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## **Standing Committee on Official Languages**

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**EVIDENCE**

**Thursday, November 17, 2011**

—  
**Chair**

**The Honourable Michael Chong**



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Thursday, November 17, 2011

• (0850)

[Translation]

**The Vice-Chair (Hon. Mauril Bélanger (Ottawa—Vanier, Lib.)):** With your permission, colleagues, with your consent, I will chair the meeting. The witnesses are all present, and I would not want to make them wait unduly. As soon as Mr. Chong or Mr. Godin arrives, I will hand over to them.

Welcome to the 13th meeting of the Standing Committee on Official Languages on this day, November 17, 2011. Some time ago, we began the evaluation of the Roadmap to improve programs and service delivery.

You know the procedure. We allow each witness 10 minutes, and then we proceed with a series of questions and answers, alternating in a pre-established order.

Messrs. Vaillancourt, LeVasseur, Couture and Groulx, I don't know which of you wants to begin. Welcome to you on behalf of the committee.

**Mr. Alexis Couture (President, Fédération de la jeunesse canadienne-française):** Mr. Chairman, committee members, first I want to thank you for inviting us to appear before you this morning. I'm particularly pleased to be here because I should normally be attending my introductory law class at the University of Moncton. So I have an excellent excuse to miss a three-hour session. I'm happy about that.

I am president of the Fédération de la jeunesse canadienne-française and, of course, I am young. When our organization was established in 1974, young people had one clear wish, to establish an organization by and for young people. That's what we have been for all those years.

My colleagues on the board of directors are young francophones 14 to 25 years of age from across the country, like the youth they represent.

Our organization defines young French Canadians as persons between the ages of 14 and 25 whose spoken language is French, regardless whether it is their mother tongue. This open approach is very important in our minds, particularly since the 2006 census confirms that this clientele represents more than 1.6 million young Canadians.

What does "by and for young people" mean? For our organization, it means operating under a system of governance consisting entirely of young people in cooperation with a network that shares that same philosophy in order to equip youth in accordance with their actual

needs. The added value of this operating method is that we are a reflection of young people.

Although this concept is ideal for our organization, it obviously isn't achievable in all aspects of society, and we are aware of that fact. However, we strongly encourage the concept of "by and for young people" in developing initiatives that target them in order to ensure their success.

With that mind, the FJCF and its members have taken care to develop genuine, productive partnerships with a broad range of partners, both governmental—

**The Vice-Chair (Hon. Mauril Bélanger):** Mr. Couture, could you slow down a little? That would help with the simultaneous interpretation.

**Mr. Alexis Couture:** Of course. That isn't the first time someone's made that comment to me.

With that in mind, the FJCF and its members have taken care to develop genuine, productive partnerships with a broad range of—

**The Vice-Chair (Hon. Mauril Bélanger):** Pardon me for interrupting you again.

Yes, Mr. Galipeau?

**Mr. Royal Galipeau (Ottawa—Orléans, CPC):** I wonder whether the interpreters have a copy of the text.

**Mr. Alexis Couture:** Yes, they have copies of it.

**Mr. Royal Galipeau:** Thank you.

**Mr. Alexis Couture:** So we have genuine, productive partnerships with a range of government and community partners. Those partnerships help provide the youth perspective to those working in their interest.

Our federation represents the interests of young francophones across Canada and tries to enable them to achieve their full potential. To do so, it coordinates innovative activities and initiatives in cooperation with its member associations in nine provinces and two territories to enable youth to enjoy experiences in French outside the classroom.

Year after year, an average of 20,000 young people benefit directly from the initiatives of our pan-Canadian network. For a number of years now, our organization has emphasized the need to make youth a priority in Canada's efforts to promote the development of the official language minority communities. And that message has been conveyed to the federal government on a number of occasions and was reiterated in the context of the consultations were organized before the Roadmap was developed.

The FJCF is extremely enthusiastic about seeing that one of the five areas for action under the Roadmap for Canada's Linguistic Duality is building the future by investing in youth. For the FJCF, linguistic duality is of major importance for the vitality of the minority francophone communities because it is by making all Canadians aware of the fact that our country's two official languages are an asset that the French language will be more appreciated and valued by everyone.

This valuing of linguistic duality is one of the ways of stopping the assimilation and decline in the French-speaking population. So it's encouraging to see that the government understands the importance of linguistic duality, knowing that the objective is not to achieve a bilingual Canadian population, but rather to ensure respect for both official language cultures in Canada.

The youth network in Canada is pleased to see that many plans for the country's youth have been implemented with Roadmap funding. Significant amounts of money have been allocated at various levels for youth, including internship awards, employment internships for translation students, summer language bursaries and, in particular, the Youth Initiatives Fund.

However, the amounts allocated for youth initiatives have definitely not been invested in optimal fashion: first, because half of the budget set aside for the initiatives was invested in infrastructure; and second, because the youth initiatives amounts were to be spent in a single fiscal year.

It is obviously much too soon to evaluate and determine the considerable impact of these initiatives on the vitality of the minority language communities and on linguistic duality, since this type of effect is obviously not immediate. However, we know that premature initiatives that must be taken quickly and produce immediate results are not initiatives that will have permanent, strategic impact in our society.

That is why longer-term investments would have been preferable to ad hoc investment, over a single year, and why youth initiatives with demonstrated strategic impact should have been preferred.

We are nevertheless pleased to see a number of actual results that have come out of certain initiatives that we are very familiar with. Those initiatives have distinct objectives, but all have one thing in common, to which we referred earlier: each one has afforded young Canadians an experience of living in French. Those experiences are extremely important for young francophones as this is one of the main ways of forging a feeling of belonging to one's community and one's country.

Young Canadians today are living in a modern society, in a world of globalization, in which the main sources of entertainment, education and information are in English. What then is the purpose of these experiences of living in French if young people subsequently go back to their everyday lives in English? These experiences are crucially important. Among other things, they help build the identity of young francophones and reinforce their ability to achieve a praiseworthy objective through full participation as citizens.

Imagine the effect of a Roadmap if all collective efforts were concerted efforts directed toward the ultimate goal of offering young

Canadians French-language living environments. That would mean that all young Canadians would have access to enriching ad hoc initiatives and to a living environment that would enable them to learn, work, be entertained and grow in their language.

Now imagine the effect of a Roadmap that builds the future with youth, by investing in youth.

We hope that the purpose of the effort you are currently making will be to improve the next Roadmap for Canada's Linguistic Duality by considering the comments of the community sector, which is constantly striving to ensure the continued existence of minority francophones across the country. One of our main recommendations concerning this Roadmap is that the government clarify its vision for young francophones.

With youth, the government must more clearly establish the role of this important segment of the population with a view to promoting the development of the official language minority communities and linguistic duality.

The FJCF recommends that the government invest in current community stakeholders to enable them to do a better job of working with youth.

● (0855)

We would also like a mechanism to be developed to introduce a form of funding management for and by youth, in partnership with the government. That would ensure that funding is allocated in accordance with young people's priorities for linguistic duality.

Lastly, the government must show greater recognition of young people's contributions to Canadian society by developing and implementing strategic programs to promote their engagement. We also ask that initiatives for young francophones outside the schools be developed further considering the enormous impact they have.

Lastly, it is necessary to invest in postsecondary education in French, in terms of both accessibility and quality.

Thank you.

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

Now we'll hear from the representatives of the Assemblée de la francophonie de l'Ontario.

**Mr. Denis Vaillancourt (President, Assemblée de la francophonie de l'Ontario):** Mr. Chairman, committee members, it's a pleasure for us to be here before you this morning.

We have submitted a brief, but I'm going to paraphrase it because I would look like a parliamentarian if I read it all.

First of all, I am here with one of the vice-presidents of the Assemblée de la francophonie, Gilles LeVasseur, who will be here to support me in answering your questions.

I'd like to start my remarks this morning with a quotation that motivates and inspires me:

Our federation was born of a desire by English- and French-speaking Canadians to share a common future, and it was built on respect for the language and culture of all Canadians. Linguistic duality is a cornerstone of our national identity, and it is a source of immeasurable economic, social, and political benefits for all Canadians.

I'll come back to this quotation at the end of my remarks.

This morning I want to talk to you about five topics. First, I'll talk about who we are, what the *Assemblée de la francophonie* is; I'll also paint a brief picture of our Franco-Ontarian community; I'll discuss linguistic duality in Ontario; I'll briefly review the investments made in Ontario under the Roadmap for Canada's Linguistic Duality, the successful ones; and I'll perhaps make some suggestions and discuss some future courses of action.

The *Assemblée de la francophonie* is the result of a long 100-year history that started in 1910, when the Franco-Ontarians were defending their rights. It was originally called the ACFEO, which has since become the *Assemblée de la francophonie*. We represent people from the institutional association sector of our community and even from the business world. We have a board of directors of 24 members who come from 14 sectors and from the community.

You have to understand that the Franco-Ontarian community is the largest francophone community in our country outside Quebec. That's why we say that linguistic duality has to succeed in Ontario in order to contribute to the rest of the country.

In recent years, our community has grown in part thanks to francophone immigration. I'll talk about that a little later. We have 50,000 francophone immigrants. For the principle of linguistic duality to continue, both the anglophone and francophone components must be strong and dynamic. In Ontario, approximately 90% of our francophone community is bilingual, whereas 8% of the anglophone community is bilingual and 6% among allophones.

French-speaking Ontario is dealing with an Anglicization phenomenon. The purpose of all our action must be to reverse this trend and to enhance the vitality of our community. We have to work within families—especially in families where parents prefer to use English rather than French—to promote the language and ensure it develops. This trend is reflected in our French-language schools. With the schools, we have to provide support in order to offset it. It will be important in the next few years to ensure the linguistic and cultural vitality of our francophone community. That moreover is what we have incorporated in a strategic community plan that we developed with the greater community. We consulted virtually all the villages and towns in Ontario in order to be able to develop our potential and to determine major areas for action.

