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## **Standing Committee on Official Languages**

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**EVIDENCE**

**Thursday, November 3, 2011**

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**Chair**

**The Honourable Michael Chong**



## Standing Committee on Official Languages

Thursday, November 3, 2011

•(0845)

[Translation]

**The Chair (Hon. Michael Chong (Wellington—Halton Hills, CPC)):** in Good morning, everyone, and welcome to the 11<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Standing Committee on Official Languages on this Thursday, November 3, 2011. Pursuant to Standing Order 108, today we are conducting our study on the evaluation of the Roadmap, improving programs and service delivery.

We have with us Mr. Perreux and Ms. Nolette, from the Association canadienne-française de l'Alberta, and Mr. Heppelle and Mr. Simard, from the Assemblée communautaire fransaskoise. Welcome, everyone.

We will begin with the Association canadienne-française de l'Alberta.

**Mr. Yvon Godin (Acadie—Bathurst, NDP):** I have a point of order, Mr. Chairman.

[English]

**The Chair:** A point of order from Monsieur Godin.

[Translation]

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** I don't want to monopolize time, but I believe this is an important point. At no time has the committee met to look at the witness list. We said we would choose witnesses on which everyone agreed, but things have to be planned. We don't know in advance who we are going to meet. I don't think that's acceptable either for the witnesses, who are notified at the last minute when they will appear. We should set aside a meeting to prepare this, to look at the witness list, to see what the government has presented, what we have presented, how we can put it all together and what the agenda will be.

**The Chair:** I suggest we discuss that issue at 10:30 a.m., after our guests have testified.

**Hon. Mauril Bélanger (Ottawa—Vanier, Lib.):** No, we have to vote.

[English]

**The Chair:** Okay, but we have witnesses in front of us. I don't think—

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** No, no, I don't want to do it now. That's not my point. I said we have to look at doing that.

**The Chair:** I agree. I'm suggesting we have a discussion about it at 10:30, or, alternatively, at another time.

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** Maybe it should be at the next meeting.

**The Chair:** Without further ado, we'll begin with an opening statement from

[Translation]

the Association canadienne-française de l'Alberta.

**Ms. Dolorèse Nolette (President, Association canadienne-française de l'Alberta):** Mr. Chairman, Mr. Gourde, committee members, good morning to you all.

On behalf of the ACFA and the francophone community of Alberta, I am pleased to accept the invitation of the House of Commons Standing Committee on Official Languages to share the views of the Association canadienne-française de l'Alberta as part of the committee's study on improving programs and service delivery under the Roadmap for Canada's linguistic duality.

In our presentation, we will briefly describe the ACFA, how linguistic duality has manifested itself in Alberta, our community's priorities and our assessment of the investments made in Alberta under the Roadmap, as well as considerations for improving the Roadmap.

Before continuing, I request your permission to submit a fuller brief at a later date. In the time we were allotted, we were able to prepare this address to introduce ourselves for the purpose of answering your questions, but a brief would provide a much more comprehensive picture.

The ACFA, which was founded in 1926 and has been governed by a statute of the Alberta legislative assembly since 1964, represents the interests and coordinates the overall development of the francophone community of Alberta. That same statute conferred authority on the ACFA enabling it to incorporate 13 regional agencies and two affiliated agencies across the province. In addition, last year, the ACFA placed 12 school and community coordinators in the remote and emerging francophone communities of the province.

In addition to those roles, the ACFA offers services directly to Albertans. For example, we operate a bilingual information centre, accessible by the Internet and by telephone, on more than 1,000 private and non-governmental services available in French in Alberta.

We manage the ACCENT directory, which promotes the extracurricular services available in French at the 34 French-language schools and 204 French immersion schools in Alberta.

We distribute information through various channels of communication on topics related to employment, immigration, the francophone community, community activities, language rights, Franco-Albertan history and more, attracting thousands of visitors, clicks, comments, tweets and retweets every month.

We also offer a range of training, awareness and group benefits services for employees in the francophone association community, as well as promotional and other activities.

The minority French-language population of the province of Alberta is the third largest in Canada. Today, 68,000 Albertans define themselves as francophones, but we estimate the number of persons who can speak, live and work in French in Alberta at more than 225,000. This means that twice as many Albertans choose French as there are people whose mother tongue is French. The future vitality of the francophone community therefore depends on a symbiosis between those who are francophone by birth and those who are francophone by choice, for the development, offer and uptake of French-language services in Alberta.

However, the Albertan francophone community is facing other challenges. Among other things, it has a demographic deficit of nearly 9,000 children. As a result, even though 2.2% of Alberta's population speak French as their first language, only 0.7% of children up to 4 years of age have French as their first language. The predominant factor is the low rate of language transfer in households where parents do not speak French. Of those children who have at least one francophone parent, 82% live in inter-linguistic households, and only 15% of those children will learn French.

The mobility of the francophone population is another important factor in Alberta. Between 2001 and 2006, more than half of Alberta's francophones moved; 31% came from elsewhere, including 16% from another province or territory; and 5% came from another country. Only British Columbia experienced similar mobility. That figure among the population of Albertan anglophones is 22%.

We therefore need innovative models, adapted to our situation, in order to meet the needs of these dispersed masses of francophones.

To seize the opportunities that are strategically important for francophone vitality in Alberta and to minimize the threats facing the French fact, the Albertan francophone community has adopted a long-term development strategy entitled *Stratégie 2030*.

- (0850)

That strategy is based on three major axes to ensure the vitality of the Albertan francophone community.

The first axis is cultural autonomy and identity development among francophones. For 80% of the community, the rate of language transmission is 15%. Consequently, how can the language and culture be transmitted to future generations. Hence the importance, among other things, of acknowledgement and advocacy of francophones' language rights, homogenous French-language education, cultural development, early childhood, family literacy and preservation and influence of francophone heritage.

The second axis is the settlement with dignity of francophone newcomers. Approximately 69% of our francophone population was not born in Alberta. How then do we ensure that francophones who

come and settle in Alberta can grow and develop? Hence the importance, among other things, of intake and settlement services, employment services, the economic sector, occupational and technical training and recognition of credentials from other provinces and countries.

The third axis is promotion of the French language to the Alberta majority, to those who speak the language and to anglophones. More than 50% of Albertans support Canada's linguistic duality, and twice as many Albertans choose French as those who were born with French as their mother tongue. Consequently, how do we increase the prestige of the French language? Hence the importance, among other things, of French immersion in public schools and post-secondary institutions, communications, the promotion and development of bilingualism and linguistic duality as citizen values in Canada.

Like those of the Roadmap, the ACFA's objectives are to involve the population in linguistic duality and to support the community's development in a diverse range of key sectors for the development of the francophone community.

Here we have chosen to note two successes of the Roadmap for Canada's Linguistic Duality.

In Alberta, the initiatives funded by Citizenship and Immigration Canada through the Roadmap have made it possible to support a francophone immigration development network linking community players in order to meet the needs of francophone immigrants in the community; projects to promote tolerance and combat discrimination experienced by francophones who have immigrated to Alberta; cultural awareness activities organized by francophone welcome centres in Alberta in order to bring communities closer together; and the creation of tools to facilitate the integration of French-speaking immigrants, such as the website [www.destinationalberta.ca](http://www.destinationalberta.ca) and the directory of services for francophone newcomers to Alberta. These are thus investments that directly affect the French-speaking citizens of Alberta.

In addition, in November 2009, the francophone community of Alberta learned that, through the *Société Santé en français*, Health Canada was investing \$1 million of Roadmap investment money over three years. From the start, we knew where the funding was coming from, what amount had been allocated and what the timetable was.

At the invitation of the Réseau santé albertain, the community attended a round table meeting to determine needs and priorities. Three major community projects were selected and are currently being implemented. The officers responsible for the projects are being assisted in the process and must report on a regular basis.

