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Chair

The Honourable Michael Chong

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•(0845)

[*Translation*]

The Chair (Hon. Michael Chong (Wellington—Halton Hills, CPC)): Welcome to the 20th meeting of the Standing Committee on Official Languages on this Thursday, April 10, 2014.

Pursuant to Standing Order 108, we are conducting a study on the Economic Situation of Canada's Minority Linguistic Communities.

Today we will be hearing from representatives from four government organizations, including the Department of Canadian Heritage, the Department of Employment and Social Development, the Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development, and the Department of Citizenship and Immigration.

We will begin with Mr. Gauthier from the Department of Canadian Heritage.

Mr. Jean-Pierre Gauthier (Director General, Official Languages Branch, Department of Canadian Heritage): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Good morning, honourable members. I have prepared a presentation, which you should have in front of you. I will just quickly deliver my presentation. I will take just 10 minutes or so in order to leave as much time as possible for questions.

My presentation is structured in three themes that I propose discussing this morning.

First I will provide a bit of context. I know that you have already heard a few presentations that have provided you with a lot of information on this. I know that my colleagues from Statistics Canada were here earlier this week. I will quickly say a few words about the context.

I also want to spend a bit of time explaining the role and programs of Canadian Heritage that have an impact on economic development, in order to inform your debates and your study.

Then, as part of the third topic, we will spend a bit of time talking about economic development in the context of the roadmap, which is a well known tool and a rather important one in official languages.

Let's begin with context. I won't go into the details, because I know that the presentation by my colleagues from Statistics Canada already provided you with a great deal of figures. I simply want to talk about each of the two minority groups, namely francophones outside Quebec and anglophones in Quebec. I will illustrate and quickly present some of the major trends and observations.

Over the past number of years, we have seen francophone minority communities close a historic gap in terms of the economy and social development. This has happened over the past 40 years or so.

Obviously, the government has made efforts to support the development of the communities. This increased in the 1980s. Today, we see that for the most part, the economic situation of members of minority communities is comparable to that of the majority.

Obviously, nothing is perfect. There are regions, places and groups that still have challenges. For example, people often cite the case of northern New Brunswick, which is facing many challenges. That is where we have to be very sensitive to the realities that might vary from region to region.

The second bullet on page 3 talks about something important. Education has certainly played a role in the communities' development, both in terms of social aspects such as the sense of belonging and of the economy.

The anglophone minority community in Quebec is facing challenges in terms of level of labour market participation for its young people. The unemployment rate is higher than it is for the majority. Their salary and average income are not the same as the majority either. Challenges exist and they are specific to the anglophone minority community in Quebec.

That is it in terms of context.

I will now quickly move on to the role of the federal government. I am on page 4.

[*English*]

I'm sure that we are all familiar with part VII of the Official Languages Act and the two objectives in that part. The act provides an obligation, a duty, for the federal government to enhance the vitality of official language minority communities, and that is the centrepiece of part VII. But there is also, as we know, the obligation to foster the full recognition of our two official languages. That is the backstage for everything we do.

I think there is no dispute that economic development, at the very least, helps enhance the vitality of a community. Therefore, we feel this is a good match to consider and that we should look into economic development and the obligations we have under the act.

More specifically, with Canadian Heritage—and I'll come back to this in more detail on the next page, but just to set the stage very broadly—we have another program, of course, at Canadian Heritage on official languages. One is of particular interest, I think, to the study of the committee. It is the development of the official language communities program that we have. It accounts for about \$225 million a year.

Of course, you have in the bracket here, in the bullet, a description of the nature of the kinds of activities that we conduct with that money, and the minister was before you recently to talk about the annual report, as well.

But the point that I wanted to make is that although the program is not aimed or does not have as an objective the fostering of community development per se, it is clear that when we foster all kinds of activities, we are actually providing, at least indirectly, some support to community development.

This is particularly true, I think, when it comes to education, for example, which is a pillar for making sure that development occurs, both socially and economically.

● (0850)

The department also coordinates the road map. I will talk about that a little more at the end. It is one of the tasks we have. I also wanted to spend a bit of time talking to you about the Ministerial Conference on the Canadian Francophonie, where there have been a number of discussions over the last few years. I think it would be of interest to the committee to hear more about it.

Let me turn quickly to page 5. As you can see, we have laid out there in a little more detail what we do with the official language communities program at my department. One of the key cornerstones of what we do is support for education, at both the elementary and secondary levels, but also with the provinces in a growing fashion. We're supporting their efforts to develop post-secondary opportunities, programs, and services for the many communities as well. Post-secondary education actually plays quite a significant role in fostering and supporting economic development.

You see that, overall, when we look back at the last term of agreements with the provinces for education, we spent about \$122 million supporting their efforts in post-secondary education.

