral treasures in the ground and all the speeches on climate change, a place where part of Canada's population reflects Canada's reality. The greatest source of northern wealth will always be its people, its population, including the francophone population.

Once again, thank you. We are now prepared to answer your questions in order to continue our constructive dialogue with the federal government.

The Chair: Thank you for that opening address, Ms. Bernard.

Mr. Nadon, you also have a presentation to make.

Mr. Roch Nadon (Director, Cultural and Youth, Association franco-yukonnaise): As Ms. Bernard said before me, thank you for having us.

My presentation will focus essentially on the theme of arts and culture, which is related to your second study question on how Canada's Roadmap for Linguistic Duality 2008-2013 is being implemented in the northern communities.

In the Roadmap, culture is identified as one of the priority sectors. We very much appreciate that. The fact that the arts and culture sector is recognized as one of the priority sectors is very significant for the some 200 arts and culture organizations and stakeholders across the country.

Through its cultural sector, the Association franco-yukonnaise is the main francophone cultural stakeholder in Yukon. As a result of the Roadmap, the arts and culture sector has received investments of \$14 million under the Cultural Development Fund, \$4.5 million under the Music Showcases for Artists from Official Language Minority Communities and \$5 million under the National Translation Program for Book Publishing. In short, there has been a total investment of \$23.5 million, which represents a slim 2.35% of the total value of investments under the Roadmap.

This clearly cannot provide adequate long-term support for structural cultural action that will promote the vitality and sustainable development of the francophone and Acadian communities in Canada.

As a result of our profile, the cultural sector of the Association franco-yukonnaise has only been able to apply for the first round of funding under the Cultural Development Fund because the fund provides more support for new, non-recurring projects that do not support long-term consolidation efforts.

Our project, the purpose of which was to develop the artistic component of our actions in the field, was accepted during the first round, as I mentioned. Action taken included assisting artists in their artistic and professional development and disseminating the cultural and artistic product.

Unfortunately, our project was rejected in the second round. Disillusioned by the process, we submitted no projects for the third round. We believe our project was intrinsically linked to the sustainable development of our community.

Artists and crafts people are culture purveyors for a community. They instill energy and vitality in sharing their passion for language and culture. They are the players who shape the cultural identity of a group, a community and a country.

Yukon's French-language community is young and growing. It needs to be fed in order to remain vibrant. Arts and culture are essential food to ensure its full development and that it achieves its full potential. In other words, the artistic and cultural development sectors need increased funding for the operation of established structures in order to anchor those structures so they can develop and fully serve the communities. However, new structural projects must not be overlooked; they should receive adequate operating grants to ensure their development.

I will take the liberty of making a few recommendations.

We recommend that the Department of Canadian Heritage ensure that the next version of the action plan for official languages or any subsequent initiative includes a strategy and funding to meet the needs and priorities of the arts and culture sector in the anglophone and francophone minority communities.

We recommend that the Department of Canadian Heritage, in cooperation with the federal institutions operating in the arts and culture sector, ensure that minority francophone communities have access to adequate human and financial resources to support the development and to promote the vitality of arts and culture in their region. In particular, they could support the development of infrastructure—a cultural centre, for example—cultural facilitation

in the schools, artist training and professionalization, the use of new technologies and networking.

We recommend that the Department of Canadian Heritage review the funding process for the Cooperation with Community Sectors subcomponent of the Development of Official Language Communities Program and that it grant the communities multi-year funding over a period of five years. The department must support the development of structural projects that can mobilize the community, simplify the funding process for small-scale projects and reduce waiting times for the processing of grant applications.

Lastly, here is the last recommendation.

● (1025)

That the Department of Canadian Heritage, in cooperation with community organizations, in particular the Fédération culturelle canadienne-française and the Fédération des communautés francophones et acadienne du Canada, of which the Association franco-yukonnaise is a member, the federal institutions operating in the arts and culture sector and the provincial, territorial and municipal orders of government, develop a long-term vision of support for arts and culture in the francophone minority communities that specifically reflects the situations of the francophone communities, the role that those communities can play in cultural promotion and diversity and in intercultural dialogue in the country, the needs of first- and second-generation francophone immigrants, the needs of every province and territory, the needs of the young generations and the use of new technologies.

I would like to finish my presentation by saying that a language is much more than a means of communication. It is a way to access a culture and, at the same time, the expression of a sensibility, of one way of being with others, an original vision of the world. This fundamental link between language and culture has been underscored by many major Canadian thinkers such as Will Kymlicka and Northrop Frye. The clearest statement is perhaps that of Yolande Grisé, former Chair of the Ontario Arts Council, who said: "There can be no language without culture, just as there can be no culture without artists. The words of a language are merely the abstraction of all that constitutes culture."

Taken as a whole, language is a container, the overall form and channel of culture. In its specific usages, speech is only one of the contents of culture. Arts and culture provide people with the tools to go beyond the utilitarian functions of language, which enables them to attach themselves to their cultural roots, which are the basis of language. Artists and cultural workers help build a dynamic, living and inspirational francophone cultural sector which is necessary to the survival and long-term vitality of Canada's francophone and Acadian communities.

According to the Conference Board of Canada, the economic footprint of the cultural sector in 2007 was estimated at \$84.6 billion, which represents approximately 7.4% of Canada's gross domestic product. This includes all direct and indirect impacts. Again, for 2007, the Conference Board estimated that the cultural sector generated more than 1.1 million jobs in Canada.

Lastly, according to the 24th report in the Arts Research Monitor series by Hill Strategies Research Inc., performing arts organizations in Canada generate \$2.70 in income for every dollar received from governments. These are definitely factors that should not be neglected in the current economic context. The real beneficiaries of investment in culture are the communities. Culture has a direct economic multiplier effect of 8.5. Public sector funding is the incentive that stimulates the private sector. In the past five years, essential public sector support has stimulated growth in private financing, which is now twice the size of public funding.

Thank you for your attention.

•(1030)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Nadon.

We'll now hand over to committee members.

Mr. Bélanger.

Hon. Mauril Bélanger: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Thanks to the representatives of AFY and the community for being with us. You have seen how we operate in committee. Time is limited and I believe that prevents us from addressing certain issues in an appropriate and more in-depth manner. So we have to get right to the point, which I'm going to do now.

In your opinion, is it time for Canada's Official Languages Act to apply to the territories?

Mr. Régis St-Pierre (Co-Executive Director, Association franco-yukonnaise): Thank you for your question. I can give you a short or long answer. The short answer is yes. And the long answer is also yes.

Yes, because, in any case, the Yukon Supreme Court held in *Kilrich Industries Ltd. v. Halotier* in 2007 that, even though Yukon's Languages Act does not contain the word "official", it is an act that was passed by the Yukon legislative assembly. It is also a quasi-constitutional enactment and the Yukon government cannot change it on its own. I repeat. The Yukon government cannot change its own act because it is ultimately not its act; it's your act, that of the Parliament of Canada.

When that act was passed, it was said that only the Parliament of Canada could amend or repeal it. The act was introduced in response to pressure from Yukon francophones. It all started after a traffic ticket was issued to a Whitehorse taxi driver named Daniel Saint-Jean. That was called the Saint-Jean case. The judgment stated that, as Canada's Constitution Act, 1982 had been signed by the provinces—not by the provinces and territories, but by the provinces—and as the territories did not have provincial status, they could not sign the Constitution. That therefore means that the Canadian government signs it for them. I won't go into the legal details, but all kinds of pressure was brought to bear to recognize that Canada's Official Languages Act applied to the territories. It was not by chance that two territories at that time, the Northwest Territories and the Yukon, signed their own act. The Northwest Territories decided to put the word "official" in their statute in 1984. In 1988, Yukon, for all kinds of reasons that we won't enumerate, did not do that. However, in 2007, the Court found that it was not necessary for the word "official" to appear in the act.