The community is therefore responsible to the government. In our minds, this is a concrete example of a winning model in which a community and the government can work together to achieve their respective objectives.

To conclude, we would like to offer four recommendations.

First, we recommend that the Roadmap for Canada's Linguistic Duality be renewed. This federal government initiative has been and still is of capital importance for the vitality and linguistic duality of Alberta.

Second, if we want all Canadians to take part in linguistic duality, we must invest in its visibility and promotion. That will have the effect of reaching target clientele and of ensuring that all Canadians sense a positive presence of both official languages.

● (0855)

Third, there must also be investment in the federal-provincial agreements. The Official Languages Act provides that the provincial jurisdictions must be respected. However, the provinces and municipalities are at the forefront in ensuring delivery of a number of direct programs and services to citizens. It is therefore imperative that there be a federal-provincial dialogue to ensure that Canadian citizens are well served in the official language of their choice and that programs and services be developed in both official languages.

Currently, \$22 million has been allocated to this envelope at the national level. Of that amount, \$650,000 is going to the Government of Alberta, which represents barely 3% of the agreement. This is utterly inadequate for the purpose of providing good service to Alberta's francophone population in the fields that are to be developed.

Lastly, if we sincerely want to support the official language minority communities and contribute to the development of direct programs and services for citizens, there must be a massive investment in the central point of the Roadmap, which is support for official-language minority communities. We have French-language schools, welcome and settlement centres, employment agencies and other services in French in Alberta because francophone community agencies detected the needs and subsequently mobilized the resources, raised awareness and marketed those services.

Consequently, we recommend that support for official-language minority communities, which currently represents only 2% of the Roadmap for Canada's Linguistic Duality, be increased.

Thank you.

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

We'll now move on to the Assemblée communautaire fransaskoise.

**Mr. Paul Heppelle (President, Assemblée communautaire fransaskoise):** Good morning, Mr. Chairman and committee members.

My name is Paul Heppelle, president of the Assemblée communautaire fransaskoise in Saskatchewan. I am here with our director general, Denis Simard. I will be sharing presentation duties with Mr. Simard as I am losing my voice.

The ACF is pleased to accept your invitation because it affords us the opportunity to express to you our community's views on the issue of the evaluation and potential extension of the Roadmap.

It must be said at the outset that the short advance notice for such an important presentation caught us a little off guard. However, we

will do our best to provide you with a clear picture of the issues facing us with regard to linguistic duality.

It should also be noted that today's presentation was prepared in consultation with the member institutions and associations of our association network.

● (0900)

**Mr. Denis Simard (Director General, Assemblée communautaire fransaskoise):** What then is the Roadmap's actual impact on Saskatchewan's francophone community? Our evaluation will be based on two major priorities: first, a plan for society the purpose of which is to build a strong, unified and innovative Saskatchewan francophone community that contributes to the fibre of Saskatchewan and Canadian society; and, second, a long-term strategic investment by the Government of Canada. That means funding that will ensure substantial multi-year support for a dynamic cultural-linguistic future for our community.

As regards the Canadian government's wish to balance its budget, how can we argue against virtue? It must be understood, however, that Saskatchewan's francophone community has been doing more than its share in this regard for over a decade.

**Mr. Paul Heppelle:** The current Roadmap targets five priority areas for action. In the area of emphasizing the value of linguistic duality among all Canadians, in 2003, Saskatchewan adopted a policy on French-language services. With Roadmap funding, the province is now funding the Direction des affaires francophones. That provincial unit is an essential link with the government and a privileged entryway into the provision of provincial services in French. This kind of initiative is central to the current Roadmap. These are investments that make it possible for French-speaking Saskatchewan citizens to live their everyday lives in French.

The area for action "Building the future by investing in youth" is also of capital importance for us. It is one of the major areas underpinning the continued existence and vitality of our community. These initiatives would require four actual investments.

The first is an additional investment in the Fransaskois school system for both the first and second language sectors.

**Mr. Denis Simard:** Second, funding must be provided for youth initiatives that will help equip young Fransaskois to become citizens who play leadership roles in our community.

Third, funding must be provided for access to French-language media, which includes Radio-Canada, and any other form of private or public broadcasting. Let's be clear on this: Radio-Canada's regional services enable the Fransaskois to see themselves, to see each other and to hear their own voice on the air, and to access programming that is of interest to them. Note as well that the community newspapers are the archives of our communities and an essential tool.

Fourth, we must invest in postsecondary education in French. The best way to build postsecondary education in French in a sustainable and effective manner in a minority setting is to encourage the province-wide creation of a highly francophone independent inter-institutional postsecondary sector that forms the continuation of French-language preschool and school education. The two levels of government must fund this kind of project on a joint basis, separate from the anglophone sector, in accordance with criteria adapted to the educational needs of the minority group.

**Mr. Paul Heppelle:** In the area for action "Improving access to services for official language minority communities", we note five areas.

In health, access to services in French goes beyond mere respect for the language of the individual. This is also a matter of personal safety, for both patient and health provider. The Fransaskois population is aging and renewing itself through immigration and inter-provincial migration, particularly by non-anglophones. In addition, our educational institutions are enabling young Fransaskois to be increasingly dominant in their mother tongue.

In justice, we must continue to increase the number and variety of legal services. Not only is the Fransaskois population getting used to justice in French, but the number of people employed in this sector in Saskatchewan has increased by nearly 40% since 2008.

In immigration, since 2008, the ACF has helped 360 persons and their families with immigration services, and we have supported an average of 85 immigrants a year. In addition to being highly involved in immigrant recruitment internationally and in eastern Canada, we launched the Réseau provincial en immigration in 2004. It allows for better coordination of activities, which enhances the effect of the actions of each of its members.

In early childhood, the current network consists of six educational centres, 12 pre-kindergartens, 10 play groups and three family and childhood support centres. Access to this network is possible mainly as a result of investments in kind and financial investments by our own community network, as Roadmap investments have not managed to meet our needs in this regard. For example, in 2010, 108 children were on the waiting list for child care services. One year later, 227 children are still awaiting services. To meet the specific needs of parents' groups, we recommend that the decision as to who will be responsible for the early childhood file and how that funding is disbursed be reached in consultation with the Commission nationale des parents francophones.

Sufficient funding must also be maintained for the arts, culture and heritage. This year, for example, the Department of Canadian Heritage and the Saskatchewan Arts Board established the Portail culturel fransaskois, a fund that provides direct support for Fransaskois artists through an investment of \$690,000 over two years. However, it will also be necessary for the Roadmap to encourage national cultural agencies such as the National Film Board, the Canada Council for the Arts and Telefilm Canada to invest in Saskatchewan because it's also their turn to support our cultural institutions in our province.

● (0905)

**Mr. Denis Simard:** In the area for action "Capitalizing on economic benefits", Roadmap investments enabled the Conseil de la

coopération de la Saskatchewan to take part in the Place de la Francophonie during the 2010 Vancouver Olympic Games. This kind of contribution should be part of a future Roadmap because this showcase made it possible to introduce Canada's francophone economic agencies to the national and international public.

As for the area for action "Ensuring efficient governance to better serve Canadians", let's specifically address the issue of the collaboration agreements of the Department of Canadian Heritage. These are still the cornerstone of our community's development. These funds constitute the majority of funding available for the operation of our network. However, the overall funding provided by the department to Fransaskois agencies has not increased in real terms since 2000. This means that our purchasing power has definitely been eroded. Let's not forget that the Fransaskois community is in effect a community development agency acting, as it were, on behalf of the Government of Canada in respect of its constitutional linguistic obligations.

