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Chair

The Honourable Michael Chong

Standing Committee on Official Languages

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• (0830)

[Translation]

The Chair (Hon. Michael Chong (Wellington—Halton Hills, CPC)): Welcome to the 40th meeting of the Standing Committee on Official Languages on Thursday, May 3, 2012. We are here pursuant to Standing Order 108 for a study on the evaluation of the Roadmap: Improving Programs and Service Delivery.

This morning, we have appearing before us the Hon. James Moore, Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages.

Welcome, Minister, you have the floor.

Hon. James Moore (Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages): Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thank you colleagues.

This morning I am accompanied by my Deputy Minister, Daniel Jean, and Hubert Lussier, Assistant Deputy Minister for Citizenship and Heritage, responsible for official languages files at Canadian Heritage.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for giving me the opportunity to appear before you this morning.

I would like to acknowledge the work this committee has accomplished since last fall in the course of your study on the Roadmap. It is in this context that I would like to talk about what we have achieved, and are achieving, with the Roadmap, and how we are taking steps to prepare for the future.

[English]

I know that there have been some questions raised at this committee in some of your consultations by some of the witnesses who have been before your committee about how I and our government plan to consult on the current road map to plan for the path ahead. At the outset, I'd like to address those questions.

This summer I plan to lead a comprehensive, pan-Canadian set of consultations on official languages. I and other members of our government and officials from my department will hear from Canadians in each and every province and territory on the next steps in the road map for linguistic duality. This summer my colleagues and I will hear from Canadians in communities across the country: Victoria, Edmonton, Regina, Winnipeg, Toronto, Ottawa, Sudbury, Quebec, Montreal, Fredericton, Moncton, Halifax, Charlottetown, St. John's, Whitehorse, Yellowknife, and Iqaluit. We won't visit just Canada's largest cities, but suburban and rural communities as well.

We will also create an online forum for Canadians unable to attend our consultations to share their views online. This is an approach we

took back in the previous Parliament, when we were doing consultations for our copyright legislation. We found that the number of Canadians who wished to have participation in these kinds of consultations on large-scope public policy issues was much larger than we often appreciate. So we're going to be doing that, as well, when it comes to consultation on official languages.

As a point of comparison, when former New Brunswick Premier Bernard Lord was asked by our government to do consultations in 2007, prior to the current road map, he visited seven communities. This is much more comprehensive and much more broad based and pan-Canadian. It will involve me, as the minister, as well as my parliamentary secretary and other members of our government, as well as, as I said, an online presence.

In comparison to those previous consultations, this will be much broader and will be open to far more Canadians. We look forward to listening to new ideas on how we move forward on official languages policy. Of course, to supplement this, the great work this committee has done on consultation will feed into this process as well.

The question is why we are doing this. We're doing this because both of Canada's official languages define who we are as Canadians. They are the languages of our national dialogue and the languages that enable Canadians who come to our country to participate more fully in our society in every way. Our official languages allow us to build a united, prosperous Canada together. For these reasons, our government is proud to support our official languages.

The road map for Canada's linguistic duality has been the vehicle that allows us to do just that. Canada's investment in the road map is, to put it bluntly, a lot of taxpayers' money. There's a commitment of \$1.1 billion over five years. In fact, it is the largest and most comprehensive investment in Canada's official languages Canada has ever seen. The road map includes 32 separate initiatives implemented by 15 agencies and departments of the Government of Canada. It allows us to act in priority areas: skills training, education, immigration, economic development, and the arts.

With the road map, our government is committed to promoting and protecting Canada's official languages, and today I can say that we have kept our word. We have kept our promises and have delivered on this commitment. As a matter of fact, in budget 2012, tabled not that long ago, of course, it says, and I will quote:

Canada's two official languages are an integral part of Canada's history and identity....Economic Action Plan 2012 will continue support for official languages by maintaining funding to protect, celebrate and enhance Canada's linguistic duality.

To put it another way, with budget 2012 we have kept our promise to support Canada's official languages.

[*Translation*]

On transfers to the provinces, our budget protects funding in the Roadmap for official language education and programs.

● (0835)

On support for culture, our budget protects funding in the Roadmap for official languages on cultural engagement and expression in the arts.

On support for second language education, our budget protects funding in the Roadmap for official languages for Canadians of all ages hoping to better understand English and French. On front-line training for health care workers, our budget protects funding for health services in English and French.

I will quote again from the budget. On all of these things, we maintained funding to protect, celebrate and enhance our linguistic duality. We kept our word, and because of this minority language communities are stronger than ever.

On April 5, shortly after Budget 2012 was tabled, I presented our mid-term report of the Roadmap for Canada's Linguistic Duality.

[*English*]

It outlines in detail how the government is delivering on those promises that I just outlined. The report confirms the implementation of the 32 initiatives contained in the road map and how they are proceeding, as we had hoped they would. They are being managed carefully, transparently, and effectively by all the departments and agencies involved. I invite those of you who have yet to see the mid-term report to take a look at it and to send me your comments and suggestions.

Broadly speaking, I am pleased by our progress and will share with you some of the concrete examples of our success.

In total, 2.4 million young Canadians are learning French or English as a second language. Close to 245,000 young Canadians from minority communities are studying their language of choice in more than 900 schools across the country.

Since 2008, support through the road map has made it possible to open five new school community centres and 14 new community learning centres in Quebec, as well as 33 new child care services in francophone communities.

Since 2008, more than 2,000 people from minority communities have enrolled in French-language health training programs.

Since 2008, more than 140 welcome centres and integration networks have been established to provide new services for immigrants in both official languages.

Since 2008, more than 100 new projects in the arts and culture originating in the minority communities have been supported.