I mention this quickly in passing. There are also a number of programs at the department in other areas that are not even aimed at official languages per se, but are open to official language minority communities as well, especially in arts and culture, for instance. We know how important that sector can be economically as well.

So it depends on how you define the scope, I suppose, of what you want to study today, how indirect you want to allow yourself to be, because you can actually look at a great number of activities carried out in the department that contribute to economic development.

Let us talk about the MCCF. This is the Ministerial Conference on the Canadian Francophonie. It's a gathering of all the ministers from all jurisdictions that meet once a year to discuss the Canadian francophonie and its issues. Interestingly, the conference has had, for a number of years now, concerns and an interest in economic development. I think it goes back to the meeting in 2009 where it

was decided that attention would be paid to economic development by the ministerial conference. That itself, I guess, is good evidence of the fact that even the provinces and territories are paying attention to that in the context of minority communities.

There has been a working group of senior public servants established across the provinces, territories, and federal government. It's co-chaired by the federal government, with the Government of Quebec. We've been working with this group to encourage the organization of an economic development forum. That actually took place in 2012. On the slide, you will see a few of the parameters for that forum, which took place at the encouragement of the Canadian francophonie ministerial conference. We had a great number of participants who came from three broad sectors: the public, community, and the private sectors. The private sector references the business sector, of course, in a sense.

The outcome of the conference was an integrated action plan with six pillars of action that were established by consensus during the conference. We can provide you with more information on this one, if you'd like. We have the report from the forum. If there's any interest, we'd be happy to share that with the committee.

The conference chair has been an active supporter of the organization of that conference. We're very happy, very proud that it actually took place and was a good success. It was organized by a committee, again made up of representatives from the public sector, the business sector, and the community sector. It was chaired by Madame Aldéa Landry from New Brunswick.

● (0855)

[*Translation*]

The forum was held in fall 2012 and we initiated national consultations around roughly the same time, in summer 2012, to try to define the communities' needs and areas of interest in the context of renewing the roadmap.

During the entire summer, the minister responsible, or some of his colleagues who replaced him, visited 22 cities and listened to what people had to say. Interested parties were also able to have their say through the website. We were able to connect with more than 2,600 people that way.

Economic development certainly came up as something important and of interest to the communities. When considering different scenarios for renewing the roadmap, we knew that economic development was important, relevant and valuable.

I am on page 8.

We also evaluated the various components of the Roadmap for Canada's Official Languages 2008-13, including three initiatives in the area of economic development in the former and current roadmap, namely the Enabling Fund for Official Language Minority Communities, the Economic Development Initiative, and the Strengthening the Language Industry and Technologies program, which is part of the National Research Council of Canada's responsibility. The evaluations find that the initiatives are useful and relevant, which reassures us.

I am on page 9.

When we were building the roadmap, we gave a lot of room to economic development. You know that the roadmap is based on three pillars. The communities pillar includes two programs that specifically target economic development, namely the Enabling Fund for Official Language Minority Communities and the Economic Development Initiative. That being said, it is true that all three pillars have a strong economic bent. The pillar that targets immigration focuses specifically on economic immigration. As far as education is concerned, I have already mentioned a few times the importance of education in a community's development on all levels, including economic development.

I will skip page 10. Essentially, last week you heard my colleagues from Industry Canada and agencies talk about the EDI, the Economic Development Initiative. My colleagues from Employment and Social Development Canada could also answer all your questions on the Enabling Fund for Official Language Minority Communities. This page simply summarizes the three main initiatives in the roadmap.

In closing, economic development is recognized as important to a community's development and vitality, and especially its sustainability. The federal government's commitments, efforts and activities reflect that.

I will stop there.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Gauthier.

Mr. Johnson from the Department of Employment and Social Development now has the floor.

Mr. Stephen Johnson (Director General, Corporate Planning and Management, Strategic Policy and Research, Department of Employment and Social Development): Good morning, Mr. Chair and committee members. Thank you for giving me the opportunity to present to you Employment and Social Development Canada's contribution to the economic situation of official language minority communities.

ESDC's mission is to build a stronger and more competitive Canada, to support Canadians in making choices that help them live productive and rewarding lives and to improve Canadians' quality of life. To do this, our department helps Canadians through all stages of their lives, including families with children, youth, working-aged adults and seniors.

ESDC plays an important role in supporting economic development of Canadian communities, including official language minority communities, through its efforts to support a skilled and adaptable labour force and an efficient, well-functioning labour market.

The department achieves this through many well-known programs that, among other things, encourage savings for post-secondary education through the Canada education savings program; reduce financial barriers through Canada student loans and grants; provide support for a variety of training programs both by means of direct delivery and by working with provinces and territories.