**Mr. Paul Heppelle:** In conclusion, we unreservedly recommend that the Roadmap for Canada's linguistic duality be renewed and improved, particularly on a multi-year basis. This Canadian government initiative has been and still is of capital importance to us. The Roadmap will guarantee that the Fransaskois community receives services in French from our two levels of government, socio-cultural activities to ensure ongoing and increased contact with our language, and the preservation of our heritage and programs in key sectors that will guarantee our development and vitality.

The enhancement of future contribution agreements is an essential condition for the Fransaskois community. Far from being an unreasonable solution in these times of budget austerity, such enhancement should be perceived instead as a strategic realignment of resources. Further reduction in federal investments in our agencies and institutions would leave them incapable of delivering the services Fransaskois citizens expect, services to which they are entitled and which are the political and financial responsibility of the Government of Canada.

Those are the essential points of our message to the Standing Committee on Official Languages. Note that the complete version of our brief will be forwarded to you as soon as possible. Ladies and gentlemen, committee members, on behalf of all Fransaskois and our francophile partners in Saskatchewan, we sincerely thank you for your attention.

● (0910)

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

We have an hour and a quarter for questions and comments. We'll begin with Mr. Godin.

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

I would like to welcome all the witnesses.

It's always a pleasure to see you again. We have seen each other on various occasions, such as during the trip to Alberta with the French. We visited Edmonton and Calgary and tried to see Fort McMurray, but I believe people didn't want to show us that place. There were such big clouds that we were unable to land. We really would have liked to go there; that was part of our mission to Alberta. I hope we can do that one day.

With regard to the Roadmap, your testimony makes me think that Alberta has taken advantage of the program. Am I right?

**Ms. Dolorèse Nolette:** Definitely.

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** As regards the investments that have been made—you talked about education and health—I'd like to know whether your associations were consulted. Was the francophone community consulted? I'm not just talking about the government, but about the community as well.

**Ms. Dolorèse Nolette:** With regard to health, yes. We took part in the consultation and talked about pushing projects and setting priorities. In education, the consultation model was different, I believe, but we were consulted.

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** You say the model is different for education. Was there any follow-up?

People say they don't get the impression the money is going to the right place. The federal government sends money to the province, but we don't get the impression all the money is reaching the minority community.

I don't want to make a mistake, but I believe that, under Part VII of the Official Languages Act, the federal government has the power to invest in the minority communities.

One case has become public. It has already been admitted in Nova Scotia that the money wasn't really going to the francophone community. And yet the money was sent for that purpose.

We asked the Commissioner of Official Languages whether he could verify that. He said he had no right to interfere in the matter as it did not involve federal institutions. However, certain ministers from the provinces tell me they do what they want with the money that comes in.

Do you get the same impression in Alberta?

**Ms. Dolorèse Nolette:** It's very hard to determine exactly how much funding there is and where it goes. That's a major concern for us, particularly with regard to education. It's very difficult to determine what the funding is.

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** Don't you think the areas of provincial jurisdiction stop there?

The program as such and the way education services are provided are the jurisdiction of the provinces. It's not up to the federal government to go and create programs. It's really an area of provincial jurisdiction.

However, if money is sent and they say a school should be built or that there should be something for early childhood such as a child care facility, wouldn't the federal government be responsible for ensuring that the money is used for that?

We don't want to know how you build your building or what furniture you put in it, but we want to know that the money has been used for that and not for something else.

• (0915)

**Ms. Dolorèse Nolette:** Is that question for me too?

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** It's for anyone.

**Ms. Dolorèse Nolette:** With your permission, Paul, I'll answer first.

Ideally, new agreements should come out of talks among the various parties. That means the federal government, the provincial government—Albertan, in our case—and the community. The roles, responsibilities and commitments of each of the parties would be very clear from the outset.

That's one of the things we really appreciated about the way the health funding was distributed and monitored. That would be ideal because, in that way, we would really feel we were partners and stakeholders in linguistic duality.

We'd also have a chance to have an agreement with the Albertan government on understanding developments in these agreements and responsibility.

**Mr. Paul Heppelle:** I can cite some examples.

Saskatchewan has a higher immigration rate. Immigrants are mainly non-francophones and non-anglophones—allophones, in other words—mainly from francophone Africa and are not rights holders. All the programming that concerns them, in areas such as improved education, learning English or French-language development, is done out of the budgets of the francophone school division, which has no money granted for that purpose. For example, the network's immigration coordinator alone probably costs \$100,000 and the grants from the province do not reflect that work, which has to be done to ensure the education and academic success of those people.

Now let's consider another area and the example of child care facilities, which are often funded out of money from the community or the Fransaskois school division. There is no funding for that. And yet, if we lose three- or four-year-old children, they'll never come back to us.

We've negotiated more than \$30 million for the community at the postsecondary level since 1968. Today, what do we have at the University of Regina, for example? Very little.

The answer to your question, Mr. Godin, is that, yes, we have an idea of the amounts that are being invested. As for how they are spent, we are often at the mercy of a majority community or a majority institution over which we have no legal authority. We are somewhat at the mercy of a number of people who do not necessarily accept our influence or intervention. However, we can't say that there has been no success or that the investment has been of no value. We have a school system; we have public and college-level education, and we have child care services, but the question is: at what cost?

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

Mr. Gourde, go ahead, please.

**Mr. Jacques Gourde (Lotbinière—Chutes-de-la-Chaudière, CPC):** Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I also want to thank the witnesses for being with us this morning.

Ms. Nolette, you talked a lot about figures, which I found interesting. You said that 69% of the francophones in your province were not born in Alberta. In fact, that must no doubt be as a result of labour mobility. Personally, I know people from my region who decided to go and work in Alberta, while others chose Saskatchewan.

It's always tough seeing people leave our region because we also have labour problems. Leaders in certain sectors—transportation, construction and health—are leaving our region. We are sort of in competition.

Once the decision is made, the usual pattern is that the man leaves to work in another province for a year or two. The families have to make a decision. They often have young children. Sometimes, the wife has a job in Quebec, but it's possible for her to be transferred to Alberta. The families sometimes decide to go and live in Alberta for a few years or for the rest of their lives.

I believe your organization has a role to play with regard to integration. These people definitely choose to go and live in an anglophone environment, but they remain very much attached to their mother tongue. Living in a francophone environment and integrating into a francophone community in Alberta is more difficult.

How do the services you can offer these people help them integrate and enjoy their stay, which would enable you to keep them for longer?

Alberta and Saskatchewan are experiencing a major economic boom. You need labour, but if people come and settle in your province for two or three years, that isn't enough. You want to keep them for longer. We're happy to see them come back to us. We say we've won because their love for their home has made them come back. You want the opposite. Explain to me what you do.

● (0920)

**Ms. Dolorèse Nolette:** In fact, the question is what services the francophones who want to come and settle in Alberta in order to work will need. It will be employment services and various other types of services that meet their needs as citizens. Those services are provided by the provincial government or by the municipalities.

Our organization wants to stimulate newcomers' efforts and everyday lives through community life. For example, someone may leave for Alberta with a very clear plan in mind, may know he is coming to work and even have a job waiting for him. However, he sometimes needs services in order to learn English, which is necessary in order to live in Alberta, or various other services.

That's where we come in. We take over when the Albertan government does not feel it has to promote linguistic duality or to serve the public in both languages. We support all kinds of initiatives that should ultimately be provided by government institutions, whether they be provincial or municipal.

We are very much aware that those 69% of francophones do not all come from Quebec. They also come from other provinces where people speak French or from other countries, and they have very big needs.

I'll give you a specific example that might answer Mr. Godin's question. It illustrates the fact that our relationship with the Alberta government does not work all the time when francophones have to be served in the official language of their choice. This past spring, an invitation to tender was issued for an employment agency in Fort McMurray. Fort McMurray is a place that takes in a very large population, both anglophone and francophone, from elsewhere. Large numbers of francophones have come to us in recent years.