We added, as I'll remind you, this fifth component to our road map because we recognize the importance of arts and culture and expression in the protection and celebration and health of minority languages in communities all across the country.

All these projects were launched and implemented under the leadership of our government.

[*Translation*]

As I said, I am preparing to lead a round of consultations in all regions of Canada this summer. These consultations will be more extensive than those held in 2007. They will also allow us to see if our funding is effective, and if our programs offer a good return for taxpayers, and an understanding of what changes might better serve Canadians going forward.

[*English*]

Finally, I'll close where I began, Mr. Chairman. I'd like to again thank this committee for your work, for inviting witnesses—inviting Canadians—to come to your committee to contribute to these consultations and the upcoming report on the road map. It too will help guide our deliberations on the way ahead.

Thank you very much for attention. If you have any questions, I'd be pleased to answer them.

● (0840)

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Thank you, Minister.

I would like to welcome Mr. Dion and Mr. Cannan. We have 50 minutes for questions and comments.

Mr. Godin, please.

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

Given the importance that the minister has given to this committee and given the importance of a minister responsible for official languages, it is unfortunate that he will only be giving us one hour of his time today. We have been working on the Roadmap since September. We finally get to hear from the minister, but we will not be able to ask him the questions that need to be asked. I would like to point this out publicly.

In the House of Commons, I stated that funding to the Association de la presse francophone had been reduced and the minister denied this. He said that this was false. And yet I have here a letter from the APF, which was sent to the Standing Committee on Official Languages. The association would like to appear before the committee. The letter reads as follows:

Despite these gains, the funding formula means that overall, APF newspapers received \$27,000 less in 2011-2012 than they did the previous year. Worse still, four newspapers that serve francophones in Alberta, Manitoba, greater Sudbury and Nova Scotia will have to absorb annual losses.

Were we lied to on Monday, Mr. Chair, or was the minister mistaken in his answer?

I will continue with my questions, Mr. Chair, so that the minister can answer them.

Before the previous election, the Conservative government asked this committee to conduct a study on immigration. The study was completed and presented to Parliament. We are asking that the government respond to the study since it was tabled. This is the same government. This was the same Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages and the same Minister of Immigration. These same individuals were reappointed to their positions as ministers of these departments.

Is the minister against the government responding to this study? Hundreds of thousands of dollars were spent to do this study. The minister said that this committee does good work. We did do a good study. It was presented to Parliament. I believe that Canadians are entitled to have a government response.

Moreover, we also did another study. The committee travelled to the North and prepared a study on the subject. The draft report was done during the previous parliament. The committee had the same clerk and the same analyst. The draft was prepared and ready to be tabled in the House. And yet, this committee, which takes the government's side, refuses to complete the study. It is the same government that is presenting bills and does not want to examine them in the House of Commons. The Conservatives are claiming that these issues have often been debated since 2006 and that they should not be debated further since we have already spent enough money on these issues.

Should we not complete this study? Should we not be fair to the people living in the North, in Yellowknife, in Whitehorse? They should be able to publicly express their opinions on the way they see things.

Finally, Mr. Chair, there has been a 40% cutback and layoffs in Canadian Heritage. In addition, you said that Citizenship and Immigration Canada was doing a good job. And yet this department is going to close the office in Moncton, a region where there are francophone minorities. The department is going to shut down all of its Atlantic offices.

So I would like to ask all of these questions, Mr. Chair. I would like answers from the minister.

[*English*]

Mr. John Williamson (New Brunswick Southwest, CPC): Mr. Chair, I have a point of order.

The Chair: Go ahead, Mr. Williamson.

Mr. John Williamson: It's not the same government as pre-2011. It is not the same government as Mr. Godin just said, despite the party colour being the same. Several members of the committee were not part of the previous government.

The Chair: Thank you for that intervention, Mr. Williamson.

I'm going to rule his questions in order. They're tangentially related to the study of the road map and the situation of official language minority communities, so I'm going to allow the minister to respond to those questions.

Go ahead.

Mr. Yvon Godin: On that point of order, I just want to say that it's the same Prime Minister, it's the same minister, and you're not going to hide behind the facts.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you.

[*Translation*]

Minister, you have the floor to answer questions.

[*English*]

Hon. James Moore: That's Monsieur Godin, kicking and screaming since 1997; it's what he does best.

● (0845)

[*Translation*]

First of all, with respect to my attendance today, I would like to point out that I attend committee meetings each time I am asked to do so and that I always respond quickly when I am invited. I believe the committee chair will be able to confirm that. I will be brief this morning because I have a meeting following my appearance before you that I cannot miss.

You raised a number of points but when it comes to consultations, clearly we want to involve communities throughout the country. In my province, British Columbia, as you know French is the eighth most commonly spoken language in Vancouver. Over the coming years, it could be ninth, tenth or eleventh.

It is essential to leave Ottawa and for me to be personally involved in touring the country and understanding what has been done over the last four years, understanding what can be done with the Roadmap over the coming year and what will be done in the future to continue to protect the French fact in all regions of the country as well as in anglophone communities in Quebec and in other regions. We will be continuing our work in this regard. That is a personal commitment I have taken on.

You referred to the Canada Periodical Fund. It is a crucial fund. I would also like to point out that in the past the government had a timeline for it, but we changed that. The government now has an ongoing commitment to the fund. It is a clear and firm commitment to protect periodicals throughout the regions of Canada when it comes to official languages. As you know, the goal is to ensure Canadians have access to magazines and newspapers which are not dailies, and this includes official language minority community publications.

I'm pleased to see that these issues are of interest but it should be said that the changes referred to were announced almost three years ago. These are not changes for the future. There is nothing new here. If it raises concerns, we could look into the regulations for our programming and if these concerns are justified, we could address them.