Many of the department's recent efforts have been focused on strengthening the linkages between the training and employment supports provided by governments and the needs of local businesses and employers. And, in particular, more directly directing these

training efforts to high-demand fields that have a strong likelihood of leading to current and future jobs.

Recent federal budgets have reiterated the intent to refocus existing labour market transfers to the provinces and territories in order to encourage a greater degree of involvement of employers. These programs include the next generation of labour market agreements, labour market development agreements, and the labour market agreements for persons with disabilities, as well as the introduction of new measures such as the Canada job grant.

An area of particular focus has been the skilled trades. ESDC recognizes that the skilled trades are critical to Canada's economic growth and long-term prosperity. A number of ESDC measures support apprentices in their training and encourage employers to hire apprentices.

The department is working to implement the Canada apprentice loan that was announced in budget 2014 to provide apprentices registered in Red Seal trades with access to over \$100 million in interest-free loans each year.

In order to improve the apprenticeship system, budget 2014 announced plans to introduce the flexibility and innovation in apprenticeship technical training pilot project aimed at reducing non-financial barriers and allowing apprentices to complete training and obtain certification.

Helping youth make the transition to the workforce is also an important departmental objective. Although Canada has high levels of post-secondary achievement, the transition to a first job can be challenging. Young graduates often lack opportunities to gain the workplace experience and skills necessary to find and retain jobs.

ESDC is improving the youth employment strategy by aligning it with the evolving realities of the job market and by ensuring that federal investments in youth employment provide young Canadians with real-life work experience in high-demand fields such as science, technology, engineering, mathematics and the skilled trades.

Older workers can face specific challenges in smaller communities across the country. ESDC is expanding the targeted initiative for older workers program. The program is a federal-provincial/territorial cost-shared initiative that assists unemployed older workers in communities affected by ongoing high unemployment, significant downsizing and business closures.

• (0900)

Information also plays an important role in a well-functioning labour market. ESDC will be launching an enhanced job matching service to ensure that Canadians have access to information on available jobs according to skills and location. Registered job seekers and employers will be automatically matched on the basis of skills, knowledge and experience.

Literacy and essential skills can pose a barrier to initial entry or to mobility within the labour market. While provinces and territories have primary responsibility for basic education, the department has an Office of Literacy and Essential Skills that acts as a national centre of expertise with a focus on working with partners and stakeholders to influence systemic change that will lead to better labour market participation and more productive workplaces.

The Office of Literacy and Essential Skills delivers approximately \$26 million per year in grants and contributions to a range of funding recipients. Part of this funding is targeted specifically to official language minority communities. In 2013-14, the Office of Literacy and Essential Skills supported six organizations working with OLMCs.

• (0905)

[English]

Now I would like to take a few moments to speak to you about a specific departmental initiative that plays an important role across the Government of Canada in community, economic, and human resource development.

The enabling fund for official language minority communities is ESDC's main contribution under the road map for official languages and an important part of the government-wide strategy for official languages and linguistic duality. Launched in 2005, the enabling fund and its predecessor, the support fund, represent a sustained effort to enable community-wide economic development and to grow the economic advantages of linguistic duality.

The current initiative is an investment of \$69 million over the course of the road map to support the operations and activities of the pan-Canadian network of 14 professional organizations, with 135 employees working at 50 different locations across the country. Recipient organizations support and operate under the direction of boards of directors composed of volunteers and business and community leaders. This allows for strong public-private partnership approaches and an ability to tailor solutions to the needs of communities. Some of these organizations have recently appeared before this committee, as you're aware.

Serving Canada's francophones and official language minority communities are the

[Translation]

Réseau de développement économique et d'employabilité Canada,

[English]

which is the national coordinating body, and 12 provincial and territorial RDÉE network organizations serving francophone and Acadian minority communities across Canada. Serving Quebec's

English-speaking population is the Community Economic Development and Employability Corporation.

The role of the enabling fund and of the recipient organizations stems from their ability to provide expertise for the development of local and community-owned strategies to use and help develop economic potential in official language minority communities, to forge partnerships at all levels, and to consolidate resources.

These organizations leverage about \$2 for every \$1 invested through the enabling fund program. They also provide an infrastructure to deliver programming, services, and initiatives in OLMCs. Communities with strong economies attract and retain investment, provide stable employment opportunities, bring in new residents, and retain their youth. The enabling fund is built on the principle that opportunities for development exist in OLMCs. The program provides these communities with local capacity and leadership so that the communities can realize their growth potential from within.

