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Chair

The Honourable Michael Chong

Standing Committee on Official Languages

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•(0845)

[Translation]

The Chair (Hon. Michael Chong (Wellington—Halton Hills, CPC)): Welcome to the 20th meeting of the Standing Committee on Official Languages. Today is Tuesday, December 13, 2011. Our meeting is being televised. The first thing we are going to do is deal with committee business so we can adopt the committee budget for witnesses.

Mr. Lauzon.

Mr. Guy Lauzon (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry, CPC): I would like to move a motion. I think we need to include money in our budget for the witnesses.

The Chair: You have the floor.

Mr. Guy Lauzon: I don't think the amount is adequate to continue our study. Perhaps the clerks know the amounts we need. I am moving the following motion:

That, as part of the study on the evaluation of the Roadmap: improving programs and service delivery, a budget of \$36,700 be adopted.

The Chair: Actually, it's \$36,900.

Mr. Godin.

Mr. Yvon Godin (Acadie—Bathurst, NDP): Is the amount \$36,700?

The Chair: No, it is \$36,900.

An hon. member: Perhaps the clerk could clarify things: there are two different amounts.

[English]

Mr. Bernard Trottier (Etobicoke—Lakeshore, CPC): Okay.

The Chair: The total amount requested is \$36,900.

[Translation]

Mr. Yvon Godin: I have a second question, Mr. Chair. Is it for future business or is it for work we have already done?

The Chair: It's for work we've already done.

Mr. Yvon Godin: You're saying that this was not in the budget, meaning that the witnesses haven't been paid yet?

The Chair: Exactly.

Mr. Yvon Godin: I'd like to say, Mr. Chair, and I want this to be on record, that it isn't good for the witnesses not to be paid. In the future, we should have a budget in advance to make sure the witnesses will be paid.

The Chair: We have already paid the witnesses.

Mr. Yvon Godin: Some have not been paid.

The Chair: This isn't the same budget, but another operational budget.

Mr. Yvon Godin: I have another question, Mr. Chair.

The representatives from the Conseil Scolaire fransaskois were already here. We could have had them here during a free meeting, we asked them to come, but we cancelled that. Were they paid?

An hon. member: We could ask them.

Hon. Mauril Bélanger (Ottawa—Vanier, Lib.): They didn't ask to be paid because they were also there for something else.

Mr. Yvon Godin: I don't know if Mr. Bélanger can speak for them, but we could ask them the question, since they are here now. I would like to know if they were paid. I think we should compensate them.

The Chair: We did not pay the witnesses.

Mr. Yvon Godin: They weren't paid at all.

The Chair: You're right. This is our first budget. We haven't adopted a budget for this study. So we need to adopt this budget to pay the witnesses who are here to testify.

Are there any other questions?

Mr. Yvon Godin: Thank you.

[English]

The Chair: Go ahead, Mr. Weston.

[Translation]

Mr. John Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country, CPC): I concur with Mr. Godin. Actually, if we need to set a budget for the future, I'd like it if we could do it in advance. To avoid the same conversation in the future, I'd like it if we could receive the budget in advance. If there are expenses we are expecting for next year...

[English]

The Chair: The budget was distributed to your offices yesterday. This budget is standard. Every study that any committee does has a budget for travel for witnesses and accommodation. There are no surprises in here. This is a standard budget. If you wish to change it, the committee can change it, but this is a standard budget for the number of witnesses we have.

● (0850)

[Translation]

Mr. John Weston: Perhaps you aren't understanding me. In the future, if there are expenses for a future study, I would like it if we could get the budget in advance.

[English]

The Chair: Okay, we will try to get it to you earlier. We did distribute it yesterday to members' offices.

Mr. John Weston: Sorry, we're not communicating on the same wavelength. I'm just saying, given that we've just learned—

Mr. Yvon Godin: It's gone to the Supreme Court.

Mr. John Weston: If we're doing a future study, it would be good to have the expenses in advance, rather than approving something we've already spent.

The Chair: Yes, we will do that.

Mr. John Weston: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

[Translation]

The Chair: Are there any other questions on Mr. Lauzon's motion?

[English]

Okay, I'll call the question. Those in favour of adopting the budget?

(Motion agreed to [See *Minutes of Proceedings*])

The Chair: Thank you very much.

[Translation]

The second point of order today is the francophone minority in Saskatchewan. This morning we have Mr. Lebel, of the Conseil scolaire fransaskois, and Mr. Roy.

Welcome. You have 10 minutes for your presentation. The floor is yours.

Mr. Yvan Lebel (President, Conseil scolaire fransaskois): Mr. Chair, committee members, good morning. My name is Yvan Lebel, and I am the chair of the Saskatchewan Conseil scolaire fransaskois. With me is Mr. Bernard Roy, who is the director of education.

Please allow me to thank you for this invitation and also for the opportunity to tell you about the Fransaskois school community in Saskatchewan and its challenges.

The purpose of this presentation is to make the members of this committee aware of the need for support from the Canadian government to ensure respect for the Canadian Constitution and to provide the Fransaskois community with the means necessary to promote its development and to enhance its vitality.

The situation we describe in the brief shows that our rights under the 1982 Constitution and the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, as well as the Education Act, 1995—on education in French in Saskatchewan—have been affected, and that the means available to the Conseil scolaire fransaskois—the CSF—are still too limited for it to assume its full responsibility.

The CSF is responsible for implementing a French first-language education system in Saskatchewan that is equal to that of majority schools. In addition, the CSF responds not only to the educational component of its mandate, but also to section 23 of the Charter, in the components of cultural community and the identity of our students, contributing to the development and vitality of the province's francophone community.

Early in the last century in Saskatchewan, there were 80 francophone communities where instruction was in French. In 1918, repressive legislation limited French-language instruction to one hour per day. In 1931, it became illegal to teach in French in Saskatchewan. It wasn't until 1967 that the Government of Saskatchewan again permitted a certain amount of French-language instruction in English school boards. When section 23 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms came into effect on April 15, 1982, a group of entitled parents demanded that the Government of Saskatchewan establish a French-language school board to be administered by parents. The Saskatchewan government turned down their demand and an application for a court remedy was filed in 1986. A favourable judgment was handed down in February 1988, but it wasn't until seven years later, in 1995, that the government authorized the school management to be done by and for francophone parents, and it adopted the Education Act in 1995. On November 9, 1998, the CSF was established. So it took almost 15 years after the adoption of the Charter to be able to obtain this minimum recognition of our language rights. There are only about a dozen active francophone communities remaining from the 80 or so that existed at the beginning of the century. Geographically, the CSF must respond to the challenges arising from the fact that the French-language communities are widely scattered throughout the province.

I hope we will be able to come back to reconciliations for past wrongs during the question period.

In terms of enrollments, registrations from kindergarten to grade 12 have almost doubled since 1998. We had 1,565 students on September 30, 2011. The number of schools has grown from 8 to 16. We think that this number could quadruple if we had adequate facilities and resources, comparable to those of the majority schools.

● (0855)

Daycare centres, preschool and full-day kindergarten are indispensable tools for recruitment and the development of children's language capacity and their cultural identity as francophones. There is currently a waiting list of 250 children for daycare spaces.

As for the underfunding of the francophone school system in Saskatchewan, our brief provides examples showing that, since the CSF was established, it has not received the funding it requires to respond to the needs of the current and latent clientele, and that the effects are cumulative. The funding scales do not consider the real costs of the services that we must provide to fully assume our responsibility.

Despite the introduction of a francophone factor in 2002, many legal remedies—yes, Mr. Chair, we are still before the courts!—and a promise of an oft delayed funding formula, which is now expected for 2012, all these means still do not meet the needs of our school system. Unfortunately, it seems that legal recourse is still too often required to defend our rights. But this is really costly for the board and for francophones. This energy could be invested elsewhere, which would benefit our children.

Giving you all the details of the list of services that are underfunded or have no funding would take too long. Our brief provides a list and a few examples of the main areas that justify our claims. We can tell you that, according to our calculations, we are still short about \$13 million to make up the difference and meet the needs of our school system, whether it is school transportation, specialized services, technological equipment, training capability or other areas. The funding formula is deficient and is based on the needs of the majority. It is also important to understand our situation, in that we are spread out and isolated, the fact that it is impossible for us to generate economies of scale and much much more.

