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The Honourable Michael Chong

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•(0845)

[Translation]

The Chair (Hon. Michael Chong (Wellington—Halton Hills, CPC)): Welcome to the 29th meeting of the Standing Committee on Official Languages on this Tuesday, March 6, 2012. Pursuant to Standing Order 108, we are studying the evaluation of the roadmap: improving programs and service delivery.

Today we have Michel Robillard and Yves Robineau, from the Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency, as well as

[English]

Mr. Davies, Mr. Dimatteo, and Madame Setlakwe from the Department of Industry.

[Translation]

To begin, we will give the floor to Mr. Robillard.

Mr. Michel Robillard (Vice-President, Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency): Mr. Chair, members of the committee, good morning.

My name is Michel Robillard, Vice-President of the Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency, CanNor, and the agency's official languages champion. Today I am accompanied by Yves Robineau, head of finance. Patrick Borbey, the President of CanNor, would have liked to attend this meeting, but he is unfortunately out of town.

I would like to thank you for this invitation to appear before the Standing Committee on Official Languages to discuss the work CanNor is doing with the minority language communities in the territories.

[English]

CanNor was created in August 2009. It is the only federal department with a mandate exclusively for the north and headquarters located in the territories where it offers its services and programs.

The work of our agency is shaped by northern realities, and we are prepared to represent the interests of the north. Our headquarters are located in Iqaluit, and we have regional offices in Yukon, the Northwest Territories, and Nunavut, as well as a liaison office in Ottawa. The agency has a team of 72 dedicated employees. These individuals are committed to working with our many partners to respond to the unique needs and aspirations of northern residents and aboriginal people.

CanNor reports to Parliament through Mrs. Aglukkaq, Minister of the Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency and Minister of Health, and is led by our president, Mr. Patrick Borbey.

[Translation]

Our mandate is to promote regional economic development in the three territories by offering programs, forging investment partnerships and promoting the interests of northern residents and aboriginal peoples.

CanNor gives a strategic orientation to all federal economic development activities in the territories. The agency administers funding programs for northern residents and aboriginal peoples, offers project management services and advice through its Northern Project Management Office, represents the interests of the north, and encourages economic diversification and prosperity in the territories.

It also mobilizes the stakeholders by developing partnerships, and promotes the programs and services it offers to the communities. CanNor conducts research to support the development of fact-based policies that contribute to the development and diversification of the economy in the territories.

The agency's work helps expand each territory's economic base and gives people the opportunity to benefit from development possibilities and develop productive partnerships with various economic stakeholders. The agency contributes to creating a prosperous economic future for people living, working and supporting families in the territories, for the benefit of all Canadians.

[English]

CanNor administers a number of major programs, including the aboriginal economic development program, the northern adult basic education program, the economic development initiative, EDI, in support of the road map for official languages, and the agency's flagship program, strategic investments in northern economic development, SINED, which has four components: targeted investment programs, innovation and knowledge fund, partnership and advisory forums, and a pan-territorial fund.

The SINED program focuses on the consolidation of growing sectors in the territorial economies and economic diversification, and it encourages northern residents and aboriginal people to participate in their economy. The projects are based mainly on five-year territorial investment plans developed in accordance with the stakeholders' proposal and are then approved by the Minister of the Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency.

[Translation]

In terms of support for minority language communities in the three territories, CanNor became a designated institution under section 41 of the Official Languages Act in May 2010. This duty compels CanNor to support the social and economic development of official language minority communities.

Since its designation, the agency has been diligent in implementing an appropriate structure for its work, in order to support the minority language communities in the three territories. It has appointed an official languages champion, created an internal official languages committee, published its first report on results, and continues to develop its implementation plan. Allow me to emphasize two fundamental aspects in its efforts to support the francophone communities in the north.

[English]

First, we are always working closely with francophone associations and francophone economic development organizations in the three territories. This collaboration allows us to understand their specific needs. It also allows us to help them with capacity building, business development, and consequently community development through economic diversification, allowing them to capitalize on economic benefits, thus ensuring their sustainability. These activities are directly related to the agency mandate and are aligned with CanNor's program architecture activities. Moreover, these partnerships enable us to review and analyze the factors that are essential to strong and autonomous communities, for example, entrepreneurship deeply rooted among francophone business owners, which is conducive to economic growth for everyone's benefit.

• (0850)

[Translation]

This particular matter is very important to us, because we are among those who believe that building strong and autonomous francophone communities is difficult, and even impossible, without constant economic growth. CanNor has a role to play in this respect. It must, to the extent of its means, help northern residents and aboriginal peoples acquire the tools and resources they need to ensure economic growth in their region.

CanNor now acts as a liaison centre for the federal government's efforts to give northern residents and aboriginal peoples the means to build diversified and performing territorial economies that will bring them prosperity.

Second, this essential support involves research and selection of projects that will be funded mainly through two specific programs. The first program, strategic investments in northern economic development, or SINED, I have mentioned earlier, equally distributes a total of \$90 million among the three territories over a period of five fiscal years for various projects which can affect official languages.

[English]

The second program, the Economic Development Initiative, EDI, with a budget of \$400,000 over four fiscal years, is earmarked for projects that affect the official language minority communities.

That said, CanNor will not single-handedly identify, select, and carry out projects. Quite the contrary. I would like to state that our *raison d'être* is to have more northern residents and aboriginal people accorded a means to take action. That is where our francophone partners come in. Over the past two years, francophone groups from across the north have collaborated eagerly and enthusiastically with each other and with us to ensure that program funding is used in a sound and prudent manner.

In 2010, representatives of francophone groups from across the territory played a key role in preparing comprehensive investment plans that identify the projects to be funded through the SINED program.

[Translation]

The cornerstone of their partnership is Table 867, named after the area code of the three territories. Table 867 brings together the three main francophone groups in the territories. It provides them with an effective and open way to determine how to distribute federal government funding to the territories through the economic development initiative (EDI) and to exercise leverage on SINED program funding. This leverage creates more opportunities for francophones to take action and contribute to their growth and the success of the businesses they own and operate.

A portion of the funding allotted has been put to use in number of projects already approved in the three territories. More specifically, there are nine projects, for a total of \$1.85 million. To name a few: the Carrefour Nunavut, \$175,000 for the planning and development of a business incubator; the Conseil de développement économique des Territoires du Nord-Ouest, \$453,000 for the development of a territorial strategy for francophone tourism; the Association Franco-Yukonnaise, \$122,550 for francophone tourism capacity-building in the Yukon.

[English]

CanNor and its francophone community partners bring their talent, experience, and knowledge to the table to make a difference in the lives of francophones in northern Canada, bringing them opportunities for prosperity and self-fulfilment and a promising economic future. These are noble aspirations. With concerted efforts, we can achieve these goals together with the francophones, northern residents, aboriginal people, and our partners.

[Translation]

Mr. Chair, ladies and gentlemen, members of the committee, thank you again for this invitation to appear before the official languages parliamentary committee. I am now available to answer your questions. Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Robillard.

[English]

Now we'll have an opening statement from Mr. Davies.

[Translation]

M. Mitch Davies (sous-ministre adjoint intérimaire, Opérations régionales, ministère de l'Industrie): Mr. Chair, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today to discuss Industry Canada's role in the Roadmap for Canada's Linguistic Duality. I am here with my colleagues Lisa Setlakwe, who is Director General of the Regional Policy and Coordination Branch, and Aime Dimatteo, who is Director General of FedNor.

As you know, Industry Canada and the regional development agencies are responsible for implementing the economic development initiative, which is part of the roadmap. The purpose of the economic development initiative is to build on the economic advantages of linguistic duality and to support the economic development of the official language minority communities. The aim of the economic development initiative is to develop new expertise through innovation, partnerships, entrepreneurship, diversification and greater support for small and medium enterprises. The government has allocated a total of \$30.5 million to the economic development initiative under the roadmap.

The economic development initiative is based on the coordination role that Industry Canada plays for federal partners in the initiative, including certain functions to which I will return in a moment. The regional development agencies and FedNor, in the case of northern Ontario, implement the economic development initiative at the local level based on their own program terms and conditions. This is a new approach to collaboration with the official language minority communities.

A change is being made and we are moving toward a more decentralized and regional, rather than centralized and national, approach. The regional development agencies are in an ideal position to work with the official language minority communities. Their offices and staff are in the field, and they are more familiar with local concerns and opportunities. Each agency is authorized and able to make its own funding decisions under the economic development initiative, and funding is granted directly to those agencies under the financial framework.

● (0855)

[English]

Industry Canada focuses its economic development initiative efforts in four key areas: first, national community consultations; second, a national research program; third, FedNor's program delivery function; and finally, evaluation. One of the cornerstones of the economic development initiative is the implementation of a national consultation process with official language minority communities. In the fall of 2010, Industry Canada organized two national economic development initiative dialogue days. One was with French-speaking organizations, and another was with English-speaking organizations of Quebec. In both cases, key partners from official language minority communities and federal institutions were present to update each other on progress achieved with the economic development initiative, to better understand and appreciate each others' circumstances and to develop closer working relationships.