Organizations offer a range of economic development and employability activities and services for job seekers, employers, and entrepreneurs. They also develop and broker partnerships with a range of organizations to design and deliver responsive initiatives. The funding provided ensures the financial stability of the economic development networks and allows linguistic minority communities to make long-term plans. Activities conducted by the enabling fund organizations are diverse and the program design provides communities with the flexibility to tailor their actions to meet the specific needs of the communities they serve. Priorities and types of interventions also vary from community to community given the variety of circumstances, which you can appreciate.

The enabling fund organizations hold regular engagement sessions where community members share their views. Participation is at the heart of what the program is about, since community members have significant knowledge about the assets and needs of the community.

The enabling fund recipient organizations also get direction on priorities from their respective boards of directors. This is a unique approach that supports strong community and private sector partnerships.

The road map reiterated the importance of the enabling fund and set out a direction to strengthen the focus on identifying targets and measuring progress and on increasing the proportion of resources leveraged from the private sector.

The importance of the enabling fund for official language minority communities is consistently raised in discussions with community members and representative organizations.

I would like to thank you again for this opportunity, and my colleague and I would be pleased to respond to questions.

Thank you.

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

[*Translation*]

Mr. Wilson, of the Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development, you have the floor.

Mr. Randle Wilson (Director General, Trade Portfolio Strategy and Coordination, Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

It is a pleasure to appear before you today in my role as official languages champion of the Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development, or DFATD, to talk to you about what the department is doing to build growing, sustainable economies in official language minority communities, the OLMCs.

If the committee has any questions on the Destination Canada program, which is the responsibility of the Department of Citizenship and Immigration, my colleague Rénaud Gilbert, who is minister-counsellor and head of immigration at the Canadian embassy in Paris, will be pleased to answer them.

I will briefly outline our actions for you under three headings, which our interlocutors at our annual official consultations with OLMC stakeholders regularly view as priorities: international trade promotion, the government's international education strategy and the economic Francophonie, which is the new dimension of the international Francophonie.

Most OLMC businesses are small or medium-sized. Although it obviously supports large companies as well, the department in a way specializes in small and medium enterprises, SMEs, which constitute most of the clientele of our trade service, the Canadian Trade Commissioner Service.

SMEs are also the particular focus of the Global Markets Action Plan, the new trade strategy the government announced last November. SMEs trying to penetrate global markets or grow and diversify their exports face many challenges. We have observed that many Canadian SMEs do this very successfully when they are well prepared and well supported by federal services in partnership with the provinces and territories and other relevant stakeholders, which helps them create jobs, grow their businesses and increase prosperity in their communities. This is how the department contributes to the economic development of official language minority communities.

However, many SMEs are unaware that services are in place to help them cut through the complexities of international trade and to find contracts, partnerships and financing or achieve any other desired objective in expanding their businesses internationally. That is why we put so much emphasis on awareness activities.

We travel across the country every year looking for new resource people and new clients, and although we normally reach out along sectoral lines, we make a special effort with OLMC businesses in all provinces and territories.

Our diplomats, when in Canada, are also enlisted in the cause. For example, during a tour of British Columbia and Alberta in February 2013, our ambassador to China met the executive director and president of the Société de développement économique de la

Colombie-Britannique, which is a member of RDÉE Canada, and made a presentation on that major market to approximately 40 members of the Conseil de développement économique de l'Alberta, also an RDÉE member. Incidentally, the ambassador also visited Concordia University before going on posting.

Our efforts involve much more than diplomats, of course. The national awareness activities plan for the department's executives provides for a permanent component through which the department will seek opportunities for engagement with OLMCs.

I would note as well that the Canadian Trade Commissioner Service has agents across Canada. They provide information and practical advice on international trade to businesses on the ground. This pan-Canadian network is specifically responsible for targeting OLMCs.

Last December, for example, the director of the Prairies and Northwest Territories region travelled to Yellowknife, where she met the executive director of the Conseil de développement économique des Territoires du Nord-Ouest to discuss the Canadian Trade Commissioner Service and explore that OLMC's needs and potential regarding international markets. She intends to return during SME Week in October.

● (0910)

On the other side of Canada, our trade commissioner in Moncton is an active participant in the breakfast meetings organized every month by the New Brunswick Economic Council, which is the most extensive francophone business network in the Atlantic region. The purpose of our involvement is to raise the profile of the Trade Commissioner Service and to make New Brunswick's francophone and Acadian businesses aware of their services.

Another important line of action in promoting the economic development of OLMCs is Canada's International Education Strategy. As has already been noted today, education is of course a jurisdiction of the provinces and territories, but the department is working closely with them and with sectoral stakeholders to promote it internationally. The purpose of this strategy is to promote Canada's brand and to market the country as a prime education destination. The Association des universités de la francophonie canadienne and the Réseau des cégeps et des collèges francophones du Canada are two of our key partners, and specific institutions such as the University of New Brunswick are our clients in the francophone markets of the Maghreb, for example.