Ultimately, the invitation to tender to serve... Pardon me, sometimes I get confused with the wording of the invitation to tender as it was issued. I know that Denis has the exact wording of the invitation to tender.

Incidentally, I didn't take advantage of my presentation to introduce us: Denis Perreux is our director general, and I am our volunteer president.

So I'll let my colleague talk about the invitation to tender.

**Mr. Denis Perreux (Director General, Association canadienne-française de l'Alberta):** It was an invitation to tender issued under the Canada-Alberta labour market agreement, which has been in effect since 1996. One of the components of that agreement concerns the offer of services in French.

The wording of the invitation to tender referred to a service to Albertans for whom English is an additional language. That wording strayed somewhat from the principles of the Official Languages Act. In fact, the bid of an agency that provides services in other languages was accepted. That agency had to ask the francophone community for help regarding the offer in French.

This is an example of a service that may not do a very good job of meeting the needs of francophones who arrive from another province or country.

● (0925)

**Mr. Paul Heppelle:** In our province, we are very much involved with immigration. For example, we have just signed a collaboration agreement with Mauritius, which also includes the UN's International Organization for Migration. We have professional recruiters involved in this matter. The first recruits already have their bags packed. For the moment, we're talking about some 100 skilled workers who will be arriving in the coming months. Then there will probably be about 100 workers, or even more, in every subsequent year.

We're doing very targeted recruitment. We aren't just recruiting workers; we are also recruiting their families. So if we hire a man from Mauritius as a level 4 mechanic, we also ensure that his wife—if he is married, of course—also has a job opportunity. We are working directly and in cooperation with employers back home. They may be logistics companies, trucking companies, companies in the mining industry or the oil industry.

The ACF is now recognized as a port of entry to Saskatchewan as a whole for francophone immigration. There is still a minor problem: although we have to cover the entire province, which is quite big, we are still funded on a project basis. It is therefore very difficult to determine what we could do next year, even though we are very sure about what we should do and about the measures that should be taken to do it.



We are very much involved in this field, and it is very important, because we are really changing our demographics with regard to the francophonie.

**The Chair:** All right, thank you.

Mr. Bélanger, go ahead, please.

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

Welcome, ladies and gentlemen, and thank you for being here.

Ms. Nolette, I can't wait to read your more comprehensive report because I'm very concerned about what I heard. You say there is a demographic deficit of 9,000 children and that French is being transmitted to only 0.7% of the children of the 2% of individuals whose first language is French. That means that Alberta's francophone community will be disappearing in two generations.

**Ms. Dolorèse Nolette:** That would be possible if the trend continued, but that is not the case for the moment.

**Hon. Mauril Bélanger:** There's reason for concern.

**Ms. Dolorèse Nolette:** Yes, but it isn't—

**Hon. Mauril Bélanger:** So I can't wait to read what you are going to prepare for us.

**Mr. Denis Perreux:** With regard to that question—

**Hon. Mauril Bélanger:** Go ahead very quickly.

**Mr. Denis Perreux:** But the vitality of that population is very high.

**Hon. Mauril Bélanger:** Yes, I'm aware of that, but as you no doubt know, when a community declines relative to the rest of the population, everything can easily reach a tipping point before long. I believe the francophone community in Saskatchewan is unfortunately near that kind of point. I don't want to be a prophet of doom, but we also have to be realistic.

Now I'm talking to my colleagues. In September, I tried to reintroduce a report that the previous committee had prepared on immigration so that we could get some answers from the government. So, Mr. Chairman, perhaps it would be time for us to consider it when we come back. I imagine my colleagues have had the time to read it.

I have a few questions, with your permission. Both of you mentioned the importance of the media. Did you know that, on Monday, two MPs—one from Alberta and the other from Saskatchewan, incidentally—tabled a petition in the House asking the government to completely abolish funding for CBC/Radio-Canada? What do you think of that?

• (0930)

**Mr. Paul Heppelle:** That would be a disaster for us. Radio-Canada is our only French voice in Saskatchewan, in Canada and internationally. It's really the extent to which we lose day-to-day contact with the language that determines the danger of reaching a tipping point and of seeing a community disappear. However, as long as there is ongoing, sustained contact...

In Saskatchewan, Radio-Canada is a primary socio-cultural and community partner. Even losing the regional component—and I'm saying nothing about losing the corporation as a whole—would constitute a real disaster from a linguistic and community standpoint.

**Ms. Dolorèse Nolette:** I absolutely agree, Mr. Bélanger, but in addition, in Alberta in the 1960s, a private French-language station that had been established by the community was sold to Radio-Canada.

**Hon. Mauril Bélanger:** And that's where the fund is, in Alberta.

**Ms. Dolorèse Nolette:** Exactly. And our CHFA was sold to Radio-Canada to ensure the private station's continued existence. So, of course, we don't want to see Radio-Canada disappear.

**Hon. Mauril Bélanger:** When there was a change of government in 2006, I put a question to Ms. Verner, who, at the time, was the minister responsible for the Action Plan for Official Languages, which subsequently became the Roadmap. I asked her whether, in its budget cuts, the government intended to protect the action plan. She clearly answered me, in the House, that it did. And it has to be acknowledged that there were no cuts.

The government is currently venturing into another series of cuts of 5% to 10%. So I put the same question to the current minister, Mr. Moore, to see whether he could assure us that the Roadmap will not be subject to budget cuts. He hasn't answered; he hasn't said yes.

Does the community have any concerns about what's coming in the next budget?

**Mr. Paul Heppelle:** Some, yes. In fact, what will the impact be if the budgets of the departments of Canadian Heritage, Citizenship and Immigration, Human Resources and Skills Development, Health, Justice and so on are cut by 5%, 6% or 7%? Is it 5%, 25% or 35%? Already, the average employee in our network, regardless of what he does, earns 20% less than his counterpart who does similar work in the majority community. So imagine the staff turnover.

**Hon. Mauril Bélanger:** Pay inequity doesn't exist just between men and women, but also between anglophones and francophones. Is that what you're trying to say?

**Mr. Paul Heppelle:** Yes.

**Hon. Mauril Bélanger:** Oh, that's new.

**Mr. Paul Heppelle:** If you add women and the rural situation, for example, that complicates matters further.

So this is a major concern for us. It's true that we may have to look elsewhere for funding and to rationalize our activities. As I said earlier, it's hard to argue against virtue, but we're making our share of the effort, and have been doing so for a long time.

**Hon. Mauril Bélanger:** Ms. Nolette, you have 30 seconds. Then I'll have one final question.

**Ms. Dolorèse Nolette:** That's a question in our minds. The Roadmap was put in place to promote linguistic duality. We believe that's still a Canadian value.

**Hon. Mauril Bélanger:** So it shouldn't be abolished.

With regard to child care services, an agreement was signed with all the provinces. There were language clauses in every agreement. I took part in those negotiations with my colleague Ken Dryden. That was eliminated. In fact, it was one of the government's first acts.

Do you have a comment to make on that point?

**Mr. Paul Heppelle:** We know that, for every dollar spent on early childhood, \$7—and now we're talking more about \$8 or \$9—has to be spent to have the same outcome later on, at the primary or secondary level. In addition, it has to be understood that the reality of today's society is that both parents work. We can't do otherwise. I would like it if there was still one parent at home to take care of and bring up young children, but that's not the case.

So it seems to me that denying this social reality is tantamount to preaching against virtue.

**Hon. Mauril Bélanger:** Lastly, I would like to thank you for the nice weather you've brought us.

**Mr. Paul Heppelle:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Mr. Galipeau, go ahead, please.

**Mr. Royal Galipeau (Ottawa—Orléans, CPC):** Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I only have seven minutes at my disposal, but I have enough questions for you to take up nearly 20 minutes.