A major outcome from these meetings was an agreement with our official language minority community partners to set up follow-up committees, to follow through on dialogue day commitments, and to

open lines of communication on a more regular basis. For both economic development initiative follow-up committees, we are able to bring together the two major national minority language associations to sit down together to share information and ideas with their federal partners. The anglophone and francophone follow-up committees share information and meeting minutes and are now able to better understand each others' challenges and realities. Industry Canada considers the follow-up committees a valuable component of its consultative process. Our community partners also value these joint committees because they are results-oriented.

In the case of the anglophone committee, a specific project is under way to gain a better understanding of the role of the creative economy. I'll speak more to this in a moment.

[Translation]

The Fédération des communautés francophones et acadienne,

[English]

for its part, was appreciative of the opportunity we provided for it to meet with departmental tourism officials and to work together and determine how official language minority communities could play an active role in the implementation of the federal tourism strategy that was launched in October 2011.

We have two permanent mechanisms, but at the same time we remain committed to formally consulting with our community partners with respect to the economic development initiative. We are currently assessing options to undertake another set of consultations this fall.

● (0900)

[Translation]

As part of our commitment under the economic development initiative, we coordinate a national research program focusing on evaluating the socioeconomic conditions of the official language minority communities. Research project selection decisions are made in cooperation with the federal partners in the economic development initiative. We organize regular meetings to discuss such issues as research and program evaluation. This research work enables the federal partners in the economic development initiative and other federal institutions involved in the roadmap to obtain evidence of economic trends and of impacts on policy development and program design.

Last year, in cooperation with our federal partners, we were one of the main contributors to the economic development workshop that was held at the same as the 2011 Symposium on Official Languages Research in Canada, organized by the Department of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages. We are thus actively making good on our commitment to official languages research by co-funding the development of a document that has helped community and federal partners acquire additional, current information on issues related to the official language minority communities. That document, entitled, *Research on Economic Development in Official Language Minority Communities*, was presented during the symposium and is now guiding our research efforts.

Community stakeholders send us observations, which we use in developing research plans. We also forward the results of completed research work to them. In this way, through the close working relationship that we have formed with the anglophone minority community over the past two years, we have funded a research project to which the Quebec English-Speaking Communities Research Network is contributing. This project is one example of a grassroots research initiative that will help us understand how the arts and culture sector contributes to the economic development of an official language minority community.

Industry Canada was the promoter of our research project involving the francophone community and concerning the economic integration of francophone immigrants. These are just a few examples of research projects that have been carried out in recent years. We have funded or co-funded more than 15 different studies and research projects.

[*English*]

Giving regional federal organizations the key role to deliver the economic development initiative locally has truly allowed us to build a stronger and more productive working relationship with official language minority communities. You'll hear more from the other agencies in this regard, as you have this morning from CanNor.

FedNor plays a similar role to that of the regional development agencies elsewhere in the country. With FedNor as a member of Industry Canada's portfolio, we have the benefit of seeing first-hand the concrete results of the program investments. FedNor is our eyes and ears in the field, building relationships with official language minority communities. FedNor, as the delivery agent for the economic development initiative in northern Ontario, has supported numerous projects.

One such project involved the trade mission at Futurallia in Kansas City. Futurallia brings together entrepreneurs from all over the world who meet over two days to get to know each other and foster business alliances. In 2011, a \$55,000 FedNor contribution to RDÉE Ontario resulted in the training of 30 SMEs on business alliances, as well as the participation of 10 SMEs in the trade mission, 50% of which saw their sales increase or expect such increases based on negotiations under way. The project's proponents reported that participation at Futurallia allowed for the creation of 20 jobs and the maintenance of another 10. Also with this \$55,000 contribution, seven new partnerships were created and three others were maintained. We expect more economic impacts in the months ahead. More recently, under another of its programs, FedNor

approved a \$605,000 contribution to RDÉE Ontario to make a similar and yet enhanced export development initiative available to all northern Ontario SMEs.

Futurallia is a success story for FedNor, and there are others like it. Industry Canada, through FedNor, since its implementation, has invested close to \$4 million in 50 economic development initiative projects that aim at fostering sustainable economic growth in northern Ontario's francophone community.

Finally, I'd like to discuss our fourth area of focus: evaluation. Industry Canada carries responsibility for the overall evaluation of the economic development initiative. Using a common set of performance objectives, Industry Canada coordinates with the regional development agencies' evaluation and reporting for the initiative, which in turn feeds into Canadian Heritage's evaluation of the road map. We are in the midst of conducting the summative evaluation, the results of which will be made available shortly to Canadian Heritage.

The results of the economic development initiative evaluation and the overall evaluation of the road map will be instrumental in helping us develop options for the future. FedNor's economic development initiative activities have been evaluated recently and show that FedNor delivers the initiative efficiently and effectively, and that 50 projects funded through the economic development initiative meet the needs of official language minority communities. The evaluation report was published in February 2012.

● (0905)

[*Translation*]

In conclusion, Industry Canada believes that its involvement in the economic development initiative is making a real and positive contribution to improving the initiatives and activities that have an impact on the development and vitality of official language minority communities.

Thank you.

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you very much.

I'd like to welcome Mr. Zimmer to our committee for today. He is the member for Peace River—Prince George.

We'll have about an hour and a half of questions and comments today, beginning with Monsieur Godin.

[*Translation*]

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

I would like to welcome our witnesses.

My questions are for the Industry Canada representatives. What is Industry Canada's official languages budget, excluding the roadmap?

Ms. Lisa Setlakwe (Director General, Regional Policy and Coordination Branch, Department of Industry): Could you repeat the question, please?

Mr. Yvon Godin: What is Industry Canada's official languages budget, excluding funding for the roadmap? Industry Canada must have budgets for that. What are they?

Ms. Lisa Setlakwe: Yes.

I can speak specifically about section 41. We also have budgets for the other parts, except for part VI. We have a budget of approximately \$500,000 to \$600,000 for that part.

Mr. Yvon Godin: You say \$600,000.

Ms. Lisa Setlakwe: Yes, because five officers are dedicated to section 41 and part VII. We also have an annual operating budget.

Mr. Yvon Godin: It's all well and good to have officers, but there have to be funds earmarked for official languages in the communities.

Does the roadmap represent all funding for official languages?

Ms. Lisa Setlakwe: The \$600,000 figure is in addition to the roadmap amount, which is \$400,000 a year.

Mr. Yvon Godin: The roadmap gives you \$400,000 a year in addition to the \$600,000 amount.

Mr. Mitch Davies: We have employees who are specifically assigned to official languages. That is the budget that my colleague is referring to. You want to know what the impact is, what influence that has on people. You want to know what our official language obligations are. You want to know whether that influences all the department's programs.

Our influence goes beyond the budget allocated to our staff because they are only public servants. The question is whether we have programs that address the communities and whether they are having an effect. That is not something that I can specifically identify, apart from the fact that we have funding for the economic development initiative.

Mr. Yvon Godin: Do you have a figure, the amount of money you spend on official languages, apart from the roadmap? I'm not talking about public servants.

• (0910)

Ms. Lisa Setlakwe: I don't have the figures here today, but we have them.

Mr. Yvon Godin: Could you send them to the committee, please?

Ms. Lisa Setlakwe: Yes.

Mr. Yvon Godin: What share of the \$10.9 million is allocated to the industry, and what share is reserved for the economic development initiative? Don't you have a budget of \$10.9 million?

Mr. Mitch Davies: I don't think I referred to \$10.9 million.

Mr. Yvon Godin: I'll check my figures.

Ms. Lucie Lecomte (Committee Researcher): It's \$10.9 million in the original roadmap, but here we have \$30 million.

Mr. Yvon Godin: It's \$10.9 million in the original roadmap, but in your report...

[English]

The Chair: Just so everyone is on the same page, in the report entitled *Roadmap for Canada's Linguistic Duality 2008-2013*:

Acting for the Future, on page 18, in annex B, it indicates that the department's budget for the road map is \$10.9 million.

In your opening statement you said that it's \$30.5 million. Monsieur Godin is wondering—

Mr. Yvon Godin: Where does the \$20 million come from, then?

[Translation]

M. Mitch Davies: The \$30.5 million figure is the economic development initiative for all the regional agencies and Industry Canada. It's the entire budget.

Mr. Yvon Godin: It isn't for the roadmap and bilingualism?

Mr. Mitch Davies: It's partly for that. The economic development part of the roadmap is \$30.5 million.

Mr. Yvon Godin: What portion of that \$30.5 million is allocated to official languages?

Mme Lisa Setlakwe: It's all...

M. Mitch Davies: All the funding is available for official languages.

Mme Lisa Setlakwe: The economic development initiative is a component of the roadmap. It is allocated among the regional development agencies and Industry Canada.

Mr. Yvon Godin: However, the roadmap states \$10.9 million, but your report refers to \$30.5 million.