As you will see in the brief, we want to make our contribution and to work with the community as full-fledged francophone citizens of Ontario and citizens of Canada. We have developed a vision in order to do that. In the document—and I'll repeat them briefly—you'll find our five major areas for action on which our community has reached a consensus. Obviously, if we go back to the cornerstone of our Canadian identity, we want to make sure that the French language and culture of the Franco-Ontarian community are passed on to future generations. That is our first purpose. To do that, we have to expand the francophone community in all regions of Ontario. We have to raise the profile and promote the use of French across

Ontario and Canada with the Roadmap for Canada's Linguistic Duality. That is what we hope.

We also want to contribute to the development of the Franco-Ontarian community and to the greater well-being of both Ontario and Canadian society. As I always tell the people I speak to, when we demand rights and services in French, the idea is not to take them away from the majority, but to be able to contribute fully to the development of our province and that of our country. We want to do that as full-fledged citizens.

● (0900)

To do that, we want to be accountable. Our areas for action reflect that desire. The federal government and our governments have a role to play in preserving linguistic duality, but citizens have a role as well. Under our provincial action plan, the community's strategic plan, we want to have the means, as the Franco-Ontarian community, to act and operate in all areas of the development of our community and province.

Now let's move on to what we consider are the successes of the current Roadmap, in the five areas it proposes.

For French-speaking Ontario, the health investments have clearly been positive. The Consortium national de formation en santé, for example, makes it possible to train health workers in French and to expand the network. Through the *Société Santé en français*, health service networks have been established in Ontario, which has enabled francophones to participate fully in planning services. We don't want to deny that. We'll be coming back to the health issue, and we can tell you that it's an issue that should be monitored. When the francophone space is expanded, we have to continue investing.

In the area of justice, we have noted there have been significant gains through certain initiatives. My colleague can talk about that at greater length, since that's his field. The fact nevertheless remains that there have been developments in French-language justice services. However, the access issue is still a problem in our province, and that may also be the case elsewhere. These initiatives must continue.

Economic development was one of the areas for action under the Roadmap. In Ontario, we note the contributions by the RDEE, which has had access to the Enabling Fund for Official Language Minority Communities of the Department of Human Resources and Skills Development. That funding permits sustainable economic development and the full-fledged participation of our fellow francophone citizens.

In arts and culture, we were obviously very happy to see that area included in the 2008 Roadmap. In fact, this sector promotes the language to a greater degree, develops francophone artists and ensures that the community feels it is developing fully. Consequently, we believe it is important to enhance these programs under the current and future Roadmap.

Immigration definitely influences the growth of our population, as it does elsewhere in Canada. For the growth and vitality of the francophone community, immigration and the intake of francophone immigrants are important. We've noted some good initiatives, but the fact remains that we don't have enough resources to show francophone immigrants that there is room for them in our province or in our country.

As my colleague from the youth sector said, the investments in priority youth issues were well received in Ontario. The post-secondary network in our province is developing an energetic and dynamic generation of young people who, in every respect, are contributing to the growth of our Ontario community and the Canadian community as well. Moreover, young people are so successful that we have trouble keeping them in Ontario. Their contributions are reaching national and international levels. Some of our young Franco-Ontarians are operating at the national and international levels in a number of places, and in all sectors, labour, professional sectors such as health and others.

I will close by giving you our view on the federal government's role in linguistic duality.

● (0905)

It is clear to us that the federal government has an essential role to play in maintaining linguistic duality and, in the case of Canada, in maintaining the minority language. If we do nothing and are not proactive, the trend will not be in our favour. If we believe that linguistic duality is a cornerstone of our national identity, we must invest in it, failing which we will risk losing that rich heritage. The Assemblée de la francophonie de l'Ontario has celebrated its 100th anniversary, and we hope to celebrate the 200th, 300th and 400th anniversary of the francophone community in Ontario and Canada.

We would like the federal government to continue its proactive commitment to linguistic duality. We believe the next Roadmap should also include the priority sectors. Some investments should be increased because the francophone community has to network. Further support must be provided to the official language minority communities.

Multi-year planning and funding would be a great help for investment. A number of projects are currently annual. A lot of time is spent preparing applications and answering questions. If projects were spread over a number of years, more time would be spent producing more tangible results.

We also believe the Roadmap should be better known to the public, which should be more informed about funding sources. Sometimes it's very difficult to find information on the various initiatives of the departments and other organizations.

I want to close by saying two things. First, we are pleased to have spent some time with you. We repeat that we want to see Ontario's francophone community become a full-fledged partner and to collaborate on the vast plan for a Canadian society that draws on a rich heritage based on its official languages and its culture. The opening quotation that inspires us and which we fully support comes from our Prime Minister and appears at the start of the Roadmap.

Thank you.

● (0910)

**The Chair:** Thank you for your presentations, Mr. Vaillancourt and Mr. Couture.

Thanks to Mr. Bélanger for acting as chair.

We have an hour and a half to devote to questions and comments. Let's begin with Mr. Aubin.

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

I'd like to start with a side comment. I want to thank the clerk, who has sent us the Canadian Heritage evaluation documents that were available. We're nevertheless somewhat concerned to see that the document is incomplete as we are in the middle of the evaluation process. That's strange to say the least. Thank you nevertheless for the information we already have.

I would like to thank our guests for the quality and relevance of their presentations, which really contribute to our thinking and evaluation. Thank you for being here. I would also like to tip my hat to the new president of the AFO and to offer him my best wishes for success, even though he is not actually here this morning.

For my first round, I would like to put my questions to the people from the Fédération de la jeunesse canadienne-française.

I was particularly struck by one sentence in your presentation. You said you would like to see the full participation of young people as citizens. That is something we're particularly in favour of. We not only enable some people to miss a three-hour class, but we have also enabled some of these young people to leave university for four years. So stay involved; the future really is now.

My real question focuses more on this striving for full participation in civic life. Do you believe that a full financial contribution is provided for that purpose in the Roadmap? In fact, I noted in the details of the Roadmap that youth initiatives were included in the Canadian Heritage budget. That's as if youth were put in a separate class and it was considered that the program would be target for all your applications. However, that program, if I correctly examined it, makes \$12.5 million available to Canada as a whole, 50% of which is reserved for infrastructure, which leaves very little money to develop your projects and ideas.

We also note that annual projects that do not receive recurring funding should be innovative. I would like to hear your comments on that point. It seems to me that staff is a special aspect of your group—you'll tell me whether I'm right or wrong. There must be greater turnover because as soon as young people finish their studies and are able to get a job, they leave the association for positions of responsibility and leave their positions for someone else.

Are you getting what you want under this Roadmap, and does the financial breakdown enable you to achieve your objectives?

**Mr. Alexis Couture:** Thank you for your question.

I'll provide an initial response and then hand over to Sylvain Groulx, our director general, so he can supplement it with more technical details.

First, young people spend about five or six years in the youth network, since most of them get involved around the age of 14. Then we start to see them drop out. Youths get involved in various ways, at the postsecondary level, in their workplace and in their community. So every four years, and even at every event, we see quite a significant turnover of young people.

The objective of each of the initiatives of the federation and its members is to have a considerable influence over young people to encourage them subsequently to get involved in their community. The best example of success is when a young person leaves the federation and joins the ranks of an adult organization such as the AFO or an organization in a particular sector.

Multi-year projects enable us to do that better. They enable us to extend the development of a project and to involve young people over the longer term. The need for innovation is felt to a lesser degree. If the initiative is good, concrete and yields good results, it will still be appropriate in four years. It will have to be updated based on new technologies and so on. It will still be relevant in four years because young people will be experiencing it for the first time. So that need is a bit different.

As for funding, I'm going to let Mr. Groulx answer.

● (0915)

**Mr. Sylvain Groulx (Director General, Fédération de la jeunesse canadienne-française):** In response to your question, I would say that an amount of \$12.5 million was indeed allocated to the Youth Initiatives Fund under the Roadmap. However, allow me to make one comment. The youth theme appears in various places in the Roadmap. There is the Youth Initiatives Fund under Canadian Heritage, but youth in general has enjoyed a number of initiatives. If you focus particularly on youth initiatives, it is true that half of that money has been invested in infrastructure. That has made it possible to establish a community school centre and other facilities. So young people have benefited from that.

The major challenge we're facing is as follows: of the remaining \$6 million, \$4 million has been allocated to this minority youth component. Not only were these one-year projects, but all the money also had to be spent in one fiscal year, whereas the Roadmap is spread over a period of five years. That's when the issue of ongoing resources and the success of those sustainable projects became a challenge for us.

As regards to the need to innovate, as Mr. Couture mentioned, a project in the youth network can run for a number of years without being changed. I'm thinking of the youth parliaments that have been around for about 30 years now and for which 75% to 80% of the clientele is renewed every year. So the activities are innovative for youth organizations essentially as a result of the changing clientele. As Mr. Couture said, by working with young people, we have no choice but to be on top of what's being done today. We have to be innovative and do different things, whereas the project itself can remain the same. That's a situation that has been experienced across Canada.

**Mr. Robert Aubin:** Have you been consulted in the mid-term evaluation of the Roadmap currently underway? Have you been asked to suggest new criteria for evaluating the various projects that take that situation into account?

**Mr. Sylvain Groulx:** We took part in a consultation that was conducted by the Official Languages Secretariat in September. We were able to share our opinion on the positive points that we had noted. Our involvement was limited to that. We did not take part in a process to propose evaluation methods or anything else. But we are pleased to have the opportunity to be here today to determine methods and mechanisms that could be introduced.

**Mr. Robert Aubin:** The door is open, so go ahead: what would your main suggestions be?

How much time do I have left, Mr. Chairman?