It is in fact an asset for Canada to offer postsecondary students the opportunity to pursue their education at Bishop's University, for example, or on the University of Alberta's Campus Saint-Jean, places where they can improve their comprehension of one language in class and of the other in the community. Incidentally, the Campus Saint-Jean was targeted last November by a cooperation mission that the department organized to promote the development of inter-institutional agreements with representatives of postsecondary education institutions in the Americas.

Lastly, the department has made reinforcing the economic aspect of the francophone space a priority in its involvement in the international Francophonie and views that as an opportunity for sustainable economic development in OLMCs. The draft economic strategy on which the members of the Francophonie are currently working will be adopted by the heads of state and government at that organization's summit in Dakar, Senegal, in November. This is also one of the current priorities of the Minister for La Francophonie, the Honourable Christian Paradis. For example, the new strategy will help consolidate implementation of the values of the Francophonie and have a direct impact on new market development, job creation and economic cooperation among the states and communities in the francophone space. One of our key partners on this project is the Réseau de développement économique et d'employabilité du Canada, RDÉE.

I will leave it at that since my time is running short. My colleague, Mr. Gilbert, and I are available to the committee to answer any questions.

Thank you.

● (0915)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Wilson.

[*English*]

So Mr. Gilbert cannot see us, but he can hear us, so we'll just proceed on that basis.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Godin, you have the floor.

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

I would like to welcome Mr. Gilbert, who is on the other end of the line, in the country of our ancestors.

You cannot see us, but we may have an opportunity to meet in Paris in two weeks, since I will be at the Canadian embassy with the Canada-France Interparliamentary Association. Perhaps we will be able to talk at greater length.

Mr. Gauthier, you say in your conclusion that the Government of Canada is committed to promoting Canada's official languages as well as the vitality of official language minority communities. How can your department help promote Canada's official languages when it has made cuts to Radio-Canada, a public radio and television broadcasting corporation? You do not talk about arts and culture, but we are going to talk about them now.

In Moncton, in the Atlantic region, which is a francophone minority region, we have been fortunate to have programs such as *Belle-Baie*, which was filmed in Caraquet. Francophones outside Quebec and in minority regions very much identify with that program. There was *La Revue acadienne* as well. However, all that has been eliminated.

The government says it has not touched the \$1.2 billion roadmap. It says it is investing in our communities, but here it is taking something fundamentally important away from us, something that helps unite people. You also mentioned education, and I will get back to that. I do not understand where the Conservatives are

headed. It is as though they want to eliminate our public radio and television. They are responsible under the act for guaranteeing a francophone presence in the minority regions, whether it be in Whitehorse, Nanaimo, British Columbia, or anywhere in Saskatchewan. They are responsible for promoting official languages.

I would like to hear your comments on that.

● (0920)

Mr. Jean-Pierre Gauthier: That is a good question.

As you will understand, I am not the departmental representative most capable of giving you detailed answers on the Radio-Canada question. An entire unit at the department deals with broadcasting issues.

A lot of measures are designed to promote official languages. Although it is true that some measures may vary over time, and Radio-Canada is an example of that, there is a package of additional measures. They constitute a set, and, based on that set, I can say that support is being provided to the communities.

As you said, official language budgets, particularly that of the roadmap, have not been affected. So a continuing effort is being made to assist the communities. It was in that sense that I said we felt we were supporting the communities.

Mr. Yvon Godin: The government says the roadmap has not been affected, but it has withdrawn \$120 million from the Department of Citizenship and Immigration and invested it in the roadmap. That \$120 million was part of the Department of Citizenship and Immigration portfolio. The roadmap has been affected to the tune of \$120 million. One plus one equals two.

Mr. Jean-Pierre Gauthier: There are various reasons for that amount. It is important to emphasize that there have been efficiency gains. We have made cuts to operating costs. The programs that were offered in the fifth year of the roadmap 2008 are still around in the first year of the roadmap 2013. There is continuity.

The plan was that certain programs would terminate after one year. They were term projects.

Mr. Yvon Godin: That does not alter the fact that \$120 million has been transferred from the Department of Citizenship and Immigration to the roadmap.

I would like to ask another question.

The Government of Canada and the provinces invested a lot of funding in the Forum on Economic Development in the Canadian Francophonie, which was held in 2012. At that forum, all the partners, who came from the federal and provincial governments, the communities and the private sector, adopted the integrated action plan for the economic development of the Canadian Francophonie.

Do you think that plan provides a good basis for the communities's economic development?

Mr. Jean-Pierre Gauthier: The primary appeal of that plan is that it is consensual. It brings together many partners, whom you named. I also discussed it in my presentation. In that respect, it is a credible and interesting plan.