I too would like to welcome you to Ottawa, particularly Ms. Nolette, whom I thank for her welcome when I was in Alberta.

Mr. Heppelle, my first job was in Waskesiu. I have relatives in Saint-Brieux, which we call "St. Brew" more often than Saint-Brieux.

● (0935)

**Mr. Paul Heppelle:** Unfortunately, yes.

**Mr. Royal Galipeau:** My brother lives in Red Deer.

I was struck by a statement by Mr. Heppelle, who said earlier that there was a 20% wage gap between an anglophone and a francophone who both have the same qualifications and do the same work. Wow! Would that be a consequence of the reactions of the legislatures of the two provinces to the decision in the Mercure case in 1988? What is that? I don't think my brother earns less money than the guy next to him.

**Ms. Dolorèse Nolette:** That's not the case in Alberta.

**Mr. Paul Heppelle:** Sir, I was mainly talking about the employees in our network, such as the community director, the accountant, and so on. The problem is that we have to consider what we are asked to do. We're involved in rural development; we work with farmers, our youths, our schools, in immigration, in human resource development, and employability. We do all that with less than \$2 million. It's incredible.

My wife tells me I work 65% of the time, but I'm a volunteer. I'm the one who goes to Mauritius, South Africa and Rwanda. You may say that's nice, but I have to travel 22 hours by plane and then spend 4 days in meetings with government and school authorities there. These aren't pleasure trips, far from it.

So we manage to do what we manage to do, but imagine what we could do if we could offer our people who work in the network a good salary, social benefits, professional training and so on.

**Mr. Royal Galipeau:** I understand, Mr. Heppelle. Thank you.

I'd like to go back to the decision in the Mercure case because I naturally liked it. However, I would have preferred it if Mr. Justice La Forest had not given the legislatures the opting-out formula. The legislatures opted out with the benediction of Gil Rémillard, who went to tell them that was fine, that Quebeckers were in agreement.

What, in your opinion, was the consequence of those acts that enabled them to opt out of the decision in the Mercure case, in Alberta and in Saskatchewan? Did everything stay normal, like it was before, or were there cuts?

**Mr. Denis Perreux:** The effect was that the only bilingual statute in Alberta at this time is the Act abolishing French before the legislature. Consequently, in the absence of any other statute, that is becoming the basis of the Alberta government's language policy. That is why there is currently a francophone in Alberta disputing the basis of that act. He is challenging the clause that you referred to and that appears in the Mercure decision. In fact, he claims it was unconstitutional to overturn the language regime in Alberta. So it's a constitutional clarification that's before the Alberta Court of Appeal.

**Mr. Royal Galipeau:** What's going on in Saskatchewan?

**Mr. Paul Heppelle:** It's the same thing. We're nevertheless making progress on French-language services. There is a policy. We still have to see an actual and sustained implementation of the policy, but there has been progress. We are very far from having a range of services, even negotiable ones. We always tell the government we don't need all the acts. We need certain acts that concern the everyday lives of Fransaskois more specifically. We need targeted services. So we're not trying to make Saskatchewan bilingual tomorrow morning, not at all. We've always said it would be a step-by-step process, that it would be negotiable as far as possible, but with quite specific targets and expectations.

● (0940)

**Mr. Royal Galipeau:** The assimilation issue dates back a long time. I remember that, when I was at Waskesiu, I had visited all of Saskatchewan in 1965 and all of Alberta in 1966. I went to Saint-Albert. There was an anniversary, and Mayor Van Brabant gave me a book to mark the anniversary of Saint-Paul. Naturally the book had to be paid for. There were sponsors named in the book. They were typically local businesses. They showed the progress they had made by means of a photograph taken in 1905 and another one taken in 1965. You could see all the progress that had been made. Obviously, the building was bigger, but the signage had also changed. Although the family name was still the same, the description was in English. That was progress. I saw that in 1967. So I can imagine how it might be today.

However, there are two things: there are new francophones going to those provinces, and there are anglophones who are becoming francophiles.

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** Mr. Chairman, I have a point of order. I believe time is up.

[English]

**The Chair:** It's not a point of order. The rules indicate that I have the discretion to allocate time to members. You had eight minutes, and he's just gone over seven minutes right now.

Finish your point, Mr. Galipeau.

[Translation]

**Mr. Royal Galipeau:** Pardon me, Mr. Chairman. I lost my train of thought as a result of that point of order. However, I may have other opportunities to meet with these people, who I think are very nice.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Mr. Menegakis, go ahead, please.

[English]

**Mr. Costas Menegakis (Richmond Hill, CPC):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'd like to thank all of you for being here today.

Mr. Heppelle, in your opening remarks you said you had very little notice for being here. Well, let me tell you, your presentations were professional, informative, very thorough, and one wouldn't know you had short notice. So thank you very much for your presentations.

Certainly I learned a lot. I confess, I really haven't focused much on the French communities in Alberta and Saskatchewan, so I found your presentations very informative.

It really is very difficult to ask all the question I'd like to ask in the five minutes I'm allotted. I'm going to really focus my questions on the road map.

Madame Nolette, I heard very carefully your presentation as well, and your four recommendations at the end in particular. The first one on the list was the renewal of the road map.

This is a question for all of you. Could you elaborate a little bit on what you would like to see more in the road map—how the road map has helped you and where you'd like us to focus with the road map. It's a priority for our government, it's a priority for the ministry, and it's something we'd like to get your feedback on as we move forward.

**Ms. Dolorèse Nolette:** I believe the road map is vital for our communities, and for our French-speaking community in Alberta in particular. As I expressed in answer to the other questions, one of the basic ways we would like to see the road map move forward would be an inclusion of more ministries involved in the different *protocoles d'entente*.

Excuse me, we'll take it for granted that there is translation here.

**Mr. Costas Menegakis:** No, I understand. You can speak to me in French. I understand French.

**Ms. Dolorèse Nolette:** Oh, I can speak in French. Okay. I am Albertan, so when I'm spoken to in English, I feel I need to respond in English.

**Mr. Costas Menegakis:** No, you can speak to me in French.

[Translation]

**Ms. Dolorèse Nolette:** Very well. I'll continue in French. Thank you.

We would like to see an increase in the number of departments that are concerned by the Roadmap and whose obligations should be much clearer with regard to the delegation of authority to provincial governments. That aspect would be very important for us in the extension of the Roadmap.

Since I'm aware that time is marching on, I will give the floor to others who would like to speak.

• (0945)

**Mr. Denis Simard:** I'm going to answer in French as well.

It's absolutely clear to us too that adding other departments to the Roadmap would be a key factor.

Moreover, it goes without saying that we would like this agreement, this Roadmap, to be enhanced. That means more money invested by certain key departments. That would be vital for us. I am thinking more particularly of the Department of Canadian Heritage and of the collaboration agreements. They really promote the development of our communities.

Again in connection with the Roadmap, the way funding is allocated also has to be clearer. We need a clearer idea of what the process is.

For example, we can talk about the allocation of funding for the Roadmap. With regard to the economic sector, it took 18 months simply to determine how the reports were going to be made and what the funding priorities were. That hadn't been established in advance. So we wasted 18 months of investment because we weren't prepared. This absolutely must not be the case under the next Roadmap.

**Mr. Paul Heppelle:** We should also ensure that future agreements are multi-year agreements. It is really very difficult to work when funding is provided on an ad hoc basis or on a project basis. How do you motivate someone working in the immigration field when he doesn't know whether he'll have a job on April 1? It's very complicated. This is a deficient aspect.

Certain budgets should also be reviewed. The education transfers, under various bilateral agreements, clearly do not offer enough money to enable the francophone school divisions to carry out their mandates. It's not because they don't know how to manage their budgets. However, they are all taking a series of academic and community measures that are not necessarily recognized under the provincial funding agreements. The province asserts that it has no legal, moral or other obligation to fund that.