During the break, I told Ms. Zarac that her business card did not state "official member of the House of Commons", even though she was officially elected. We don't need to include the word "official". Once an act is passed, it becomes an official act. Now the real question is whether Yukon should do what the federal government has done and have a commissioner of official languages in order to proceed with a genuine implementation of the legislation and to invest the necessary money and resources in that effort in order to achieve that. The answer is yes.

•(1035)

Hon. Mauril Bélanger: As I told you, I don't have a lot of time. The problem that we as members of the Standing Committee on Official Languages can face is related to the fact that, since the Official Languages Act does not apply, the tools we have are useless with regard to you. For example, if I asked the Commissioner of Official Languages to audit the implementation of agreements between Canada and Yukon, I don't know whether he would do it because he is the Commissioner of Official Languages for the regions where the Official Languages Act applies.

It's in that context that I asked my question. Earlier I asked where the preparation of certain annexes to the Canada-Yukon agreements stood. We're missing Annex B, for example, which is a strategic plan, in the agreement on services. If we don't have the strategic plan, we don't know where we're headed. The same is true of the agreement on education. However, that's another matter, and we'll come back to that this evening because I believe we'll be meeting with representatives from the school board. How do you view all that, as members and as co-director of the AFY?

Mr. Régis St-Pierre: In general, the community is being held hostage because, from the territory's standpoint, you've seen the answers we're given. We say it's the federal government that doesn't want to give us any money, and the federal government says that it's the territory's act. So we've created a structure in which it's ultimately the individuals, the people of Yukon's francophone community, who are being held hostage. This act has been in existence since 1988, and it has not yet been implemented. An evaluation hasn't even been done to determine where things stand. The act states: "towards implementation of the equality of status", whereas we should have a timetable and be able to say that we have reached a certain point, but we don't even have an evaluation.

We believe the Parliament of Canada has a role to play. This falls within its jurisdiction. This act was passed and the two territorial acts were passed for one very simple reason: to provide services to the francophone community of the territories. Consequently, the Parliament of Canada is ultimately responsible for seeing to that. It signs an agreement that follows directly from the Official Languages Act, in the very preamble to Yukon's Languages Act. It has a role to play. It will have to ask the question. Never has anyone in the federal government asked whether Parliament is ultimately responsible for that act, which is a quasi-constitutional enactment. Parliament should be able to conduct its evaluation.

Hon. Mauril Bélanger: So you're telling us that we should be able to get the same kind of thing from the act in effect in Yukon, not from Canada's Official Languages Act.

Mr. Régis St-Pierre: That's correct because the Yukon act arises from the Official Languages Act. So this is a quasi-constitutional obligation, and the Parliament of Canada alone can amend or repeal it. An evaluation by the Parliament of Canada should therefore be conducted on a periodic basis to determine where the situation stands.

Hon. Mauril Bélanger: My last question concerns a completely different subject. It's for Mr. Nadon. I imagine I'll soon be told that my question period is over.

Has there previously been a community radio project here in Whitehorse?

Mr. Roch Nadon: No.

Hon. Mauril Bélanger: Is there a reason for that?

Mr. Roch Nadon: That's a good question. Régis was here a few years before I was.

I'd like to emphasize that we nevertheless have one hour of French-language radio on CBC North. It's a kind of agreement. Incidentally, this year we're celebrating the 25th anniversary of the program *Rencontres*. So that's a—

• (1040)

Hon. Mauril Bélanger: Are you talking about one hour a day?

Mr. Roch Nadon: It's one hour a week, but it's also excellent.

To answer your question, I know there were discussions in the community in the 1990s to determine whether we should have a community radio station. Régis will correct me if I'm wrong. Following some consultations, they realized that there was no desire for a radio station within the community. Since then, I must say we haven't really revisited the issue.

Hon. Mauril Bélanger: Thank you.

Mr. Régis St-Pierre: I'd like to add to his remarks and to have a few seconds.

In one sense, we have a community radio station because Radio-Canada's 102.1 frequency belongs to the community.

Hon. Mauril Bélanger: So you control the programming!

Mr. Régis St-Pierre: The AFY signed the documents with the CRTC regarding Radio-Canada in Yukon.

Hon. Mauril Bélanger: Do you control the programming?

Mr. Régis St-Pierre: We control nothing. That's why Radio-Canada is being renewed this year. We're at a crossroads and we're wondering what will happen. It's taken 12 years to gain access to the airwaves. It was bought by the community through a subsidy from the Department of the Secretary of State. So there was no investment by Radio-Canada. Our one hour of radio a week is currently done by volunteers, French-speaking Yukoners who receive no compensation.

The Chair: You're saying you've had access to Radio-Canada television in French for 12 years.

Mr. Régis St-Pierre: We've been able to listen to Radio-Canada radio since 1992. Since then we've been able to receive the Montreal station.

So that you have a clear understanding, the official rebroadcaster of Radio-Canada radio in Yukon is currently the AFY.

Hon. Mauril Bélanger: That's the Association franco-yukonnaise.

The Chair: Is it a noon program like *Maisonmeuve en direct*?

Mr. Régis St-Pierre: That's correct. From CBUF-FM in Vancouver.

The Chair: It's CBUF-FM in Vancouver. Excellent; that's what you said in your address.

Thank you very much.

We'll continue with Ms. Guay.

Ms. Monique Guay: Thank you very much.

Mr. Nadon, first I'd like to ask you whether it's possible to get a copy of your notes because you mention some things that are very important for us.

Mr. Roch Nadon: Absolutely; I'll make a copy of them.

The Chair: Yes, we're going to make sure you get a copy of them. We normally have a copy in both official languages.

Ms. Monique Guay: I didn't get a copy. So I'd like to have one. We're going to write a report after our meetings in Yukon and in Yellowknife, and I believe that's important.

You talked about Radio-Canada radio and you said you had the same programs as in Quebec. So we're not necessarily talking about what is going on in Yukon or about what is happening here in your region.

Mr. Régis St-Pierre: Yes and no. We're in the same time zone as Vancouver. Because of certain Radio-Canada responsibilities, we have certain services in Yukon. We've filed a number of complaints with the Commissioner of Official Languages, and that will continue.

It must be understood that, in the CBC's structure, if I'm an anglophone, I don't have any problems because I'm served by CBC North. The same structure provides for budgets. Now, in Radio-Canada's structure, the north does not exist. When Radio-Canada conducts its consultations in the regional communities, no one from the north is invited because Radio-Canada Nord does not exist. In the very structure of Radio-Canada, the north does not exist. We don't exist. We live in the north; therefore we don't exist. No budget is allocated to us.

For example, they usually come and see us to celebrate our 25th anniversary. They send a film crew. They recently came to celebrate the Gala de la Francophonie. However, the people responsible for covering our events in the field have to work very hard. We have one journalist here, but the work is done at CBC North's facilities. What kind of budget do these people get? There's no budget. Radio-Canada Nord doesn't exist. It's an anomaly.

Ms. Monique Guay: That's why it's a community station. You have one hour a week. You'd better not miss it, as I said earlier. Since it's a community station, it's volunteers who work there.

Mr. Roch Nadon: Yes, as Régis mentioned, volunteers have hosted and produced the program for 25 years. The technical work is done by francophones, who are paid, because of—

Ms. Monique Guay: All right.