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

**Mr. Sylvain Groulx:** In fact, Mr. Couture mentioned one. Essentially, we need a way or mechanism for ensuring, in partnership with the government, that youth has its place. I wouldn't go so far as to say it has to play a role in decision-making, but it should at least take part in developing the types of programs that could be funded. In the same way as is done in the health field, we should see whether organizations can play a role in decision-making regarding the types of projects funded.

So there are various ways of doing this, in particular working in collaboration with youth. The idea is to ensure youth are given the room to express themselves in a process in which they are directly involved.

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

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

Mr. Gourde, go ahead, please.

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

Thanks to the witnesses for being here this morning.

First of all, I would like to speak to you, Mr. Couture. I would like to congratulate you for the leadership you have shown in your federation. You can also pass that message on to all members from me. You are really having an interesting time at the federation. That reminds me of my youth as well. I liked to attend board meetings and state young people's positions. That's really very important. In addition, this morning you're proving to us that you do that well.

You talked to us about initiatives. Could you give us some examples of initiatives contained in the Roadmap that have done a good job of serving the interests of young Canadian francophones?

**Mr. Alexis Couture:** The youth network has developed a number of initiatives across the country that have been funded under the Roadmap.

In New Brunswick, for example, I can think of initiatives like Accros de la chanson, which is a development program for young artists. The involvement in that program has been absolutely phenomenal. Every year, the young people who come out of that project, as is the case with the Festival international de la chanson de Granby, form the next generation of Acadian artists.

As for examples of national initiatives, there is the Forum jeunesse pancanadien, the Parlement jeunesse pancanadien and the Stratégie d'intervention jeunesse as well. These are all events that we organize and that are designed to develop a greater civic commitment.

We're dealing with a nice problem at the national level because we have to turn young people down. Space is limited at our events, like our resources. A youth parliament can't have any more seats than there are in the Senate. Sometimes we have to tell young people that they can't come, and we're sorry about that.

It's an interesting problem that shows that the federation really resonates with young people in the communities. Our initiatives are a good fit with their needs.

● (0920)

**Mr. Sylvain Groulx:** I'd like to add one point. Some initiatives presented under the Roadmap are related to translation. They have been very well done. Public Works and Government Services Canada has played a role in managing a project that would grant translation internships to young translation students. The department has done that together with our federation to ensure that the program reflects what employers and students think and want.

It's an initiative that has been very successful. It's currently underway and is a tremendous success. For example, the data base contains the names of 300 students seeking an internship, whereas there are only 80 employers. We've reached the limit. We can't give out any more than what the money allows. It's a very big success.

**Mr. Jacques Gourde:** I believe you're also working with the Assemblée de la francophonie de l'Ontario. What initiatives are you working on with the Assemblée?

You can answer too, Mr. Vaillancourt. Both of you can talk about what you are going through together.

**Mr. Denis Vaillancourt:** Sorry, I didn't hear your question.

**Mr. Alexis Couture:** The question is what initiatives we're doing together.

As a national organization, we have less direct contact with the AFO. However, the member youth organization in Ontario, the FESFO, which is absolutely extraordinary, maintains a lot of contact.

Perhaps I can let you provide details on that topic.

**Mr. Denis Vaillancourt:** Thanks, Alexis.

The FESFO, which represents youth in Ontario, is a member of the Assemblée de la francophonie de l'Ontario. We work closely together on various issues.

The last health-related initiative was an awareness project called TonDoc. It's quite a tool. Young people can refer to it on all health-related matters.

The people in the Franco-Ontarian community support the FESFO's projects. They are members of our board of directors, and they developed the various priorities in our community's strategic plan together with us.

**Mr. Jacques Gourde:** How many provinces are there in your federation, Mr. Couture? Are all the provinces represented?

**Mr. Alexis Couture:** You have to draw a distinction. Nine provinces and two territories are members of the board of directors. Nunavut and Quebec aren't represented.

Quebec is absent because there's no structure corresponding to those in the other provinces. Its situation is obviously different. However, Quebec is involved in all national events. We have a number of recruitment partners in the province, as well as in Nunavut. We nevertheless make an effort to reach out to them.

At the Jeux de la francophonie canadienne, the Quebec delegation has been successful at every edition to date. In the Parlement jeunesse pancanadien, about 10 spaces are reserved for Quebec out of the some 100 seats allocated nationally.

So nine provinces and two territories are represented in the administrative structure, whereas youths from across the country are represented at our events.

**Mr. Jacques Gourde:** Could you send me a list of initiatives that you have conducted to reach out to the Quebec associations, to support you and to help you?

**Mr. Alexis Couture:** Of course.

**Mr. Jacques Gourde:** It would be important for Quebec youth to take part in your federation. They are an integral part of our country.

**Mr. Alexis Couture:** Perhaps I can add that the federation is currently in the midst of an evaluation process. We're trying to determine how we can better integrate Quebec. This is a proposal that's now two years old. It was introduced at the general assembly and came up again this year.

A committee is currently sitting to assess the options. Greater integration of the entire country is obviously what we would like. As regards development, I believe we've reached that point. It can only be beneficial to have everyone around the table.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

You have the floor, Mr. Bélanger.

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

I want to go back to the issue that Mr. Aubin raised concerning the documents. I may not be as nice as he is, but what we received is incomplete, and that's not acceptable. It's very hard to read.

First, is it possible to obtain a version that contains all the documents, in electronic format? Right now, it's garbled. If we try to paste it together, we'll make a nice mess of it. Is it possible to get the information in electronic format? It's stored electronically, so that should be quite easy.

● (0925)

**The Chair:** Yes, I've already asked the clerk to ask the Department of Canadian Heritage to provide us with complete documents containing no errors, and that will be done.

[English]

We think we might have received a draft copy, so I've asked the clerk to see if we can get the final complete copy, along with the further answers we requested.

[Translation]

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



I'd like to offer my congratulations on the hiring of Mr. Hominuk, your director general. I believe he will be occupying your position in January or February. You've made an excellent choice. Bravo.

You said you wanted budgets to be granted on a multi-year basis. That means there will have to be increased audit capacity in French. Unfortunately, it appears we're headed in another direction in this country. You previously said that the government's decision to hire an auditor general was, and I quote you, "disturbing". Would you have anything else to add in that regard?

**Mr. Denis Vaillancourt:** Thank you for the question. I'll rephrase that.

Incidentally, I would like to say that our new director general is the product of youth projects and activities, since he has emerged from that group of youths and has been involved from a very early age. We are particularly pleased with that.

While linguistic duality is a cornerstone of our national identity, the federal government must clearly set the best example the country can offer. It is therefore somewhat disturbing to see that this does not appear to be respected in key positions, whereas there were prerequisites. We're a bit troubled. We believe that there are competencies in the majority and minority communities and that there are people who can do these things who speak both languages.

I believe that if we really want to promote linguistic duality, we have to invest in francophones, francophiles and anglophones and go after our biggest assets. We also have to cultivate this francophone reflex.

**Hon. Mauril Bélanger:** I would point out to you that my question was shorter than your answer. I'm a parliamentarian and you aren't.

**Mr. Denis Vaillancourt:** All right, I'll remember that.

**Hon. Mauril Bélanger:** Does youth have a comment to make on that point?

**Mr. Alexis Couture:** I obviously believe that the aim is that key positions should be occupied by people who are capable of understanding both official languages and functioning in those two languages.

I don't believe we have anything else to add with regard to the Auditor General's appointment, except that we would like that position to be occupied by a qualified person who speaks both official languages.

**Hon. Mauril Bélanger:** That also has to be a prerequisite, doesn't it?

**Mr. Alexis Couture:** Yes, you have to meet the requirements of the position.

**Hon. Mauril Bélanger:** When the Commissioner of Official Languages recently appeared before us, I expressed the wish that he would check to see if he could inquire into and inform us or inform Canadians about the most important area in the Roadmap for Canada's Linguistic Duality, that is to say education.

I would like to know your opinion on the relationship between the Government of Canada and the provinces regarding education for the official language communities and cash transfers. Do you think some kind of accountability mechanism should be set out in the agreements? Should it be stated that the communities must be

consulted? Should there be a complete breakdown to which everyone should have access?

**Mr. Gilles LeVasseur (Vice-President, Assemblée de la francophonie de l'Ontario):** To answer Mr. Bélanger's question, I would like to mention that there is an aspect that is often hard for the communities to accept. The decisions made by Canadian Heritage on the allocation and distribution of funding are not always consistent with interests as the community defines them. We need the contribution agreements or accords to contain a mechanism that makes it possible to go to mediation to negotiate or review the allocation of funding. Ultimately, there could be an arbitration mechanism so that the complaints of the various communities could be well heard and so that we could understand what we're seeking.

We don't have the necessary influence to make Canadian Heritage move in a given direction, unless the Roadmap is clear and well developed. With a program that evolves over time, the allocation and distribution of funding and the power granted to the administration, the decision on priority-setting is often made based on other interests, as a result of which we're trapped by the program's evolution. If one thing had to be included in the agreements, that would be this mediation and arbitration mechanism so that we would be able to reflect the strategic plans for the communities.

• (0930)

**Mr. Alexis Couture:** Briefly stated, I think that what is true in health should be true in other areas. The health management model is very good. The Société Santé en français has a shared-management model and jointly develops the criteria for evaluating initiatives. I believe that the community's objective is to have a say from the outset on the choice of initiatives that we want to carry out and on the determination of which initiatives have the greatest impact. The Government of Canada has the best intentions in the world—we understand that—and the community as well. However, their viewpoints may be different. If we want those viewpoints to converge, that could be good. So it would be good to study the health model.

**Hon. Mauril Bélanger:** I'm going to ask you another question which you unfortunately won't have the time to answer because I have one minute left.

Your comments have sharpened my thoughts. In a number of fields, there are leading organizations such as the AEFO, the FCFA and the FJCF. Apart from that, there are specific organizations. There are a host of them in education, health and justice, where there are lawyers. There are also specialists in economic development, research and development, arts and culture, literacy and so on. However, in my opinion, the most important field after education is immigration and the way we integrate immigrants into the communities. We must increase their numbers and then integrate them.