Ms. Lisa Setlakwe: I'll have to look and see exactly how the \$10.9 million is allocated, but FedNor has \$4 million and Industry Canada headquarters has \$1.6 million—

Mr. Yvon Godin: Can you sort that out and send it to the committee tomorrow?

Ms. Lisa Setlakwe: At one point, what was included in that was FedDev and...

Mr. Mitch Davies: Can we reconcile the document he referred to with our figures? Definitely.

Mr. Yvon Godin: That's good. Thank you.

Can you send the final version of your official languages action plan to the committee?

I would also like to have the plan for every sector and all branches.

I would also like to receive the service standards regarding active offer.

Can you also send us your language of work guidelines?

And when was your last internal official language audit?

Ms. Lisa Setlakwe: We recently conducted an internal audit on part IV, and the commissioner has just completed an audit on part VII. The report will be published this spring.

Mr. Yvon Godin: Do you know when this spring?

Mr. Mitch Davies: It's up to the commissioner to decide when he will publish it.

Mr. Yvon Godin: You're talking about the Commissioner of Official Languages.

Mr. Mitch Davies: Yes. That's correct.

Mr. Yvon Godin: What about your internal audit in your own department? You have an internal audit.

Mr. Mitch Davies: It was conducted last year.

Ms. Lisa Setlakwe: Yes. I believe it has already been published. We can send it to you all the same.

Mr. Yvon Godin: You can send a copy to the committee.

Mr. Mitch Davies: Yes, certainly.

Mr. Yvon Godin: In your report on section 41, you say excessive use is made of consultations to speak with the official language minority communities.

We met Jean Léger, Executive Director of the Fédération acadienne de la Nouvelle-Écosse. Here's what he says:

For us, one concrete example of this has been the withdrawal of Industry Canada, which was identified in the previous plan, the Action Plan for Official Languages. Industry Canada was working very closely with the community because that department had money from the Action Plan for Official Languages. However, when the money disappeared, the department completely withdrew. Unfortunately, we now have very little contact with Industry Canada in Nova Scotia.

● (0915)

[English]

The Chair: Merci, Monsieur Godin.

[Translation]

Mr. Mitch Davies: In my address, I referred to a change in the way we operate when we implement programs in the communities. I said that all the regional agencies—ACOA in Nova Scotia—are responsible for implementing initiatives in the field so that we can work closely with the communities. That may explain the change in staff. However, the money is indeed there, and the agency people are there to serve the communities.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Davies.

Mr. Gourde, you have the floor.

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

Thanks to the witnesses for being here this morning.

My first question is for Mr. Robillard, from the Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency.

The goal of your agency is obviously to develop the economy in Canada's high north. Are you paying special attention to francophone communities? And what extra effort has the roadmap enabled you to make, in your agency, for those francophone communities?

Mr. Michel Robillard: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

First, we work in close cooperation with the francophone communities, which are linguistic minority communities in the north. Some 2.5% of the total population of the high north live in francophone communities.

For them, we have used the funding provided to us through the economic development initiative, the EDI. We have used that money to leverage funding from some of our other programs. For example, earlier I mentioned the SINED program, which is providing \$90 million over five years, allocated fairly among the three territories.

In addition, Table 867 brought together the three francophone associations and their respective development arms. For example, the Association des francophones du Nunavut was with Carrefour Nunavut, and the Fédération franco-ténoise with CDÉTNO. We brought them together through Table 867 and, together with them, developed a strategic plan to determine the important economic areas in which investments had to be made in the coming years to develop the vitality of the linguistic communities.

For example, the northern linguistic communities determined that tourism was indeed important. They talked about attracting francophone tourism to the high north. They decided to develop what we call the pan-territorial tourism strategy. As a result, the three francophone communities in the north have received a total of \$453,000, which they will spend in the next few years to reinforce the supply of and demand for tourist activities in the high north.

This is how we make sure there is economic vitality in the francophone communities. We sit down with them, we draw up a strategic plan, we agree on projects, and we use money from the EDI—\$400,000 over four years—and as a lever to secure other funds from our other financial contribution budgets.

Mr. Jacques Gourde: Does your strategic planning provide for initiatives to support francophone workers who will be working in the north for some time? There is a significant degree of economic development in the north. In many cases, these workers are far away from their families. Some would like to stay there for 10 or 15 years, to return there with their families and to have their children educated there.

Mr. Michel Robillard: In Nunavut, for example, we are trying to attract francophone entrepreneurs. That is why we have just financed a business incubator project there. This is a place where there are many business opportunities, but where the wherewithal is not always there. If we can develop this business incubator, we will be able to encourage francophones to settle in the region and to invest in businesses that have innovative ideas. They will be able to derive a certain amount of support through the economic incubators.

In addition, we have met representatives of the francophone communities through the northern adult basic education program. We know that there is a need for basic training among francophones who arrive in the north and who need to raise their education level in order to get a job in the mining industry, in particular. We are discussing these initiatives and projects with the francophone associations.

● (0920)

Mr. Jacques Gourde: Industry Canada and Canada Economic Development are working in the same areas. Are the two departments working in complementary fashion on some initiatives?

Mr. Mitch Davies: FedNor is actually responsible for carrying out the project in northern Ontario. The department's role is to coordinate what all the agencies are doing in that project, including FedNor and the other regional agencies.

I also talked about our research program, our evaluation program and the economic development initiative. Apart from the FedNor people, who are on site, the departmental people are not in the field in northern Ontario. In that sense, there is no overlap.

Mr. Jacques Gourde: Thank you.

[English]

The Chair: Monsieur Bélanger.

[Translation]

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

I encourage you to go on about CanNor. I think you are off to a good start. I have no criticisms for the moment. I may at some point. As for FedNor, if there were any lessons to be learned, you have learned them. That at least is what I have understood. Everything seems to be going well. At the Department of Industry, you've had your knuckles rapped a number of times by the communities and the courts. It appears the message has been received. However, I am somewhat disappointed that you haven't completed your summative evaluation. It was to be completed in February, but it isn't finished yet. Perhaps there is some way to roll up your sleeves and make some progress.

Earlier you said the evaluation of the roadmap would be very useful to you. I advise you to lose your illusions about that evaluation: it won't very useful because it will be fake and remote-controlled by the government. It will contain only what the government wants in it. When you receive the evaluation—and it will be the committee report—I suggest you read the dissenting reports. They will be more useful to you than the evaluation itself.

That will be all for the moment, Mr. Chair. I may speak during the second round.

The Chair: All right.

Mr. Trottier, you have the floor.

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

Thanks to the witnesses for being with us today.

This question is mainly for the CanNor people. You talked about tourism, a very important industry around the world. Are you managing to attract tourists from the United States, Europe and elsewhere given the dollar and the economic problems that are raging around the world? Could you tell us about your tourism challenges and successes in the north?

Mr. Michel Robillard: Mr. Chair, I'm not a tourism expert, but I will do my best to give you an intelligent answer.

I believe that the Olympics did a lot to help make the north known. We know that Canada's Northern House, which was on site in Vancouver, was a major success. It introduced people to the north and the beauties of the high north. The Canada Winter Games also

have a major impact and have helped attract tourists. I believe people are starting to discover the three territories: Yukon, Nunavut and Northwest Territories.

There has been some increase in tourism, and we increasingly want to help the communities, both the francophone communities and the majority anglophone communities. That is why, last year, we awarded grants for tourism in the three territories, \$3.5 million of which went to majority anglophone communities as part of a pan-territorial strategy. We did the same thing on the francophone side as part of a pan-territorial campaign as well. The two campaigns are aligned and the two partners are working together to learn from one another, to link their websites and to ensure their initiatives and strategies are well aligned.

This is having the effect of making the high north increasingly known, not only in Canada, but outside the country as well. With regard to the francophone communities, there are some initiatives to attract both francophone tourists from Quebec, among other places, and European tourists. We also know that many Germans visit Yukon. Now there are direct flights from Frankfurt, Germany, to Yukon. So we are seeing that people are increasingly attracted by the beauties of the north. In our view, this is an opportunity for increasing investment to give these communities the means to offer attractive products to Canadian and foreign tourists.

• (0925)

Mr. Bernard Trottier: We've been having success for some time now. The Germans really love the novels of Jack London, for example, and Karl May.

Are we having as much success with tourists from France and francophone Europe? What could we do? Should we market northern tourism more to European francophones?

Mr. Michel Robillard: That is why Table 867 worked with CanNor so that we could get funding to target those sectors in particular. I know that, last year, or two years ago, people from CDÉTNO went to Europe. They were invited to go and present the beauties of the Northwest Territories. So there is a target market in the francophone community's strategies to attract people from those francophone countries.

Mr. Bernard Trottier: Is francophone capacity on the ground a significant factor in attracting more tourists to the north?