I want to talk about arts and culture because that concerns not only Yukon, but all of Canada's as well. Cutbacks are being made everywhere in the field, both in Quebec and elsewhere. Our artists on both the anglophone and francophone sides are very frustrated. They've made submissions to the federal government.

I would like to know whether you have budgets for this purpose and whether you've made any requests.

Mr. Roch Nadon: With regard to budgets, the association gets some money under the contribution agreements with the federal government. Part of that amount is intended for the cultural sector.

• (1045)

Ms. Monique Guay: Is it a large amount?

Mr. Roch Nadon: We receive about \$75,000 a year. We also receive funding from our government and other departments. As I said in my presentation, it's distinctly inadequate. The French-speaking community in Yukon is a young community that really needs artists and crafts people to ensure its survival and the survival of its language. They are culture purveyors for our young people and for cultural identity. We also need infrastructure. We don't have a cultural centre. We have an excellent community centre, but now it's too small. And we're currently witnessing the emergence of certain artists.

Ms. Monique Guay: Does the government here want there to be a cultural centre? Have you asked the federal government for assistance?

Mr. Roch Nadon: Our community will be celebrating its 30th anniversary next year. We have to go step by step. I get the impression it's time to establish a francophone cultural centre in Whitehorse, both for our community and for the Yukon community as a whole. I think that's the next cultural area we should establish.

Ms. Monique Guay: In order to host francophone artists—

Mr. Régis St-Pierre: That's correct.

Ms. Monique Guay: —artistic events and so on.

Mr. Régis St-Pierre: I'd simply like to add that we in the Yukon are one of the only francophone communities that is growing in absolute numbers, as a percentage of the Yukon population and in terms of the number of immigrants. This phenomenon can be seen in the community institutions, the day care centre, the school and so on. And yet investment by the federal government has been the same since 2003. The \$75,000 amount cited by Roch is in fact what is planned until 2013-2014. Imagine that you'd been granted the same budget every year for the past 10 years.

We work hard, we generate funding by other means, but in one sense we are victims of our own growth, of our own success. Here I'm talking about immersion, which has more than quadrupled, about the French-language school, about our community activities and so on.

Ms. Monique Guay: Earlier you mentioned a problem, that the Commissioner of Official Languages could not really take the pulse of the situation because he was prevented from doing so by a Yukon act. Should that Yukon act be amended?

Mr. Régis St-Pierre: The commissioner is welcome in the Yukon. I talked about the RCMP, which is under federal jurisdiction. They're right near here, on Main Street. I talked about immigration. Citizenship and Immigration Canada is a federal department. I also mentioned Radio-Canada, which is also under federal jurisdiction. In that case, it's just as well to address federal issues. Certain issues falling within the Yukon government's jurisdiction require addressing, but try to imagine the situation. We are just a small team and we have to fight institutions, immense organizations.

In the cultural field, we have only one director and he's assigned to culture and youth. Imagine the resources we have to deploy. For years now, we've tried to negotiate on a friendly basis with the federal and Yukon governments. We have filed a number of complaints about the RCMP. Our newspaper is currently in trouble because the institutions don't abide by the letter of the law. Last Friday, the federal government published a major advertisement in the *Yukon News*. It was in English on top and French on the bottom. That's an insult to our community. What does that mean? That we have to assimilate and buy the newspaper in English in order to read information about the federal government? It's shameful that these kinds of things can still happen in 2011. You have a role to play, to ensure that the federal government does its job in Yukon.

Ms. Monique Guay: We're going to prepare a report following our meeting.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Guay.

From what I read in the last edition of *L'Aurore boréale*, the Lost Fingers will soon be doing a show in Whitehorse.

We'll now go to Mr. Galipeau.

Mr. Royal Galipeau: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you, Ms. Bernard, Mr. Nadon, Mr. St-Pierre.

Were you here this morning when the senior officials made their presentation? If so, you heard it.

First, we aren't a government committee. We are a committee of the House of Commons. You raised a number of points that could make some people sensitive. You aren't the only people to complain about the RCMP; we've also filed a complaint against the RCMP. It was supposed to respond to us at the start of the week. We'll know what its response is when we get back.

As for Radio-Canada, you receive programs from Vancouver. Does that mean you don't get *Maisonmeuve en direct*? Is that program broadcast in Vancouver or is it...?

No, you don't seem to know it.

• (1050)

Mr. Régis St-Pierre: I can answer that. I know that, in Vancouver, there is—

Mr. Royal Galipeau: Do you get *Maisonmeuve en direct*?

Mr. Régis St-Pierre: Yes.

Mr. Royal Galipeau: So you're well aware of what is going on on the Plateau Mont-Royal, but less about what's going on here on Main Street.

Francophones established the Maison de la francophonie in Vancouver about 25 years ago. What's the address of your community centre in Whitehorse? I'd like to visit it.

Mr. Régis St-Pierre: It's at 302 Strickland Street. We've invited you all. I'm going to tour the centre with you and Mr. Larouche.

Mr. Royal Galipeau: Your plan to transform the community centre into a cultural centre is completely sensible. However, it is never easy to establish francophone cultural centres in a minority setting. It was difficult with the Maison de la francophonie in Vancouver. It was difficult with the cultural centre in Orleans as well. You have to do it. My friend Mr. Bélanger was involved in that project and I was too.

Hon. Mauril Bélanger: There's also Whitehorse.

Mr. Royal Galipeau: I didn't hear you say anything about health services. And yet health services took up a lot of our time during the last meeting with a delegation from your organization. Do you have any comments on the subject?

Mr. Régis St-Pierre: Yes. We talked about it. We know you worked very hard to prepare and that there would definitely be questions on the subject. We also took notes this morning. We talked about it, perhaps indirectly, when we said it was time for the government to take action to meet its obligations. As regards health, there has been a case before the courts since 1999. It's in the process of discussion or mediation; call it what you will.

As regards health, you're quite familiar with the legislation, Mr. Galipeau. I took some notes. In our address, we refer to French-language services that were available long before Yukon's Languages Act was passed. In fact, the Yukon government sometimes thinks everything started in 1988. No, history started long before that. In 1970, with the Caron case, the territories, including Yukon, obtained legal protection for French-language services.

You also asked whether we could live in French in Yukon. Can we be born and die in French? That happens between those two stages. All health and prenatal services are currently provided in English. They're provided at a health centre managed by the Yukon government, where you can call, but the service is in English. There's no bilingual health centre in Yukon and no French-language health centre either.

As for extended care, I know some people who paid federal taxes for 50 or 55 years and who have never received any home-care service in French in Yukon because there is none.

We're talking about seniors, Alzheimer's, dementia, declining physical functions. We need services, and they are essential services.

I'm a community worker, I grew up here, I paid my taxes here. I don't want to have to speak English in my own home because I'm asking the government for home-care service to which I'm entitled.

Can we live in French?

Mr. Royal Galipeau: Before I'm interrupted, I would like to ask you for your opinion. You don't seem reluctant to give your opinion. So I'm going to take advantage of that.

Earlier I saw that some of us tried to elicit some opinions from the senior officials who were here. The officials were quite reluctant to

provide any. They gave us figures, but they didn't offer any opinions. However, I realize that you aren't reluctant to do so.

If I asked you your opinion on the health funding gap which goes back to 1993, what would you tell me? Why is there a lag?

• (1055)

Mr. Régis St-Pierre: To be honest, the government doesn't want to provide the services.