I also speak on behalf of the Ministerial Conference, because I am co-chair of the interministerial working group studying this matter. We have always wanted this plan to belong first of all to the communities and to the business community since it is their economic development that is at stake. We are here to help them, as we were throughout the forum. We observe developments under this plan and we offer our support.

Mr. Yvon Godin: Then why not invest in its implementation? The communities say there has been no investment in its implementation. It is good that the committee is conducting a study on the economic situation of official language communities. However, a major forum was held in Ottawa in 2012, and, as you said yourself, that forum was productive.

Mr. Jean-Pierre Gauthier: Yes, it was.

Mr. Yvon Godin: However, the communities felt that the government was subsequently not there to help them.

Mr. Jean-Pierre Gauthier: We feel that some of the roadmap investments, such as the EDI and the Enabling Fund for Official Language Minority Communities, for example, help pursue these objectives. Strictly speaking, that plan has not been adopted as public policy. The activities we carry out are clearly part of that plan; they are consistent and compatible with that plan.

•(0925)

Mr. Yvon Godin: Perhaps you should explain that to the communities because they do not see themselves as being part of that plan.

My next question is for the representative of the Department of Citizenship and Immigration.

In the April 7 "My Opinion" column, New Brunswick's Commissioner of Official Languages, Katherine d'Entremont, discussed the poor results of francophone immigration to that province, noting that French was the first official language spoken by only 11.7% of recent immigrants.

As you know, immigration is a very important pillar of the economic development of official language minority communities. In her article, Ms. d'Entremont called for a federal-provincial framework agreement to be established for francophone immigration to promote a long-term joint approach.

Do you agree that such a federal-provincial agreement would be necessary to maintain the demographic weight of official language minority communities?

Mr. Jean-Pierre Gauthier: I am going to refer that question to my colleague from the Department of Citizenship and Immigration.

Mr. Yvon Godin: That is who I am addressing.

Mr. Rénaud Gilbert (Manager, Immigration Program, Paris, France, Department of Citizenship and Immigration): That would definitely be one way of increasing the percentage of francophones settling in New Brunswick. However, New Brunswick is already able to select a number of its immigrants. It already has tools it can use to do that.

Mr. Yvon Godin: Quebec has its own immigration office, which gives it an advantage, but the country's other provinces do not. How

do we promote francophone immigration to minority regions elsewhere in the country in such a way that they will stay there?

Mr. Rénaud Gilbert: Strictly speaking, New Brunswick does not have international offices, but representatives of that province frequently come and recruit in Europe and Africa. I believe they are coming for another week in June. Last November, the province set up what we call Destination Nouveau-Brunswick.

The province is already carrying on its own activities, but I cannot really respond for the Government of New Brunswick.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Gilbert.

Mr. Gourde, you have the floor.

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

I want to thank the witnesses for attending our meeting this morning.

My first question is for Mr. Gauthier.

At the Pan-Canadian Forum on Economic Development in the Canadian Francophonie, an integrated plan was prepared based on six areas of intervention: markets and marketing, entrepreneurship, economic integration, sustainable partnerships, funding and investment and public policies and regulations.

Could you briefly tell us what we should take away from that report? Perhaps you could also provide the report to the committee.

Mr. Jean-Pierre Gauthier: It will be a pleasure to send you the report, which is quite substantial and comprehensive.

With respect to the markets and marketing area of intervention in the integrated action plan, efforts are being made to promote project development, particularly under the EDI, which is provided for under the roadmap. The report also suggests that entrepreneurship should be promoted. Several Employment and Social Development Canada programs are designed precisely to support development of business skills and the labour market. That includes entrepreneurial skills.

There is work to be done on the areas of the integrated action plan. The plan does not just call for government involvement. It also calls on the communities and the business community, which must organize its own situation. One of the factors we felt was important when we spoke at the forum was the development of an approach to encourage community empowerment. That is somewhat the responsibility of the private sector, which must state its priorities and needs in cooperation with the local communities.

There is a need for dialogue, which must always be improved to ensure that the community takes action on its own. We indicated on several occasions during the discussions that we were very open to that. I am thinking once again of the intergovernmental working group, which can receive suggestions, projects and specific proposals and subsequently present them to the various authorities in order to advance the plan. Dialogue and discussion have taken place. We hope that more actual results can be achieved.

We talked about creating a directory of business people to promote networking in the Canadian Francophonie. I know that at least two groups are working on ideas for that purpose. We are talking to them so that we can follow up. We will be able to consider those ideas at a later date once the projects have been developed and presented. Together with our federal government colleagues, we will be able to see who is in the best position to support them.

We are already addressing various aspects through some initiatives by our department. Others must be conceived, and the community must take some of the initiative.

● (0930)

Mr. Jacques Gourde: Thank you.