Think about that before answering my question and send us your answer. I'm going to put the same question to the representatives of the FCFA when they appear next week. Since they are represented in the committee today, the question will be put to them. Should there be a similar organization in immigration, focusing on immigration to ensure that a better job is done of integrating those communities into ours?

**The Chair:** Mr. Galipeau, go ahead, please.

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

Thanks to the witnesses for being with us today. I'm particularly impressed by the clarity of your comments, Mr. Couture. I have every hope that you will be a good lawyer and a good leader, even though you're missing your class this morning.

As regards the documents submitted to the opposition this morning, you may perhaps be interested in knowing that the government members didn't receive them. We didn't receive the final document or the draft. That's not a criticism, but when the opposition members receive a better quality document, it will be useful for government members to receive it as well.

**Hon. Mauril Bélanger:** I sent it to everyone at 4:48 yesterday afternoon.

**Mr. Royal Galipeau:** Thank you. I would point out to you that I didn't interrupt the member for Ottawa—Vanier.

Mr. Vaillancourt, do you know that there has been a 40% increase in funding under the Roadmap for Canada's Linguistic Duality?

**Mr. Denis Vaillancourt:** I know there have been increases, but I'm not aware of the most recent one.

**Mr. Royal Galipeau:** This week, I announced 38 new projects, a number of which concerned various components of the AFO. Were some of them unacceptable?

• (0935)

**Mr. Denis Vaillancourt:** No. We entirely agree on the projects announced. They're part of the initiatives that contribute to the development of the francophone community. Those initiatives are definitely very much appreciated.

**Mr. Royal Galipeau:** You didn't know there had been a 40% increase. I assume the branches haven't been informed of the situation either.

Give me a piece of advice. How can the government communicate more effectively with the organizations representing minority francophones so that they can be aware of what we are doing together?

**Mr. Denis Vaillancourt:** In my written remarks, we mentioned means of communication, government sites that would provide more information on contributions and emphasize improvements. There are tools of that kind. You should communicate in a targeted manner with the groups that represent the provinces and with other groups in order to increase our understanding of those things.

**Mr. Royal Galipeau:** I was raised in Ontario, in a part of the province where French is generally spoken poorly. I am naturally grateful to my family and to certain institutions for the guidance they gave me. One of the institutions that was very important for me in developing my language was Radio-Canada, which I have been watching and listening to with pleasure for 60 years. However, I see that it is increasingly "Montreal-centric". I believe that what Radio-Canada has given me over the decades is now less accessible to francophones who are facing the same challenges as I had to deal with when I was young.

Mr. Couture, of all the francophones you know in the nine provinces where francophones are in the minority, how many

watch and listen to Radio-Canada and feel represented by the image presented to them?

**Mr. Alexis Couture:** I can tell you that I get up every morning at 6:55 so I have the time for the 7 o'clock news on Radio-Canada and I've done so since my second year. I haven't always been a typical young man.

I can talk about Acadia in particular.

**Mr. Royal Galipeau:** At what time do you listen to Radio-Canada? Do you get it from Moncton?

**Mr. Alexis Couture:** At 7:00 a.m., in Moncton.

**Mr. Royal Galipeau:** And you were in Moncton in second year too?

**Mr. Alexis Couture:** I was living in Nova Scotia at the time. I subsequently lived in Quebec City.

In Acadia in particular, Radio-Canada has made a significant effort to improve its regional presence over the past decade. Its programming is regularly one of the most listened to and most watched in radio and television. Obviously, one can only deplore the Montreal-centric nature of certain branches of Radio-Canada, but I have to applaud its efforts in the area of new technology. For example, the tou.tv site enables my girlfriend, who is currently in France, to watch Radio-Canada programs when she wants. Smartphone apps also let you watch Radio-Canada, which is her favourite, wherever you are in the country.

I nevertheless believe that Radio-Canada should make a bigger effort to reach out to young people by offering content more consistent with their reality. In my mind, that means putting more young people on air. That's not impossible to do. There are communications and journalism schools across the country and young people who would be very interested in taking part in a weekly Radio-Canada program. There's enough content across the country to do it in French. I could only applaud that kind of initiative.

• (0940)

**Mr. Royal Galipeau:** I intervened personally with regard to a CRTC decision that had prevented a community radio station from being established in Ottawa. The minister asked the CRTC to redo its homework. Ultimately, we have a francophone community radio station in Ottawa.

What is the situation regarding francophone community radio that young people can listen to elsewhere in Canada?

**Mr. Alexis Couture:** French-language community radio stations grew out of a project of the Fédération de la jeunesse canadienne-française in the late 1980s. We're very close to that network, particularly the Alliance des radios communautaires du Canada. I worked at a radio station, and I know they're doing an excellent job of reaching young people and offering programming suited to young people across the country.

**Mr. Royal Galipeau:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Mr. Trottier, go ahead, please.

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

Thanks to our guests for coming to meet with us this morning.

My name is Bernard Trottier, member for the Toronto region, more specifically Etobicoke—Lakeshore. I'm very happy the AFO representatives have come here this morning because Ontario, as you know, is the province with the largest minority francophone community in the country. It's also an enormous province with a great deal of variety.

Mr. Vaillancourt and Mr. LeVasseur, could you describe the specific challenges of the Ontario regions? For example, you're aware that the city of Toronto has no specifically francophone concentration, neighbourhood or suburb. It's not like in Ottawa. The challenges of northern Ontario also aren't the same as those of Ottawa or Toronto. There's southern and northern Ontario. Perhaps you could provide an overview of the various challenges and possibilities for the francophone community in the province.

**Mr. Denis Vaillancourt:** Thank you. I'll begin and perhaps my colleague can continue.

Having worked in education across the province, I can say that you are entirely right about Toronto. There is obviously a greater concentration of francophones in eastern Ontario today, which makes some things easier. However, from the moment you move away from eastern Ontario, that is to say beyond Renfrew or Kingston, you get into remote communities. I often like to say that French-speaking Ontario represents, in the province, all the characteristics of the minority of Canada as a whole. There are remote areas and areas where there is a high concentration.

I often like to say that the francophone community in the greater metropolitan Toronto area is like a rural francophone community. Even though it's a large community, the francophones there are isolated, hence the importance of networking, of creating occasions and of expanding the francophone area in order to promote the language.

There is another kind of isolation in Windsor. One of the main projects of the Assemblée de la francophonie is to create networks, opportunities to work together and to get to know one another, to go home and be proud of who we are and to take our place.

There are initiatives virtually everywhere, but the challenge of distance and isolation remains intact, even in Ontario, where there is a large francophone community. There are francophone areas in the northern part of the province. Hearst, for example, is a dynamic community. Some people call it "Little Quebec", but we say that they're Franco-Ontarians. They've been established there for a number of generations now. There is a francophone cultural, community and economic life there. All those people are contributing to the vitality of their community.

There are examples in Kingston and Penetang, in particular. I'm thinking of La Clé d'la Baie and the AFNOO in Thunder Bay. There are francophone organizations that are becoming partners of provincial governments, and sometimes of the federal government, in providing services in both languages and serving the francophone community.

As regards accountability, these communities have helped meet certain challenges. There are always challenges, in particular the challenge of keeping this area alive.

We were talking about community radio and Radio-Canada. There are weaknesses at Radio-Canada, as my colleague mentioned. I live in eastern Ontario, and when I visit Toronto or Sudbury, I see that local stations really reflect Ontario and are part of everyday life. Although I'm little older than my colleague, I wake up to Radio-Canada. Here in eastern Ontario, Radio-Canada serves both sides of the river, and they may have forgotten us. That's the challenge we're facing.

To go back to the Franco-Ontarian dynamic, we're dispersed and diversified, given the origins of our community. Bringing us together and expanding the francophone space remains a challenge. Our communities are alive and creating events. A whole range of events has been promoted through investments by Canadian Heritage, in particular. The federal investment under the Roadmap has had a domino effect: the Government of Ontario has also become accountable through certain initiatives. We're creating promising partnerships to expand the francophone space and promote linguistic duality.

• (0945)

**Mr. Gilles LeVasseur:** Mr. Trottier, I'm a native of Toronto. As a Franco-Ontarian, I understand your question. In the case of those who live in areas where there isn't this francophone linguistic enclave, we must remember first and foremost that there is the educational environment. That starts with child care centres and then moves on to the schools and, later on, to our social network. So you absolutely have to understand that the investment in education is essential for our community.

If we ultimately do not always want to be forced to come here and talk about the Roadmap, it will be have to be understood at one point that Franco-Ontarians want their rights, as they currently exist, to be entrenched in the Constitution. This can be done jointly by the federal government and the province of Ontario, but at one point we'll have to sit down and ask ourselves whether we can include those rights in the Constitution. That's the minimum protection we need to be able to move on to the next step.

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

Ms. Michaud, go ahead, please.

**Ms. Éline Michaud (Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier, NDP):** Thank you very much.

Welcome to you.

I must also compliment you, Mr. Couture. We're roughly the same age. Without wanting to boast, I would say that we're a good reflection of everything youth can accomplish and the positive effect we can have on the political system. So I encourage you to continue your work. Perhaps we'll be colleagues one day. Who knows?

A lot of meaningful topics have been addressed today, but I believe it was Mr. Galipeau who opened an interesting door. We talked about Radio-Canada.

Mr. Vaillancourt, you mentioned that one of your objectives was to ensure the advancement, vitality and presence of French in Ontario. Can you tell me about the importance of Radio-Canada and how it will help you with regard to the advancement and visibility of French?

**Mr. Denis Vaillancourt:** Radio-Canada has been a partner of the Assemblée de la francophonie de l'Ontario on a number of occasions. The hosts of the provincial programs are always in attendance at our annual meetings. Radio-Canada is a partner in the promotion of cultural activities in various places, whether it be in eastern Ontario or in Sudbury from its local station.