We submitted 10 recommendations in our brief. I'll summarize them simply by saying that it is imperative to get more involvement from the federal government to support the responsibilities of francophone school boards operating in minority situations. Whether it's in early childhood, specialized services or any other area, the situation requires increased means. Particular attention must also be paid to implementing compensation measures to remedy past wrongs.

Since the recognition in the Constitution of the right to instruction in the minority language and the establishment of our *Conseil scolaire fransaskois*, a great deal of progress has been made. We must be allowed to continue to build on that in order to enjoy our right fully.

Will we at some point be able to recover from the enormous losses of the past?

The fact that the French education directorate in Saskatchewan's Ministry of Education was recently abolished is certainly not the most positive and encouraging example. Everyone recognizes that provincial governments have exclusive jurisdiction over education. However, we must also recognize that minority-language education is a special case that is protected by our constitutional rights and, by extension, by the federal government's role in protecting official language minorities. The issues are different and the means to develop must be at least equivalent to those available to the majority, while being tailored to suit the realities of the minority communities.

● (0900)

Furthermore, it is imperative—and this goes beyond the provinces' exclusive jurisdiction—that the federal government ensure that favourable conditions are created and that the necessary tools are available to ensure the full development and vitality of minority language communities.

Thank you for listening. We are ready to take your questions.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Lebel.

We now have 45 minutes for questions and comments.

Mr. Godin, you have the floor.

Mr. Yvon Godin: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you, Mr. Lebel and Mr. Roy. I'm pleased that you are here. It's unfortunate that we couldn't do it when you were in town. It would have cost our taxpayers much less. However, the government decided to cancel the meeting. We could have done it, it would have been done.

Before asking you some questions, I need to talk about something else. Here in Ottawa, it's a real free for all during in camera meetings. Since we aren't in camera, I will take a minute of my time to publicly read two motions I intend to present. I'm taking advantage of the fact that we are not in camera and that it's my time to speak.

I gave a notice of motion. So I wanted:

That all of the Committee's activities be open to the public except where the Committee has the consent of at least one (1) Opposition member to hold an in camera session. This would prevent the government from dictating in camera sessions. I think that it affects my rights as a parliamentarian, and that it prevents me from working for Canadians.

In the event that we would sit in camera forever and no longer be able to discuss anything before the general public, I propose this motion. So at least the public will know that we do not want to work in camera and that we want to be transparent.

The second motion I'm giving notice about sets out:

That the Committee invite the president and CEO of CBC/Radio-Canada, Hubert T. Lacroix, to a public, televised two-hour meeting on February 15, 2012, given the importance of the CBC/Radio-Canada to the vitality of official language minority communities.

Mr. Chair, the government always boasts about wanting to keep the CBC and about being strong defenders of our public radio. Mr. Menegakis always speaks highly of the CBC, but Mr. Dean Del Mastro, the Prime Minister's parliamentary secretary, said to one committee:

[*English*]

...it's time that the Canadian government looks at it and says maybe it's time we get out of the broadcasting business and get into investing more money into content? We invest over a billion government dollars, as you know, into a stage, when in fact the private sector would not only make use of that stage...

[*Translation*]

Given the direction the government is taking, people from the CBC must be brought in and we need to get explanations.

I'm sorry for taking your time. Now, we will go directly to the questions I have for you.

To your knowledge, is the Government of Saskatchewan doing a poor job of managing the financial contribution of the Government of Canada? Are there irregularities or negligence? If so, what are they?

● (0905)

Mr. Yvan Lebel: We don't have all the figures we could have. But, one of the recommendations is that the money provided by the provincial government be matched by the federal government.

When we ask questions about this matching request with the province, the answer is fairly simple. We're told that we are given enough money and that it is included in the overall envelope.

I'd like to give you a clearer answer.

Mr. Yvon Godin: I want to fully understand.

You were told that you have enough money and that you should work with that budget. That's what they say.

Mr. Yvan Lebel: That's right.

Mr. Yvon Godin: However, the federal government has a responsibility under Part VII of the Official Languages Act. It's in sections 41, 42 and 43, I think.

Mr. Yvan Lebel: It's sections 41 and 42.

Mr. Yvon Godin: The government must send the money to help you. It was out of those obligations, I think, that it was recognized that you had the right to francophone schools in Saskatchewan.

As a school board, are you able to know what money is coming from the federal government, specifically for that? Do you know if the money is really spent for that? Is it simply that you don't know? There's money, trust us.

Mr. Yvan Lebel: I sense that Mr. Roy wants to answer this question. There are things to say about it. I'll let him speak.

Mr. Bernard Roy (Director, Conseil des écoles francsaskoises): I will try to answer as best I can.

Initially, when the board was set up, we received \$1.9 million for special measures intended for early childhood education or even francization and facilitation. We are currently receiving \$2.2 million from the federal government. The actual value of this amount that we receive, despite the cost of living index, doesn't allow us to do much.

However, I know that the provincial government receives \$2.6 million for languages, specifically for first-language education. From \$300,000 to \$400,000, more or less, is distributed to Fransaskois organizations that support education in French through various means.

We know very well that, in the most recent agreement, amounts of money paid by the federal government for immersion programs went from \$900,000 to \$4 million. As for us, the increase has not really followed the real needs, and no study has been done to find out what the needs would be and what mechanisms for restitution and solutions would be used.

Mr. Yvon Godin: Do you think the francophone communities receive the federal government's contribution to Saskatchewan and that it's not enough, or do you think that it is possible that the money is being spent elsewhere? We'll recall that there are provinces that denounced that, even some ministers said so clearly. In fact, we clearly told the Commissioner of Official Languages that we are deciding where the money is really being assigned. We cannot say that the money is really being sent there.

As for us, are you sure that the amounts that are sent by the federal government to Saskatchewan are really assigned to French education, or could it be that the amounts are being marked for English education?

Mr. Yvan Lebel: I'd like to be able to give you an answer about the figures. We are doing research and haven't been able to get the answers we wanted.

Mr. Yvon Godin: If this is the way it is, my question will become an observation. I understand that you haven't had the opportunity to sit down with government representatives to tell them that you have received such-and-such amount of money, what your expenses are and to make your requests.

Mr. Yvan Lebel: Exactly.

Mr. Yvon Godin: If the government doesn't give a response, it is raising doubts.

Mr. Yvan Lebel: That's right. The doubts are there.

Mr. Yvon Godin: Let's talk about the Roadmap.

Mr. Yvan Lebel: May I add that, in our recommendations, we mentioned holding meetings, being part of these negotiations with the federal and provincial governments, like a tripartite committee. Because we know our needs and we would also like to know where the money is going.

Mr. Yvon Godin: If I remember correctly, didn't Saskatchewan win the right to have French schools? English schools were closed because they were obsolete. New schools were built and francophones took over the old schools.

Mr. Yvan Lebel: We always take over the old schools.

Mr. Yvon Godin: You use old schools.

Mr. Yvan Lebel: Yes, but we built new schools this year. However, it wasn't enough to allow the community to flourish. It's growing faster than our capacity to provide services to meet its needs. If we had a school that could take 400 students—we have 200 right now—we would still have 200 more students who would come immediately. We are still trying to catch up later instead of being in a position to meet demand.

• (0910)

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Gourde, you have the floor.

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

Thank you, Mr. Lebel and Mr. Roy, for being here this morning.

I'd like to come back to your initial remark so that I can really understand. You said that, in the early 1900s, there were 80 francophone communities that no doubt came from Quebec, eastern Ontario or perhaps even directly from France, but I doubt it. This is really part of Canada's history.

Mr. Yvan Lebel: Yes.

Mr. Jacques Gourde: There were far too many people in Quebec's francophone community and few jobs were available. So the community moved west, or south to the United States.

What percentage of the entire population of the province would these 80 francophone communities proportionally represent compared with today? Ten percent? Fifteen percent?