I also understand the concern you expressed either this week or last week in the House of Commons regarding this issue. However, we do not expect any changes for the moment. However, if changes are required to protect communities, for instance, if the periodical readership is not large enough to fit within our funding formula, we may consider the situation.

You also mentioned budget cutbacks in the department and not in services or investments in the area of culture and official languages. You mentioned the savings for the department. I would now invite my deputy minister to describe the way in which we will achieve these savings without affecting the Roadmap, official languages or our obligations under the Official Languages Act.

Mr. Yvon Godin: Mr. Chairman, could that be sent to the committee and could I get a response to my other questions on immigration and the North?

Time is limited and we know that you are a very busy minister.
[English]

Hon. James Moore: With respect, you can't ask me to come to the committee, do a five-minute rant, and say can you then just write us the answer? No. I'm here.

[Translation]

You asked me questions and I will answer them in a responsible manner.

Mr. Yvon Godin: Mr. Chairman, perhaps we could ask for unanimous consent to have the minister respond to all my questions.

Hon. James Moore: I am trying to Mr. Godin, but I will proceed as a minister does when appearing before a committee. My officials are with me to answer questions as well. I am pleased to be here with you and will certainly reappear before the committee. If you wish, we can also send you written information, and if you wish me to answer each of your dozen questions, I shall do so.

[English]

The Chair: Okay, thank you.

There's no unanimous consent to answer all of the questions, but there are other opportunities for members—

[Translation]

Hon. James Moore: As you also know, Mr. Godin—

[English]

The Chair: —of the NDP to ask questions.

Monsieur Gourde.

[Translation]

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

I would like to thank the minister for being here this morning, and especially for having made himself available to meet with us. You have a very busy schedule, and as I work with you, I know you are extremely available.

My questions will be brief. Unlike the opposition, I do not wish to waste any time in asking long questions preceded by long very partisan preambles. MPs from the governing party like to work in a constructive manner for official languages. I think you have made your mark since you've become Minister for Canadian Heritage. You have moved the issue of official languages forward and we are very pleased to work with you.

You recently tabled your mid-term report. Could you tell us about it?

Hon. James Moore: Of course. There are two things. All of the details in that document lay out the progress made so far in the area of services, culture, health and so forth. In my opinion, what counts in the short term is using this document to initiate discussions in the various regions of the country. It's one thing to have a document from 2008 that speaks of our aspirations over the next five years, but it's quite another to have a mid-term report to launch the next stage of commitments. Such a study was necessary, but we wanted it to be tabled after the budget. There was a certain sequence; the election campaign, our 2011 budget, and following that, consultations before the 2012 budget, during which we made commitments not only towards communities in a minority situation, but also towards all Canadians, mainly those who needed to know that the Roadmap would be protected in the 2012 budget.

We consulted and made commitments, and then we tabled our 2012 budget. We protected francophone and anglophone communities in a minority situation. Our Roadmap is completely protected in the 2012 budget. On April 5, a few weeks later, we tabled the mid-term report. We have made all these commitments, that is in the 2011 budget, the 2012 budget and in our report.

Now, I am before you today. I mentioned our consultations that will take place over the next few months. We will come back and you will have undertaken a parallel study of your own over the course of the summer. We will have both studies. We will continue to discuss all of it and it will all be part of our commitments in the 2013 budget. There is a process.

Let's see what we are doing overall. We encourage the committee to study our Roadmap and, once all this documentation is produced, we are committed to pursuing the discussion. I believe that is the most responsible approach for a government that wishes to have a responsible official languages policy for all regions in the country.

● (0850)

Mr. Jacques Gourde: Our committee has discussed at some length the importance of investing in education through the Roadmap. Could you tell us a bit more about that?

Hon. James Moore: If I remember correctly, that makes up 41% or 42% of the Roadmap, that is \$1 billion over five years. That's nearly 42% invested in education. That is the largest portion of the Roadmap. As I said the last time I appeared here, my mother was one of the first French teachers in British Columbia. Today, my sister also teaches French in British Columbia. For the future protection of the French language in all the regions of the country, it is truly essential to have that type of commitment. Education is essential.

I know that the Commissioner of Official Languages has undertaken a study of post-secondary education. That's most important, but as a government, we must respect provincial jurisdiction, that is why we made commitments to the Liberal, Conservative or NDP provincial governments in Nova Scotia and Manitoba. We must have concrete results for communities that need investments from their government. It is essential that we commit to education. In my opinion, that is the most important aspect of the Roadmap.

Mr. Jacques Gourde: Minister, could you explain to us how you tell Canadians about the implementation of the Roadmap?

Hon. James Moore: There is our website. The government makes its publications available to everyone. This report here is available online, in every MP's office, and in all Service Canada offices. It is available for anyone who wishes to read it. During the next round of consultations and round tables, we will distribute that report and the original Roadmap report in order to commit to continuing the work. It is essential that everyone have access to this information.

Mr. Jacques Gourde: In closing, I have one comment. I would like to congratulate you for your performance on the television show *Tout le monde en parle* in Quebec. Quebec had the opportunity to get to know you and today, has a greater appreciation for you.

Thank you.

• (0855)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Gourde.

Mr. Dion, you have the floor.

Hon. Stéphane Dion (Saint-Laurent—Cartierville, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair. How many minutes do I have?

The Chair: You have seven minutes.

Hon. Stéphane Dion: Minister, I have four or five questions for you. I promise to be brief, but I would like you to answer them directly without too many explanations.

First of all, I understand from your comments that the impression left, perhaps involuntarily, by the senior director of the Secretariat of Official Languages, Mr. Gauthier, that the only official consultations on the next Roadmap were undertaken by this committee, was unfounded. You do plan to have official consultations within your department, isn't that so?

Hon. James Moore: Yes, we are doing so this summer.