They always find the money to provide services in English. The Yukon government's budget has increased from \$400 million to \$1.1 billion. So there have been increases in their budget. The services are provided to citizens.

Brian Murphy very clearly emphasized that Yukon's Languages Act doesn't make English any more or less official than French. They're equal. They find money to provide services in English, but it's funny they don't seem to find any for services in French. They always hide behind the fact that that service has been devolved upon Yukon and it doesn't have the money.

And yet we have official letters flatly telling the communities not to get involved in the matter, that they don't want them to be at the bargaining table or to hear their opinion. We're told that the government will manage the situation, that it will get the necessary money and that it will provide the services to its citizens. Once again, we're being held hostage.

We know that the information we're providing today will be made public. We've done our homework. The figures we're citing aren't our opinion; they're real. We have an opinion, but we're citing real facts.

The transfer has been made. We have official letters from the government telling us that it doesn't want us at the table. It guarantees us that, under Yukon's Languages Act and the Official Languages Act, we'll get all the services. We're guaranteed that.

Mr. Royal Galipeau: And yet the problem has been around since 1993.

Mr. Régis St-Pierre: Yes.

We've asked the committee why it doesn't go to court. That's definitely always an option.

I invite you to take a look at our community's profile in the FCFA's figures that we submitted to you. You'll see that we've created institutions. We've created a dynamic and a strong Yukon francophone community. I had my children during those years. We established our institutions precisely so that we could control what we control and what we want to control.

I control the language spoken at home. More people speak French in the home than francophones. That means that people like my wife, who is anglophone, and people from exogamous families, that is to say couples of different mother tongues, have decided to speak French in the home. No one will take that away from us.

It's funny that the community institutions find staff. The school started up with 26 students and one teacher. Now the school is flourishing. It has rights and needs. They find qualified teaching staff. The same is true at the day care centre. That's the case for us as well, in our institutions.

Mr. Royal Galipeau: Although 184 out of 5,000 students isn't a lot.

The Chair: We'll come back to that, Mr. Galipeau.

We're going to begin our second round with Mr. Murphy.

Mr. Brian Murphy: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

Among the list of witnesses, I believe it's you from the Association franco-yukonnaise who will perhaps answer my legal question. Correct me if that's not the case.

You're the largest association representing Yukon's francophone population. In New Brunswick, we have a number of groups that are involved in legal issues, but you're unfortunately the ones who have to respond to these questions.

Here in Yukon, do you have enough judges who can understand French? Do you have enough lawyers who understand French and can argue in court in French? Do you have enough French-language services provided by defence lawyers for people appearing before a judge?

Do you currently have enough in Yukon or not?

Mr. Régis St-Pierre: No, it's not enough.

There are no bilingual judges on the Yukon Supreme Court. They have to bring in someone from the outside every time there are cases.

We've also made presentations to the Yukon government about legal aid. It's paid for by the federal and territorial governments. Both have very clear legislation. As someone said, justice has been guaranteed for linguistic minorities since 1970, since the Manitoba Act. And yet legal aid is provided only in English in Yukon.

Imagine the situation. You are disadvantaged, you have no money, you don't know who to turn to, and you have something really serious happen in your life. You pay taxes all your life and you're told you're entitled to something. However, currently in the field, you won't get any services.

Mr. Brian Murphy: Today you said that, when you have a complaint, you always ask federal government representatives to rectify the situation, but they answer that it's the territorial government's problem and the territorial government says the same thing.

These are federal matters, aren't they? All your judges are under federal jurisdiction, are they not? Is the lack of justice you describe here a federal or territorial matter?

• (1100)

Mr. Régis St-Pierre: We've asked the same question. We're not experts. Legal aid is a good example. The logos of the Canadian and Yukon governments appear under the advertisement in the paper. We don't know who's concerned. It's not up to a citizen to know whether it's a federal or territorial service. He goes to an office where he's told to go; he phones a justice service line that he's told to call. He should receive service.

However, we're often told that the federal government pays first and then hands off to the Yukon government. The Yukon government puts that money in its coffers before providing citizens with the service. It can also hire a third party. That's the big danger

now: third parties. You know there have been Federal Court judgments at the federal level. In the Territories, they say that Many Rivers, which is a third party, another institution, provides health services. We're also told that it's the Legal Aid Society that provides service, and it operates in English only.

Mr. Brian Murphy: I wonder why no group has taken up the challenge associated with this issue in court. Has that previously been done or not?

Mr. Régis St-Pierre: At the association, we submitted a request to the Court Challenges Program, the forerunner of the Language Rights Support Program, the LRSP. Our request was favourably received. We were told that we had very good cases and that we would be receiving funding. We have legal advisors and lawyers working on the case. We also tried to negotiate on a friendly basis to give the Yukon and Canadian governments a chance to act. To date, we've almost always won when we've filed an official languages complaint. For example, we won in the RCMP case over communications a few years ago. Then they decided to start over. Imagine the energy that takes. For example, we've been working on the RCMP case for 18 months.

We have a small team. We're wearing our people out. I have employees who are on sick leave. This is a real situation we're going through. The government doesn't place any advertisements in our only French-language newspaper. We filed a complaint and we were told that we were in the right and that it would stop doing that, but we filed another complaint and we were told that we were still right and that it would stop doing it and so on. In the meantime, employees become demoralized and are on sick leave.

Our newspaper may be in a financial crisis because there's less and less advertising as a result of social media. And when advertisements should be placed, we see what's going on. Take the Friday edition of the *Yukon News*. It's a great advertisement: it's in English on top and in French on the bottom; and it's an English-language newspaper. They want us to assimilate, to function in English and to buy the English newspaper in order to read the advertisements in French.

Mr. Brian Murphy: How much time is left?

The Chair: You have a minute and a half left, Mr. Murphy.

Mr. Brian Murphy: I'd like to ask another question about the Northwest Territories. It's clear in my mind, when I read the official language statutes that you need a commissioner of official languages in order to settle matters. As regards the deputy minister, it's not clear that there is a political will for that. I understand the political level.

Would it be useful for Yukon to have both things?

Mr. Régis St-Pierre: Yes. We've been writing letters and making requests since the act was passed. Ms. Bernard has just written a letter. We got an answer from the Yukon Premier, Dennis Fentie, who said he didn't see any need for it because there's a process. Imagine! It's like giving prisoner the key to the prison. He told us they don't need an intermediary. The Yukon government is currently receiving money from the federal government, conducting its own analyses, preparing its own reports and carrying out its own evaluation without external sources.

Mr. Brian Murphy: It was often a very pleasant tool for us in New Brunswick, to have the promotion of bilingualism for anglophones and the economic communities because you can win and get a lot more money. For example, the Northwest Territories have received more money than you in response to its requests, and that may be because they have language charters and commissioners and so on.

Do you think it would be a good idea for Yukon to have both things in the economic field?

• (1105)

Mr. Régis St-Pierre: In Yukon, we form a larger population, an extremely active one, which requests services. We have made all these requests, but they have been denied at the political and administrative levels. And we refused to take part in developing the last reports because that wasn't an evaluation. They only cite the government's achievements. There are some good achievements, but, to measure change, you have to be able to say, for example, that the government has 26 websites, 13 of which are in French, and that the other 13 will be introduced next year. That would constitute a real evaluation for the purpose of determining whether equality is being established. If you simply say "bravo" because there are 13 websites in French, that's not right because perhaps there were 16 the previous year and three have been lost.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Murphy.

Ms. Guay, would you like to continue?

Ms. Monique Guay: Yes, of course.