Mr. Bernard Roy: Today, we're told that there is still about 12% of the population that has francophone roots or ancestry. The percentage of francophones was initially about 35% to 40% compared with the total population at the time. It's clear that the decline has sped up over time.

Mr. Yvan Lebel: I have an anecdote for you. In the early 19th century, the governors who came to Saskatchewan had to be bilingual. It was a prerequisite of the federal government, and a bilingual individual had to be sent because most things were done in French.

Mr. Jacques Gourde: For Canadians and to help us understand the history of Saskatchewan, how, politically, did the province come to ban education in French if the population was 25% to 30% francophone? That is a lot of political weight. What aspect of the history or what political forces at the time could have triggered that?

Mr. Bernard Roy: Historically, we see that there were many lobby groups. After the Battle of Batoche, which Louis Riel lost, a lot of francophones began to keep quiet, rather than claim their rights. It was the same thing for the Métis. Unfortunately, this phenomenon had a negative impact on all Métis populations, as well as on the francophones, who were Métis allies.

This of course had an impact on everyone, and their reflex was to want to collaborate more. The government took this opportunity to make changes, which had negative effects. There were even Ku Klux Klan groups in Saskatchewan. They oppressed the francophones. When crosses were burned in Gravelbourg and Vonda, the target was Catholic francophones. Our francophones were victims of oppression, and many of them wanted to be assimilated, rather than fight. They were the target of some discrimination.

Mr. Jacques Gourde: You said that in the late 1960s and early 1970s, there was a shift in the legislation. No doubt, it was modest and gradual, but what triggered it?

Mr. Bernard Roy: The Official Languages Act. We must keep in mind that the Assemblée communautaire francophone, or the ACFC, acted sort of like a government when it came to programs in French. It was the ACFC that prepared the curricula that enabled students to get one hour of French instruction after school. Fights to have these things recognized occurred constantly.

In 1967, the legislation brought about changes. Initially, teaching was allowed within English school boards. This approach was directly addressed at the first language, even though the majority used it. There was type A immersion and, for anglophones, type B immersion. Over time, the anglophones also wanted to get the best in language education, in this case education in French. But we hardly had any power or influence because we were part of an English school board.

Mr. Jacques Gourde: Then, between 2000 and 2010, more students wanted to register for our schools. What does that stem from? Is it francophones coming from other provinces or simply people with a Francophone background who really want their children to go to your schools? In the case of your schools, you said that the daycare centres are full and have a waiting list. Could you please give me a few statistics on that?

Mr. Bernard Roy: Over the years, a good number of people born in Saskatchewan haven't been able to exercise this right. Some of them are now starting to discover the possibility of passing on their language, which they couldn't do in the past. There is also a lot of immigration, given that things are going very well for Saskatchewan, economically speaking. This attracts workers from across Canada,

including francophones, as well as a significant number of French-speaking immigrants.

● (0915)

Mr. Jacques Gourde: You spoke about people age 25 to 40 who do not necessarily have a francophone background, who attended school in English, but who want to enrol their children in French schools.

Mr. Yvan Lebel: We can really sense a renewal, an interest in learning French or another language, even from the majority. For us, the number of students who are enrolling is always increasing. We're talking about an increase of 4% to 6% a year. There would be even more if we had the facilities required to accept them.

We've also noted an increase in immersion. There really is an interest and, among other reasons, it's because Saskatchewan is becoming increasingly international with immigration. There is also the developing economy, the companies that set up there, and so on.

Mr. Jacques Gourde: Does the population of Saskatchewan understand the economic advantages related to bilingualism, in terms of administration or the international scale? It can be beneficial for the province.

Mr. Bernard Roy: I think Saskatchewan is beginning to see this. In fact, it's a value added for Saskatchewan and Canada. The more people who are functional in French, who are perfectly bilingual or who say they are francophone, the more francophones we attract. Whether we want it or not, this is what happens when there's a community and it provides services. That's what needs to develop. Over the years, we haven't had services. Or they were very expensive and, in that respect, reparation measures must be put in place.

Mr. Yvan Lebel: If I may, it isn't just the economic aspect, but the cognitive aspect that our children and the growing community benefit from. This knowledge, the development of various brain muscles, it doesn't just benefit the economy, but learning as well. It's important to take that into account.

Mr. Jacques Gourde: Thank you.

That's very interesting.

The Chair: Mr. Bélanger, you have the floor.

Hon. Mauril Bélanger: Welcome.

Mr. Chair, I have another request to make of our researcher, if possible. It would be helpful for the members to have a document. It doesn't need to have a mountain of figures, but just an overview of the money transfers from the Government of Canada to Saskatchewan for education each year. It could be very helpful to know the transfer situation. Because this morning I heard that \$13 million would be enough for the request and to quadruple the system. I don't know if I'm right.

Mr. Yvan Lebel: It's a good start.

Hon. Mauril Bélanger: It's a number I heard. Only \$2.2 million is being transferred for education. I think it would be helpful for the committee to have an overview of the situation should we want to write a report on this matter, which I hope we do.

Perhaps I should ask the Auditor General to study it, but I will have to wait at least a year or maybe more before he can understand us.

This morning, Mr. Chair, I am also going to put forward one of my motions, which you have notice of, the one that deals with asking the Auditor General to come and appear before us.

As for the one that refers to the headhunter, I'll wait, in case my colleague for Ottawa—Orléans should join the committee. I'll wait to give him the opportunity to vote for or against this matter, because he had spoken about it.

I also want to say to the members of the committee—because this session is currently being publicly broadcast—that I intend to support the motions of my colleague, Mr. Godin, this morning, even if we do it in camera. I intend to support them and I want the world to know where I stand, Mr. Chair. It's important that Canadians know where their representatives stand and that we are not going to hide behind closed doors, as this committee has a tendency to do.

Next year is the year of the francophonie in Saskatchewan. Does that mean that the Government of Saskatchewan is going to give you more money?

Mr. Yvan Lebel: I'm at a loss for words with this question because—what do they say—once bitten, twice—

• (0920)

Hon. Mauril Bélanger: Twice shy.

Mr. Yvan Lebel: —shy, yes. A lot of promises have been made and we lived in hope for a long time that they would be acted upon. This situation is often presented to us. We have even had to go through the courts.

What will the year of the francophonie in Saskatchewan bring? A beneficial recognition, that's for sure. However, to commit to saying that there is something more from the government, we can't—

Hon. Mauril Bélanger: We can hope that the government walks the walk.

Mr. Yvan Lebel: Yes.

Hon. Mauril Bélanger: Yes, Mr. Roy?

Mr. Bernard Roy: I would still like to draw your attention to one thing. We hope that it's more than the presentation of a plaque showing the contribution of the Fransaskois.

Hon. Mauril Bélanger: Yes, especially if the federal government is paying for the plaque.

Mr. Bernard Roy: I don't know. There have been many recognition events where a plaque is unveiled one day, but it stops there. I think it's very important to have adequate funding and correct past wrongs.

Hon. Mauril Bélanger: I am sure that a motion of support for the Government of Saskatchewan to recognize the year of the francophonie in Saskatchewan, which would include amounts of money, would be welcome. So Mr. Chair, I will also give notice of such a motion. Perhaps we'll be able to adopt it one day, in camera. We'll see. So I propose:

That the Committee encourage the Government of Saskatchewan, given that it has declared 2012 the Year of the Fransaskois, to increase funding of the Fransaskois school board.

The Chair: Mr. Bélanger, can you repeat that motion?

Hon. Mauril Bélanger: Yes, I can repeat it. Since it now seems possible to present a notice of motion without it being written down, I will present this one:

That the Committee encourage the Government of Saskatchewan, given that it has declared 2012 the Year of the Fransaskois, to increase funding of the Fransaskois school board.

To help my colleague, Mr. Gourde, grasp what is going on, I'll describe a situation. I have a good friend, who you may know. Her name is Joanne Perreault. Her children learned English. This woman worked and still works in the Fransaskois community. She is an advocate. I think she has already been a director in the Fransaskois community. It's her grandchildren who are going to be remolded through the school system and the daycare centres.