Radio-Canada is a preferred instrument and partner. We have examples of various cultural activities, such as the Ontario Pop competition sponsored by Radio-Canada, for example. One of my sons took part in it. It's an initiative of the Sudbury station that was picked up by Radio-Canada in Ontario. It's an annual event.

**Ms. Éleine Michaud:** So Radio-Canada is a very important for you. The cutbacks might probably have an impact on your activities, is that correct?

**Mr. Denis Vaillancourt:** Radio-Canada is definitely an important partner for Ontario's francophone minority. We criticized the cutbacks, for example, when the Windsor station was closed. We would like it to come back because we need that picture. It's obviously essential for the community that Radio-Canada, which is an instrument at our federation's disposal, to be there to support a francophone presence with a local flavour. Although there are national programs, and some focus a little too much on Montreal, others provide that perspective.

**Ms. Éleine Michaud:** Thank you. I believe you've highlighted how important Radio-Canada is in advancing linguistic duality and building our national identity.

• (0950)

**Mr. Denis Vaillancourt:** That's undeniably the case.

**Ms. Éleine Michaud:** I believe that's quite clear.

In your presentation, you also mentioned that your community has developed a community strategic plan. Can you tell us more about the priorities set out in that plan?

**Mr. Denis Vaillancourt:** We're talking about activities. This major component comprises five courses of action. We want to expand the francophone space. Once again, the objective is for the francophones and young francophones of our community to consider that speaking French and requesting services in French adds value. So we want to expand the francophonie. That starts with the schools. The niche we are more interested in is early childhood. In the past, we've asserted that we had language rights, particularly the right to education, and those rights are exercised from birth. If there is a child care service, we watch that very closely.

**The Chair:** Pardon me, Mr. Vaillancourt. Is there an interpretation problem?

[English]

Please wait just one moment while we figure out what's going on.

[Translation]

Pardon me. You have the floor.

**Mr. Denis Vaillancourt:** So we must expand the francophone community in all regions of Ontario. That's obvious; it's being done. There are concrete examples, such as the monuments to the francophonie which promote that. French-language health centres, cultural and community centres and francophone legal clinics have been established. We support those initiatives.

Another initiative concerns the visibility and development of the use of French.

**Ms. Éleine Michaud:** I apologize for having to interrupt you over a question of time. Are those priorities currently reflected by the Roadmap?

**Mr. Denis Vaillancourt:** Yes, they match up well. We've also taken that into account.

**Ms. Éleine Michaud:** How much time do I have left?

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

**Ms. Éleine Michaud:** A little earlier you mentioned, with regard to youth, that you would like to be more involved in decision-making regarding funding allocation. If I correctly understood, your organization was not really consulted before the Roadmap was developed?

**Mr. Sylvain Groulx:** In fact, our organization took action when the Action Plan for Official Languages was being developed and during planning for the Roadmap. However, those are actions that our federation took. There was no consultation as such.

**Ms. Éleine Michaud:** So government stakeholders took no proactive steps to determine your needs.

**Mr. Sylvain Groulx:** That's correct.

**Ms. Éleine Michaud:** I believe you're in a good position to know what might be important.

This is an interesting discussion, but I will keep my questions for later because I'll have the opportunity to speak to you again.

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

Mr. Menegakis, go ahead, please.

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

As you know, we are studying the Roadmap for Linguistic Duality. It's very important for us to meet with you and to hear your comments. Thank you for being here today and thank you for your presentations.

Mr. Couture, I'm also very impressed by your remarks. So my first question is for you.

Cultural programs are important for our young people. How has the Roadmap supported cultural programming? What improvements would you like to see?

**Mr. Alexis Couture:** I'll begin to answer that and then ask Sylvain to finish.

I can say that would be, on the one hand, everything included in the cultural programs item that is funded out of the cultural envelope and that is developed through the cultural networks aimed at young people. That constitutes a whole development plan.

On the other hand, the cultural sector has been specifically targeted by the youth network across the country because it's through culture that you manage to target young people's interests. We can all agree that you don't build identity with a mathematics textbook. Instead, it's through music, theatre and culture in general. The federation and its members have made a major effort in this regard.

I'm going to ask Sylvain to continue on this topic.

**Mr. Sylvain Groulx:** Culture is definitely important for youth. However, our organization doesn't work just in this area. It can be said that the Roadmap definitely touches on all important aspects and that culture is always included in youth projects. With regard to culture in general and cultural organizations, we believe that an effort has been put into the Roadmap. But we would hope to see more, knowing that youth derives considerable benefit from this contribution by culture in building their identity. Consequently, if additional efforts were made in culture, they would definitely be welcome and beneficial to that clientele.

• (0955)

**Mr. Costas Menegakis:** Could you give us a few examples of cultural programs?

**Mr. Alexis Couture:** Examples of cultural programs that have been implemented in recent years include young artist development programs in a number of provinces. In particular, they include Frogstock in Nova Scotia and Accros de la chanson and Art sur roules in New Brunswick. There are other programs in Ontario that were mentioned earlier, including La Furie in Manitoba and also some programs in Alberta. So there are a lot of young artist development programs.

In addition, we always make sure to include a cultural component in all the activities of the federation and its members. They may be evening cultural, theatrical or musical performances in the context of the proceedings of the Parlement jeunesse pancanadien, or improvisation or music at the Jeux de la francophonie canadienne, an event for which a whole cultural component is planned. We make sure a cultural component is included in our activities. Our organization has to present a variety of activities to reach the largest possible number of young people. As a result, by keeping the door open to culture, we make sure we do it as best we can.

**Mr. Costas Menegakis:** Thank you.

Cultural programs are also very important for our seniors. So I'm putting the same question to you, Mr. Vaillancourt.

**Mr. Denis Vaillancourt:** The Assemblée de la francophonie de l'Ontario has a large contingent of seniors. So it is important for them that we provide cultural group activities. Our seniors were builders who, more often than not, had to wage battles for their language and to obtain their services. They are bequeathing a number of services, institutions and community centres to young people, and to our generation in Ontario.

This morning, we suggested that, if we had to increase one envelope, we would target arts and culture, which enrich life and raise the profile of our language. It's important for us and for seniors, who have made their careers in French and who want to continue living in French.

**Mr. Costas Menegakis:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** Mr. Harris, go ahead, please.

**Mr. Dan Harris (Scarborough Southwest, NDP):** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thanks to everyone for being here today.

I'll admit to you that, as a Franco-Ontarian, I find this exciting. For 15 years now, I have helped youth get involved in politics and other things. Mr. Vaillancourt talked about his early childhood. I was born in Toronto and went to the Petit Chaperon Rouge, Georges-Étienne-Cartier School and Mgr-de-Charbonnel Catholic High School. I was a member of the FESFO. These are all good things. I'm happy to be here today and to have the opportunity to speak to you.

Earlier when you were talking about youth, you mentioned that you didn't have an organization in Nunavut. Is that correct?

**Mr. Alexis Couture:** Yes, Nunavut isn't represented on the board of directors. However, efforts are being made to have young people involved in all events.

**Mr. Dan Harris:** All right.

I asked the question knowing that, during the 40th Parliament, this committee began a study on linguistic duality in the north. The committee only had to go to Nunavut in order to complete and table the report. Do you believe that report is important and that it would help you in your work in Nunavut?

**Mr. Alexis Couture:** The federation is definitely in favour of getting additional information. One of our development areas for 2010-2013 is research and evaluation and having more information on the situation of francophone young people across the country. That includes Nunavut, Quebec and all the provinces and territories from east to west and north to south. Having documentation and statistics enables us to offer events that are better suited to and more consistent with the reality of young people. Of course, that enables us to reach out to those young people in the best way possible.

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

That's interesting. The NDP, which is the official opposition, really has a young caucus for the first time. Twenty-one of its members are under 35. We think it will be really good and important to interest more young people in politics. We will definitely need candidates in New Brunswick in future.

Let us know if your organization wants to have MPs for events. I am caucus vice-chair and you can contact us for other things. With regard to the AEFO, it's important to attract young people.

Let's talk about francophone immigrants. In Ontario and elsewhere as well, immigration is very important for our future. What do you think is the most important thing we should do to improve the situation of francophone immigration in Ontario?

•(1000)

**Mr. Denis Vaillancourt:** I think the most important thing is to ensure that there is a very obvious francophone presence at the ports of entry to Ontario through signage and staff on duty. Upon entry, from an immigrant's first step in Pearson airport, McDonald-Cartier airport or Windsor, regardless of the point of entry where there is an Immigration Canada office, there should be bilingual staff who know the network and community access to services in French. To achieve that, there must be partnerships with local communities. I am thinking, for example, of ACFO in Kingston, which sponsored a project with the city of Kingston. Its representatives are there when immigrants arrive in the city to tell them from the outset the opportunities they have for living, working and taking part in community life in French. That's what's lacking in our showcases at each of our points of entry. It has to be clear that there is a French life in Canada and in Ontario in particular.

**Mr. Gilles LeVasseur:** I'd like to add one point. Once immigrants are here, there have to be integration mechanisms for them. Immigrants often find themselves without resources and lost in the community. The Immigration Program at Canadian Heritage and the Roadmap for Canada's Linguistic Duality must also take this approach into account in order to integrate them into the community, provide them with tools to understand where their next employment opportunities should be and what the education path is. The problem is that immigrants will get lost in the community, will follow a targeted group which is often their natural group and will then forget the francophone reality of Ontario.

**The Chair:** That's fine, thank you.

Mr. Weston, go ahead, please.

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

My first question is for the representatives of this group from Ontario. I heard that, after the last election, there was a real explosion in the use of funding by the Greek-Canadian community in Ontario.

Second, thank you for your presentation. I come from British Columbia and I'm impressed by the increase in the use of the minority language in all provinces. Can you tell me your story and your favourite example concerning the growth of French in the anglophone communities? Alexis, perhaps you can start.