Hon. Stéphane Dion: All right. That is one misunderstanding cleared up. That is good.

During our February 16 meeting, my colleague Mr. Bélanger, questioned Mr. Léry, the Acting Director General of Support Programs for Official Languages, about the Action Plan that preceded the Roadmap. The goal was to double the number or percentage of youths learning the other language. Another goal was to increase the enrolment rates among rights-holders from 60% to 80%. Mr. Déry responded that those were good questions, but that he did not have the data with him and that he did not believe the number had doubled.

Are you able to provide us with those numbers today? If not, could you send them to the committee later on?

Hon. James Moore: You should know those numbers since the former Roadmap was your own.

Hon. Stéphane Dion: The objective yes but the results have to come from you.

Hon. James Moore: Precisely.

For the next Roadmap, we will try to set the goal of doubling the number of youths who commit to these things, but the current Roadmap does not have that grand objective.

Hon. Stéphane Dion: Here's my question; what is the situation today? Earlier, you gave us a long list of programs and exchanges. All very well, all the ministers do that. But, at a certain point, citizens wish to know results, for example, with respect to the struggle against assimilation. You must have some statistics about these two goals. It would be good for the committee to receive them so we can see how much progress has been made.

Hon. James Moore: The evaluations are taking place and they will certainly be part of our next Roadmap since it is essential to understand what is going on in the field. The progress I mentioned is what we know so far. As you know, with such an important commitment, we sometimes see unexpected progress.

Hon. Stéphane Dion: All I want to know is the number of youths and the percentage of rights-holders. This information would help us better understand the situation.

Hon. James Moore: The evaluations are coming along.

Hon. Stéphane Dion: I am not requesting an evaluation, I am asking for specific numbers.

Hon. James Moore: Evaluations contain statistics.

Hon. Stéphane Dion: I am looking forward to receiving them. Could we get them soon? You have them, so could you provide them to us?

Hon. James Moore: Yes, but we're talking about 32 areas, in 15 departments, and we will be receiving—

Hon. Stéphane Dion: I am only requesting information on 2 criteria, not 32. It should take less time.

Hon. James Moore: Yes, I know, but they are all included.

Hon. Stéphane Dion: If I receive 32, all the better, but I would not want to have to wait 6 months. I would like to receive them next week, if possible.

Hon. James Moore: I realize this is your first meeting on this issue. Our evaluations are ongoing and they will include those numbers.

Hon. Stéphane Dion: Then, when will we receive them?

Hon. James Moore: Soon.

Hon. Stéphane Dion: Your colleague, Mr. Valcourt, recently met with people from the Centre scolaire et communautaire des Grands-Vents, and that's a good thing. However, his comments caused them great concern, because he told them, and I quote, "an envelope that unfortunately will probably be smaller". Is that correct?

Hon. James Moore: We have not yet made a decision on that. That is why we are consulting.

Hon. Stéphane Dion: Mr. Valcourt said it would probably be lower.

Hon. James Moore: We have not made a decision yet. That is why we are consulting.

Hon. Stéphane Dion: Minister, communities do not have much leeway. They are unable to achieve economies of scale specifically because they are minorities. So we really must try to protect them. Requests for funding would be higher rather than lower, and that is understandable. Let me remind you of the difficulties they face. For you to announce to them ahead of time that the funding will probably be lower, is a staggering blow for them.

Hon. James Moore: Things are not that simple. One does not necessarily obtain better results by spending more money.

Hon. Stéphane Dion: I agree with you. That is not what I am saying. If you already announced, even before you completed your evaluations, that the budget envelope will be smaller, that's not the best way to engage communities.

You've said that there haven't been any cutbacks so far. However, on May 1, Ms. Kenny told us that this initiative, Destination Canada, and I quote, "which allows us to recruit people and promote francophone communities", was cut. It was an initiative contained in the Roadmap, and \$600,000 was cut from this initiative."

Under this program, for example, people would go to Paris to take part in a fair with the purpose of potentially attracting French-speaking immigrants to Saskatchewan and to Manitoba, and not only to Quebec. So this program is very important for communities.

Was \$600,000 really cut from a program which was not very expensive to begin with, and which was essential to recruit new immigrants to Manitoba, New Brunswick and Saskatchewan, as well as elsewhere in Canada outside Quebec?

● (0900)

Hon. James Moore: As far as I understand, it was eliminated. It did not affect services or commitments to new Canadians, but it was funding for those fora.

Hon. Stéphane Dion: You are confirming that it was eliminated.

Hon. James Moore: Yes, it was \$600,000 for that type of event. It did not affect services for new Canadians, nor commitments made to them. In our view, our commitments are essential. As you know, Mr. Dion, as far as obstacles for new Canadians are concerned, we often talk about this issue in Canada.

[English]

As you know, when we first came into government, we talked a lot about—your government talked a lot about it, and our government also talked a lot about it, but invested—the idea that new Canadians can't have their credentials fully recognized, that new Canadians have barriers to entrance into the workforce, and that new Canadians are not able to fully realize their potential in Canadian society. There are barriers to that.

The greatest barrier for new Canadians to having full integration and full participation in Canadian society—by far the biggest barrier

—is language. That's why we've invested more money than ever before in immigration services in both official languages

[Translation]

so that new Canadians are able to fully integrate into Canadian society. That's why we did it.

In fact, we cut \$600,000 out of a total of \$1.1 billion. This cut affects fairs and not services. The amount of money we have reinvested to protect the rights of new Canadians is unprecedented.