At the time, I negotiated a daycare agreement with my colleague Ken Dryden, but the Harper government cancelled it. In fact, I think it was one of the first things he did. I'd like to get the government to understand that our communities, pretty much across the country, need daycare centres.

Furthermore, I would like to know if you can give us a few examples of services that francophones cannot obtain because of underfunding, but that anglophones in the same province can.

Mr. Bernard Roy: First, if we're talking about study programs accessible to the majority, we can say that there's a difference of 150 programs.

Hon. Mauril Bélanger: There are 150 fewer programs in French?

Mr. Bernard Roy: Exactly. That gives you an idea of the situation. When a program is created, the English version is always available sooner than the French version. In our case, the educational resources do not come immediately. There's a delay.

In 2007, for example, the government required that the treaty on first nations and the Métis be part of the curriculum. Last September, we received the related written document, but our teachers have not received training. But I know that, on the English side, in addition to receiving the training as of 2008, those people had a video dealing with the pedagogical approach, and so on. We still haven't received them. At the end of the day, the board must invest its own funds to try to fulfill a government requirement.

Mr. Yvan Lebel: Given the circumstances, we appointed someone from a school management team who is familiar with the topic to start to develop the program alone. But it's in addition to the regular workload.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Bélanger, the figures concerning the transfers from the Government of Canada to the Province of Saskatchewan are on page three of the analyst's notes.

• (0925)

Hon. Mauril Bélanger: I will send a note to the analyst. I'll share what I have in mind.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Mr. Lauzon.

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

I'd like to thank our witnesses for being here this morning.

I have five minutes, but I have about a dozen questions.

If I understand correctly, obtaining funds from the Province of Saskatchewan to fund your schools is a major challenge.

Mr. Yvan Lebel: That's right, and we are given funds based on a funding formula that is comparable to that of the majority.

Mr. Guy Lauzon: Is it based on the number of students? How does it work?

Mr. Yvan Lebel: Yes, it's determined by the number of students. Imagine 1,500 students spread out over 15 schools, in our case, and for the majority, it's 1,500 students in one or two schools. So we're talking about one principal and two vice-principals, whereas for us, it's 15 schools, 15 principals, 15 buildings.

Mr. Guy Lauzon: Are the numbers per student the same for anglophones and francophones?

Mr. Bernard Roy: Actually, there's no longer a formula for that. Since 2009, it has been under review, and we are still waiting for the new model. We received 1.34% of the base value, but some factors have been eliminated. Previously, we received \$600 more per student, but at some point, that amount was reduced to \$12 for the teaching of another language. If we multiply \$12 by 1,000 students, that comes to \$12,000. But teaching English, first language—and we are in fact teaching both languages—costs \$630,000.

Mr. Guy Lauzon: I'd like to ask you to give a very brief answer.

Of the 1,565 students, what portion has francophone roots and what portion has anglophone roots?

Mr. Bernard Roy: Close to 4% or 5% are anglophones; the rate isn't very high. We are not accumulating very many, the way we see it.

But when this involves lost generations, under section 23, we must consider them anglophones. At that point, the percentage increases to 20% or 25%.

Mr. Guy Lauzon: Do you have difficulty finding francophone teachers?

Mr. Bernard Roy: Yes.

Mr. Guy Lauzon: It's a problem in my riding, as well. Perhaps it's one of the reasons people can't get enough funding. How does that apply in your situation?

Mr. Bernard Roy: When we have to go to university fairs to recruit, we have to pay for advertising. We are competing with everyone else to get those teachers.

Then there is continuing education. At the University of Regina, education courses focus mostly on immersion. We have to invest more money to allow our teachers to meet their obligations in their first language.

Mr. Guy Lauzon: I think you mentioned that 12% of your population is of francophone origin.

Mr. Bernard Roy: That's right.

Mr. Guy Lauzon: Of the 12%, how many live in French and use French?

Mr. Bernard Roy: About 1.9%.

Mr. Guy Lauzon: That's real progress.

The other 10% is lost...

Mr. Bernard Roy: It is not necessarily lost with remedial action and good marketing. When immersion schools were established, the federal government had a national advertising campaign to promote immersion education and the use of the method. But, when we built our schools and set up our school boards, there was no advertising and no money was invested to let those eligible know that they could use the service.

Mr. Guy Lauzon: In my constituency, there are a lot of francophones who cannot speak their language anymore. Children often go to anglophone schools or immersion schools. But parents cannot help their children. At some stage, they lose the ability to speak French.

• (0930)

Mr. Yvan Lebel: But we still provide assistance to parents. We are well aware of the problem.

If parents see that the school is stable, well established and getting good results, they might be more responsive. Many parents are sitting on the fence and looking to see if the whole range of services is available or not. If we provide all the services, we will attract many more parents. As the saying goes, if you build it, they will come.

Mr. Guy Lauzon: That depends on where the schools are located.

Mr. Bernard Roy: Yes.

Mr. Guy Lauzon: You currently have 16 schools. Are they in good locations?

Mr. Yvan Lebel: They are scattered.

Mr. Guy Lauzon: All over the province?

Mr. Yvan Lebel: Bellegarde is in the southeast. Bellegarde and Lloydminster are the farthest points. It is a nine-hour drive between the two.

Mr. Guy Lauzon: How many more schools do you need?

Mr. Bernard Roy: Right now, in cities, we think we would need two more elementary schools in Regina and Saskatoon. We could also use another school in Prince Albert. But there are still emerging communities, such as Estevan, Weyburn, Swift Current and Yorkton, where there are no services.

Mr. Guy Lauzon: How many high schools do you have?

Mr. Bernard Roy: At the moment, there are just two high schools that are separate from elementary schools. In rural communities, schools go from junior kindergarten to grade 12.

Mr. Guy Lauzon: Is that it?

A voice: [Editor's note: inaudible]

Mr. Guy Lauzon: Oh, really? I can continue.

You are saying that the number of students goes up by 4 to 6% per year. Is that because of francophone families?

Mr. Bernard Roy: We have francophone families and immigration is just getting going, but we could attract more.

Mr. Guy Lauzon: What percentage of students comes from immigration?

Mr. Bernard Roy: In a city, it is usually about 15%.

Mr. Yvan Lebel: I'm sorry but I would like to add something.

Children who were in school 15 years ago are now parents. They went to our schools and now they are coming back with their kids. That does not make us look younger, but we have this generation that is now well on its way and that—

Mr. Guy Lauzon: Do you have cultural centres to help francophones continue to speak their language? Can people make a life for themselves in French in some communities?

Mr. Bernard Roy: I think so. It is a matter of having services, such as a cultural centre—

Mr. Guy Lauzon: Are you telling me that you can build a life in French?

Mr. Bernard Roy: I for one work in French.

But for shopping or health care services, unfortunately... We might sometimes get a francophone doctor, but it is quite rare.

Mr. Yvan Lebel: Some organizations work really hard to get those services. The vitality of the Franco-Saskatchewanian community is amazing. The people are proud. And it is growing. They are trying to get services in French.

I cannot say that I can fully live in French, because my wife is anglophone.

Mr. Guy Lauzon: Do you have—

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Lauzon.

Mr. Aubin, the floor is yours.

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

Good morning and welcome to everyone. I hope you will let me take 30 seconds of your time. Unfortunately, it is the only way we have now to guarantee transparency and to introduce a notice of motion as well.

I move:

That the Committee invite the minister, the deputy minister and the relevant senior officials from the Department of Canadian Heritage to discuss the mid-term report of the Roadmap for Canada's Linguistic Duality 2008-2013 by February 23, 2012.

If you get an answer, it will probably be a positive one; if you don't hear back, you will draw the same conclusions as us.

Let's go back to the main issue. Mr. Lebel, in your presentation, I couldn't help but notice your desire to go over the wrongs of the past and their impact. I would like to give you a minute to quickly do so, before I go on to my next questions.

Mr. Yvan Lebel: Yes, the wrongs of the past have led to an assimilation, and that continues because we don't have the tools yet to address all the needs of the community. That is sort of what we are asking the federal government or the provincial government to do: to right the wrongs. That might give us a strong enough foundation to be able to welcome development and accommodate the number of students that continues to grow each year. That would be part of making amends—providing us with structures and adequate funding to curb the assimilation process that is ongoing.