How can we let go dozens or hundreds of young children in Saskatchewan, or who settle in Saskatchewan, simply because there isn't any funding or the government doesn't recognize that on the funding forms?

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

Mr. Aubin, go ahead, please.

**Mr. Robert Aubin (Trois-Rivières, NDP):** Thank you.

Good morning to the four of you. Thank you for being here.

Thank you especially for the quality of your presentation, despite the short timeframe you were given. I await your brief with interest. You are making a major contribution to my education on the linguistic communities, since I was elected very recently.

The answers you've provided since this morning seem very relevant to me. However, they also raise some questions in my mind. Apart from this morning's meeting, a mid-term process is currently underway to assess the Roadmap for Canada's Linguistic Duality. Incidentally, the 15 departments involved are in the process of evaluating the performance of that Roadmap.

Were you consulted by one or more of those departments to gather your impressions or to evaluate the various programs? If so, how was that evaluation conducted? Was it by means of a questionnaire, a telephone interview or a report that you will have to prepare? Could you give me some information on that point?

**Mr. Denis Perreux:** I can tell you that one of the reasons why we were unable to submit the brief immediately is precisely that it is very difficult to make a connection between the investments under the Roadmap for Canada's Linguistic Duality and the ultimate results. It's difficult particularly because we aren't in the departments. The programs are often matched with other programs that are not part of the Roadmap for Canada's Linguistic Duality. Ultimately, when we consider the departments' proactive disclosure, it's very difficult to determine what money comes from what source.

Consequently, our approach is different. When we see that one of our organizations has received funding from a department under the Roadmap, we contact those people directly and ask them what results they've managed to achieve. So that's a somewhat more extensive survey.

As regards the departments as such, there was a dialogue, more than a consultation, with the Official Languages Secretariat in September. It was very general and concerned themes. None of the 15 departments consulted us about the evaluation as such.

• (0950)

**Mr. Denis Simard:** We agree. Officially, no, we were not asked to answer questionnaires or evaluations. Unofficially, people simply asked us whether things were going well or poorly.

I also agree with my colleague, who said it is often very difficult to know, when you look at the reports from the various departments, which amounts are attributed under the Roadmap, to whom they were attributed, how, and whether it was under a bilateral agreement.

Even at the provincial level, when these agreements are reached, we often wind up with budgets that are inflated by the provincial department, which says it has allocated money to the francophone community whereas it has gone elsewhere. Essentially, it has received the amounts from the federal government and handed them over to the provincial level. Ultimately, it has not evaluated the impact of those investments because it has ultimately signed a document to say it was simply relaying the money. However, it seems to have a very big budget for investment in our community, whereas these are fundamentally bilateral agreements.

**Mr. Robert Aubin:** All right, thank you.

I understand that we have a substantive problem regarding the evaluation since there should currently be a summative evaluation of the various departments. It should be completed in February and be followed by a horizontal summative evaluation of all the programs.

You aren't involved in this entire exercise. So, unless I'm mistaken, your only voice in the matter is the voice we've heard this morning during the time you've had with the committee.

I'm going to take this opportunity to ask you what departments not currently involved in the Roadmap you think should be involved in the next one. You emphasize that you were interested in seeing more departments take part in the next Roadmap.

**Ms. Dolorèse Nolette:** I'm going to respond by not responding.

Ultimately, the needs of Alberta francophones are the needs of Canadians.

**Mr. Robert Aubin:** So it's the entire government.

**Ms. Dolorèse Nolette:** Choosing one would be tantamount to saying that we are different, whereas we are ultimately Canadian citizens.

**Mr. Robert Aubin:** Thank you.

**Mr. Paul Heppelle:** You're really asking us to make a Sophie's choice. It's as though I were being asked to keep eight of my 10 fingers; perhaps I might keep my 2 thumbs.

The other problem is that we have to acknowledge who are the ones who know the terrain in Saskatchewan or Alberta. I'm saying that's us. The federal government may have an overall picture of Bellegarde, but we know exactly what goes on in Bellegarde.

It seems to me that, if we intend to judge the impact of some investment, no one is better prepared than we are to tell you where to work, how to do it, with whom and sometimes against whom.

That's not an easy answer.

**The Chair:** All right.

Thank you, Mr. Aubin.

Mr. Weston, go ahead, please.

**Mr. John Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country, CPC):** Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Thanks to our witnesses.

I'm from British Columbia. I know that we are together in the community of francophones, francophiles and those from the west who want to speak French. It's a growing community.

It strikes me that some people are afraid of having yardsticks or of knowing the results of the government's investments. However, you aren't afraid of that. You want yardsticks. You want those kinds of instruments to be in place. So can you tell me the two or three benefits of having a clearer idea of the impact of federal investments and of knowing, for example, how much money is really received from the federal government at the provincial level?

We have five minutes together.

**Mr. Denis Simard:** Perhaps I can take the liberty of providing an answer on that point.

One of the major things that is key to our communities is that we really consider ourselves as partners in government investments. So if we have the opportunity to be more informed about those investments, we can also be of greater service to that department and to the Government of Canada in serving the needs of our community.

Some citizens in the four corners of the province may not even be aware of the existence of funding because they don't know that an investment has been made under the Roadmap in relation to such and such a department. By being able to know those aspects, we can inform our community. We can ensure that it is equipped and that it makes specific requests in connection with those issues. We are part of a continuum.

We are important to the process because we are the spokespersons of our communities. We absolutely have to be kept informed of those decisions; we have to know who is making those investments and how they are being made.

• (0955)

**Mr. Denis Perreaux:** I'm going to address the question a little differently and tell you about the 2005 early childhood agreement. The investment was there and dialogue with the province was open. However, the province remained a partner even when there was no more investment. It is still funding early childhood today.

The advantage of being informed about agreements and investments under the Roadmap is that, somewhat as Denis said, we can ensure that the demand for service is maintained. If people don't know there are services in French, they get organized, but in our case, because we were informed, we worked together with the department to establish an action plan for early childhood in French. This represents a small amount for the department, but for us it's enormous. This is quite an effective investment. It isn't just a matter of money; sometimes it's a matter of exercising community, federal and provincial influence.

**Mr. John Weston:** Mr. Perreaux, one sentence states that, if it's valid, you have to be able to measure it.

**Mr. Denis Perreaux:** Yes.

**Mr. John Weston:** You said very clearly that it was hard to measure improvement, results. Do you have a few suggestions?

**Mr. Denis Perreaux:** That's interesting. I mentioned the dialogues, particularly with the Official Languages Secretariat and the FCFA, where they concerned improvements that we had seen in our communities since 2008. That's a question that's easier to answer. However, it wasn't as easy to determine exactly what portion came from the Roadmap funding. It's a bit like water in the sand. Once the water is in the sand, it's hard to recover it. We've probably tripled the number of service points since 2008. That's just one example.

**Mr. John Weston:** Are there any other examples that illustrate the way we can measure progress?

**Mr. Denis Simard:** One of the key factors, when talking about measuring progress, is having the time to do it. When people ask us to measure the impact of an investment over a period of three months, for example, it's difficult. As for results, the investments are often made over the longer term. So how do you do it? Essentially, you have to go and see the people receiving the service, check whether citizens appreciate the service when they receive it, see whether the service was adequate and whether it met

their needs. We have to ask ourselves whether, as partners in this investment, we informed the people well, played our role well. Did this funding meet citizens' needs? These are all fundamental questions.

**Mr. John Weston:** That's really a businessman's answer.

**Ms. Dolorèse Nolette:** I'll give you the viewpoint of a person who has worked in the education field for more than 30 years.

Based on my experience, an evaluation is valid when the criteria are cited in advance and all stakeholders understand them clearly and know what will be measured, the performance or learning. If I had to advance an argument on how to evaluate, I would say that there at least has to be a common understanding of evaluations.