The third question concerns the accounting when you make a decision on the use of public funds. Every dollar is precious. It isn't our money, but rather that of the public. Can you give us examples of very good uses of public funds?

**Mr. Alexis Couture:** First, I'll answer your question about examples of growth in the use of the minority language in the majority community. In our case, we're talking about French in an anglophone community. The best example to date is the Jeux de la francophonie canadienne. The games have been in existence since 1999 and bring together people from all provinces and territories every three years. Last summer, they were in Sudbury, Ontario. Three years ago, it was Edmonton, Alberta.

We find ourselves in a very particular situation. Young people who come from immersion schools—these are anglophones who

have learned French—very much want to take part in the games. They make remarkable efforts to join the provincial delegations sponsored by the provincial member organizations of the FJCF. The games reach out to young people on three levels: culture, sport and leadership. Through this varied programming, high-quality programming and very strong recruitment partners, we have managed to recruit young people outside what is considered the traditional francophone pool. We managed to do that in particular in British Columbia with the CJFCB, which is our member partner there.

Some extremely interesting efforts have been made. We are seeing growth in participation in the games precisely because we are going after that clientele outside the population pool that could be considered francophone. It's also for that reason that the federation has members in the country who are French-speaking young people 14 to 25 years of age. You have to draw a distinction between a French-speaking young person and a young francophone. French-speaking young people don't necessarily have French as their mother tongue.

•(1005)

**Mr. John Weston:** Are public funds being used?

**Mr. Alexis Couture:** The games are obviously funded by the federal and provincial governments. Perhaps I can let Sylvain provide more details on that subject.

**Mr. Sylvain Groulx:** In fact, the Department of Canadian Heritage contributes financially to the games. Other provincial agencies make significant contributions through the delegations. To go back briefly to the accountability question, the youth organizations are extremely responsible and handle the money very well.

You can imagine everything that has to be done to manage an activity or a youth organization where you work with young people most of whom are 14 to 18 years of age. In other words, they aren't adults. We have to speak with the parents, obtain consent forms, work with them and get volunteers. We get an enormous amount for every dollar invested because, given the nature of the event and the people we work with, we have to step up our efforts. Generally speaking, our members are very good in that respect.

I don't want to take up too much time, and I'm going to let the others speak.

**Mr. Denis Vaillancourt:** I'd like to add to that and to provide some actual examples. The investments in the community arts and culture groups in certain regions of the province have resulted in permanent infrastructure being established and the francophone community taking charge of cultural activities that have had an economic impact. I'm thinking, for example, of a cultural centre or auditorium in Hearst. I'm thinking of auditoriums in various places where the community has stepped up through its activities and taken charge. It has entered into partnerships with the Department of Canadian Heritage and the provincial government. That's the provincial spillover effect. All that has been transformed into economic activities that enable the community to live in French.

I have to say that the best example in Ontario—I admit I'm not neutral, being a career educator—is the entire effort being made with our youth. The school system founded the FESFO, among other things. Today, when I go into the professional world, I meet young Franco-Ontarians who are lawyers, physicians, accountants and business owners. They are taking their place. These are examples that show that, without investments and networks, whether it be the Jeux franco-ontariens, the school sector or the community sector, we wouldn't have these professionals. It's very enriching. The result of our investment is ultimately that, around this table, we have Franco-Ontarians who have gone beyond the system, are speaking French and are still here to represent us. These are tangible signs of the success of linguistic duality and of the complete maintenance of our minority.

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

**Mr. Gilles LeVasseur:** One thing has changed, Mr. Weston, and that is the rights holders. Under section 23 of the Constitution, we have gone after the rights holders, those who were entitled to French-language schools. Through funding, we have gained access to schools and we have funded schools outside Quebec in regions where, in many cases, there were previously no French-language schools.

The rights holders have thus made this growth in the francophone population possible. On the anglophone side, the French-language immersion programs in the schools have also helped francophones a great deal. People who are capable of speaking French work for provincial government bodies or other bodies. They are capable of communicating with francophones, which creates this francophone community. That aspect is often overlooked. Various programs afford us the opportunity to work much more with the other communities. At first, it was the rights holders. This is one of the major problems that we have to solve among francophones to ensure we have this linguistic continuity in the schools.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Mr. Aubin, go ahead, please.

• (1010)

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

Here's a challenge for you, if you accept it. I have five minutes and three questions to ask, and I would like to hear from both your organizations about each of the topics.

Here's my first question. The Roadmap is an additional funding strategy to develop projects. In real terms, is it easy for each of your organizations to draw a distinction between regular programs and Roadmap programs, or are we bogging you down in red tape?

**Mr. Sylvain Groulx:** I'm going to take the liberty of responding.

It's not easy. You have to ask a lot of questions to get a clear understanding. The Roadmap as such, at least the way we understand it, involves 15 departments that are taking part in it and that have programs that are operating normally.

So my answer would be to say no, it's not easy to see or to understand our situation.

**Mr. Denis Vaillancourt:** I agree with Mr. Groulx.

We understand that there are programs. At the provincial level, our assembly is making an effort to understand. When we talk with our members, it isn't easy for them to distinguish between a Roadmap program and a program of the Department of Canadian Heritage.

So this must be clarified, and I support the idea that this isn't necessarily easy. You really have to go and explore and find things.

**Mr. Robert Aubin:** Thank you. Here's my second question.

In the past little while, we've heard quite eloquent testimony about the success the linguistic minority communities have achieved. There are even some promising prospects in what you're proposing.

However, the fact is that the departments are being asked to cut 5% and in some cases 10% from the plans. Have you got wind of any cuts at one department or another that would affect you directly?

**Mr. Denis Vaillancourt:** Not directly, in view of the fact that there are agreements regarding certain envelopes that will subsequently expire.

We have our suspicions, but we have had no direct indication regarding the Assemblée de la francophonie. However, the rumour is circulating.

**Mr. Alexis Couture:** We would echo that comment. We haven't heard of any direct impact at this point, but that prospect is of course something people have on their radar screens.

**Mr. Robert Aubin:** I'm going to ask a question B to make it four.

Do you think there is a priority or a sector that absolutely should not be touched?

**Mr. Denis Vaillancourt:** The community sector.

**Mr. Alexis Couture:** Generally speaking, of course, there's the community sector and education. Education, in relation to the community sector, is absolutely essential.

**Mr. Denis Vaillancourt:** I support that.

**Mr. Robert Aubin:** My last question is as follows.

In the development of the next Roadmap, are you afraid that amounts will be provided for projects with one hand, through the Roadmap, that will then be withdrawn from the regular programs, as a result of which, to all intents and purposes, there will be no improvement in the situation of the communities?

**Mr. Alexis Couture:** Can we say that's a fear? I'm not sure we have any fears at this point. However, if that situation were to arise, that definitely would not be desirable.

In our minds, the objective of the Roadmap is to improve existing programs, and in that sense this has to remain an improvement, not a transfer of funds to another budget. It really has to involve additional funding.

**Mr. Denis Vaillancourt:** I would add the same advice to that. If we say that linguistic duality is a cornerstone of our identity, when we prioritize our Roadmap investments, that has to be consistent, again accepting the fact that parliamentarians have a fiscal responsibility. This nevertheless has to be done with firmly-rooted priorities.

I go back to that idea that inspires me everyday. Linguistic duality is a cornerstone of our national identity. That's what distinguishes us from the Americans. We have to invest in that aspect.

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

You have shown exemplary efficiency. I received answers to all my questions. If I have a minute left, I can share it with one of my colleagues.

**Ms. Éline Michaud:** Mr. Couture, you tell me you skipped a law class, but I'm going to take advantage of your status as a future lawyer to ask you for your impressions on the appointment of a unilingual anglophone judge to the Supreme Court.

**Mr. Alexis Couture:** Mr. Justice Moldaver has expressed his intention to learn French within the next year.

**Ms. Éline Michaud:** I'm not talking about him. I'm talking about the situation in general.

**Mr. Alexis Couture:** In his specific case, I believe this is extremely interesting. In general, I believe it would be desirable for all of our Supreme Court justices to speak and understand both languages.

**The Chair:** All right.

Briefly, do you have another question?

• (1015)

**Mr. Dan Harris:** The Commissioner of Official Languages expressed concern about the cuts because the government will not keep its eyes on linguistic duality. There may not be any direct cuts. However, if every department had to cut 5% to 10% and they didn't do it together, that might hurt the community.

Would you have a brief comment to make on that subject?

**The Chair:** Briefly, please.

**Mr. Alexis Couture:** We're aware that the fiscal situation in Canada is difficult at this time. We understand the reality. However, as Mr. Vaillancourt said, duality is a cornerstone and has to remain a priority of this government and future governments.

**Mr. Denis Vaillancourt:** I would simply add that it's an idea of national priority that has to be supported.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Mr. Gourde has the floor.

**Mr. Jacques Gourde:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Vaillancourt, you previously cited some examples of francophone entrepreneurs who have succeeded. Among your initiatives, is there one that would help develop entrepreneurial leadership?

**Mr. Denis Vaillancourt:** Yes, some of the planned projects, with FedDev Ontario, among others, can put young graduates in the community and in small- and medium-sized businesses. That will enable them to develop strategic planning and marketing skills. The goal is precisely to provide them with tools so that they can become entrepreneurs and contribute to entrepreneurship where they are placed. These are things that we try to promote at every opportunity that arises.

**Mr. Gilles LeVasseur:** Mr. Gourde, I'm going to give you an idea for a specific project.

The UN has declared that next year will be the International Year of Cooperatives. In French-speaking Ontario, cooperatives play an essential role in the entrepreneurial development of the communities. That's important because this involves people who are taking charge of their lives at the local level.