We have the names of 250 kids on a waiting list for enrolment. That's scary. We think about that every day and we wonder what we can do to stop assimilation.

I'm not sure whether Mr. Roy has something to say about this.

• (0935)

Mr. Bernard Roy: If I may add a few words, making amends has to do with child care services, francization services, family advocacy centres, various services that are equivalent to programs that most people get, as well as facilities to make all that possible and an effective technology network to help us reach our young people wherever they are.

Online schooling is a way to offer programming to students in remote communities where they have no schools. That is one of the solutions we have suggested to the government. We have not received funding for that yet.

Mr. Robert Aubin: Thank you. There is one question that concerns me.

Is it true that the province made the decision as to whether you could participate in the consultations with Canadian Heritage? Why do you think you are not an official partner with full rights?

Mr. Yvan Lebel: I constantly ask myself that question. We are the ones going through everything. We know what we need, we are the experts. But we keep being told what we need. It would make a lot more sense for us to be on a committee that is going to decide our future and the funding we get .

Let me tell you a little story. Last time Canadian Heritage consulted with the Saskatchewan government, it took us almost a whole day and several letters to convince government officials to let us take part in the committee. We were successful in the end, but that was the first time.

Mr. Robert Aubin: We are also deep in the Roadmap evaluation process. Under normal circumstances, the Roadmap should have improved your financial situation and given you more leeway.

In terms of the amounts you receive, are you able to separate things and determine which amounts come from the Roadmap and which come from the regular Canadian Heritage programs, for example?

Mr. Bernard Roy: Not at the moment. We receive \$2.2 million and that is the amount we are working with.

Mr. Robert Aubin: So we could easily come to the conclusion that what the right hand gives, the left hand takes away and that the program has not been enhanced.

Mr. Bernard Roy: I wouldn't be able to answer that because we are not involved in the discussions much more than that. We are consulted in the preliminary stage, before the actual meetings, but we are not sitting at the table. The government can then decide on the priorities it wants to see us work on.

Mr. Yvan Lebel: We are talking about consultations, but being involved goes much further than that. They can consult us, but they jot down what we have said and then they go and make their own decisions.

In our recommendations, taking part in negotiations is crucial; it also makes sense.

Mr. Robert Aubin: Absolutely.

In your respective communities, does francophone Radio-Canada play a key role?

Mr. Bernard Roy: It is important for us because it is a network where we can talk about our community, our communities, and we can find out what is going on. In minority communities, it is crucial to be able to see who we are, to celebrate everything good that happens and to talk about it, as well as to address our challenges. We need that voice to assert ourselves and to be recognized by the public at large in Saskatchewan.

Mr. Robert Aubin: Do you feel that Radio-Canada reflects who you are in your community?

Mr. Bernard Roy: Generally, yes. I think Radio-Canada is making a good effort. More specifically, the extra half an hour added to the evening *Téléjournal* helped with making the needs of the community better known. We participate a lot in various interviews. Also, some portions of Radio-Canada's day programming give us the opportunity to make our voice heard and to spread the word about what is going on in our communities.

Mr. Yvan Lebel: It is not just Radio-Canada's programming. The employees are also part of the community. Many of them are involved in the community in order to enhance its vitality and so on.

Mr. Robert Aubin: So we have to stay tuned.

The Chair: Thank you.

Your turn, Mr. Trottier.

Mr. Bernard Trottier: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I would also like to thank our guests for coming here today. As a francophone minority, I am even more delighted to see you here today. As I was saying earlier, I am a former Albertan living in Toronto now. We are sort of experiencing the same challenges, though they are not exactly the same.

I would also like to commend Saskatchewan on its recent economic strength in Canada. I think it is a strength. You now have more immigrants. This is adding to the number of francophones in Saskatchewan and also to the diversity of the French fact in Saskatchewan, I think.

Could you talk about the dynamic relationship between the francophonie in cities and the francophonie in more rural areas? Mr. Gourde talked earlier about the dynamics at the beginning of the century. How are things different in terms of needs and schools?

• (0940)

Mr. Bernard Roy: We certainly have fewer students in our rural schools. This means that our teachers often have multi-grade classes, which makes the task more difficult in itself.

You mentioned immigration in Saskatchewan. We are definitely starting to see the effects of immigration even in rural communities. But that means there should be more promotion and outreach on the francophone side. At the moment, the programs in place and receiving funding from the Saskatchewan government focus more on the anglophone side. So funding is needed for immigration so that

we can act as a host community and have the services required to be welcoming.

To come back to needs, we have to say that, in cities, when we have enough students in a classroom, we cannot have multi-grade classes. Most schools have single-grade classes. For example, if there are 51 students in the Catholic school system in Regina, they create three classes.

At one point, we had 33 students and, since we did not have enough funding, we tried to set up multi-grade classes, but we were losing our students. That did not work to our advantage.

Mr. Bernard Trottier: In Saskatchewan, do you have two francophone school systems, a Catholic system and a public system?

Mr. Bernard Roy: No, the school board administers both. There is no Catholic system as such, but there is a provision in the legislation that lets the school board determine the religious education that is going to be taught, with moral education as an option.

Mr. Bernard Trottier: In the anglophone system, are there also French immersion courses?

Mr. Bernard Roy: Yes.

Mr. Bernard Trottier: Is there any tension between the two systems? Do the two systems compete against each other for students?

Mr. Bernard Roy: Yes, they do compete. English school boards are not required to tell people who are eligible that they should go to a Franco-Saskatchewanian school. Sometimes, people are in the immersion system and they think it is a francophone school.

Mr. Yvan Lebel: The same message was passed to welcome centres and organizations, such as the Open Door Society, Regional Newcomer Gateways, and so on.

We were sort of comparing the nature of rural communities at the beginning of the century and today. I'm not sure if things have changed. For example, I visited the school in Bellegarde, a pretty little community in the southeast of the province, for the graduation of eight students. The gym was so full that I was afraid firefighters might have to come. There were at least 400 people when there are usually 150 people in that small community. You need a bigger gym for graduation or other celebrations; otherwise, things aren't up to their normal standards. You get the idea of the level of enthusiasm in a situation like that.

In Bellegarde and Gravelbourg, it is always amazing how involved people are.

Mr. Bernard Trottier: There is also a sense of vitality outside schools.

I know people from Willow Bunch, for example. I knew the Champagne family when I was young.

Can you quickly give us an overview of linguistic vitality outside schools? I think those two things go hand in hand. It is very important to have a francophone environment both at school and outside. Are there other French-language radio stations in Saskatchewan in addition to Radio-Canada?

Mr. Yvan Lebel: The community is very vibrant. The Association communautaire francosaskoise is active in more communities than schools. Actually, the association always has representatives, local associations, if you will, that promote the French language and capitalize on the fact that there is a community centre and activities. Networking also takes place. We work a lot with schools and the community because, together, we will be able to get things done.

For example, Saskatoon has an urban village. Another one is being developed in Regina. There is a great deal of interaction between the two, and we can understand how important that is. If there was only the school, we wouldn't be able to survive. The community has to be active and vice versa.

● (0945)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Trottier.

Thank you for your testimony, Mr. Lebel and Mr. Roy.

We are now going to suspend for one minute before we start the third part of this meeting.

● (0945)

_____ (Pause) _____

● (0945)

The Chair: Welcome to the Standing Committee on Official Languages.

Joining us are Mr. Fahmy and Mr. Turbide from the Table de concertation du livre franco-ontarien.

The floor is yours.

Mr. Jean Fahmy (Past President, Table de concertation du livre franco-ontarien): Good morning, Mr. Chair. Good morning, ladies and gentlemen.

We are pleased and honoured to appear before you this morning. Thank you for giving us this opportunity to talk about one of the most vibrant Franco-Ontarian communities. By that I mean the community of writers and all those who work in the book industry.