Since you're talking about websites or evaluations, Mr. St-Pierre, I'm going to wait.

Mr. Régis St-Pierre: No, that's fine.

My wife says I can't do two things at the same time, but I can.

Ms. Monique Guay: It's because I don't have a lot of time; someone will be cutting me off.

Mr. Régis St-Pierre: I'll listen to you.

Ms. Monique Guay: With regard to evaluations, you say there aren't really any fair evaluations in the case of francophones. Is that what you're in fact saying?

Mr. Régis St-Pierre: Under the last agreements—and that's why you have a role to play as federal parliamentarians—the government, through its Heritage Department, signed an agreement with the Yukon government for linguistic services. There are two major bilateral agreements that concern education and linguistic services. Those agreements previously had to be evaluated by a third party. The last time, the Yukon Bureau of Statistics did it, even though it wasn't necessarily a third party.

As regards the last agreement, which expired in 2008, there was no third-party evaluation. We're still waiting for it. The last evaluation essentially stated three things.

Ms. Monique Guay: If I understand correctly, you're headed toward assimilation if things go on this way because there's no political will. Or perhaps you're headed toward a confrontation.

Mr. Régis St-Pierre: Yes, a confrontation, because the community is growing stronger and, at some point, when you're strong enough, you pick your battles.

Ms. Monique Guay: Personally, it's the health issue that troubles me a great deal. I'm a francophone and sometimes I go to hospital to see a doctor. Even if he's a francophone, when he explains my condition to me, it's very complicated because he uses medical terms that are very hard to understand. So I can imagine that it must be quite terrible for a francophone who can't get care in French at a hospital.

Aren't there any francophone doctors?

Mr. Régis St-Pierre: You have to draw a distinction between the services. We're looking for institutionalized services; we want that to be organized by the government. A lot of people speak French and provide service in the language chosen by the patient, but that's not institutionalized service. The Yukon government currently has 5,000 employees. How many positions do you think are designated bilingual? There are five.

Ms. Monique Guay: There are only five?

Mr. Régis St-Pierre: There are five out of 5,000. How do you want them to serve the population? That doesn't mean those five positions will still be filled next year. Mr. Bélanger did a good job of showing that: the budget envelope has stayed the same for years now. And yet the Yukon government wants to sign a pay increase agreement for all its employees.

They're entitled to pay increases; that's fine. However, when the pie remains the same size and more people eat it, there's a problem. For example, I was born to a family of 10 children. There were 12 of us in all. When there was just one pie for the 12 of us, we only got small pieces of pie. We also had guests who would come to eat at our place and there wasn't any more pie; so someone gave up his share. That's what they're doing: they're providing a service, and then, at some point, the service disappears. A nurse in a designated bilingual position for early childhood services leaves Yukon and her position isn't filled. She's replaced by an anglophone employee. At the Department of Health, which is obviously the most important department for health services, there's only one person in a designated bilingual position for the entire Yukon.

Ms. Monique Guay: How many are there in the Department of Health?

Mr. Régis St-Pierre: There are hundreds and hundreds. The department has a budget of approximately \$250 million. The Yukon government had a budget of \$400 million. The budget tabled last week had increased to \$1.1 billion or \$1.2 billion.

Ms. Monique Guay: There would have to be a better agreement between the Yukon and federal government. It appears the Yukon government is saying that it's the federal government that isn't providing the money. If I understand correctly, the Yukon government seems to be receiving money but not distributing it to the right places.

Mr. Régis St-Pierre: It isn't our job to manage the Yukon government's money, but we know we should be receiving services that we aren't receiving. So we think that, if a good plan were put on the table to verify developments in the situation and, in the planning, obviously... A question was asked this morning as to whether we had developed a good plan including a specific amount of money and how much its full implementation would cost.

• (1110)

Ms. Monique Guay: We asked that this morning, but we were told that it was—

Mr. Régis St-Pierre: That's been done. Even before health services were transferred, there was a plan, the Bénéteau plan. It was published. That plan, which was submitted to the Yukon government, clearly stated what was required in order to achieve a minimum level of service, even before services were transferred from the federal government to the territories.

Ms. Monique Guay: When was that plan prepared?

Mr. Régis St-Pierre: In the mid-1990s. Then there was the Graham Plan. There have been a number of health plans that have clearly shown the minimum level required. For example, would it cost more to have bilingual reception positions at the institutions? No, we would include that in the job descriptions.

At the hospital where we go, the reception positions are currently unilingual English, 24 hours a day, seven days a week. I believe there is one half-time employee working between 8:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. So you'd better not get sick at 1:00 p.m. because things won't go well at all.

Ms. Monique Guay: Thank you very much.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Guay.

We'll continue with Mr. Lauzon.

Mr. Guy Lauzon: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

It seems that Mr. Nadon is prepared to answer our questions. I'm somewhat involved in the Cornwall Cultural Centre in my constituency. That cultural centre almost shut down about 18 months ago. The decision was made to develop a plan. We now have almost 200 members. Before that, we had only 12 members. With enthusiasm and work, we've made it to 200 members.

How many members are there at your centre? You don't have a cultural centre?

Mr. Roch Nadon: No.

Mr. Guy Lauzon: But you do have a francophone community centre?

Mr. Roch Nadon: Yes.

Mr. Guy Lauzon: How many members are there? Can people join?

Mr. Roch Nadon: Yes, absolutely.

The Association franco-yukonnaise is a bit like a two-headed organization. It's a political mouthpiece, as Régis clearly explained and as you have seen, and it also offers services in various fields: the economy, culture, youth, seniors, education and employability. The Centre de la francophonie in Whitehorse houses all those services.

You've visited its two storeys. We have a small community room. That's somewhat the cultural aspect of the centre. It's mainly a centre that has offices and a community room that's now too small. We use that small room to share and showcase our community's cultural and artistic vitality.

As regards membership, it's possible to have members. However, these aren't the members of a cultural centre; they're the members of the Association franco-yukonnaise.

Mr. Guy Lauzon: How can I, as a francophone, get involved in your centre? Is there a way to do that?

Mr. Roch Nadon: Absolutely. You can become a member by buying a membership and take part in the many activities we organize during the year. That's the cultural component of the Association franco-yukonnaise.

Mr. Guy Lauzon: Are there meetings, shows?

Mr. Roch Nadon: Yes, absolutely.

Mr. Guy Lauzon: In an attempt to promote the francophone community?

Mr. Roch Nadon: Absolutely. In the past few years, we've organized approximately 150 cultural events, projects and activities every year.

Mr. Guy Lauzon: Every year?

Mr. Roch Nadon: Yes, 150. We reach 10,000 to 12,000 persons a year. We understand that one individual may take part in a number of events or projects.

Mr. Guy Lauzon: Yes, absolutely.

Mr. Roch Nadon: I find that interesting because I want to make a connection with assimilation.

In the youth and culture sector in which I'm engaged, the community is definitely a player, if not the main player, working to counter and block the phenomenon of assimilation. We definitely need the services of departments and governments.

However, as Régis mentioned, it's really the community that makes francophone life vibrant and dynamic.

Mr. Guy Lauzon: Are young people involved in your centre? What's the percentage of youths under 18 who are involved?

Mr. Roch Nadon: We're facing challenges with regard to young people. They're there, but we're in the process of, in a way, rebuilding the youth committee. At the French-language school, we mentioned earlier that there were about 50 students between the ages of 12 and 18, plus immersion students. So we're attracting these young people and there are activities for them. We're active.

• (1115)

Mr. Guy Lauzon: Are there any bilingual anglophones involved?