**Mr. John Weston:** That's good.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Ms. Michaud, go ahead, please.

**Ms. Éloïse Michaud (Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier, NDP):** You talked a lot about the fact that increasing numbers of francophone immigrants are settling in your communities. My colleague Mr. Bélanger also mentioned a study conducted during the last Parliament on the recruitment, intake and integration of immigrants in official-language minority communities. That report has not yet been discussed or even presented to the government.

Could you tell us about the importance of that report and about your recommendations for its handling by the committee and Parliament?

• (1000)

**Mr. Denis Simard:** It's hard to comment since we don't know the content of the report or even the analysis that was conducted.

**Ms. Éloïse Michaud:** What importance would you attach to a report dealing with a subject of this kind?

**Mr. Denis Simard:** Obviously, any analysis of immigration would be interesting. Even the census data, which should be available by December, will help us reach certain findings, such as that the francophone population of western Canada has grown. At least that's what I see. In my opinion, it's data of this kind that will help us. Immigration and migration are key factors in the vitality of our communities.

**Ms. Éloïse Michaud:** Thank you.

Ms. Nolette and Mr. Perreaux, do you have any comments?

**Ms. Dolorèse Nolette:** On how to use a report?

**Ms. Éloïse Michaud:** Yes.

**Ms. Dolorèse Nolette:** I agree with Mr. Simard. We have to have the time to assimilate what a report states to ensure that it paints a true and current picture of our community.

**Ms. Éline Michaud:** However, to sum up your remarks, if the Standing Committee on Official Languages were in possession of such a report, it would be important for you to get a copy, to discuss it in Parliament and to get the government's comments.

**Ms. Dolorèse Nolette:** That's correct.

**Ms. Éline Michaud:** Thank you.

[*English*]

**The Chair:** We have a point of order from Monsieur Godin.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** I have a point of order, or rather a point of information following the last questions asked. The report was tabled in Parliament; it is public; it does exist. It's the government's response that we have not yet received.

I simply wanted to inform you of the fact.

**The Chair:** It's not a point of order, but rather a point of information. Thank you.

Ms. Michaud, go ahead, please.

**Ms. Éline Michaud:** I apologize for the confusion. I did not want to mislead the committee or the witnesses here. However, even though the report is available, I can nevertheless conceive that it is important to comment on it and for you to be able to discuss it with us.

You talked about the effect of the initiatives presented in the Roadmap. I believe that some consultations, although not many, were conducted with you.

How would you like to be involved in the development of the Roadmap, both in the evaluation and in the development of indicators? What do you think would be the ideal way for your communities to take part?

**Mr. Denis Perreux:** Fifteen departments are included in the Roadmap, and, for each of them probably three or four of our organizations benefit from funding. In fact, it may not be each of the 15 departments as there are specific programs.

I admit, however, that consultation can also be a burden on us. We have to be honest. Every department submits questionnaires to us and wants us to bring everyone together to talk about one of the 32 programs, then the thirty-first, then the thirtieth, and so on.

When the next Roadmap is developed, it will be very interesting to consider the Leaders Forum of the Fédération des communautés francophones et acadienne du Canada. That forum reflects what the Roadmap is doing on the community side. It brings together all the sectors of the francophone and Acadian communities, the municipal governments, the representatives of health, post-secondary and college-level education and us, a representative organization in health and justice. We are all there.

We have an action plan. It's a community strategic plan for the entire country. We can draw considerably on that work done by the francophone and Acadian communities.

We're using all our joint action systems to provide information on the Roadmap for Canada's Linguistic Duality. I think that would be an effective approach.

**The Chair:** That's good.

Be brief, Mr. Simard.

**Mr. Denis Simard:** I support what Mr. Perreux just said 100%.

However, I would also add that each of our communities has been making overall development plans for a very long time. Our CEO is appointed for a period of 10 years. Your local CEO, I believe, has been in his position for a period of five years. All the communities had an obligation to consider where they wanted to go and where they wanted to be directed. We have established plans accordingly. It would be very interesting for the departments to acquire those plans, read them and see how the priorities of those communities can be addressed.

These are plans that were adopted in the community. The entire community is in favour of the plans and must meet those obligations.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Thank you, Ms. Michaud.

Mr. Trottier, go ahead, please.

**Mr. Bernard Trottier (Etobicoke—Lakeshore, CPC):** Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Thank you to our guests today.

I don't know whether you know, but I'm a Franco-Albertan, a francophone by birth. Now I'm a member from Toronto. I appreciate the comments by my colleague Mr. Galipeau, who referred to Mayor Van Brabant. I knew him very well.

Ms. Nolette, you talked about francophones by birth and francophones by choice. One of the challenges for the francophone communities in Alberta, Saskatchewan and elsewhere in the country is to know how mother-tongue francophones can remain francophones by choice. I'm pleased to see the Gallic spirit is still alive on the Canadian Prairies, but I believe the magic potion for a francophone by birth to remain a francophone by choice consists of arts, culture and heritage.

Having health and education services managed by the provinces, for the most part, is a good thing. However, for someone to have the pride and courage to remain francophone and to speak French at home, in the community and in business, the community has to intervene, supported—at times, but not always—by the government, to ensure that arts, culture and history remain implanted in those communities.

Moreover, these are areas where the federal government can play more of a direct role and where it has less of a need to go through the provinces and municipalities.

Could you talk about the measures the federal government can adopt in this regard?

● (1005)

**Ms. Dolorèse Nolette:** Go ahead.

**Mr. Denis Perreux:** I very much appreciate your comment because the arts and culture sector back home is one of the most important sectors, considering the number of stakeholders and participants. It's an excellent means of mobilization, artistic creation and expression.

The vitality of our artistic community is such that we always need investment. That's not surprising.

You also talked about heritage and history. In Alberta, that area isn't funded. The province doesn't fund it. At the federal level, our Canada-communities agreement does not include funding for the heritage and history sector.

Identity is one of the areas where there is an excellent return on invested capital. It's an area where investment could be enhanced, at least for our province.

**Mr. Bernard Trottier:** What about Saskatchewan?

**Mr. Paul Heppelle:** I believe we have somewhat the same challenges. For example, as regards the media, there is talk about possible cuts at Radio-Canada. What kind of television and radio media will we have?

The small weeklies are very vulnerable. And yet, when we talk to the management of *L'Eau Vive*, we're told that federal government investments, even in advertising, have fallen by 40% or 50%. We aren't even receiving an advertising share comparable to that of *The Star Phoenix* or *The Prince Albert Daily Herald*, or whatever.

We also have a heritage and artists. A number of our people make headlines everywhere. I agree with Denis: it's vital, it's full of energy and a lot of things are being done, but it's often done with whatever resources are available.

That's why we work in the area of federal and provincial government services in French. The community remains vital to the extent that we can live in French from day to day.

It should be noted that there were approximately 55,000 French speakers in 1955. Today there are 47,000, 48,000 or 49,000, but, at the time, they were Catholic French Canadians. Today, people like me are in the minority. Now they're anglophones who speak French. These are immigrants, people from everywhere who migrate to our province by choice, or who learn a second language.

I believe that the arts, culture, heritage and education are important. For example, back home, the school program refers extensively to identity, language and culture objectives that form an integral part of what young people learn, a certain pride in who they are.

• (1010)

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Mr. Harris, go ahead, please.

**Mr. Dan Harris (Scarborough Southwest, NDP):** Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Thanks to all our witnesses for being here.

I would like to mention one thing I found very interesting. Last year, I worked in Fort McMurray, Alberta. I'm a Franco-Ontarian from Toronto and I spoke French in Fort McMurray more often than

in Toronto. It was very interesting. There were mostly Acadians and Quebecers, but there were also francophones who came from Manitoba and Saskatchewan because of the jobs.