It has been observed that the incomes of entrepreneurs are higher in the cooperative sector than in the private sector. We often have a false perception of the actual situation and don't understand the cooperative sector in French-speaking Ontario. What happens is that these cooperatives develop entrepreneurship to an enormous degree, which then leads to the private sector.

I mention that to you because sometimes you ask what the relationship is with Canadian Heritage. These Roadmap programs often request funding to develop these local and regional businesses.

**Mr. Alexis Couture:** I can mention that, within the youth network, the fields of health and entrepreneurship are currently growing across the country. Our member partners across the country are developing projects. In the east, in particular, there is a project involving four organizations called *Faut que ça bouge*, which is currently being implemented.

At the national level, the federation is managing a francophone youth employment program that provides initial employment experience in French for young people. We obviously hope this first experience will stimulate the spirit of entrepreneurship and an interest in working and developing in French, which we consider very important.

This is a growing network priority, but the effort is only beginning. We can say it has been under the radar for three or four years.

**Mr. Jacques Gourde:** Are there any sectors of the economy or of the country where it's an advantage to be a francophone entrepreneur as opposed to those who are unilingual anglophones? Can they put themselves in an advantageous position relative to the competition?

**Mr. Alexis Couture:** I believe it is extremely important to have a francophone perspective in the service sector. We can offer services in both languages. It's similar in communications, research and international business.

The francophone world is an enormous market, particularly with Africa opening up. Francophone Africa is currently exploding. I believe that, with regard to international economic development prospects, Africa will be a major player in the next few years. It's an undeniable asset in that connection to be able to speak French and to be francophone.

**Mr. Jacques Gourde:** In the financial sector, the *Caisses Desjardins du Québec* has broken into the market in Ontario and other provinces. It often starts up in the more francophone areas.

Have you shown that there are any advantages for the communities in having a financial sector that has emerged from a francophone environment?



**Mr. Denis Vaillancourt:** The Mouvement Desjardins has obviously gotten involved in Ontario. It has undeniably become a partner in the development of SMEs and in economic growth. The movement is a partner in a number of projects in our communities. As a result, it is a source of funding for young entrepreneurs and small businesses. It has played and continues to play a role.

In Ontario, there's also the Alliance des caisses populaires de l'Ontario, which is another movement. It moreover is involved in the cooperative movement.

Perhaps Mr. LeVasseur can add something as he knows more about that subject.

•(1020)

**Mr. Gilles LeVasseur:** In the cooperative environment, the associations in French-speaking Ontario are independent. Even though they share services with Desjardins, it's an independent community that is responsible for itself. We maintain relations. In the financial sector, we have developed our own avenues, our own financial services and our own internal financing capability. That's what's important and that's what's emerging. That doesn't mean we don't experience any influence from the outside, from Quebec, for example. However, you should know that this affords a significant degree of local control in French-speaking Ontario for our development.

**Mr. Jacques Gourde:** Desjardins' financial model has thus been introduced and is very well accepted in the francophone communities.

**Mr. Gilles LeVasseur:** It's very well accepted. However, I want to make it clear that, even though we share and buy services from Desjardins, those services are managed by francophones, for their own interest, based on their situation and in accordance with their mandate. That doesn't mean we don't abide by the policies since we belong to a major network where we share IT services and everything else. We're accepted, we are established and we believe in French-speaking Ontario.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Mr. Harris.

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

I'm going to go back to a comment that Mr. Vaillancourt made about the difficulty involved in keeping Franco-Ontarians in Ontario. Even in our caucus, we have elected four new Franco-Ontarian members, but I'm the only one who was elected in Ontario. Would you have any suggestions for retaining more francophones in Ontario?

**Mr. Denis Vaillancourt:** They say that our Franco-Ontarians leave the province to go elsewhere. On the one hand, that's unfortunate for us. On the other hand, it shows that the system and life in French are good. Our citizens can go and work internationally. We don't necessarily need to retain them. Instead we should ensure we continue to cultivate this dynamism. That's our youth. More often than not, many stay home. We have to continue, even though we know that some will go elsewhere. Our challenge is to encourage them as much as possible to contribute to their community, without however preventing them from developing elsewhere. The idea is also to maintain everything that has enabled young people to grow

and develop in their language, become proud of their language and carry on their profession. We clearly need these young people in Ontario. Efforts are being made in that area, but we also must not penalize them. It is the strength of the system that enables people to become international citizens.

**Mr. Dan Harris:** I'm going to share my time with Ms. Michaud.

My question is open to everyone. Again on the same subject, do you believe there is enough investment in education and in the community to enable you to continue your good efforts?

**Mr. Denis Vaillancourt:** In education, even with the contributions from the OLEPs in Ontario, there are still deficiencies in access to primary and secondary schools, for example. There are still certain issues regarding access to postsecondary education. In postsecondary education, more partnerships should be established so that we can receive federal funding.

At the community level, Ontario will definitely always need more investment. We need a larger community to serve and, in any case, its diversity is what characterizes virtually all regions of the country.

**Mr. Sylvain Groulx:** With regard to education, in a consultation that our organization conducted a few years ago in partnership with the Conférence ministérielle sur la francophonie canadienne, we asked young people what concerned them and what were priorities for them. Postsecondary education is one of the things that emerged strongly. We are still being asked to find information and to act in this area. There is a lack of access to postsecondary education and problems with regard to the quality of that education.

Consequently, before deciding to make more investments in postsecondary education, if other investments had to be made, the government would do well to consult young francophones or French-speaking young people who want to do postsecondary studies in French or to conduct a survey of them. It must determine what they are lacking and what they need. That will enable it to meet its obligations to the public and to make good investments.

For French-speaking youth, postsecondary education is something we must invest in.

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

I hand the floor over to Ms. Michaud.

**Ms. Éline Michaud:** Thank you.

I told you I would come back to the various consultation mechanisms that you would perhaps like to see established under the a future Roadmap. Have you thought, in more concrete terms, of certain mechanisms that you would like to see put in place? If so, I would like to hear what you have to say on that subject.

•(1025)

**Mr. Alexis Couture:** In an ideal world, I believe the model that was adopted in health is extremely promising for funding management with the Société Santé en français, which can manage part of it. What is particularly interesting in this approach is that all the work is done in cooperation with the government. The idea is not to provide a budget and say thank you. We're working together to see how we can optimize that money and how we can maximize the return on it.

I believe that the youth network—Sylvain talked about this a little earlier—is extremely effective in realizing the potential of every dollar invested because we in fact don't have as much money as that and we have some major challenges. So I believe that moving toward a collaborative management approach such as this one is extremely promising, which could produce absolutely phenomenal results in the long term.

**Mr. Sylvain Groulx:** As regards the youth network, there is one point regarding the Roadmap, and that is the need to work with youth organizations when there are youth initiatives. This means that the organizations that work with youth have been extremely taxed by the requests for partnerships to work with them without there being any results. So if we involve them in a process from the outset, it will be easier to see to the management of those projects.

**Mr. Denis Vaillancourt:** I would like to add that, for the Assemblée de la francophonie, there is a protocol that we call "the circle of collaboration with Heritage". On behalf of our members and all sectors in the province, we occasionally sit down to define major needs. Our community's strategic plan will be the cornerstone of that conversation in order to orchestrate programs and to ensure that all our members and all sectors have a clear idea where to knock for development projects.

We would all like to spend more time on this, but I believe there is a basis on which we can discuss the matter.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Mr. Galipeau, go ahead, please.

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

The Fédération des francophones de la Colombie-Britannique appeared before us earlier this week and discussed the direct contact between the francophones and francophiles of British Columbia. B. C.'s francophiles provide a strike force to francophones that they would not have without them.

What kind of mechanisms do you have for forming alliances with Ontario's francophiles?

**Mr. Denis Vaillancourt:** For the Assemblée, this is an area where we've considered action to expand the francophonie. The downside is that there is a risk of falling into what we call watered-down bilingualism. Where the minority is involved, we have to protect the francophone community in a very controlled manner. Otherwise we can fall into that trap and, if we aren't articulate enough, we'll switch over to the language of the majority. One of the New Brunswick researchers discussed watered-down bilingualism.

In fact, there are places where this affinity and closeness are useful. I'm thinking, for example, of the postsecondary sector. When programs are being offered and there are students from French-language schools and a good immersion program, twinning the two communities at the postsecondary level to offer a program a French makes sense. If we talk about a single perspective on early childhood in bilingual environments, we fall into the watered-down aspect, that is to say that we don't promote the language well. And when we talk about expanding the community and the electronic waves, it seems appropriate to move closer to the francophile community and to all the people who have come out of the immersion programs. We have articulated that, but may be in the

early stages in the case of the Assemblée de la francophonie de l'Ontario.

**Mr. Royal Galipeau:** I'm pleased that you're talking about education.

When I was a student at the University of Ottawa 40 years ago, the percentage of francophones there was larger than it is now. I admit a number of my friends were from Hull. Since the Université du Québec en Outaouais has been in existence, francophones from western Quebec feel less of a need to come to the University of Ottawa. The francophone presence at the University of Ottawa has declined as a result.

I believe that a good way to counter that is to attract francophiles, but strategies must be developed. Thirty years ago, there was a meeting between your predecessor, ACFO, and an anglophone minority organization from Quebec, the predecessor of the Quebec Community Groups Network. It wasn't Alliance Québec at the time as that was before it was established. We met at a hotel in downtown Ottawa to establish ties.

Do you have any ties with the Quebec Community Groups Network?

• (1030)

**Mr. Denis Vaillancourt:** We have no formal ties. There have been a few conversations since I've been president, but we haven't yet developed any operational ties.

Just to answer you—

[*English*]

**Mr. Royal Galipeau:** Canadian Parents for French...?

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Denis Vaillancourt:** We've also had conversations with them, but there's no firmly established protocol. However, with regard to the University of Ottawa, we've celebrated the fifth anniversary of a series of programs designed to get closer to the immersion world and to make it possible to offer programs in French at the University of Ottawa that can benefit both francophones and francophiles.