My name is Jean Mohsen Fahmy and my colleague's name is Yves Turbide. Mr. Turbide is the director general of the Association des auteurs et auteurs de l'Ontario français. I was the president of this association and the founding president of the Table de concertation du livre franco-ontarien.

As authors and book people, we are active participants in the Franco-Ontarian community, which, as you know, is vibrant and very much alive. It is also a large community. Actually, we now have over 600,000 francophones in the province. We are four times the population of Prince Edward Island, and two-thirds of the total population of New Brunswick or Nova Scotia.

We Franco-Ontarians come from many different backgrounds. We actually have many tools to help us continue to grow. Do I need to mention the French Language Services Act in Ontario and the whole host of community and cultural associations that make the community vibrant? But we must never take this vibrancy for granted. We have to keep looking for other tools that will enhance our vitality. And I must point out right away that, on its journey forward, the Franco-Ontarian community has long enjoyed the support of federal organizations, particularly the support of the

Department of Canadian Heritage, the Canada Council for the Arts and Radio-Canada. Your committee has also played a lead role in helping our community, as it has done for other official language minority communities.

The Department of Canadian Heritage has been our partner in countless undertakings. The Canada Council for the Arts has been helping publishers. Radio-Canada has broadcast throughout our province and, at the suggestion of our community, has readily agreed to create a literary award called the Prix des lecteurs Radio-Canada. This award was initially a provincial award, but is now a prestigious national award.

As you know, the federal government created the Roadmap for Canada's Linguistic Duality in 2008. Under the Roadmap, just over \$20 million went to the cultural component, including almost \$5 million for literature. We would like the budget for the next roadmap to include a larger portion for culture, especially for literature and books. Why? Because literature and books are tools that our community needs to continue promoting French language and francophone culture in Ontario.

Let me briefly tell you about the history of Franco-Ontarian literature, which is absolutely remarkable. The first book was published by a francophone publisher in 1973, in Sudbury, Ontario. And I would just like to add that Sudbury has played and continues to play a major role in promoting our literature.

After that first book, there was an explosion of creativity. Dozens of novelists and poets feverishly wrote great literary works. In 1989, a group of authors established the Association des auteurs et auteurs de l'Ontario français in Ottawa. That's the association I'm representing here today. In the same year, publishers founded the Regroupement des éditeurs canadiens-français. In 1996, the Ontario government recognized this reality and introduced the French-language Prix Trillium, which is awarded every year to the best francophone writer in the province.

● (0950)

Our association, the AAOF, has 180 members now. That means that we have 180 full-fledged authors in French-speaking Ontario. The association provides them with services in four specific ways: we raise awareness among Franco-Ontarians about literature, we support authors in the creative process, we sponsor promotional activities, and we try to give greater exposure to the works.

Meanwhile, the Regroupement des éditeurs canadiens-français is made up of nine Franco-Ontarian publishers, four or five of which are here in Ottawa. Our writers are of Franco-Ontarian origin, but they also come from all over Africa—Rwandans, Congolese, Cameroonians, and so forth—from the Middle East—Egyptians, Lebanese, Syrians—from France and the rest of Europe, from Argentina, from Haiti. Simply put, the Franco-Ontarian literary community is a microcosm of Canada.

I said that our authors write wonderful novels and prestigious essays. I'm not the only one to say that; seven of us have already received the Governor General's Award.

So there is plenty of creativity, but in terms of book distribution and building a strong readership, we have quickly discovered gaps. And that is why, in 2007, we created the Table de concertation du livre franco-ontarien, managed by the AAOF.

What is this Table de concertation du livre franco-ontarien? Well, it brings together representatives of authors, publishers, book distributors, booksellers, librarians and instructors; in a nutshell, it brings together representatives from all economic and cultural sectors of the French book industry in Ontario. So we can see that a very large number of workers participate in the economy of the province.

The Table de concertation du livre franco-ontarien did a number of studies and quickly concluded that we had to take vigorous action for our books to reach a wider readership in the community and in our schools.

We came to the conclusion that it was time to develop a book policy for French-speaking Ontario. This is one of the main reasons why we are here before you. We are asking for your support as a committee in our undertakings.

We are currently working on the draft of the book policy. To do so, we have partly drawn on the experience of the two other provinces that already have book policies in place.

The first province is Quebec. Bill 51 on the book policy in Quebec has been in place for nearly 30 years. In some ways, it is a restrictive policy. For example, Quebec schools and public libraries must only get books from accredited bookstores in Quebec, except for textbooks. This immediately ensures a large market for Quebec books in the neighbouring province and it ensures the longevity of publishing houses and bookstores.

The second province is New Brunswick, whose policy is much more recent. It was adopted three years ago. It was initially designed to help the Acadian population of the province, but it was then extended to the two language groups in New Brunswick. It is less restrictive than the Quebec policy; it does not impose a quota system or mandatory purchases, but it strongly encourages all book industry stakeholders to promote the works produced in New Brunswick.

Here in Ontario, our association and our community have a vision of what a Franco-Ontarian book policy should be. It should promote public purchase policies, it should create educational programs to promote reading and studying Franco-Ontarian works, it should set up publishing mechanisms, it should create programs to promote books and reading, and, finally, it should encourage the purchase of books in francophone bookstores in the province. Simply put, all we want is for our governments—the Ontario government in particular—to show strong support for making books and reading accessible.

In light of how jurisdictions work, this book policy will actually have to fall under the provincial government, but we hope and we wish that it will also allow for a sensible partnership between federal and provincial authorities. We hope that Canadian Heritage will continue to help us develop this policy and will help us implement it afterwards.

● (0955)

In that spirit, we come before you today. We know that you will lend us a sympathetic ear, as your colleagues on this committee have done in the past. We know that you will want to stand with us and assist us so that Franco-Ontarian literature can continue to flourish and to be a source of pride for all Canadians.

Thank you for your attention. Mr. Turbide and I are ready to answer your questions.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Fahmy.

We have 30 minutes for questions and comments.

Mr. Godin, you have the floor.

● (1000)

Mr. Yvon Godin: I yield to Mr. Harris, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Go ahead, Mr. Harris.

Mr. Dan Harris (Scarborough Southwest, NDP): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

I also thank the witnesses for coming to make their presentations today.

As a Franco-Ontarian, I must say that it is very important for our culture to survive and flourish. I want to ask some questions, but unfortunately, just like my distinguished colleagues, I also have motions to introduce because I want to make sure that they are made public.

Here is the first motion:

That, by January 30, 2012, the committee publicly justify why it has spent \$109,621.18 to conduct an as-yet incomplete study on linguistic duality in Canada's north.

I give notice of the second motion, as follows:

That the committee ask the Treasury Board subcommittee conducting the strategic and operational review to provide, by March 1, 2012, a report on the status of official languages in the strategic and operational review as well as an official languages' status report at the end of the review.

Thank you. Once again, I apologize for taking some time to present my notices of motion.

When I was younger, I was my party's assistant critic for science and technology.

In your studies, have you looked at the question of books being available online? A lot of people these days are buying things like iPads or Kindles. Do you know how many Franco-Ontarian books are available online?

Mr. Yves Turbide (Secretary General, Table de concertation du livre franco-ontarien): Of the four or five publishing houses here in Ottawa...

It's a long process. Actually, the technology is not all there yet. It is not yet mainstream enough, so to speak, for all the technologies to be harmonized. There are also security questions in terms of making products available online as opposed to making them available in stores or from distributors. Some authors are starting to...

Online distribution is probably quite tentative in comparison to what can be found on the English side. However, most publishers are getting on board and giving their authors the option of distributing their books online. It is still basically a matter of negotiation between the author and the publisher. It also depends on what the author really wants. Most publishers have already taken the first steps.

Mr. Dan Harris: Thank you. So it's starting to happen.

Mr. Yves Turbide: Yes.

Mr. Dan Harris: Not very long ago, the Librairie Champlain in Toronto closed. That made me sad; I had been going there to buy my books since I was very young.

If this book policy had been in effect in Ontario, do you think that the bookstore might perhaps still be there?

Mr. Jean Fahmy: Absolutely. That is one of the reasons why we are here.