You emphasized the importance of renewing the Roadmap for Canada's Linguistic Duality. It would be important to continue the work on official languages in this regard. However, there will be a mid-term report.

How important is it for you to have access to that report once it is made public and there is a consultation, since it will be very important for officials, the government and the opposition in drafting the next Roadmap? What do you think of that?

**Ms. Dolorèse Nolette:** It's very important for us to see the mid-term report. That will enable us to gain a greater understanding of the investments and performance indicators. It's very important for us to have access to it.

Furthermore, is it desirable for the new Roadmap to be only the continuation of what there is now? Personally, I'm not convinced of that. Perhaps certain ways of doing things should be reviewed. We're always looking for the most efficient ways to achieve results. We would like to take part in the thinking effort for the next Roadmap.

**Mr. Denis Simard:** I agree with Ms. Nolette. That absolutely has to be done, but like any good business or someone who does a job, you have to check with the customer to see if he's satisfied. That report would be made public and could be used by the francophone and Acadian communities. It could be read and analyzed so that we could then determine whether the report's findings are accurate, whether they coincide with the actual situation of our communities. These are absolutely essential factors that would enable us to see to the renewal of a new Roadmap. Without any involvement by those clients, by those people in the field, I find it hard to see how the government could obtain a real analysis of the situation.

**Mr. Dan Harris:** Thank you.

We definitely want to improve the next Roadmap. You said that people in Saskatchewan were concerned about cuts. That's exactly what the Commissioner of Official Languages said. In his view, when the government considers making cuts, no one oversees what happens to official languages. If a program is abolished, that may not be very serious, but if cuts are made everywhere and no one considers the cumulative effect of those cuts, that can definitely hurt the Standing Committee on Official Languages.

We already see that you're doing a lot with little. Are there any concerns you would like to tell us about in that regard?

**Mr. Denis Perreux:** I think you've summed up the situation well. As Ms. Nolette said earlier, we aren't Canadian Heritage communities, but rather citizens in every respect. We therefore touch on all the sectors, all the fields. In many cases, we replace the organizations that don't provide services in French back home. We use every means at our disposal to do so. An organization that handles justice issues deals with a number of things, in addition to the access to justice program. Cuts at a department can have a cumulative impact, as you said. We are funded by Canadian Heritage, Citizenship and Immigration Canada and the province. If all those who fund an organization implement cuts, it goes without saying there will be a cumulative effect.

•(1015)

**The Chair:** All right. Thank you.

Mr. Simard, do you want to add something? I would ask you to be brief.

**Mr. Denis Simard:** I entirely agree that there may be a cumulative effect.

We are also very concerned about the idea that these cuts may be used as a pretext to slash French-language services and that the excuse given may be that that is in response to directives. Of course, it's easier to do in our communities, where they say there are fewer clients. We're afraid that, as a result of those cuts, these people will ultimately no longer meet their French-language service obligations. That's a major concern for us.

**The Chair:** All right. Thank you.

As there will be a vote in 30 minutes, we are going to adjourn the meeting, but I would briefly like to say four things just before that.

First, Mr. Bélanger, I will grant you 15 minutes at the next meeting, if you wish, to address your motion.

**Hon. Mauril Bélanger:** Will I have the right to speak first?

[English]

**The Chair:** We can do that, if you wish.

[Translation]

**Hon. Mauril Bélanger:** I ask to be the first to speak at the next meeting when we reach that point.

[English]

**The Chair:** Okay. If we do—

[Translation]

**Hon. Mauril Bélanger:** I want to speak before Mr. Gourde.

[English]

**The Chair:** Okay.

I understand that, and I'm prepared to do that because you've given me notice. However, if I do that, I'm going to move the witnesses that we had hoped to have that day to the Thursday. I don't want to have a situation where we have witnesses who've flown in from across Canada, they arrive here, and then they're not able to speak because the discussion and debate on the motion is taking far longer than—

[Translation]

**Hon. Mauril Bélanger:** That won't be today, will it?

[English]

**The Chair:** No. What I'm saying is that right now we had planned to have witnesses on Tuesday, November 15, to appear in front of our committee. I don't want to have a situation where, if we put your motion first on the orders of the day and we end up having a two-hour debate on it, these witnesses are here and are just wasting their time.

I will do that, but I will then try to move those witnesses to Thursday. Okay?

**Hon. Mauril Bélanger:** Let's talk first.

**The Chair:** Okay, we'll talk about it then.

The second thing I want to tell you is that

[Translation]

Mr. Godin suggested that we prepare a witness list. I will distribute the complete witness list that you have suggested. We've already invited more than 30 groups. We're now awaiting their responses to confirm the meetings that will be held before the Christmas break.

For the moment, the plan is that, on Tuesday, November 15, we will hear from three groups: the Consortium national de formation en santé, Société Santé en français and the Fédération des francophones de la Colombie-Britannique.

[English]

So that's what we currently have booked.

Go ahead.

[Translation]

**Hon. Mauril Bélanger:** Mr. Chairman, perhaps it might be a good idea to meet with representatives of the departments. Mr. Gourde initially suggested that when we were considering starting this study. It would be important for us to meet with representatives of the departments. We hear things, but we have no idea what's being done in the various departments.

**The Chair:** We'll invite representatives from the departments.

**Hon. Mauril Bélanger:** We would do well to do it before bringing in all the other groups.

**The Chair:** Are you talking about officials from the Department of Canadian Heritage?

**Hon. Mauril Bélanger:** I'm talking about representatives of the departments who have a role in the Roadmap.

**The Chair:** All right, yes.

**Hon. Mauril Bélanger:** I'm talking about those who deal with immigration, early childhood, justice, health—

[English]

**The Chair:** We're getting through the list. I'll have the list distributed to all members. We've invited more than 30 groups, and we're waiting for confirmation from them. The reason why we haven't issued the notice of meeting for Tuesday, November 15, is that we have confirmation that the three groups are able to appear; they just haven't confirmed to us who exactly from their association is appearing. So before I issue the orders of the day, I want to make sure we've got the names properly confirmed. That's the second thing I wanted to tell you.

If you tell me you want to move your motion to the beginning of Tuesday's meeting, I won't invite those witnesses to Tuesday's meeting. I'll—

**Hon. Mauril Bélanger:** That's not what I said.

**The Chair:** I'm telling you, Mr. Bélanger, that if you tell me you're going to move your motion at the beginning of Tuesday's meeting, I'm going to cancel their appearance—



•(1020)

**Hon. Mauril Bélanger:** That's not what I said, Mr. Chairman. I said when you get to the item I'd like to be the first to speak, so I can introduce the bloody motion before Monsieur Gourde calls to go in camera.

**The Chair:** Okay. I will commit to you then to dedicate the last 15 minutes of Tuesday's meeting for your motion. I will allow you to speak first.

**Hon. Mauril Bélanger:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** Thirdly, the other thing I want to indicate to you is that

[*Translation*]

today, there will be a meeting with Sri Lanka's minister of national languages and social integration, Vasudeva Nanayakkara, in the Centre Block, from 3:30 to 5:00 p.m., if you are interested in attending.

[*English*]

The other thing I wanted to inform the committee of is that, as requested, we contacted

[*Translation*]

representatives of Canadian Heritage to get answers to your questions

[*English*]

and they told us exactly this.

Following the appearance of PCH's Officials at the October 18 meeting, a number of follow-up questions were identified. The Department is currently working to gather the information and will provide the documents to the Committee as soon as possible.

Those are all the points of information we've been provided.

Thank you to our witnesses for appearing, for coming across the country. We very much value your testimony, and I want to thank you very much.

[*Translation*]

Thank you, everyone.

[*English*]

This meeting is adjourned.

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