Mr. Michel Robillard: Yes, that's important. In fact, it is also very important for us to develop attractive products and to ensure that we have whatever is necessary to support tourism on site. It must be understood that nothing is easy in the high north. There are major challenges. There are challenges related to distance, infrastructure, communications, telecommunications and capacity. When we engage in economic development, whether to support business incubators or tourism, when we have grants and are able to support the communities, we can attract people because we offer well paid jobs with good working conditions, and we enable the francophone communities to develop those capacities.

Then we are able to develop attractive products as a result of those capacities. For us, this is a very holistic approach. Tourism is important and helps us develop attractive products, but it also has an immediate impact by increasing the capacity to offer these services. Through this diversification and these capacities that we are building, the communities develop further. So we are attracting people who want to visit these places, but also those who want to live there because there's a well-established francophone community; there are services on site and there is the support of their community as well.

Mr. Bernard Trottier: How did the roadmap help you? I imagine you were doing this work on official languages before the roadmap. What benefits have the roadmap and its process given you?

Mr. Michel Robillard: CanNor was created in 2010, so we have really been involved in official languages for about two years now. Among other things, we've used the roadmap funding to leverage more funding from our other contribution budgets.

As I mentioned earlier, the strategic investments in northern economic development program represents \$90 million over five years. We are able to use that amount, combined with the \$400,000 from the EDI, to leverage additional funding. This makes it possible to do appropriate strategic planning and to meet the criteria of the other programs, which are based on specific applications or projects, for example. This funding enables us to pay people and assures us that the projects meet the criteria and can subsequently be funded.

For example, one portion of the \$450,000 for the three francophone communities to develop tourism comes from the EDI and another portion comes from the SINED program. So it's a combination of the two. As I mentioned, this enables us to use this money to leverage other funding sources.

• (0930)

Mr. Bernard Trottier: With respect to aboriginal services, I imagine you have a component to serve northern citizens in their languages as well, such as Inuktitut, Cree, Dene and other aboriginal languages.

Could you tell us about what you are doing in that respect? Do aboriginal services conflict a little with services for francophones in the north?

Mr. Michel Robillard: Actually, as I mentioned—

Mr. Bernard Trottier: Is there sometimes competition for funding?

Mr. Michel Robillard: No. Personally, I have not noticed that kind of competition. As I mentioned, SINED is open to francophone communities, majority anglophone communities and aboriginal communities. However, the first nations and Inuit also have programs specifically for them, for support for businesses and so on.

I don't sense any competition between the communities. On the contrary, I believe that one of the major strengths of the north lies in the complementary nature of the communities. For example, if the francophone community receives funding and attracts francophone tourists, the first nations offering tourism services will benefit from that as well, as will the majority anglophone communities. This is the rising tide that floats all boats. We don't see them isolated or in

competition. As I mentioned earlier, people work together. Nothing is easy in the high north. So people are forced to work together, and that's what makes communities much stronger.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Weston, go ahead, please.

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

Thanks to our witnesses for being with us here today.

A number of themes have been discussed today, including the north and job creation. Here we are constantly thinking about the future of official languages in Canada.

Let's put ourselves in the shoes of a youth of 10 or 12, for example. Based on your experience in the north, what advice could you give that person? Do you believe it's worth the trouble for someone who is thinking about future to learn a second language, whether it's English or French? The north is our future, as we often say. Do young Canadians in the north believe that can work, that it's worth the trouble.

Mr. Robillard may answer my question first, then Mr. Davies.

Mr. Michel Robillard: I would like to talk about my personal experience. I have two young children. My daughter is quadrilingual; she speaks English, French, Polish and Spanish, and I don't need to tell her to learn a second language. We don't need to tell the young generation to learn a second language. Young people do it themselves because they are citizens of the world. Young people today know very well that they must be proficient in at least one or two languages in order to get along in the nearly borderless world we live in.

Youth who live in the high north, who are open to what is going on and who have means of communication, such as the Internet and so on, know very well that the world will open up to them if they are proficient in two or three languages, whether it be Spanish, English, French or, increasingly, Mandarin. These are increasingly useful languages. And I find it hard to see how I could try to advise young people. I can give them advice, such as that official languages are important.

Having lived in Europe for a number of years and seen that English and French are the two official languages normally spoken in all international institutions, I can see that being able to speak them is, in my opinion, a competitive edge.

This enables us not only to open up and to learn another language, but also to understand the culture. Language is what we are and is therefore also very cultural. When we are proficient in two or more languages, we can not only communicate, we are also able to better understand the culture of the other linguistic communities. So I believe that young people today are very open to learning a second language. You need only see the increasingly pronounced interest in immersion classes, both English and French. Increasingly...

• (0935)

Mr. John Weston: There are a lot of them in the north.

Mr. Michel Robillard: Yes. I know there are immersion schools in Yukon. I believe that people have taken that intellectual step and that the young generation is already engaged in learning a second and even a third official language.

Mr. Mitch Davies: One of the objectives of the economic development initiative is to take economic advantage of our linguistic reality. One of the components of the initiative is definitely to treat linguistic duality as an economic advantage for projects. At FedNor, we have a lot of examples of internship projects to enable young people to get a job in their community by working on a project funded by the economic development initiative program. This is a concrete example of a measure created to retain people in their community. According to the figures, this is one of the biggest challenges. The idea is to keep people in the economy because communities are strong when they have access to more young people.

Perhaps Mr. Dimatteo would like to talk about projects for interns because we've had a lot of them since the program was launched.

The Chair: All right, thank you.

Thank you, Mr. Weston.

Mr. Aubin, go ahead, please

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

Welcome, everyone. Thank you for being here with us and thank you for your presentations.

My questions will be mainly for Mr. Robineau and Mr. Robillard. I assume that the fact that we are asking you so many questions must be symptomatic of the entire Canadian population's attraction to the north. I haven't yet had the opportunity to go there, and I still hope we will complete our study on the north by visiting the official language communities there.

First of all, I'm going to ask a few questions on the figures appearing in the roadmap. Your organization, which was founded in 2009, receives \$400,000. Is that in fact the case? Do you consider that amount reasonable? In your opinion, does this mean that you are underfunded in view of your needs and what they actually cost? I suppose that, if the cost of living is twice as high in the north, carrying out activities there cannot be cheap either.

When I look at the expenditures column in particular, I see that there were no expenses in 2009-2010, but that's normal since your organization had just been established. We give you the time to get started. In 2011, you spent approximately \$100,000. Do you believe you will exhaust your budget, that you will lack money or that you will have a surplus this year?

Mr. Michel Robillard: With regard to funding, we have received \$400,000. We work with the money that is given to us. As I said earlier, the advantage is that we can use it to leverage other grants. We spent \$100,000 in 2011; we also spent \$100,000 in 2011-2012; and the same amount will be spent in 2012-2013. The \$400,000 from the EDI will have been spent at the end of the roadmap.

We also invested \$1.45 million under the SINED programs, for a total of \$1.85 million in support of the francophone communities. I believe our francophone communities are adequately funded for the moment, in view of the number of projects under way. Some will not terminate until 2012-2013. As I mentioned, there are nine quite important projects. We can always spend more, but we also have to take into account the agency's capacity and the capacity available in the field.

Mr. Robert Aubin: Thank you.

I was very pleased to get page 15, by the way. The rest of the presentation made me think of what is on your website, which I consulted.

We are talking about the results of the roadmap 2008-2013. I imagine that this refers to the objectives set and that it is one way of clarifying the objectives you want to achieve. I note the following sentence: "...development of new expertise through innovation..." Personally, I understand absolutely nothing there. I continue: "...diversification of economic activities, partnerships, and increased support of small businesses."

The end of the paragraph is quite clear, but the start is like Chinese to me, or Inuit, in this case. I don't really know.

Could you give me an example that would enable us to understand what "development of new expertise through innovation" actually means?

• (0940)

Mr. Michel Robillard: Yes, absolutely. The current SINED program, which I was discussing earlier, is the second one. There was another one between 2004 and 2008, and it was renewed in 2008, when the pan-territorial fund was added. Thus we have funding that enables us to innovate by ensuring that the northern communities work together. The three territories are different, but they also have a lot of similarities and often face the same challenges. Here's an example of innovation. We had the three francophone associations that form Table 867 work together and develop plan-territorial strategic planning. In the context of that planning, we determined with those people which projects would be priorities in the coming years and in which projects we wanted to invest to support the francophone communities.

Mr. Robert Aubin: I see the connection. Thank you.

I know that your organization is still young, but, based on that specific example, I would like to know whether you have had the time to establish performance indicators for the linguistic minority communities.

Mr. Michel Robillard: In the case of EDI, performance indicators are provided by Industry Canada. We provide information such as the number and type of projects, impact and so on.

As I mentioned earlier, in the case of each project that we fund for a community, whether it be a francophone, first nations or Inuit community, our contribution documents contain performance indicators that we want to see met. For example, if the idea is to measure such and such an aspect, the reports that the communities submit to us contain indicators about which it is important to have information. That is part of the contributions. Under the EDI, the performance indicators are provided to us by Industry Canada. We regularly supply information that Industry Canada requests from us to contribute to the evaluation of the roadmap.