Establishing dialogues with QCGN or the Canadian Parents for French is part of our plan for expanding the francophone space.

**Mr. Royal Galipeau:** Do you know that the new RCMP commissioner is bilingual?

**Mr. Denis Vaillancourt:** Yes.

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

Mr. Bélanger, go ahead, please.

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

I would like to make a few comments and ask a few questions.

Mr. Couture, I think you're right about the Société Santé en français. It's the only model under which someone from the provincial government is at the table. I don't know whether she is still a member of the board, but an associate deputy minister of the New Brunswick Department of Health was a member of the board of the Société Santé en français. That's the best example of collaboration among the federal, provincial and community orders. It might be a good idea to consider that elsewhere.

With regard to education and needs, I heard that immersion was one of the under-funded areas. That was said here by a number of groups in particular. There are waiting lists in British Columbia. They've even begun offering immersion at the postsecondary level at the University of Ottawa and the waiting lists are very long. Perhaps the committee should look into that.

When the House sits on Tuesday and Thursday mornings, I start my day by listening to Mr. Galipeau, and I choose to end my day by listening to Ms. Galipeau—Céline is her given name—on Radio-Canada. I'd like to cite two speeches that were made in Parliament not so long ago.

The first statement was made by the member for Calgary-West, and I quote it in English:

[English]

Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present the first of thousands of petitions asking to end the patently unfair taxpayer subsidy of the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation.

Canadians from British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba and Ontario all want to end the \$1,160,000,000 taxpayer subsidization of the CBC.

Rural Canadians from Innisfail, Alberta; Chemainus, British Columbia; Waldheim, Saskatchewan; and Exeter, Ontario, are calling for an end to the \$1 billion public subsidy of the state broadcaster.

When we live in a 1,000-channel universe, why spend over \$1 billion on a state broadcaster like the CBC?

• (1035)

[Translation]

The second quotation comes from the member for Yorkton—Melville and reads as follows:

[English]

Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure today to present a large number of petitions from Canadians from coast to coast.

The petitioners call upon the government to de-fund the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation. They would particularly like to draw the attention—

**Mr. John Weston:** Point of order, Mr. Chair.

**Hon. Mauril Bélanger:** —of the House to the fact that the Government of Canada funds the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation to the sum of \$1.1 billion per year—

**The Chair:** Mr. Bélanger, I'm sorry to interrupt. Mr. Weston has a point of order.

I hope it's a real point of order. Go ahead.

[Translation]

**Mr. John Weston:** Mr. Bélanger, pardon me for interrupting you, but, for the information of our guests, it must be understood that those petitions—

[English]

**The Chair:** Okay, I'm going to interrupt you there. It's not a point of order.

I would ask members of the committee to please not interrupt other members when they have the floor. If it's a real point of order, you may raise it at any time during the committee, but that's a point of information, not a point of order.

Please do not interrupt other members when they have the floor. I think that will allow for better functioning of the committee.

Go ahead, Mr. Bélanger. You have the floor.

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

I'll finish the quotation:

They would particularly like to draw the attention of the House to the fact that the Government of Canada funds the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation to the sum of \$1.1 billion per year and that the vast amount of the Government of Canada funding gives the CBC an unfair advantage over its private sector competitors.

The petitioners call upon Parliament to end the public funding of the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation.

[Translation]

End of quotation.

[English]

By the way, you don't have to table petitions this way. You can table them by just handing them in at the table, Mr. Weston, which means, most often, that when members table them it's because they support the—

**The Chair:** Mr. Bélanger, direct your remarks to the chair, through the chair. Thank you.

**Hon. Mauril Bélanger:** Yes, Mr. Chairman. I apologize for that.

But Mr. Weston would know that there's a different way of submitting petitions.

[Translation]

Are there any comments about this initiative to de-fund the CBC?

**Mr. Jacques Gourde:** I have a point of order.

[English]

**The Chair:** We have another point of order.

Go ahead, Monsieur Gourde.

[Translation]

**Mr. Jacques Gourde:** I would simply like Mr. Bélanger to explain the relevance of his question in view of the fact that it does not really fall into the context of the study we are conducting this morning.

[English]

**The Chair:** I think the topics that are being discussed here pertain to the road map and it is a decision by the committee to study this. I think it's a fairly broad area so I'm going to allow the question, because it has to do with Radio-Canada. I would point out that other members on both sides have asked questions about CBC/Radio-Canada in the context of this study of the road map, so I'm going to allow the question.

Go ahead, Mr. Bélanger.

Sorry, Mr. Harris, do you have another point of order?

**Mr. Dan Harris:** It wasn't a point of order but a comment on that point of order.

**The Chair:** I've already ruled on that point of order—

**Voices:** Oh, oh!

**Mr. Dan Harris:** That's all right.

**The Chair:** —so we're going to move on.

Mr. Bélanger, you have the floor.

**Hon. Mauril Bélanger:** How much time do I have left?

**The Chair:** You have time. Go ahead.

[*Translation*]

**Hon. Mauril Bélanger:** Do you have any comments to make about the relevance of Radio-Canada for your communities?

**Mr. Alexis Couture:** In New Brunswick, one issue has been very important in recent years, the issue of bilingual commercial signage and the need for a community to be reflected in the advertising landscape. I believe that need is also present in the media landscape. I believe it is essential for the francophone community across the country and for the French-speaking young people of the country to have a way to see each other, to hear each other and to get to know each other. I believe that Radio-Canada performs that function to the best of its ability. If CBC/Radio-Canada is de-funded, there will have to be an alternative in order to afford those same opportunities.

**Hon. Mauril Bélanger:** Thank you.

Mr. Vaillancourt, you want to add something.

**Mr. Denis Vaillancourt:** In the same perspective, with regard to the francophonie, Radio-Canada is essential to our identity. I will even go further. Radio-Canada and the CBC are another aspect of our national identity. Take away Radio-Canada and the CBC, and you Americanize us overnight.

**Hon. Mauril Bélanger:** Thank you.

Mr. LeVasseur.

**Mr. Gilles LeVasseur:** Linguistic duality requires that we be present in our society. We cannot allow ourselves to lose the resources that present the face of the regions to all Canadians without taking this linguistic reality into account. Radio-Canada does this by taking into account not only the metropolitan centres, but the regions as well. That's what we must never overlook, that the regions are often forgotten.

That's the purpose of Radio-Canada, to ensure that those regions speak in the minority language.

• (1040)

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

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Mr. Weston, go ahead, please.

**Mr. John Weston:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

First, I would like to go back to the following point. When we receive a petition, as riding representatives, we have an obligation to ensure that the petition is tabled, as Mr. Bélanger said, or present it orally in the House. We have to do that even if we don't agree with what the petitioners say.

To go back to the issues we discussed earlier, do you have anything to say—

**Hon. Mauril Bélanger:** I have a point of order, Mr. Chairman.

[*English*]

**The Chair:** Go ahead, Mr. Bélanger.

[*Translation*]

You have the floor.

**Hon. Mauril Bélanger:** Mr. Chairman, he has just made a statement that is not true. I'm not required, as a member, to table a petition.

[*English*]

**The Chair:** That's not a point of order. It's a point of information. It's not up to the chair or other members to make determinations on the veracity of other members' comments.

I'd ask that members not interrupt other members when they have the floor.

Mr. Weston, you have the floor.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. John Weston:** Thank you.

What message could you transmit to the communities of British Columbia or Saskatchewan that are working for the vitality of the French language?

There are a lot of barriers. For example, a school in Whistler wants to teach French, but people say you can't go to British Columbia to learn French. What can you say to inspire those people who would like to see French develop?

**Mr. Denis Vaillancourt:** Mr. Weston, I would tend to refer the question back to you and to ask you what our national government can do to promote the acquisition of the second language. The onus is not just on the community. Our government must make this its national value. As stated in the Roadmap, this is a cornerstone of our national identity. The first promoter of the national identity, that is to say the federal government, must inform the majority group that learning the language of the other group is an advantage and a need for both parties. Appointing a unilingual francophone to the position Auditor General would have been unthinkable. The promoter of linguistic duality in British Columbia is, first of all, the federal government.

**Mr. John Weston:** You know that the government has invested more than \$1 billion in the Roadmap. I believe you will agree that the vitality of the culture and language is not the sole responsibility of governments, but also of the people and communities, isn't it?

**Mr. Alexis Couture:** I believe you're right on that point, but I think the government has a responsibility in that regard and that the communities must also accept a share of it if they want to survive in the long term. In the communities across the country, whether it be in the cultural field, youth, health or the representation of adults, a remarkable amount of work has been done to promote the language and explain the appeal of speaking French. It is an absolutely superb language and being able to speak it affords extraordinary benefits, if only because Canada, by its nature, is better understood when you speak both official languages. Whether it concerns the laws, history or culture, understanding both languages enables us to understand both communities. Language is more than a tool for communication. It's also the reflection of a culture and the cornerstone of that culture. That's part of Canada.

Working for that development and vitality is essential. I believe the communities are doing it and that the government is doing it as well, but we can always do more.

**Mr. Gilles LeVasseur:** Mr. Weston, it must be borne in mind that the federal government has a duty of leadership with regard to Canada's linguistic duality. In the regions where the number of francophones or francophiles does not achieve critical mass and for the communities to take charge of their destiny, basic development tools must be offered.

Mr. Galipeau asked what could be done for our relations to be well structured. For example, the government could ensure that, in the political sphere, annual meetings are held involving the officials of associations and the ministerial level so that we could speak to each

other. The same could be done in the departments with officials so that people could understand each other. It seems at one point that the message is not that of the associations and the strategic plan is not always understood. This relationship is necessary so that we can explain our approach to each other and explain our priorities to you.

● (1045)

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

Thanks to committee members for their questions and comments. Thanks as well to our witnesses for their presentations and testimony.

The meeting is adjourned.

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