Hon. Stéphane Dion: I appreciate the fact that something else is being done. However, it is unfortunate that the francophone community of Saint-Boniface in Manitoba, for instance, will lose the opportunity to become more well-known at that fair, which ultimately did not cost the government much money, but which nevertheless played an important role for that community. Especially since I've been told that the program yielded good results. The fair attracted immigrants who otherwise would not have come and who otherwise would have chosen to settle in Quebec. These immigrants discovered that they could work in a francophone community outside Quebec because it is what they learned at one of those fairs. In the interest of saving \$600,000, people are being deprived of that tool. I agree that we have to fight the deficit, but it could have been done otherwise.

Have you conducted any evaluations? You should ask your colleague at Immigration whether there have been evaluations showing that the program was really not warranted.

Hon. James Moore: I would like to point out two things in that regard. First, if you have any questions, you know that each minister is responsible for their portfolio. So if you want the Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism to appear before the committee to speak to these internal evaluations, and why they were undertaken, I am sure that Mr. Kenney would be available to do so.

Second, if what you are saying about what is happening on the ground is indeed true, then I am sure that...

Hon. Stéphane Dion: Go speak with him, if you like. You are the minister responsible for official languages. Speak to your colleague.

[English]

Hon. James Moore: Stéphane, I didn't interrupt you. I'm just making my point.

[Translation]

If this is true, we will hear about it at the consultations you did not hold when you were minister.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Dion.

Mr. Trottier, you have the floor.

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

Thank you Minister, for being with us this morning. I thank you for being available and especially for your commitment on this file.

As you were saying earlier, \$1.1 billion over five years is a lot of money. I should add that this is funding that has been added to funds that the government has already spent.

In your comments, you mentioned that we had to ensure that programs were performing well. How would you describe their performance? How can we ensure that these investments are having an impact on linguistic communities in the country?

Hon. James Moore: The current evaluations are a bit complex. For example, to evaluate an improvement in service points for the communities, we evaluate whether or not Canadians are satisfied with them.

Elsewhere, it is however much more subjective than that. For example, in arts and culture, we have committed \$14 million over five years. Over and above this funding, there are also commitments from museums in the country, the Canada Council for the Arts and the Canada Media Fund, for which we have allocated money for creation in official languages.

In that respect, we have invested in culture, but is it succeeding? That is a complex issue. As the minister responsible for culture, let me tell you that it is no simple thing to establish the value of things. Furthermore, I can certainly tell you that committing to and investing in culture is a key element for culture and languages to be protected in Canada's various regions.

Let me turn to Mr. Lussier. He may be able to tell us how we arrived at these numbers and how we plan to continue forward over the next few stages. He may also be able to comment on how we determined what has worked well and what was a little more challenging.

• (0905)

Mr. Hubert Lussier (Assistant Deputy Minister, Citizenship and Heritage Branch, Department of Canadian Heritage): As the minister said, the fundamental reason for which we invest in the future is that it has been demonstrated that particularly among youth, and we have singled out youth, contact and cultural practices in French are a determining factor for one's commitment to one's community, learning French and the ease with which one learns and remains in school. Fourteen million dollars means approximately \$3.5 million per year over the last four years. That has allowed for many, many wonderful projects. We hope to be able to measure whether that had any more effect than fireworks on the ground. This is something an evaluation should be able to provide as a result.

We may be able to do certain things better. There are durable effects we can measure and use to plan the future. However, there may also be some projects that were less successful simply because they were a bit tentative and more short-term.

Mr. Bernard Trottier: Thank you.

Given these rather subjective measures, how do you plan to improve programs and service delivery to better support official language communities?

Hon. James Moore: The next evaluations on what we have done up until now will guide us when we want to make improvements.

Before I ask Hubert to go into greater detail, I would like to point out that what is important is that we have figures. Not only do these evaluations help us decide on the next steps and improve things, but they also are important to taxpayers so that they realize that these investments have value.

In addition, these are tools that will enable you to debate the issue. For example, I know that the Fraser Institute has produced a report. I used to work for the Fraser Institute, but when it comes to official languages, they have everything wrong. Their statements are not accurate. These details and evaluations are essential tools that enable us to have such a debate. We want to have the facts for the next five years so that we can continue promoting official languages. Hubert, do you wish to add anything?

Mr. Hubert Lussier: I would only add one thing, Minister. We did want to underscore something else through the cultural programs. I am referring to youth and potential contact between this group and young people who are learning French as a second language or who are learning English in Quebec. For a very long time, we focused exclusively on francophone culture and anglophone culture in the communities. We now know, however, that many groups are prepared to open up and enable those learning the second language to have access to these cultural products as well. This is something that we would like to be able to measure.

Mr. Bernard Trottier: Thank you.

We are thinking about the next version of the Roadmap. We are wondering what criteria are required to establish these priorities. This is very important for a government as it must really set priorities. In your opinion, what criteria should we be using for all of these investments and official language community activities? What is important?

Hon. James Moore: We have added a fifth component to the Roadmap. As a result of our consultations, Mr. Lord's report and the participation of members of Parliament, we feel that it is essential that we invest in arts and culture for the French language in the regions. This explains why we have added a fifth component. After reading the analyses, becoming aware of your participation, and after hearing from the public on the matter, it is possible to take various approaches, but we need to hold consultations so that we can listen to the needs on the ground, because things change and needs may differ, the next time, from what they were in 2008 when we established the current Roadmap.

This is very important, but we certainly want to invest more in services so that we can obtain some tangible successes in the area of frontline services for the communities.

As for new Canadians, our government feels that it is very important that they be able to be more engaged in our society on all fronts. We underscored this issue in the Speech from the Throne. This was a large part of our 2012 budget. The purpose of these measures is to help immigrants have better access to our society in every case. This is really essential for our future.

• (0910)

The Chair: All right, thank you.

Mr. Williamson, the floor is yours.

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

I always think that you are going to give the floor to someone on the other side, but I am always the one who follows Mr. Trottier.

Good morning, Minister.