I would like to hear what a representative of the Department of Employment and Social Development has to say about this initiative. How do you complement each other?

Mr. Stephen Johnson: Representatives from RDÉE Canada and CEDEC previously mentioned that they were working together to develop a plan. They discussed how the plan might harmonize with the other strategy. As far as I know, it is very consistent, particularly in the entrepreneurship and employability areas.

Rather than establish the overall objectives of a strategy, the idea is to be more precise and to define the activities specific to each community. That will result in a more specific action plan that can be put in place.

I see it all as very consistent, but every community has to be made to understand what that means for it.

Mr. Jacques Gourde: Thank you.

My next question is for Mr. Gilbert.

The program to promote French immigration to Canada is working well. What makes the French come and settle in our great country?

Mr. Rénaud Gilbert: There are many reasons. Unfortunately for France, its economy is not doing very well. Its unemployment rate is very high, particularly among young people. Many people are very well educated and, in many instances, have good work experience, but they have a history of contract work and do not have permanent jobs. They are looking at other opportunities elsewhere, in Europe, first of all, I have to admit.

However, there is enormous interest in Canada. People are regularly interviewed, and newspapers regularly publish articles that cast Canada in a very positive light.

First, we try to take maximum advantage of that to make people understand that not all francophones live in Montreal, in Quebec. Of course, Montreal is often the first focal point. Second, we tell them that it is possible to succeed as a francophone elsewhere in Canada, outside Quebec.

Mr. Jacques Gourde: How do you promote Canada's major regions? Apart from the big cities, many jobs are available in all regions of the provinces. How do you tell the French to go and discover Canada and the opportunities it affords?

Mr. Rénaud Gilbert: We organize regular training sessions. We hold 80 to 100 information sessions a year at the Canadian Cultural

Centre. We have started organizing webinars, not just for the French, but for all francophones who want to register.

We attend job fairs during the year and give talks at those events. Every November, we organize an entire week called Destination Canada. Canadian employers from various provinces come to them. In recent years, representatives from seven or eight provinces and one territory have attended together with employers to offer opportunities to young French, Belgians, Swiss and others wanting to settle in Canada. We do not target just France. There is a Destination Canada website where people can find information.

We receive many information requests and direct people to the opportunities available in Canada. The embassy in Paris receives an average of 1,000 information requests a week. We are not the only ones. Many things are being done to promote French Canada in France, but also elsewhere in Europe and francophone Africa.

● (0935)

Mr. Jacques Gourde: Do you have any statistics on the retention of these young people? Do they stay in Canada or do 50% of them return to France?

Mr. Rénaud Gilbert: That is very hard to say. I would doubt very much that it is 50%. Since there are no exit controls in Canada, we do not know how many of these young people return to France after the fact.

We do know that the French community in Canada is growing. Every year we see an increase in the number of immigrants, temporary workers and students. However, I regularly meet people who have lived in Canada for 5, 10 or 30 years and who have returned to France to take care of their parents or something like that.

We do not know what percentage of French return to France, but I think it must be quite small given that economic conditions in France currently offer few opportunities.

Mr. Jacques Gourde: Are families trying this or is it only single individuals?

Mr. Rénaud Gilbert: In general, young families try it. Young people often go to Canada as through programs such as International Experience Canada. Under an agreement we have with France, 14,000 French youth can enter Canada with a work permit and stay for a limited period of time, from 12 to 18 months, depending on the kind of sub-program under which they have applied. In many of these cases, these young people acquire experience in Canada, come back to France and return to Canada a few years later, in some instances with their spouses and children.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Gilbert and Mr. Gourde.

Ms. St-Denis, you have the floor.

Ms. Lise St-Denis (Saint-Maurice—Champlain, Lib.): My question is for Ms. Gareau and Mr. Johnson.

Mr. Gauthier talked about empowerment, what you call "social finance" in your documents, which means capital mobilization. You described that as the mobilization of private capital to guarantee a social dividend in order to empower the communities.

There are not a lot of francophones in the western provinces. They represent 1%, 2% or 3% of the population. It is 2% in Alberta.

Are anglophone communities investing in francophone projects? Do they agree to invest or do they want to have nothing to do with them? What do you do if francophone communities cannot find financing? Have you planned to help them?

The projects are great, but what is the reality?

Mr. Stephen Johnson: Social innovation comes in several forms. It is quite new, not only in Canada, but around the world as well.

Our department is moving forward quite slowly in this field. For example, we are conducting pilot projects in an attempt to do a better job of solving the problems. In many cases, these are problems for which the conventional mechanisms do not work. As far as I know, we are not proposing to replace all our programs with social financing. I wanted to clarify that point.