Mr. Robert Aubin: A lot of people will go and live in the north for some time and subsequently come back. Are there any projects specifically designed to retain or better serve that population?

Mr. Michel Robillard: When we worked on the northern adult basic education program, I saw that the francophone population was highly educated. So the high north attracts a lot of high-quality people.

As I said, what will make people stay is the presence of strong communities. People can find good jobs there and a developing economy. People are attracted there not only because the communities are economically well supported, but also because they support francophones and enable them to exchange. I think that's a decisive factor.

I lived in Iqaluit for two years before returning to Ottawa. I was a member of the francophone community and felt very good there because it is so very active culturally. There are francophone schools. For example, when francophones held cultural events, the Inuit and anglophones went to them. Those communities have a lot of similarities, particularly because they are very tightly interwoven. Consequently, people have been living there for many years and want to continue living there. They attract a lot of new francophones every year, and that's because there is financial, cultural and institutional support.

The Chair: Thank you.

[English]

We will suspend for five minutes.

● (0940)

(Pause)

● (0945)

[Translation]

The Chair: Let's continue this 29th meeting of the Standing Committee on Official Languages.

Mr. Menegakis now has the floor.

[English]

Mr. Costas Menegakis (Richmond Hill, CPC): Good morning, and welcome. I want to thank you very much for joining us today, and certainly for your informative presentations and responses to the questions so far.

As you know, the road map is a very important initiative of our government. It represents a billion dollar investment, which is why we are studying it now—we are about 60% in—so we can assess its impact on the community across the country, and at the same time get some ideas and hear directly from the users of the road map, as

well as our partners, on what they would like to see moving forward with the road map.

Today, we have two groups here, both of you, that are direct partners. Industry Canada is a partner. Your organization is a partner through Health Canada. It's important that we hear how you feel the road map has worked so far, and whether you would like to see its continuation after it expires in 2013, and what you would like to see moving forward. Perhaps, as part of that question, you can tell us a little about what it was like before the road map—I know it's difficult for your organization to answer because you weren't there before—and what opportunities the road map has provided that you didn't have before to promote linguistic duality in our nation. Would you care to start?

● (0950)

Mr. Mitch Davies: Thank you for the question.

I'll pick up on the last point in the question, which I also addressed in the opening remarks. In particular, the advice from Mr. Lord, in terms of establishing the road map, was that the economic development activities under the strategy be driven by community needs and be well informed by local needs based on working closely with the communities. I think that's, in part, the key to how the economic development initiative has turned out. Each of the agencies has an existing field staff network and infrastructure to deliver economic development programming. They have then been brought in much closer contact with the official language minority communities in their own jurisdictions. This has been a great success, and we see it through our direct role in it, since FedNor, as part of Industry Canada, is directly involved.

We have projects through the economic development initiative in each of the 32 francophone minority communities in northern Ontario. The reach is there, and the level of consultation by the agencies and us nationally has been very rich. I think this part of the initiative has been key, in terms of orienting the economic development activities to the local level, in developing a close understanding of what those needs are so that they can develop projects that really meet those needs. Again, those are the springboard projects that often lead us to do other initiatives, through our regular programming, through regional agencies. So there's a leverage effect of the economic development initiative financing with the other financing that regional agencies already have available. That's been quite important in the road map.

In terms of the future of the initiative, again, we'll work on the evaluations that are under way. We've recently received the evaluation of the FedNor part, and it was quite positive in its report on the impact and efficiency of the program delivery. We will see the total of all the agency evaluations and will put those together in an overall package for Canadian Heritage. I think the evidence will guide which options on the future of the initiative will be put before ministers for their consideration.

We also undertake consultation. National consultations, this fall, are being considered to engage with communities on the future of the initiative to ensure that their interests and needs are well understood by the federal players who will have a role in influencing the future direction.

In terms of our personal view, obviously we'll work with our respective ministers to advise them on what evidence we have on the success of the program. We will bring together the economic analysis we have put together through the national research program. That will inform the future direction of the initiative.

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Mr. Robillard, do you have something to add?

Mr. Michel Robillard: Yes. In fact, I would like to discuss what my colleague Mitch just said. CanNor has been in existence for only two years. However, I know that the funding received through the economic development initiative is important for francophone communities.

I also think it's interesting that this is being done through regional economic development agencies. They

• (0955)

[*English*]

are part of the fabric of the region, and because of that, we understand the reality, the problem, and the challenges. We have a good network of key partners. I think that's a plus, from my perspective.

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

Madame Michaud.

[*Translation*]

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

Thank you all for your presentations, which are highly instructive and will be very useful in our current analysis. My questions will mainly be for the Industry Canada people.

Since you are responsible for spearheading various regional development initiatives, can you tell us a little more about the mechanisms—if any—planned to ensure accountability for all roadmap funding recipients?

Ms. Lisa Setlakwe: We have some mechanisms. We meet the officials from all the agencies in person. We are the ones coordinating the evaluation. As far as possible, we try to establish similar processes and questions so that we can establish a form of reporting that ultimately constitutes a good summary.

Ms. Éline Michaud: Will you be determining the evaluation criteria for the reporting purposes of all the agencies? If not, is each agency responsible for its own evaluation, and do you subsequently coordinate a more comprehensive analysis?

Ms. Lisa Setlakwe: It's a little of both. First, we worked closely with the agencies to establish criteria so that they would be logical. In some cases, the agencies conducted their own evaluation, and, in other cases, we did so together because it was more efficient that way. We hired an advisor to help us with the evaluation.

Ultimately, however, we are the ones who will bring all that together to prepare a report for submission to Canadian Heritage.

Ms. Éline Michaud: Perfect. Would you be able to send a copy directly to the committee?

Ms. Lisa Setlakwe: Absolutely.

Ms. Éline Michaud: Thank you very much.

You said that some regional development agencies had previously conducted, or were conducting, a summative evaluation of the roadmap. You mentioned FedNor among others.

Have any others already begun the same process? Can you state the exact number?

Ms. Lisa Setlakwe: They have almost all finished. I believe they have completed their evaluation in the west. They have all started, and we expect them all to have finished by the end of March. To obtain more specific information, it would be better to ask them exactly how far they have gone.

For example, we did it for, and with, both ACOA and CED. That will definitely be complete before the end of March.

Ms. Éline Michaud: There was something I found quite interesting when I read the report you published on results. You mentioned that a filter is used at Industry Canada to determine what agency, who must deal with official languages as part of his or her work, and who is less concerned by that situation.

Would it be possible for you to send us the filter? I am quite interested in the criteria.

Ms. Lisa Setlakwe: Yes, no problem. It's a document that we will even be trying to improve in the next few months. We use the document when we prepare Cabinet briefs and other documents.

Ms. Éline Michaud: Why are certain programs exempted from the filter, when it is imposed on others?

Ms. Lisa Setlakwe: They aren't exempted as such. The idea is to determine whether the filter applies to the policy or program in particular. That depends. It is determined on a case-by-case basis. There is a series of questions that officials must answer to determine whether they must apply the filter.

Ms. Éline Michaud: That's interesting. I can't wait to see the analytical framework that's used.

Briefly, I would like to know a little more about how the research on official languages that Industry Canada is currently conducting is coordinated with research conducted by other departments.

Ms. Lisa Setlakwe: We are working very closely with other departments, particularly Canadian Heritage and Human Resources and Skills Development Canada. We have committees that work together. We will often share part of the research. Some research has previously been conducted in partnership with those departments.

I would say that our research is based on two different sectors. Some research is designed to equip the communities, and the purpose of other studies is to conduct socio-economic analyses, including the ones we have previously discussed.

For example, we conducted the Business Vitality Index project with the CEDECs. It was a project designed to help the communities measure economic development and entrepreneurship gaps and opportunities. We gave the CEDECs funding to develop the tool, to train people to apply the tool, and we applied it in certain communities—I think it was Témiscaming and Campbell's Bay.

We conduct various types of research, and we share results with our federal and community partners. We work with both groups to determine the research plan.

• (1000)

The Chair: Thank you, madam

[English]

Mr. Boughen.

Mr. Ray Boughen (Palliser, CPC): Thank you, Chair.

Let me add my voice of welcome to the panel. We're glad that you're able to be with us this morning and share some thoughts with us.

I'd like someone on the panel to respond in a little more detail on research. What is the topic of the research and how does that tie in to tourism? We heard you speak on tourism and what's happening to increase the probability of people coming north. Could you share with us a couple of those issues that are in vogue now in attracting people?

Mr. Mitch Davies: In terms of the research, my colleague mentioned that there are essentially two aspects of the program.

One is what I call more field research. For example, there's the business vitality index, which is a practical research tool to develop best practices in terms of a community assessing its attractiveness to attract investments, its attractiveness to grow itself economically. In that case we partnered with communities that wanted to build this tool, and then that becomes a mechanism that can be replicated and used by the community. That's sort of active, on-the-ground research.