Mr. Roch Nadon: Yes, absolutely. Francophiles are invited and they're also present.

Mr. Guy Lauzon: What's the percentage of francophiles?

Mr. Roch Nadon: That depends on the activity. Some activities are intended more for francophones, others for anglophones. I think it's 50-50.

Mr. Guy Lauzon: However, they aren't members.

Mr. Roch Nadon: No, they aren't members.

If I may—

Mr. Guy Lauzon: Yes, go ahead.

Mr. Roch Nadon: Earlier in my remarks, I spoke a little about the importance of having institutions and structural projects in a minority community. That's true for both anglophones in Quebec and in the other provinces and territories that have needs.

You have to have structures and permanent qualified staff, a core of people. Right now, we unfortunately have only project funding. Projects kill. There is staff turnover in the course of three- or six-month projects. That's fine, but we don't want that anymore.

Mr. Guy Lauzon: What's your budget for this year?

Mr. Roch Nadon: This year's budget is approximately \$225,000 for the cultural sector, and we're getting about \$75,000 or \$80,000 from the federal government.

Mr. Guy Lauzon: That's nearly \$300,000.

Mr. Roch Nadon: No. We're getting \$75,000 from the federal government out of an annual budget of approximately \$225,000.

Mr. Guy Lauzon: All right. Do I have any time left?

The Chair: You have a minute and a half left.

Mr. Guy Lauzon: Mr. St-Pierre, if I correctly understand what you explained, you said that the Yukon government doesn't let you take part in negotiations with the federal government. Did I understand you correctly?

Mr. Régis St-Pierre: You understood perfectly.

We had previously established a tripartite mechanism for bilateral agreements. That included the territorial government, the federal government and the community. We took part in it. It's understood that this is an agreement among governments, but we took part in it. Now we no longer take part.

Mr. Guy Lauzon: Did the government explain why it doesn't want you to take part in the negotiations?

Mr. Régis St-Pierre: The very short answer is that it's a government-to-government agreement and there's no legal obligation.

Ms. Monique Guay: Since when?

Mr. Régis St-Pierre: Since the last round of negotiations. From 2003 to 2008, we took part in that series of meetings. However, in the last round, the renewal of the Roadmap, we weren't invited.

Mr. Guy Lauzon: But you made requests?

Mr. Régis St-Pierre: Yes. We asked to take part.

The judgment by the Supreme Court of Canada in *DesRochers v. Canada* clearly states that federal government services must be developed based on the needs of the communities, as the communities have described them. It was understood that the federal government had to act accordingly.

So that same reasoning is applied to the territorial government because it's the federal government that's paying. There's ultimately an obligation. When I give my son \$20 to buy shoes, if he comes back with a Nintendo game, that's not right.

Mr. Guy Lauzon: All right, thank you.

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

There's enough time left for a third round.

Ms. Zarac, go ahead, please.

Mrs. Lise Zarac: Mr. St-Pierre, earlier you mentioned funding delays. As you no doubt know, our committee has conducted a study on delays in program disbursements. Last week, our colleague Mr. Godin—who is on his way to join us—put the subject back on the table and the Minister of Canadian Heritage responded that the matter had been resolved and that there was no further problem.

So I'm taking advantage of our visit here to check with you as to whether the problem of delays has been solved. If not, what impact is that having on your organizations and especially on services to the community?

Mr. Régis St-Pierre: I'll give you a two-part answer.

You have to give the runner a chance. You have to be honest. And we made a lot of presentations in 2008. The delays had improved. We have to be honest; that improved. Now there's a process.

However, the process now involves a lot more red tape. Report writing is more demanding for staff. We no longer have staff. That's an adjustment that has to be made. We know that, when you shift from a bureaucratic system to another system, you have to get used to the system.

I think some good listening was done on that subject. You did a very good job. I believe the Senate committee also did a very good job in emphasizing the fact that that had to change. We saw an improvement.

Mrs. Lise Zarac: You say it's still a more complicated matter to prepare reports, precisely because the questionnaires are quite long. If I remember correctly, the committee was provided with the questionnaire that the organizations had to submit and we were told that the process had to be facilitated. You seem to be telling me that, on the contrary, it's still just as complicated.

• (1120)

Mr. Régis St-Pierre: No, I said that, when a change occurs, you have to be able to understand it. I wouldn't say it's more complicated. It's different. You have to adjust to certain things that you don't understand as well.

However, we're not afraid. We're not afraid of accountability. At AFY, we have agreements with a host of departments. On a single invoice, there are often six stamps, such as those of Human Resources, Economic Development, the housing fund, entities responsible for culture, and so on. We like accountability when it's well done and simple. You give the runner a chance—that's what I said—not so things will become too complex or to involve us in monthly cashflows and so on.

We're in the first year of the cycle. The cycle isn't yet over. I spoke to the accountant last week, and he said he thought the forms were starting to be quite different. It's improving. We have to be on the look-out.

Mrs. Lise Zarac: All right.

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

You have one minute left, Mr. Bélanger.

Hon. Mauril Bélanger: Mr. Nadon, earlier you mentioned that, in the second round, the cultural component of your roadmap was turned down. Were other Yukon projects accepted?

Mr. Roch Nadon: Yes.

Hon. Mauril Bélanger: Were you told why it was turned down?

Mr. Roch Nadon: No, hence my disillusionment and the fact that we did not submit a project in the third round. This is happening across Canada. Some communities in the provinces and territories have been well served by the Cultural Development Fund, and others not.

Hon. Mauril Bélanger: In the first round, in which you submitted an application, did you get a positive response?

Mr. Roch Nadon: Yes.

Hon. Mauril Bélanger: Were you told why you had been given a positive response?

Mr. Roch Nadon: Yes, absolutely.

Hon. Mauril Bélanger: But you weren't told why you didn't get a positive response in the second round?

Mr. Roch Nadon: No, and that was the second phase of the same project.

Hon. Mauril Bélanger: The second part of the same project.

Mr. Roch Nadon: Yes. In the first year, a pilot project had been successful and had even raised expectations in our community with regard to artistic development, among other things. I submitted a second, more substantial project.

Hon. Mauril Bélanger: Is there an appeal mechanism for that kind of decision?

Mr. Roch Nadon: I didn't get an answer. It should be understood that this is at the employee-employee level.

The Chair: I want to go back to your question, Mr. Bélanger.

In your presentation, you mentioned that the cultural sector of the Association franco-yukonnaise was only able to submit its application to the Cultural Development Fund in its first round of funding because the Cultural Development Fund subsidizes new, non-recurring projects more, and does not support consolidation efforts.

So didn't you provide part of the response in your presentation?

Mr. Roch Nadon: Yes, absolutely. The second year was really to consolidate—

The Chair: That worked well, but the program was designed for new initiatives.

Mr. Roch Nadon: That's it. Perhaps I can mention that the selection criteria changed over three years. In my view, it's a bit of a mess.

The Chair: Unless I'm mistaken, you suggest in your recommendations that it not be solely for recurring programs, but that there be a kind of continuation in order to address this situation, in which there were three- or six-month projects.

Mr. Roch Nadon: Yes, absolutely, and that's mentioned in my remarks.

The Chair: Thank you; we've taken note of that.

Mr. Galipeau.

Mr. Royal Galipeau: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Earlier in his remarks, Mr. St-Pierre referred to an advertisement that appeared in both official languages in the *Yukon News*. I got a copy of that paper. At the top of page 27, there is an advertisement published by the Public Health Agency of Canada. It seems to be a very important advertisement. It's published in French below.