If I may, very quickly, I would like to sum up our position. The Franco-Ontarian literature available is amazing, but the demand is not there. That is not because people do not want to ask for it; it is because there is no channel to encourage and create the demand in schools.

When our publishers want to place their products in Franco-Ontarian bookstores, they face competition from a very significant number of other publishers, from Quebec, from France or from elsewhere. By contrast, we are relatively few in number. So long as there is no active way to tell Franco-Ontarians, or others who speak French in our province, that we have great Franco-Ontarian books, sales will continue to fail to meet our expectations and bookstores will continue to close.

As you know, our bookstores can buy their books anywhere. It does not work the other way around. French-language bookstores in Quebec cannot buy their books from us because of Quebec's Bill 51. So there is a kind of imbalance between the demand on both sides and the book policy we would like to see.

We do not yet know if our proposal to our provincial government is going to involve a restrictive public purchasing policy or if we are going to opt for a very proactive approach like New Brunswick's. But we would like a public purchasing policy that would allow the Librairie Champlain, and all the others, to remain open.

• (1005)

Mr. Dan Harris: Thank you.

Mr. Yves Turbide: A bookstore in Casselman closed too. So did the Librairie du Nouvel-Ontario, Grand Ciel Bleu, in Sudbury.

Really, a clear and precise purchasing policy that would allow books to be carried in bookstores close to the institutions that ordered them would allow those stores to maintain their presence since most of their revenue comes from sales to those institutions. And if the bookstores were located right there, people would keep looking in the window and coming in.

In addition, if the policy was similar to the spirit of Bill 51 in Quebec where accredited bookstores have to keep a certain percentage of Quebec content on their shelves, the bookstores here would likewise have to keep a certain percentage of Franco-Ontarian

products. Not only would French-language literary products be available, so would Franco-Ontarian products, anywhere there was a bookstore. That is where the real strength...

Mr. Dan Harris: I have to interrupt you, unfortunately, because I'd like to ask another question before my time...

The Chair: You don't have any more time.

Mr. Dan Harris: Oh, that's a pity!

Thank you very much.

The Chair: Your turn, Mr. Weston.

Mr. John Weston: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you for joining us today, Mr. Turbide and Mr. Fahmy. I really like meeting people who are passionate about their work, as you both are. What a great story you told about the explosion of success in Sudbury. I was really inspired. So thank you very much.

You mentioned the influence of Bill 101 in Quebec. When we talk about linguistic duality here in Canada, we can also think about governmental duality. On the one hand, it influences or obliges people to do something, as the provisions of Bill 101 do. On the other hand, it encourages people who want the duality to flourish here in Canada.

Can you talk a little more about those two influences? How can we encourage Canadians to speak both languages? At what point will the participation, the intrusion perhaps, of government into the life and choices of Canadians be necessary?

Mr. Jean Fahmy: I don't think we need to impose anything on Canadians at all. I think we just have to show them the extraordinary richness and amazing potential of our linguistic duality. I say, as does our association, that we are one of the most fortunate of societies in having two of the most prestigious and culture-laden languages on the planet. And we must capitalize on that. That is what we are doing in Ontario more and more.

How can we arrange for Ontario society as a whole, both anglophone and francophone, to become more aware of that richness? By giving the francophone minority a greater and greater presence and profile and by making its cultural products more and more visible, including its books.

To answer your question more directly, I will tell you that we are just at the beginning of the development of a policy like that. I mentioned that earlier. We have done studies to find out about the situation in the trenches. Today, we do not know whether we should propose a relatively restricted approach to our provincial government, one in which only bookstores and libraries would be required to offer Franco-Ontarian books—which is basically all we are asking—and in which schools would teach Franco-Ontarian literature better so that both students and teachers would become more familiar with it.

Are we going to ask our provincial government for a more restricted approach, or are we going to adopt what I venture to call the “New Brunswick model”, which is still in its infancy? The policy is only three years old and it is firmly based on incentives. The New Brunswick government has invested money to encourage public libraries to buy books in both official languages, to encourage schools to use both official languages, and so on. We do not yet know which of the two approaches we are going to take, but we want results.

• (1010)

Mr. John Weston: You talked about the Table de concertation du livre franco-ontarien and the fact that you want to bring the cultural and economic sectors together.

How can we use economic potential, incentives, to promote linguistic duality in Canada? I'm not thinking along the lines of the government forcing the situation, in a kind of *noblesse oblige*.

Mr. Jean Fahmy: I think you just have to quote a figure from a Conference Board of Canada study. It states that cultural activity in Canada generates between \$80 and \$85 billion for the country's economy. That is about 5% of our gross domestic product. You cannot turn up your nose at an amount like that. We have several hundred thousand people employed in culture across the country.

You are perfectly right, sir; this is not just a matter of *noblesse oblige*. We also have to look out for our economic interests, of course. That is why we should continue to support culture in all its forms.

Mr. John Weston: It really is in [*Editor's note: inaudible*]. It implies that, in the future, it will endure. Whatever the government or the politics, I personally want my children and their children to be able to speak both languages, and to want to do so.

Mr. Jean Fahmy: Absolutely.

Mr. Yves Turbide: If I may, I am going to quote Jeff Dayton-Johnson, from Dalhousie University. In a 2000 study for Heritage Canada, Mr. Dayton-Johnson was himself quoting UNESCO when he said that cultural products are not commodities like others. The study states that “...markets for cultural products cannot be expected to meet the conditions under which purely market-mediated production will be the most efficient.” Later, he writes: “Cultural products provide the raw material for a national conversation that allows the formation of national identity and for the construction of social cohesion.”

I feel that the contribution of the artistic and cultural sectors is front and centre in the two majority language groups in Canada. So I feel that encouraging a wider distribution of a cultural product like literature will allow us to work towards those objectives.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Turbide and Mr. Weston.

Mr. Bélanger, you have the floor.

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

Good morning, gentlemen.

I will be brief. Do you know whether the program in New Brunswick receives financial assistance from the federal government?

• (1015)

Mr. Yves Turbide: I don't know.

Hon. Mauril Bélanger: How about the one in Quebec?

Mr. Jean Fahmy: No.

Hon. Mauril Bélanger: It doesn't get any or you don't know?

Mr. Yves Turbide: I cannot tell you.

Mr. Jean Fahmy: No, I do not think that it receives any because the Bill 51 program does not stipulate any amounts. It's just in the regulations that arise from an act. Under the regulations, as we have said before on a number of occasions, Quebec has accredited booksellers and they have to do this, that and the other.

Hon. Mauril Bélanger: Excuse me, Mr. Fahmy. I have only one chance to speak, so I have to get things done quickly.

Are you in discussions with the government of Ontario?

Mr. Jean Fahmy: We are in the process of preparing a submission that we are going to present to a committee similar to yours at Queen's Park.

Hon. Mauril Bélanger: When?

Mr. Jean Fahmy: We don't know yet because we are not ready.

Hon. Mauril Bélanger: You are not ready.

Mr. Jean Fahmy: We are not ready in terms of that submission.

Hon. Mauril Bélanger: I do not know what the reaction of my colleagues on the government side would be, but, if they felt that the primary responsibility in this case lies with the government of Ontario, I would agree with them.

Mr. Jean Fahmy: Yes.

Hon. Mauril Bélanger: You agree with that?

Mr. Jean Fahmy: Absolutely.

Hon. Mauril Bélanger: So let's wait and see what kind of reaction you get to your presentation, when you are ready.

In the meantime, let me change the subject. While Mr. Harris was asking you questions just now, I looked at my iPad to see if I could buy anything francophone online. The answer is yes; I can buy music. I visited the Association de la presse francophone's site because I want to buy a CD by Andrea Lindsay. I could have picked it up this morning. I could even play it for you, but perhaps...

Voices: Ha, ha!

Mr. Dan Harris: There's not enough time for that.

Hon. Mauril Bélanger: Right. But I can't do the same thing for books.

Mr. Yves Turbide: Have you been to the RECF site, the Regroupement des...?

Hon. Mauril Bélanger: Can I buy books online?

Mr. Yves Turbide: I think so.