The second aspect to the program is more the socio-economic study of the economic development and situation of the official language minority communities in particular, which is more or less taking the overall data that we have through Statistics Canada and actually taking it further, actually adding more richness and detail so that we can pull out the specific economic circumstances, the population circumstances and so on, of the communities that are the focus of the economic development initiative.

That's our service, essentially, to all the departments involved in the road map. It's to ensure that we have the right evidence on what's happening in those communities and can put together a strong research program in that regard.

As it relates to tourism, of course, the issue in that case is partly to ensure that we have a very active dialogue with communities, specifically as to their needs in relation to attracting tourists. So there is marketing, putting together programs to ensure they can market on a collective basis so that not everyone is trying to do this themselves. It's very costly. But if you can put together communities into a plan and you can, overall in a regional area, bring more interest into that area....

The second aspect is also to work on strategic planning around what attractions can be built, which is more the tourist experience and ensuring that we can enhance the tourist experience. The EDI money is helpful in terms of some of the strategic planning, and then again through our regular programs, through regional agencies, they can then identify if there are worthy projects that they can carry forward, and actually finance part of those projects and see them through to completion.

Marketing is one key aspect because there's a lot of competition in tourism to get our message out, to get these communities' message out to the specific target markets they want to focus on, and, second, to help them build up the actual asset, the tourist experience, through training and the development of infrastructure that would help them offer a full experience to tourists.

• (1005)

Mr. Ray Boughen: Thanks, Chair.

The Chair: Okay.

Mr. Harris.

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

Thanks to everybody for being here today.

I'm going to start with CanNor. I have a couple of questions. As a new organization, certainly I'm sure that more data would be helpful. Would a northern study on linguistic duality help CanNor in its endeavours?

Mr. Michel Robillard: I think it will, for sure.

Whatever we do in terms of economic development, if we have... As I said in my speech, we like to develop fact-based policy and programs. Whatever source of information we get to support any communities in the north, we try to get access to these studies or these analyses.

I have a good example, and I would like to come back to the previous question with respect to tourism. If you look at the two strategies right now, one supported by the francophone community, the other supported by the three territories, they have done some really important research to help us target, really, the different markets. Whatever we can get access to in terms of studies or analysis, we're trying to use this information to develop our policies and programs.

I think it's time for me to shut up because—

Voices: Oh, oh!

Mr. Dan Harris: That's the cue to my next question.

I was asking because the last Parliament did start to undertake a study on linguistic duality in this committee. We've spent nearly \$150,000 on that, and to date this Parliament has not completed it.

You mentioned that the cornerstone of the partnership is Table 867. Is that partnership going to be producing a report as to the activities they've completed and are undertaking? Since these bring together the minority language groups from all across the territories, I'd certainly be very interested to hear what collectively they might have to say about the program.

Mr. Michel Robillard: Specifically for this one, I don't know, but I can come back to you with the answer.

What I know is that Table 867 did apply. As I said, CanNor is application-based and project-based. Bringing Table 867 together to do this strategic planning session was part of a project.

Normally at the end of each project, as part of our contribution agreement, not only do we have performance indicators, we also have regular reporting. And at the end of the project we normally have reports.

But I will make sure I get back to you with a more thorough answer.

[Translation]

Mr. Dan Harris: Excellent, thank you.

Since your group no doubt works on official languages, does it have authority to impose directives on all branches and components of Industry Canada?

[English]

So are you able to provide, encourage, and force the subgroups with directives?

Mr. Mitch Davies: I feel like asking, directives in what respect, but I....

Mr. Dan Harris: With respect to official languages.

Élaine Michaud spoke about the filter. Are you able to actually make that filter apply to every subgroup, for instance? And does it?

Mr. Mitch Davies: Our staff work very actively with the policy groups in the department, in particular on new initiatives as they're coming forward in their early stage. We work with the policy staff and other organizations to go through the filter with them. Our key value-added is to bring forward specific knowledge of the Official Languages Act requirements, part VII in particular, to ensure they're applied in a rigorous fashion when we implement policy.

The law in and of itself is authoritative enough in this respect, in the sense that it doesn't require an authority on our part more or less. We're bringing to the attention of the department and its employees the obligations that are already in place under the law and dutifully ensuring they're taken care of in the department.

I don't think it's a question of force. It's more awareness, skill, and competence in being able to represent, to all parts of the departments, the Official Languages Act requirements, particularly part VII, requiring our active support of official language minority communities through our activities, and how that would apply, given the case.

•(1010)

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. Davies and Mr. Harris.

Mr. Weston.

[Translation]

Mr. John Weston: Thank you.

I took great interest in the answers, at least the start of the answers, when we discussed the role of young people in the north.

Mr. Robillard, you said that only 2% or 3% of people in the north are francophone. In view of technological growth, we know that young people are increasingly using English with their tablets and other electronic devices.

I want to take this question further. How can young people in the north be persuaded that they should study French?

I'm convinced it is necessary to know another language, whether it be Chinese or Spanish. It's good to know another language. For me, however, the challenge is to determine how we can preserve both languages in a world that is changing so quickly and that is increasingly globalized.

Perhaps Mr. Dimatteo, Mr. Robineau or Ms. Setlakwe would like to answer that question.

[English]

Mr. Aime Dimatteo (Director General, FedNor (Federal Economic Development Initiative in Northern Ontario), Department of Industry): Yes, if I may.

Clearly, in terms of the work that FedNor is trying to do through the EDI program and our regular work, we're trying to demonstrate.... We have some 16% of the northern Ontario population that is francophone, so we have a fairly large francophone population.

Mr. John Weston: Sixteen per cent and...?

Mr. Aime Dimatteo: Sixteen per cent of the northern Ontario population is francophone, so it's in our interest—

[Translation]

Mr. John Weston: I'll stop you there a moment.

Unless I'm mistaken, you said that only 2% or 3% of the population of the north is francophone?

Mr. Michel Robillard: Currently, Statistics Canada's 2006 data indicate that approximately 2.5% to 3% of the population of the north is francophone. That means approximately 3,000 to 3,500 persons in the territories.

Mr. John Weston: But what is the percentage in northern Ontario?

Mr. Aime Dimatteo: Ultimately, it's larger percentage for us. Sixteen per cent of our population is francophone, and we have a lot of francophone communities. I'm talking about towns like Sturgeon Falls, Hearst, Cochrane and several others where the first language is French.

Even though the EDI and other programs are for us, it is important to be able to develop programs in the language of choice of the people who live in the north.

Mr. John Weston: We've heard it said that French immersion schools are popular in the north. My three children, who are from British Columbia, studied French at an immersion school. French immersion schools are really growing in British Columbia. Are we seeing the same trend in the north?

Mr. Michel Robillard: It would be hard to answer your question. I believe there are immersion schools in Yukon. As for the Northwest Territories and Nunavut, I will have to look for the answer.

You mentioned iPads, for example, tablets and other electronic devices. Your question is eminently philosophical: how do we ensure that young people will always continue speaking French, English or both languages? I believe that question goes to the solidity of the community and the framework we offer young people.

One thing is certain: this is a very complex matter for us in the north, as I mentioned earlier. In Nunavut, for example, they speak English, French and Inuktitut, and, if I'm not mistaken, Inuinnaqtun is the fourth official language. Not only are young people living in the community with which they identify—francophones living in a francophone community—but they are also surrounded by a population that mainly speaks Inuktitut. That also changes the situation. Personally, I believe that young people are still speaking the language and opening up to other languages because they come from established communities whose continued existence is guaranteed.

• (1015)

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

Mr. Godin, go ahead, please.

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

I heard Mr. Weston say how quickly the world is changing and wonder how we could continue speaking both languages. I believe that, if the federal government respected both languages and started appointing bilingual instead of unilingual English judges to the Supreme Court, as well as a bilingual auditor general, that would send young people the message that you have to know both languages to gain access to similar positions. That would show considerable respect to the founding peoples, including the aboriginal peoples. That would set the stage for everyone.

I am forced to send that message because Mr. Weston still wonders how we can continue to support the two languages. And our friend Ray Boughen still says there are more Chinese than francophones in the west and wonders how that can continue.

What is Industry Canada doing about this? Has the department considered the question? We're talking about industries and jobs—at least, that's what I think. Francophones who go to work in industry in the west aren't even able to get translated versions of the security tests they have to take, without which they can't get a job. However, foreign countries send temporary workers and everything is translated. It's as though they don't need the official languages program. You'd think everything is fine for them; we "accommodate" them. But it's as though no one wants to "accommodate" francophones because that's too costly. And yet francophones are one of the founding peoples.

I would like to know the opinion of the Industry Canada representatives. Are you doing something to help our francophone workers who don't speak English, people from Caraquet and Lamèque, for example? What is the government doing for them? Let's forget about the roadmap for two minutes. What is the government doing to help those workers?

Mr. Mitch Davies: First, Human Resources and Skills Development Canada is responsible for training and skills development. That question could definitely be put to them.