The Chair: As it's in both official languages, Mr. Galipeau, that's not a problem; you can circulate it.

Mr. Royal Galipeau: In my opinion, our committee should be quite sensitive to the proposal that Mr. St-Pierre is making. If that advertisement appears there in French, it should also appear in French in *L'Aurore boréale*, and perhaps it should even appear with the French on top and the English below it.

The Public Health Agency of Canada and, while we're at it, all the other agencies that advertise in community newspapers should probably be told that the address of *L'Aurore boréale* is 3402 Strickland Street, Whitehorse, and that the postal code is Y1A 2K1. I have the telephone and fax numbers, if necessary.

I believe the message has been sent, Mr. St-Pierre.

• (1125)

Mr. Régis St-Pierre: Our paper left the presses two days earlier. That advertisement could very well have been published in our paper. In the past, we were told that there was no French-language newspaper and, later on, that we didn't publish it often enough. Sometimes the paper is published that same day.

Mr. Royal Galipeau: We're going to send the message.

Now I'm going to address the question of AFY's involvement in relations between the Yukon and Canadian governments. If I belonged to the Yukon government, I would think that having you at the table would provide my team with an additional asset.

If you were part of the team until 2008, but not subsequently—

Mr. Régis St-Pierre: The last round of negotiations was the one in 2003.

Mr. Royal Galipeau: In 2003, you were part of the team, but not subsequently. Did an incident occur in 2003 that caused the government to change its mind and decide to stop inviting you?

Mr. Régis St-Pierre: Yes, you've guessed it.

Mr. Royal Galipeau: I said nothing. I just asked a question.

Mr. Régis St-Pierre: You're right to ask yourself the question.

During the term of the last agreement—the agreement is usually for a term of four to five years—the 1998-2003 agreement, there were two applications between 1999 and 2001 under the Court Challenges Program. Twelve years earlier we had negotiated for a genuine implementation of certain programs and that was not done. So we filed an application, which was legitimate. The federal government, through its program, subsequently had to decide whether the application was valid or not. It told us that our application was very valid and that it accepted it 100%.

As regards the application concerning education, we had to meet with the school board, which was the representative starting in December 2007. And then, as you know, there was the legal proceeding.

We are currently the representative for French-language services and we are pursuing a mediation process. So was it for those reasons? I can tell you what happened. All our information is public. It is contained in our annual reports and appears on our website: afy.yk.ca. You can access it if you want to know about our activities, what's going on or if you want to place an advertisement in our paper. We are also in the social media. All that is public. We aren't hiding.

We met with the Yukon premier and asked him whether he was going to make a commitment. The premier gave us his word. He told us that he was making a commitment to rectify the situation, that we were right, that we were not receiving enough services. He told us that more had to be done in health, that we were right and that we had been poorly treated.

Now the government is telling us that it will be requesting money from the federal government and that, if it doesn't grant that money, we won't be getting any more. That's curious logic.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Galipeau.

Ms. Guay, you will lead our third round.

Ms. Monique Guay: I'll be the cherry on the cake.

How often is your newspaper, *L'Aurore boréale*, published? Is it a weekly or a monthly?

Mr. Régis St-Pierre: It's published every other week, except in July, when the centre is closed and we give our employees leave.

Ms. Monique Guay: Do any volunteers work at the paper?

Mr. Régis St-Pierre: Yes, volunteers handle virtually all our activities. Our president has long been a volunteer.

Ms. Monique Guay: All right.

Mr. Régis St-Pierre: Incidentally, our president is a volunteer. She's not paid; she receives no salary. She has a young child at home and is currently pregnant. Our volunteers are the real source of our strength. We have more than 50 volunteers. We have a few tens of employees. We have a lot more volunteers than employees.

Ms. Monique Guay: If you didn't have that, you wouldn't survive. With all your activities and a community centre, you need volunteers since you don't have any funding.

Our organizations are experiencing the same problems. You tell me that things are better. We even have organizations whose presidents were paying expenses with their personal credit cards

because funding wasn't being sent to them. That's starting to improve, but it isn't over yet. The government is changing the rules; it's changing the applications.

As members, we have a big job to do with our organizations to help them complete the forms and ensure they get their money.

I hope your activities here will continue. I believe you have to bring pressure to bear. We're going to write a report on this meeting and on all the meetings we're going to have. We're also going to conduct some visits this afternoon. I'm disappointed because it's sad that there are so many francophones here, that everything is so lively and you don't have any fair support.

I think that, when we submit our report, we're going to make some noise and we'll see the federal government's reaction. We have to believe that there's a good agreement between the federal and Yukon governments. If the federal government sends money to the Yukon government and the latter doesn't hand it over to you, that's another problem.

• (1130)

Mr. Régis St-Pierre: Yes, that's a good point.

You mentioned the devolution of services. Responsibility for forest fires fell to the federal government. That was transferred to the Yukon government. This summer, there were two forest fires, as there are virtually every summer in Yukon. The evacuation notices were given in English on Friday, and in French on Tuesday.

Nothing like that would ever have happened at the federal level because your legislation and websites are published in French and English at the same time. You can't put up a unilingual website. And yet, after the transfer, the federal government washed its hands of the matter and is no longer monitoring what's going on. It seems to me that, after a service is transferred, it should monitor the situation for a certain period of time to see what's happening.

A number of employment assistance services were transferred through Service Canada last year. Citizens, employers, workers and businesses pay for those services. It's not services we're looking for; we're entitled to them by law. This has now been transferred to the Yukon government, and it's washing its hands of the matter.

Since the transfer, the Yukon government has provided a host of services. You've seen it; you've received the response: the budget envelope is not increasing. It seems to me that, when you transfer a service, you're responsible for ensuring that all the communities, including the official language communities in Yukon, are subsequently served in an equitable manner.

Ms. Monique Guay: I think you're very solid people. I think you're going to win. In any case, we're going to try to work to that end. It's not easy not to be able to function in one's language, and that doesn't make people any happier.

In all fields, like health, there are special service needs. Just think of seniors. Work absolutely has to be done in this regard. Count on us to prepare a very specific report on this subject.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Do you want to add something?

Ms. Monique Guay: Mr. Nadon wanted to say something.

The Chair: Go ahead.

Mr. Roch Nadon: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

I would like to mention that the francophones in Yukon are not working in isolation. By that I mean we're also working a lot with the anglophone community, that is the community organizations, the people in the performing arts, culture, youth, people related to the economy and so on. The message we want to send this morning is that the challenges we have to face are, to a large degree, at the level of the departments. We also have challenges at the community level. It's important for me to mention that there is good synergy between the anglophone and francophone communities. That's an asset.

In response to one question, Mr. Galipeau said that there were no doubt challenges involved in managing the cultural centre, but there are models. This could be a cultural centre for anglophones and aboriginals. I'm not just talking about a francophone cultural centre.

In short, we're very creative here. Geographic isolation has often caused us to be creative and dynamic.

Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

The Chair: You're welcome.

There is a federal program, at Canadian Heritage, for artistic production areas. It's the Cultural Spaces Canada Program.

Mr. Roch Nadon: I know it.

The Chair: The solutions you mentioned, particularly if there are synergies, may be particularly promising.

Perhaps I could hear one or two comments on that point.

Mr. Bélanger, I believe you wanted to speak.

Hon. Mauril Bélanger: Yes, I have three or four points to make.