Could you talk a bit about the consultations that will take place this summer? What are you looking for? Could you explain how they will be different from previous consultations that were undertaken either by your government or by another?

[English]

Hon. James Moore: Canada is the second-largest country in the world, but in population terms we're the 36th-largest country in the world. In order to actually get a proper scope and scale of the frustrations, needs, and hopes of official language communities across the country, you have to get out of Ottawa. You have to travel the country and you have to get around. There is a reason why members of Parliament have been afforded so many travel points for us to visit around the country. It's not just to shuttle to and from our districts, but it's also, in times like these when we have a summer break coming up, for ministers to travel the country and visit and find out from Canadians how things are going.

The benchmark timeframe of a year before the end of our road map is a perfect opportunity for me and others in our government to go around and to meet with people within the context and through the filter of official languages.

The previous road map was not entirely, but in good measure, based on the report that was given to our government and made public by Bernard Lord, former Premier of New Brunswick, and his consultation was in seven places in the country. What we're looking at here are at least 17 different places.

You'll notice as well in the list of cities mentioned in my opening statement that we'll be visiting all of Canada's provincial and territorial capitals, in large part because of the question that was asked earlier about education. Because we have these agreements with the provinces where we have transfer of funds agreements with all the provinces, the provinces are an essential component of the success of the road map, especially on the education side. So we'll be visiting there and we'll be visiting these communities.

As I found on the heritage side, the culture side of my portfolio, when you get out of the biggest cities of the country and you actually visit small suburban and rural communities and villages, you start to get a very different dynamic of the understanding of the pressures and needs and hopes and aspirations of official language minority communities.

The largest francophone community west of the Red River is Maillardville, which is in my community of Coquitlam, British Columbia, and they have very specific hopes. They've gone through incredible changes there, but their hope is that, for example, the Government of British Columbia continues to invest in Maillardville junior secondary as a francophone junior high school, and that they still have the same levels of investment and they can protect that francophone factor in Maillardville, which is really important.

That's very different from some of the concerns the QCGN has talked about, the concerns and frustrations and hopes that the anglophone minority communities have in the province of Quebec.

But you're not going to hear that if you just go to and from your riding, and stay in Ottawa. You have to go to those communities, listen to them, talk to them, and feel it in a first-person sense, because that absolutely contributes to one's better understanding of the way to go in the future.

Mr. John Williamson: I think it's good you're going on this consultation, and I understand the steps you had to take, both budgetary and because one thing has to follow another. It's also something that the opposition has cited time and again as more fearmongering to the witnesses who have appeared here. It's been said time and again that despite the news, no decision had yet been taken.

I come from a bilingual province, New Brunswick. I understand the importance, as you said, of targeting and ensuring we have programs that help where it's needed. In my neck of the woods in New Brunswick southwest there are very few francophones, but that doesn't mean it's not important. In the north obviously there are many more. In fact I hardly think of the francophone fact in New Brunswick as a minority. Having said that, there are still things we can do.

How do you think bilingualism generally is in this country? How has it progressed over the last number of years and decades? Are we on the right track, do you think? Where do you think we should be looking to go from here?

• (0915)

The Chair: Okay, thank you, Mr. Williamson.

Minister.

Hon. James Moore: It's healthy and well. I was looking at a statistic the other day, actually, and in 1976, the year I was born, 0.3% of British Columbia kids were enrolled in French immersion. Today it's almost 11%. That I think is considerable progress and success.

When you go into these classrooms... I have been to my sister's classroom, for example. She teaches at Aubrey Elementary School in Burnaby, right across from Kensington Pitch and Putt. It's this phenomenally communitarian, great little public school. You go into the classroom and...

By the way, three-quarters of the students there are first- and second-generation Canadians. When Graham Fraser, the Commissioner of Official Languages, was out in Vancouver during the Olympics, I brought him to Maillardville. It was fantastic. We stood there and we saw... We had this great choir from a couple of elementary schools. They were singing O Canada. Of the entire group of kids, it was the most ethnically diverse groups of kids you've ever seen.

I guarantee you that a majority of those kids' parents are first-generation Canadians, many of whom I suspect are struggling to learn their first official language, and these kids are up there singing the national anthem entirely in French.

We have these examples all across the country. It's great.

The Chair: Thank you, Minister.

I know you're a graduate of the French immersion program. I have two children in French immersion, and they know the national anthem only in French.

Voices: Oh, oh!

The Chair: We realized that the other day when we were singing it. They didn't know the words in English.

Madame Michaud.

[*Translation*]

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

Allow me to first make a brief comment.

If the minister had allowed us to complete the study on the North which had been undertaken by this committee, he could have seen that the costs of implementing programs like those of Destination Canada are much higher in those territories. The \$600,000 reduction could jeopardize the whole program. That would be a substantial savings, but it would be very regrettable for northern communities, given that the program was effective.

Regarding accountability, a number of witnesses told us they detected very serious anomalies in investments by the federal government, notably concerning the transfers to the provinces and territories you mentioned.

Can you tell me when the last national audit on government investments in official languages was conducted? I would ask you to be brief, please.

Hon. James Moore: I will ask Mr. Jean to answer your question.

Mr. Daniel Jean (Deputy Minister, Department of Canadian Heritage): Within our agreements with the provinces and territories as well as with community groups, we always have objectives. They have obligations and they must send reports. We receive them regularly. For example, our provincial and territorial agreements have objectives. There are specific numbers.

Ms. Éline Michaud: I talked about a national audit.

Mr. Daniel Jean: I don't have that information with me. I don't know if Hubert has it, but otherwise I would be pleased to send it to you.

Ms. Éline Michaud: I would now like to give the floor to my colleague Mr. Benskin.

[*English*]

Mr. Tyrone Benskin (Jeanne-Le Ber, NDP): Thank you.