As for our department, we take our obligation to promote linguistic duality seriously. We meet that obligation in all the programs for which we are responsible. We have well-trained people. We can offer services in both official languages. Canadians have access to our programs in both languages. We take that very seriously.

I can't give a general answer to a question that contains a number of components. That is not something that—

Mr. Yvon Godin: Don't worry, we have already put the question to Human Resources and Skills Development Canada.

It isn't a major component, Mr. Davies. I am just talking about Canadian workers. In fact, I may have talked a lot, but I didn't discuss a lot of things. I just talked about francophone Canadian workers who go out west.

What is Industry Canada doing to help Canadian workers, those who could get a job? While foreign workers who speak another language and get aid are being brought in, Francophones are not getting that aid.

Mr. Mitch Davies: The department's role in general is to support economic growth across the country. We want a regulatory framework so there is a solid and competitive market. We want to offer programs to help small and medium enterprises create jobs and grow. We have programs for all that.

Mr. Yvon Godin: For employees, it's job creation. That's obvious.

Mr. Davies, under the title, Program Activities, on page 5 of Industry Canada's Report on Plans and Priorities, there is Market-place Frameworks and Regulations. Below that, there are Subactivities, including Measurement Canada, Superintendent of Bankruptcy, Corporations Canada, Internal Trade Secretariat and Intellectual Property. Nowhere do I see official languages. There are a number of subactivities.

Further down the same page, I see Community Economic Development. That's ACOA, FedNor...

An hon. member: That's not ACOA.

Mr. Yvon Godin: No, it's not that?

Mr. Mitch Davies: In our case, it's Fed Nor. As for ACOA, the minister has his own report on plans and priorities. The funding is allocated directly to the deputy minister by Parliament.

Mr. Yvon Godin: So it's FedNor in your case.

There we see: linguistic duality and official languages. Why do linguistic duality and official languages appear only under the activity Community Economic Development, not under the other headings? The term "official languages" appears under no other heading.

Who handles official languages in the other departments?

• (1020)

Mr. Mitch Davies: In fact, it is the role of all employees to promote official languages for all the programs. However, in the case you are referring to, there is an accounting system in all departments which distinguishes funding under our economic development initiative program. That's what is represented in our plan.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Godin.

Mr. Trottier will now have the floor.

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

I would like to discuss Mr. Godin's topic a little.

I wanted to talk about governance. Mr. Davies, you said that the role of all departments was to work taking into account the official languages situation and to promote official languages within departments.

Who is really responsible? If it is everyone's responsibility, is there a person in your department who specifically deals with official languages? Who manages it?

We could cite some more specific economic development examples. If FedNor has a project in the natural resources sector, will responsibility for it fall to FedNor, the Department of Natural Resources or Canadian Heritage?

When the departments cooperate with each other, how does support for official languages work in your field?

Mr. Mitch Davies: Under the economic development initiative, we at Industry Canada are responsible for coordinating the activities of all regional agencies. We talked about meetings and standardization systems for the data and research that we conduct jointly on these mechanisms. We are there with all the other departments concerned so that we can have a common plan and something coherent at the end. We can look at each other's activities and make sound comparisons.

My team and I are responsible within the department for supporting all officials on all official language issues, whether it's training, applying our official languages filter or the report of the Department of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages. That is our role.

In addition, we also interact with the commissioner. We have just completed quite an intense period with him because the people from his office conducted an audit of our implementation of part VII in particular. This is very important work for us and we take it very seriously.

Mr. Bernard Trottier: You mentioned the consultative approach with the linguistic communities. For example, if you have a project that is being launched in Témiscaming or Timmins, where there is a large francophone community, FedNor may intervene, or the Department of Natural Resources, or the department concerned with Small Business and Tourism.

Who ensures that the service is offered in both official languages, that all communications are good and that they reach the linguistic communities in their official language?

• (1025)

Mr. Mitch Davies: Technically, the officer who provides the service is responsible for that. That means, in FedNor's case, that Mr. Dimatteo and his team are directly responsible for knowing whether there is staff, whether requests have been properly handled in the clients' language of choice, if they have been taken seriously and whether we have a rigorous program. That is the role of managers in the field.

Mr. Bernard Trottier: So this is a project execution issue. What problems arose in planning and developing plans for the roadmap? What problems surfaced when you designed the various parts of the roadmap? What problems were there in coordinating with the Department of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages, or with the Commissioner of Official Languages, for example? What challenges did you face in developing the plans from 2008 to the present?

Ms. Lisa Setlakwe: I admit I wasn't here in 2008. As I mentioned, we work very closely together. I imagine we didn't always share the same view on everything, but we nevertheless all have the same goal and the same objectives. The first idea was formed the right way because every agency has its own procedures. We still have a framework objective that guides us, but the agencies have the necessary flexibility to respond to needs in their community.

It was not necessarily very difficult to agree on a national plan because the way it was structured gave us that flexibility.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Bélanger, go ahead, please.

[English]

Hon. Mauril Bélanger: I want to verify first that I'm not mistaken. FedDev is not coming to this committee. Is that correct?

The Chair: Let me verify that.

Go ahead.

Hon. Mauril Bélanger: Well, my questions will be based on that.

The Chair: Off the top of my head, I don't know.

Hon. Mauril Bélanger: We have FedNor. We have ACOA. We have Western. We have CanNor. But FedDev, the one for southern Ontario, is not coming. Is that correct?

[Translation]

The Chair: You are right.

[English]

Hon. Mauril Bélanger: It's the only one I'd have some real questions for.

Mr. Davies, do you have any responsibility for it?

Mr. Mitch Davies: I wish we did, but no, we're not responsible.

Hon. Mauril Bélanger: Would you convey some questions to it?

Mr. Mitch Davies: I'm certain they'll be recorded.

Hon. Mauril Bélanger: I understand it started at the same time as CanNor. But CanNor has, according to our numbers, at least, done 24% of its spending, and it seems to be doing its job. It's willing to be here, and it offered, I thought, an interesting briefing.

I'd love to get a similar briefing from FedDev. I'd love to know why, as of the end of 2010-11, our numbers tell us, it has spent only 11% of its funding. I'd like to know also, systematically, who it is consulting and when and how. As someone from so-called southern Ontario—because it includes the east as well, since it includes everything that FedNor doesn't cover—I haven't heard a single peep from it since it's been in existence. I represent a riding in its territory and I haven't heard a peep. Obviously it doesn't care about MPs, and that's fine; I expect we're not its clientele. But if it needs any help in reaching out to communities, it's not.... I haven't heard from the communities in eastern Ontario either that they're even aware of its existence.

Convey these things to it for me, please.

Perhaps we can squeeze it in at some meeting, Mr. Chairman. It's the only one not coming.

The Chair: I will say just two things about that.

First, it wasn't on the list of witnesses suggested by any of the members here. But what we can do, and what I'll instruct the clerk to do, is to call up FedDev and ask that it submit a brief to the committee that would be distributed to all committee members.

• (1030)

Hon. Mauril Bélanger: And it's part of the *feuille de route*.

The Chair: I understand. We'll ask FedDev, which is out of Kitchener, to submit a brief to our committee with respect to our study, and we'll have it distributed to all committee members.

Hon. Mauril Bélanger: I don't understand. We seem to have invited every other agency and department that's included in the *feuille de route*, but not FedDev. Does someone have something to hide?

The Chair: I am the servant of the committee. I asked committee members to submit witness lists to me.

Hon. Mauril Bélanger: Maybe it's been misdirected by a phone call to go somewhere else.

Voices: Oh, oh!

The Chair: I asked committee members to submit a witness list to me. We went over it two or three times. It wasn't on the witness list.

That being said, even though it has not been invited to appear, we can demand that it submit a brief on the road map. I've instructed the clerk to contact the Federal Economic Development Agency for Southern Ontario to give us a brief on what it's doing for the road map.

Hon. Mauril Bélanger: Thank you.

[Translation]

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

The Chair: Yes, Mr. Godin?

Mr. Yvon Godin: I would like to suggest that we add this group to the meeting where the ACOA people and all those groups will come and testify. They could come at the same time. I suggest that we invite them, if we have the approval...

[English]

The Chair: We'll make the attempt. We'll ask it to appear. We'll try to fit it in. If it can't, we'll still demand that it submit a brief.

[Translation]

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

[English]

That's it for me.

A voice: And we'll submit questions to it.

The Chair: We have, actually, a few extra minutes.

Mr. Zimmer, you've not had a chance to ask any questions. Would you...?

Mr. Bob Zimmer (Prince George—Peace River, CPC): I will cede my time to my colleague, Mr. Gourde.

[Translation]

The Chair: Mr. Gourde, do you have any questions?

Mr. Jacques Gourde: I do, but I think we have to discuss future business or the budget. I will let you...

[English]

The Chair: Okay. Just one moment. Hold on.

We have 15 minutes left. If there are no further questions, we'll—

[Translation]

Mr. Yvon Godin: Yes.

[English]

I have one.

[Translation]

The Chair: All right.