First of all, Mr. Chairman, I would like to submit the Canada-Yukon agreement on services to the clerk. It is in English and French and includes Annex B, the strategic plan. It has been delivered to me. I also have a document to submit to the committee that is in English only. It is a summary of Yukon's requests to the Canadian government concerning health. It makes for quite interesting reading, but it is in English only. It's dated February 2011 and goes back to 1993. It's an interesting story.

I wouldn't want us just to brood over this. I want to offset what Mr. Galipeau previously said. Looking at the last issue of *L'Aurore boréale*, I noticed that it contained advertisements in which Canadian Heritage, Health Canada, Human Resources and Skills Development Canada were involved. It would be interesting to ask the managers of *L'Aurore boréale*, if we have the opportunity to meet them, if they feel they get a fair share of the Canadian government's advertising.

According to the evidence we heard from the deputy minister of Public Works and Government Services Canada last week, we are assured that the media of the minority language communities receive their fair share of advertising. He pays special attention to that. We'll see.

I'd like to hear briefly from Mr. St-Pierre on the refusal to allow him to take part in the bipartite negotiations in a tripartite committee.

Can you provide us with a bit of an explanation on that subject?

• (1135)

Mr. Régis St-Pierre: Yes, I'll be brief.

Before the Languages Act, we obviously had a strategy, and the francophone community was part of that strategy together with the Yukon and federal governments. That was even before 1988. The model we had developed, we called it the Yukon model, and we wanted useful, used and useable services. We had funding. Then we developed models that were accepted by UNESCO for interracial relations. So there was a certain synergy.

Services have obviously changed. It was said that there had to be a progression toward equality. That's what the act was about. So we worked hand in hand until the day when there was no more progression. From that point we were told that there had to be a real action plan, a real implementation. That was a minimum. Lastly, for reasons that we cannot necessarily explain—because I can't speak on the government's behalf, although I can speak on the community's behalf—it was decided that that would no longer be done. Perhaps it was because we had gotten a lot bigger. We're a strong presence in the community, we had organized activities—

Hon. Mauril Bélanger: When did that happen?

Mr. Régis St-Pierre: As I mentioned, that was in the early 2000s. There has really been a change.

Hon. Mauril Bélanger: Are things going well at the Petit Cheval blanc?

A voice: The day care centre?

Hon. Mauril Bélanger: Yes.

Mr. Régis St-Pierre: I believe the day care centre has given a little... We definitely sit on a lot of committees together with that centre, but I won't speak on its behalf. I know that, a little later today, you'll be able to put certain questions to representatives of the school board. I believe they even talk about it in a paragraph in their presentation.

However, I can talk to you about early childhood. We offer family literacy services through AFY, and reports have been provided. It must really be understood that Yukon is very different from other regions. And when the federal government puts programs in place, it must understand that specificity.

For example, we had to fight so that three individuals could appear here today. And yet, at AFY, we are the newspaper, we publish it, and we are the economic development sector as well. I saw that you accepted two individuals for the Northwest Territories. The situation in Yukon is different.

Hon. Mauril Bélanger: You had to fight for three people to appear here? I don't understand.

Mr. Régis St-Pierre: Yes.

Hon. Mauril Bélanger: But the fight must not have been very hard.

Mr. Régis St-Pierre: It's—

Hon. Mauril Bélanger: You fought with our clerk?

Mr. Régis St-Pierre: Just at the start. Even the form states two representatives per organization. Whether we manage culture, health, seniors, economic development of the newspaper, the model is unique. That doesn't fit into the government's boxes. That's often the way it is. We're told that we don't fit into the government's boxes. We made a request, but we had to fight. The first answer that we got was: no, it's two persons per organization.

Hon. Mauril Bélanger: The Yukon government has at least six.

Mr. Régis St-Pierre: If I had been allowed six people, perhaps we could have had six.

Hon. Mauril Bélanger: Mr. St-Pierre, are you saying that we in the committee aren't fair? No, I—

Mr. Régis St-Pierre: I'm not saying you're not fair, but we're completely different from elsewhere. I saw the NWT list. For example, you had CDETNO. CDETNO is RDÉE TNO; RDÉE Yukon is the AFY. We're a hybrid model. We decided to concentrate, to consolidate our energy, to develop a Yukon model somewhat different from what is done elsewhere in the country. But depending on the model, on the form, it says two persons per organization. We understand that.

• (1140)

Hon. Mauril Bélanger: I have two brief questions. With regard to immigration and integration services, is that done in English only?

Mr. Régis St-Pierre: Currently, if a citizen is admitted to Canada in accordance with Citizenship and Immigration Canada standards, he is entitled to receive intake, support and linguistic services. He will be directed to the Multicultural Centre, which offers services in English only.

Hon. Mauril Bélanger: Is there a francophone or bilingual organization that could provide the services in French?

Mr. Régis St-Pierre: Yes, at AFY, we offer services up to—

Hon. Mauril Bélanger: Have you filed any funding applications?

Mr. Régis St-Pierre: We applied and we were denied because another organization had been accepted. That's fine. There's another organization. It was a call for tenders. It's like in business; you tender for a project. However, we don't understand why bilingualism wasn't required in the call for tenders.

Hon. Mauril Bélanger: The call for tenders was for services in English only?

Mr. Régis St-Pierre: No, we were never told that. The answer we got was that we did our advertising in French and English. And, in the newspaper, there's still an advertisement from the *Yukon News*, but it's in English only.

We were told that wasn't necessary. And yet, if you consult the federal government website, you see that it states that CIC must provide bilingual services in Yukon.

Hon. Mauril Bélanger: You say the RCMP issues news releases or publishes on its website in English only.

Mr. Régis St-Pierre: The RCMP testified publicly on CBC/Radio-Canada in Yukon. There are excerpts. It simply said that, as it was not publishing its news releases in French, it would no longer be publishing them in English in order to comply with the Official Languages Act. Strange logic, but that's the official response.

Hon. Mauril Bélanger: We may have caused that somewhat because we invited RCMP representatives to appear before the committee. There was a reaction. In British Columbia, the RCMP decided that, since it was not issuing press releases simultaneously, it would stop publishing them. There was an outcry, the RCMP reconsidered and decided that it would hire enough interpreters or translators to be able to issue the news releases in English and French at the same time.

Why would RCMP officials not be able to do the same thing in Yukon?

Mr. Régis St-Pierre: They're able to do it, but it's simply that they don't want to. It used to be the person hired by the RCMP who was responsible for that. That person was bilingual. The position had become bilingual. The RCMP in Whitehorse decided to do things differently. It's a real fight. We're talking here about a 10-month fight. It's hard for our little community to fight the RCMP.

A lot of citizens call us—

Hon. Mauril Bélanger: It's hard to fight the RCMP across the country, Mr. St-Pierre. Sometimes we have the same problem on Parliament Hill.

That's fine, Mr. Chairman. Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you.

These are obviously issues which the committee will consider and on which it will intervene from time to time. It goes without saying that we will address them when we write our report and in the context of the measures that will follow.

We are coming to the end of the first stage. This afternoon, we will have the opportunity to visit the Centre de la francophonie in Whitehorse. For the moment, I would like to thank you for appearing before the committee this morning.

Mr. Nadon, you cited a passage that I very much appreciated, that there can be no language without culture. The cultural aspect is often what encourages people to learn a language. You explained it well through the quotations. You also talked about the importance of culture in maintaining vitality, not only language, but also the linguistic communities. Thank you very much.

Ms. Bernard, thank you for being here and I congratulate you on this happy revenge of the cradle.

Perhaps we can speak less officially this afternoon during our visit.

We'll resume our activities at 1:00 p.m.

The meeting is adjourned.

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