Hon. Mauril Bélanger: That is what I wanted to know.

Mr. Jean Fahmy: I was talking about the Regroupement des éditeurs canadiens-français site.

Hon. Mauril Bélanger: I am certainly going to give it a try. As this is the only turn I get, I will signal you if I succeed before the end of this meeting. How much time do I have left? I have 5 minutes left? I don't believe it!

I made a promise to my colleague, Mr. Menegakis. I am going to read him a little excerpt from the *Globe and Mail's* business section last Saturday.

[English]

As the deadline for work approaches, Conservative MP Brent Rathgeber told The Globe and Mail that he and other members of the Conservative caucus are urging cabinet ministers to cut more aggressively. "Everything should be on the table," he said, listing federal funding for the CBC and the Royal Alberta Museum as areas where savings can be found.

[Translation]

I will pass it over to you, Mr. Menegakis.

[English]

I'm surprised they want to cut the Alberta museum; usually they're pretty strong on dinosaurs.

Sorry, that's a cheap shot.

[Translation]

I have to ask: in the efforts you are making, does Radio-Canada/CBC have any significance as an institution?

Mr. Jean Fahmy: The answer is a resounding "yes".

Let me tell you the story of Radio-Canada's wonderful Prix des lecteurs. A Radio-Canada host in Sudbury started them there in 2001; he wanted to encourage literature and culture by establishing a readers' prize for Franco-Ontarian authors. So he asked his bosses for permission and they approved it. First, the prize was just for Ontario. Six members of the public were chosen to read books sent in by publishers. A winner was then chosen at a big ceremony. In the first two years, the ceremonies were held in Sudbury and then in Ottawa. They were broadcast on the radio. More and more people began to tune in and to hear our books talked about.

All of a sudden, a lot of other people outside Ontario became interested. I don't know what kind of negotiation went on, but one day we woke up to find that Radio-Canada had decided to extend it across the entire country. So today, six or eight readers, coming from every province, from Quebec, from the Maritimes, from Ontario and from the west, read books from all over the country and debate about them on the radio. There are even short items on television. It's great because you hear about someone in Moncton who has written a wonderful book, or someone else who has produced an amazing essay at Western, and so on.

If it were not for Radio-Canada, none of that would have existed. To answer your question more directly, sir, I should tell you that our broadcaster covers the entire territory. We have Radio-Canada in Sudbury, and in Toronto, and here. Radio-Canada covers the whole territory. People in Sudbury hear about issues that affect Sudbury.

People in Toronto hear about issues that affect them. We hear about issues that affect us here.

I can say without any hesitation that Radio-Canada is indispensable in reflecting ourselves, in telling us who we are, what we do, and what we contribute to the country.

• (1020)

Hon. Mauril Bélanger: What do you think, Mr. Turbide?

Mr. Yves Turbide: I totally agree with what my colleague said. Radio-Canada is essential for literature and for all other areas of artistic creation, whether the contribution be in the development of dance, the visual arts, or theatre or music. Think of the APCM music gala, for example. I feel that Radio-Canada has been an absolutely essential player in promoting Franco-Ontarian music through its association with APCM. It is more than essential, it is vital for French-speaking Canada.

Hon. Mauril Bélanger: Are any of our books translated for the English-Canadian market, or even for sale abroad?

Mr. Jean Fahmy: Very few Franco-Ontarian books are translated. Actually, that is one of our difficulties. As I am sure you know, under the present roadmap, there is a \$5-million program to translate works in French into English and works in English into French. That is great for our country's duality.

But the Quebec publishers have benefited most because they are bigger and stronger, and so on. As far as I know, we do not have many translations.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Bélanger.

Mr. Menegakis, over to you.

Mr. Costas Menegakis (Richmond Hill, CPC): Thank you for your presentation. I found it very interesting.

I would like to talk a little about CBC and Radio-Canada.

[English]

I want to thank my friend from across the floor for bringing up his reading material from the weekend, because it gives me the opportunity once again to set the record straight as far as Radio-Canada and the CBC are concerned.

As you may very well know, and certainly as all members of the House of Commons who are here with us today know, all members have an opportunity to voice their opinion and discuss what they would like to see. Government policy, however, is made at the cabinet level, and the representative responsible for the CBC in the government is the Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages, Minister Moore. In his testimony to the heritage committee he was very clear about the government's position on Radio-Canada and the CBC, and I want to read what he said because I don't want to leave anything lingering. We all understand how important Radio-Canada is to the francophone community across this country.

Without further ado, this is what Minister James Moore said:

...the CBC, through their board of directors, has approved their 2015 plan. This is a plan that we support and have been pushing for and hoping that the CBC would implement for a long time. It is: staying in regions; digital technology; and protecting their mandate to ensure that it's all-Canadian programming.

Those are the three things that we wanted the CBC to do. They've done it with their 2015 plan. ...in the budget, they will have enough funding to deliver that plan.

That is the official government position on the CBC, and while it makes good talk, perhaps even—I don't want to use the word “fearmongering”—a good conversation piece to bring up with all deputants who come to the committee here, this is the official government position. Individual members can speak their minds and say what they like, but the government is very cognizant of the importance of Radio-Canada to the francophone community, and, quite frankly, the contribution of the CBC nationally from coast to coast to coast in Canada.

I want to make that very clear.

My question for you is as follows.

•(1025)

[*Translation*]

As you know, we are studying the Roadmap for Canada's Linguistic Duality. I would like to hear your comments on the roadmap specifically. Can you share with us some examples of the way in which the roadmap has helped your organization and the francophone community in Ontario?

Mr. Yves Turbide: Without a doubt, we are absolutely delighted with it. In terms of the roadmap, we endorse practically the entire presentation that the Fédération culturelle canadienne-française made to you last week. Clearly, because of the cultural development fund, the francophone community in Ontario, and in a wider sense, in Canada, has benefited from funds that were absolutely necessary.

In literature, we were a little surprised to see the national translation program for book publishing in the present roadmap. Although this is an excellent program and an excellent initiative, I do not believe that we formally asked for a translation program.

We support what the Fédération culturelle canadienne-française presented to you when they were here. That is, it would be very interesting, and very much appreciated, to see the establishment of a stream purely for arts and culture in the next roadmap. In that way, more attention could be paid to cultural development, to artistic infrastructure and to artists themselves by keeping artists present in a dynamic pool all across Canada, in cultural industries and in access to the arts.

The Association des auteurs et auteurs de l'Ontario has benefited from several of the roadmap's programs. We were able to establish programs that have allowed our artists, writers and authors to reach out to the people, to become involved in community projects, to go and work with the people and to cultivate that appetite for literary creation. It has been absolutely vital for us.

I repeat that, having become aware of the presentation that the Fédération culturelle canadienne-française made, we endorse it. We feel that the roadmap should have an arts and culture stream.

[*English*]

Mr. Costas Menegakis: Thank you.

Mr. Chair, seeing that it's almost 10:30 and we have a lot of business to discuss, I move that we go in camera for our next meeting.

The Chair: The motion is in order.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Yvon Godin: A point of order, Mr. Chair.

[*English*]

The Chair: There's no point of order.

I'm going to call the vote on it because that's procedurally the correct thing to do.

I want to thank members of the—

•(1030)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Yvon Godin: Mr. Chair...

The Chair: I have the floor, Mr. Godin.

Mr. Yvon Godin: I know that you have the floor, but you are taking away all our democratic rights. This is the worst Parliament I have ever seen in 14 years.

[*English*]

The Chair: All those in favour of the motion will please—

[*Translation*]

Hon. Mauril Bélanger: I ask for a recorded vote.

[*English*]

The Chair: I'll pass the floor to the clerk for a formal recorded vote.

(Motion agreed to: yeas 6; nays 5)

The Chair: We'll suspend for two minutes to allow our witnesses to depart.

[*Translation*]

I want to thank our witnesses for their presentations and their testimony. Thank you very much.

Mr. Jean Fahmy: Our thanks to everyone, Mr. Chair. It has been a pleasure and an honour.

[*English*]

The Chair: We are suspended.

[*Proceedings continue in camera*]

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