Mr. Godin, you have the floor.

Mr. Yvon Godin: I would like to know whether you have any idea of the status of official languages at the Competition Bureau and at the Office of the Superintendent of Bankruptcy.

Mr. Mitch Davies: To address that question, it will probably be important to gather specific data or information. However, since I personally don't work in those offices, I can't report more specifically on their activities.

I will be pleased to provide the committee with additional information on their official language programs. They are definitely required to follow the same procedure as is followed in all the other branches of the department.

Mr. Yvon Godin: Here is my final question, even though I am somewhat repeating myself. Has the roadmap been important for your departments?

Mr. Mitch Davies: Yes, it has.

Mr. Michel Robillard: It's important for us.

As I mentioned, it is especially so for the francophone communities because it helps provide access to other types of funding from our other programs. It has had a positive impact.

Mr. Yvon Godin: Like Guy A. Lepage, I'm going to say, here's the question that kills: do you want it to continue?

Mr. Michel Robillard: It's not up to me to decide.

Mr. Yvon Godin: I'm not asking you to decide.

Would you like it to continue?

Mr. Michel Robillard: I believe the question should be put to the francophone communities, but it's an important mechanism that, among other things, has enabled us to have a positive effect on the northern francophone communities.

Mr. Yvon Godin: Thank you.

And you, Mr. Davies, what do you think? I know it's not up to you to respond, but I would like to know your ideas on it.

Mr. Mitch Davies: Yes, it's important. We have definitely achieved some success through the regional development approach. As for FedNor, we've had very good success with some projects.

In my remarks, I discussed a project that had been expanded to apply across all of northern Ontario as a result of the success we had with the EDI. That's important.

Mr. Yvon Godin: The communities say it has been important for them. That's something.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Godin.

We will now suspend for a few minutes to allow the witnesses to leave the room.

[English]

Then we'll continue with our budget.

•(1030) _____ (Pause) _____

•(1035)

The Chair: We're coming out of suspension. We are in public, so I hope I didn't give the wrong impression that people had to leave the room.

[Translation]

Mr. Godin, you have the floor.

Do you want to introduce your motion?

Mr. Yvon Godin: Yes, Mr. Chair.

This is a request for supplementary budget. My motion is in both official languages. It reads as follows:

[English]

That in relation to the study of the evaluation of the Roadmap: improving programs and service delivery, the proposed budget in the amount of \$ 63,900 be adopted.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

This budget is in addition to the \$36,900 that has already been approved and spent for witnesses who have already appeared in front of our committee. This supplementary budget of \$63,900 would allow us to call another 34 witnesses.

[Translation]

Are there any questions?

Mr. Gourde, you have the floor.

Mr. Jacques Gourde: It's more a suggestion or comment.

In view of the fact that all our rooms are well equipped now and that we have invested in teleconferencing facilities, perhaps we can use the technology for certain witnesses. Some witnesses could cost a lot of money.

We could at least study the possibility of doing so. If we could save money, that would be good.

The Chair: That's possible.

Mr. Bélanger, go ahead, please.

Hon. Mauril Bélanger: Mr. Chair, I am opposed to this. I think instead we should ask the Department of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages to give us the funds.

The bills should be paid by Canadian Heritage since, without consulting us or even seeing whether we wanted to do their work, its officials decided, unbeknownst to us and without discussing the matter, that we would do their work to evaluate the roadmap. This is utterly unacceptable, and it lacks professionalism and transparency.

I don't see why they wouldn't pay this amount. Mr. Chair, I move that we ask Canadian Heritage to pay us this amount.

[English]

The Chair: I understand the point you're trying to make, but I don't think that's possible.

Mr. Weston, *puis* monsieur Godin.

[Translation]

Mr. John Weston: Thank you.

I am somewhat confused. It seems to me that it is the taxpayers who will pay the expenses. If it is possible for witnesses to give their evidence by teleconference, we have to consider that and the possibility of saving money.

[English]

The Chair: As chair, I'm more than willing to invite people by teleconference. I've done that on previous committees. Just so you know, it's about 50% of the cost nevertheless. If we were to invite all of the witnesses here to appear in front of us by teleconference, it's still \$30,000 as opposed to \$63,000. It is a cost saving, and we'll endeavour to do that, if possible.

Monsieur Godin.

[Translation]

Mr. Yvon Godin: Mr. Chair, I am opposed to that. With all due respect to Mr. Bélanger, my position is still the same. It is not our responsibility to conduct the study that the Department of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages was to conduct. I even filed a complaint with the Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages. Canadian Heritage must conduct consultations, as it is directed to do by the act. That is my position. It is not up to us to do it. A study does not replace consultations. Personally, I am not considering it; I do not support it.

Furthermore, I think it is really important that the people we invite be able to testify here. When they do not, it is because they are unavailable and we are unable to reach an arrangement. In that kind of case, we use the teleconferencing service. However, that service should not replace face-to-face meetings with witnesses, when we ask them questions, which leads to dialogue. We save perhaps \$30,000 through teleconferencing, but there is no human aspect to the discussions.

I think we should continue doing what we are currently doing. We didn't choose to spend three or four months on a study. Now that these people will be testifying, I believe it is important that they have the same opportunity as the others.

Thank you.

•(1040)

[English]

The Chair: Monsieur Menegakis.

Mr. Costas Menegakis: Mr. Chair, I'm in favour of the additional funds in the motion, for sure, but I'm also in favour of video conferencing, wherever possible. We use it on my other committee. It's very effective as well, so if we could save some money, why not?

The Chair: Mr. Harris.

Mr. Dan Harris: I'm not going to add much to it. I would like to parrot my colleague, Monsieur Godin. Having somebody by video conference or by teleconference is absolutely not the same as having them in the room. You don't get the same impression.

Furthermore, my experience in committees with respect to the person on teleconference is that they tend to end up being the lesser witness, the lesser person, in terms of the attention the committee gives them. I think that does them a disservice.

I certainly think it's an important and valuable tool so we can have people who would otherwise be incapable of appearing before the committee, but having witnesses in person is critical.

The Chair: Monsieur Aubin.

[Translation]

Mr. Robert Aubin: Actually, I just wanted to mention that I would be in favour of the videoconferencing idea in cases where it is impossible for witnesses to travel to Ottawa.

However, I've been taking part in these proceedings for several months now, and I have the feeling that I am learning as much from the interactions among the various witnesses who appear before us as from the evidence they give, if not more.

When we use the videoconference system, I am necessarily limited by the director's eye, which focuses on the spokesperson and prevents me from seeing the other reactions. Unless we have a number of cameras, I much prefer to meet with people in person.

[English]

The Chair: My understanding of the direction of the committee is that to save money the chair will invite people to appear by teleconference if it's not possible for them to appear in person. Otherwise, the committee's preference is to have them appear in person. No?

An hon. member: No.

The Chair: Okay.

Mr. Zimmer.

Mr. Bob Zimmer: No, I think we have a responsibility to the taxpayer. The fact that we have technology, which we're not used to perhaps, and that we don't ask as many questions as we should using the technology isn't a fault of the technology; it's our fault. So we need to use the technology that's here, to save the taxpayer some money. I think we have a responsibility to do that.

Otherwise, it seems we want the luxury of having them here when we need to use the technology before us. The conversation is going to be the same.

The Chair: Just quickly.

Mr. Yvon Godin: Very quickly, at the same time we could stay home and look at CPAC and vote electronically and we wouldn't have to come to Ottawa any more. Maybe some of you would like that, or maybe Stephen Harper would like that, but not me. I think we have to have those discussions directly with people.

The Chair: We have a minute left.

The direction the chair is getting from the majority of members on the committee is that we will invite the witnesses by teleconference.

What is the wish of the members of the committee: to primarily invite witnesses by teleconference—

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Chair: —or in person?

Mr. Yvon Godin: No, and if it is, they have to make a motion, and then we're going to have to vote on it. I want a registered vote.

The Chair: This is simply for the budget, so I'm just—

An hon. member: This is a separate issue from the budget.

The Chair: That's right, but I need direction. If the majority of members on committee are telling me they want to invite witnesses by teleconference exclusively, that's what the chair is bound to do.

•(1045)

Mr. Yvon Godin: The motion I put on the floor doesn't say that.

The Chair: No, the motion you put on the floor is simply for a budget. The motion in front of us is on the budget. If there's no further debate on the budget, can I call the vote?

Mr. Costas Menegakis: Can we amend the motion?

The Chair: Yes. Go ahead and move an amendment.

Mr. Costas Menegakis: My amendment is exactly what you said, Mr. Chair, that we invite witnesses to testify by teleconference, and if that's not possible, we invite them in person. We do have a responsibility to the taxpayer.

Mr. Dan Harris: That's the opposite of what the chair said.

Mr. Yvon Godin: Are we going to do that all the time now or what?

The Chair: Because there's no consensus here and debate has not been exhausted, we're going to adjourn the meeting. We'll continue this in the last five minutes of the next meeting.

The meeting is adjourned.

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