Thank you for coming in and joining us. It's good to see you in this different context.

Speaking of different context, I'm looking at a notice of motion here to start a study on the sesquicentennial. I'm a bit confused, because I just came off the heritage committee. At heritage we studied pretty well for the year, I think up until almost last week, the 150th anniversary of Canada.

Largely at our behest, a number of groups came in representing the francophone community across the country as well as diverse communities across the country, which we had to push for to have come in as witnesses.

I'm wondering why we need a separate study, especially since it's under the same minister, on the same subject in this committee.

• (0920)

Hon. James Moore: There are a couple things here.

First, congratulations on your new assignment.

Mr. Tyrone Benskin: Thank you.

Hon. James Moore: I thought you did a great job, by the way, as heritage critic. Thank you as well...you don't have to do it, but your involvement in the all-party arts caucus. I think that's fantastic.

Second, it's up to you to decide. I'm not a member of this committee. You guys can decide to study whatever it is you want.

But this is also kind of a circumstance where you're damned if you do, damned if you don't. If we weren't engaging the official language committee on a specific study with regard to Canada's 150th birthday, I suspect I might be before this committee right now and there might be members of your caucus saying, "How can you, as Minister of Official Languages, plan the 150th celebration of this country and not include a study by the official languages committee?"

So you're damned if you do, damned if you don't. I'll leave it to this committee to decide whether or not it's a good use of your time, but...

Well, maybe I'll just leave it at that.

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Dionne Labelle, you have the floor.

Mr. Pierre Dionne Labelle (Rivière-du-Nord, NDP): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I agree with Mr. Gourde. I like to watch you on television.

You went on *Tout le monde en parle* and you said that Canadian Heritage had too many public servants and that you would cut 42% of staff. Furthermore, I have here the statistics on the recommendations of the Commissioner of Official Languages that highlight the fact that 82% of them have not been implemented. When you say that Canadian Heritage has too many employees, but you see that 82% of the recommendations of the Commissioner of Official Languages have not been implemented, in my opinion, something does not add up.

The questions I will ask you will be simple. Cuts have been announced. How many positions will be eliminated within the Official Languages Support Program at Canadian Heritage? In addition, can you send us the list of employees who work full time in the area of official languages within this department?

Hon. James Moore: My deputy minister is directly responsible on the ground, not only for the next few years, but he also has been for a number of years. I will therefore ask him to provide that information to you.

Mr. Daniel Jean: If we start, for example, with the 42% reduction in Canadian Heritage's operating budget, this was done over the past three years and will continue over the next three years. These reductions include both reductions in permanent resources and the end...

Mr. Pierre Dionne Labelle: Could I have the list of the resources that will be eliminated?

Mr. Daniel Jean: It will be our pleasure to send them to you.

Mr. Pierre Dionne Labelle: How will you follow up on the 82% of the Commissioner of Official Languages' recommendations that have not been implemented if you cut staff? That seems strange to me, and it must also be the case for Canadians who are listening to us.

Hon. James Moore: We heard your question and my deputy minister was in the middle of his answer. Could he perhaps finish?

The Chair: Okay. Mr. Jean, you have the floor.

Mr. Daniel Jean: As I was saying, the 42% decrease takes place over a six-year period, going back three years and going forward for three years. Within that percentage, there are permanent reductions and the ending of so-called temporary initiatives. Two examples would be the Vancouver Olympics and the Shanghai Expo. There were also resources transferred to other departments, for example, the consolidation of shared services. One has to be careful since the 42% includes all of that.

If we are talking about permanent resources for which I have a more specific number, that would be around one third of these. In all the choices we have made, whether that be transforming or centralizing priorities, we ensured there would be no major significant repercussions on client service. Not one dollar was cut from programs.

Finally, with respect to official languages, we went about it the same way. The positions we plan to eliminate from official languages are management positions we will be eliminating, while consolidating responsibilities and protecting the program's administrative resources. Once again, we wish to maintain our service standards for the recipients of these programs and ensure clients do not see a difference. The reason for which...

Mr. Pierre Dionne Labelle: Could you tell us about the 82%?

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Jean, but your time is up.

[English]

Mr. Boughen, you have the floor.

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

Let me extend a welcome to the witnesses to our meeting. It's good to have you here.

I've had an opportunity to serve on a number of committees since becoming a parliamentarian. Certainly, Minister, your sharing with us this morning your summer activities is tremendous. That's a very enthusiastic program, and I don't think I was ever privy to hear of another program with quite that degree of enthusiasm covering that much territory. It's a big country, and you're going to talk to a lot of people. You're doing a good job.

The one thing that I would ask about is the interface between the federal government and the provinces in terms of education. Minister, you mentioned that you're going to build some more schools. There are some programs there. Perhaps you could expand on that a little bit, and share with us any action that is taking place at the community level. I'm thinking of the western provinces. Are there going to be some opportunities for adult education programs in some of the buildings that are there now, or an expansion of those programs, to allow more people to become familiar with French?

• (0925)

Hon. James Moore: Certainly. I'll give you an example. I suspect I've talked about this before.

It was an emotional moment for me when I became Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages. École secondaire Jules-Verne is the first French high school in the province of British Columbia. I've been Minister of Official Languages since the spring of 2008, and in 2010 we had the official grand opening of École secondaire Jules-Verne.

My mom was one of the first French teachers in British Columbia in the early 1970s. In 1969 the Official Languages Act passed, came into force, and it wasn't long after that, of course, that there was a big tidal wave of public energy about it and what's it going to mean and what were the barriers going to be.

My mom told the story that the principal of New Westminster Senior Secondary asked all the teachers to come into the room, and asked if any of them spoke French, because they had all these parents who were calling them and saying they want some French classes because Pierre Trudeau and the Official Languages Act is going on, and these parents want their kids to speak both official languages for job opportunities. My mom and a couple of other teachers put up their hands and said they did. My mom spoke rough French, but adequate French—she's originally from Scarborough—so she said “Yes, I do”, and he said “Okay, you're our French teacher now”. So without any books or curriculum—school boards of course were way behind in thinking about this—they told her to put together some kind of a curriculum.

My mom passed away in 1993, when I was 16. Fast forward from then to 2008, and then 2010, and about a five-minute drive from the high school where my mom was asked to teach French, I was opening the first French high school in the province of British Columbia.

It gives a sense as well to what you were saying, Mr. Chairman, about the progress of official languages in this country. That's in spite of the fact that in 1976, if memory serves me correctly, 75% to 80% of Canadians spoke English as their first language. Today it's down to about 58% because we have increased diversity. So even with the increased diversity and pressure, for example, on the budgets of the government of British Columbia to have more investment into English as a second language, English immersion programs—even with those pressures—there is an increasing budget and increasing participation in French immersion and French learning in the province of British Columbia, because Canadians and British Columbians increasingly understand the value of speaking more than one language.

In Europe among 16- to 25-year-olds, 57% of them speak more than one language. In Europe, speaking more than one language is seen as an asset; it's seen as the smart thing to do, to educate your kids and have them more engaged. You become more cultured, have better job opportunities, have more exposure to literature and music and film. You live a more enriched life if you speak more than one language. It's a great thing.

I think it's a great thing that in this country we're past the hump of a debate over whether or not Canada's official languages are great for this country or not. The answer is absolutely in the affirmative, and Canadians get it.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. Boughen and Minister.

The last intervention goes to Monsieur Godin.

[Translation]

Mr. Yvon Godin: Thank you, Chair.

The minister stated, for example, that he believes it is very important to respect the official languages, to deliver services and so forth. Yet, the Commissioner of Official Languages has made recommendations, of which 88% have not been followed. The data indicates 88%. Furthermore, this very same Commissioner of Official Languages, one of the officers of Parliament the minister claims to respect and appreciate, given their qualifications—and one hopes Mr. Graham Fraser is qualified—not only made recommendations, but also concluded that the complaint about the appointment of the Auditor General, Mr. Michael Ferguson, was well founded and that the law had been breached.

Mr. Moore, you are the same minister who openly said we did not need a bill for Canadians to be served in both languages by officers of Parliament. You claim it is useless. But a member of the same government, Maxime Bernier, a cabinet minister, says the opposite and supports the bill.

Just as on *Tout le monde en parle*, let's ask the killer question. What is your real position? Are you in favour of respecting official languages in our country, yes or no?

• (0930)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Godin.

Minister, you have the last word.

Hon. James Moore: Yes, it is certainly necessary to respect the Official Languages Act and we have committed to doing so, not only with our roadmap, but also through our appointments and our other commitments. That is clear and that is true.

As for my answer yesterday, first of all, the government has not yet taken a position with respect to your bill. My reaction yesterday was to answer that we can accomplish what you are trying to accomplish with or without your bill. However, we will see what the future brings. We have not taken a position on your bill as such. We shall certainly continue to meet our commitments to protect official languages.

That was not a killer question. It was quite an easy one.

Mr. Yvon Godin: It is a matter of respect for official languages.

Hon. James Moore: I know that, Yvon, but...

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Minister, Mr. Jean and Mr. Lussier for your testimony.

[English]

We'll suspend for five minutes to allow our witnesses to leave the room.

• (0930)

_____ (Pause) _____

• (0935)

[Translation]

The Chair: We will resume the 40th meeting of the Standing Committee on Official Languages.

Mr. Gourde, you have the floor.

Mr. Jacques Gourde: Mr. Chairman, can we continue our deliberations in camera?

[English]

The Chair: Okay, seeing that's neither debatable nor amendable, I am going to call the question.

All in favour of going in camera? Opposed?

Okay, the motion is adopted.

[Translation]

Mr. Yvon Godin: Mr. Chair, I did not see which way Mr. Chisu voted. He did not raise his hand.

[English]

The Chair: I saw—

[Translation]

Mr. Yvon Godin: He did not vote, Mr. Chairman. The motion was very clear, Mr. Chairman, and he did not vote.

The Chair: Mr. Godin, it was not a recorded vote.

[English]

I called the vote orally, so I'm seeking consent, and I believe I have it. So if you want me to go to full recorded division on it, I will, and I'll pass the floor to the clerk to do so.

[Translation]

Mr. Yvon Godin: Mr. Chairman, with regard to that issue, when it is a recorded vote, members normally must show which way they are voting one after the other. However, they did not all do this. The only government members who indicated which way they were voting are the five members who raised their hand. The others did not indicate which way they were voting, neither verbally, nor by raising their hand. In short, they did not vote at all, Mr. Chair, and I would ask you to rule on this matter.

Mr. Chair, I believe that it is important that this issue not be discussed in camera, so that Canadians see what is going on.

The member did not vote at all. He did not raise his hand. He did not even nod his head, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: In my view, a committee member can indicate which way he or she has voted other than by raising their hand.

[*English*]

Members to my right were either raising their hands or nodding in agreement when I asked them if they were in favour of the motion. So I've made a decision that the motion has been adopted.

If you want to have a formal recorded vote on this, I'm prepared to do that.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Yvon Godin: Yes, Mr. Chairman, I am asking for a recorded vote, if you are asking that I make this request. The member did not even nod his head and gave no other sign.

The Chair: I will turn it over to the clerk.

(Motion agreed to: yeas, 6; nays, 5. [See *Minutes of Proceedings*])

[*Proceedings continue in camera*]

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