However, one or two principles of the enabling fund work well and reflect certain social financing principles, particularly the concept of partnership involving the private sector, not-for-profit organizations and various levels of government. In a way, it all boils down to agreeing that governments do not always have all the solutions. This is a collaborative effort. It is already being done.

Leverage is another important aspect of social financing. The idea is to find other financing sources and solutions through those partnerships.

Ms. Lise St-Denis: Are you talking about francophone communities? Generally speaking, this is a great principle that should be applied everywhere, but is it also effective for francophone communities? Are partnerships being established or are francophones ultimately unable to find money? You have to admit that the francophone communities in those provinces are often poor.

Mr. Stephen Johnson: I am going to give you a general answer. My colleague Ms. Gareau may perhaps add some details.

In fact, it varies from one community to the next. In the context of the enabling fund and of the support fund that preceded it, we have observed for at least the past 10 years that all communities are able to find other financing sources. They may be other federal departments or agencies, the provincial or local government or the private sector. I should point out that there has been little private sector funding to date. We also want to focus more on that and encourage employers to participate more. After all, they are the ones that have jobs to offer. So it is very important to continue encouraging them.

There have nevertheless been successes virtually everywhere.

• (0940)

[English]

On average or overall, they leverage \$2 for every \$1. Everywhere people are doing this leveraging. It is different in each community, but it has been possible for all communities.

[Translation]

Ms. Lise St-Denis: This week Radio-Canada broadcast a program on which people complained that they were absolutely unable to obtain French-language medical services. One case in particular

involved a mother with an autistic son. I think that was in British Columbia.

Does the government intend to find solutions to this kind of problem through your organization?

I think Mr. Gauthier should answer the question since it concerns a language matter.

Mr. Jean-Pierre Gauthier: We are very much aware that one of the primary concerns of minority communities is obtaining services in their own language. In health, that means services offered by the provinces. We therefore encourage them very strongly to develop an offer of service in French. We establish agreements with them and we encourage them, with a little funding, to design plans to expand the scope of their French-language services. The fact remains that it is up to the provinces to make their choices and to set their priorities.

Ms. Lise St-Denis: The Official Languages Act provides that we must offer services where numbers—

Mr. Jean-Pierre Gauthier: The federal government must provide those services.

Ms. Lise St-Denis: That is correct.

Mr. Jean-Pierre Gauthier: However, we are talking about provincial government services here. Strictly speaking, the Official Languages Act does not compel the provinces to provide these services in French. The approach is one of encouragement. A provision in the Official Languages Act calls for Canadian Heritage to encourage the provinces to do so. That is where our agreements come in.

Furthermore, Health Canada has established programs under which the government is trying to train more French-language health professionals in the minority communities. It is trying to involve the members of those communities, the francophone minority communities, whose professional health qualifications are in French.

We hope to see the offer of service improve, but that will depend first on the province.

Ms. Lise St-Denis: Everyone knows that francophones in New Brunswick and Quebec are going to Alberta, for example, to work. Are you involved in establishing francophone structures in those new communities?

Mr. Jean-Pierre Gauthier: Yes, it is a bit like what I was saying about services.

We strongly support the provinces in the area of schools so they can offer service where they have a constitutional obligation to do so. We support that directly. That may include the construction or renovation of schools, the purchase of equipment and teacher training. We do a lot of work with the provinces in this field because education is, of course, a provincial jurisdiction. We help them and that becomes part of the community infrastructure. The communities often present education as the starting point for community infrastructure.

Ms. Lise St-Denis: Are there any recurring programs for the remote communities, the ones that are in greater difficulty? For a community that is not very well developed or is having trouble taking charge of its situation or living in French, for example, are there any recurring programs for community groups or do they have to hope they can obtain a grant each time, from one year to the next? Is there a recurring programs principle?

• (0945)

Mr. Jean-Pierre Gauthier: Once again, perhaps I can answer the question from Canadian Heritage's perspective.

Our programs concern the development of community life. We fund the operation of a broad range of community organizations that support communities from day to day. That includes all provinces and territories, in other words all the most remote communities. Operating funding makes it possible for an organization to exist. There is also project funding, which varies with the applications submitted to us.

On the whole, however, we are consistently there, year after year, to support all communities in Canada.

Ms. Lise St-Denis: Entrepreneurship—

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. St-Denis.

Now we will hear from Ms. Bateman.

Ms. Joyce Bateman (Winnipeg South Centre, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thanks to all the witnesses. I very much appreciated their comments.

As you know, our government's focus is job creation, economic growth and long-term prosperity for our generation and for young people. Most of my questions will address that topic.

First, I would like clarification on one point, Mr. Gauthier. Are you familiar with the Conseil de la coopération de l'Ontario? It is one of your clients, is it not?

Mr. Jean-Pierre Gauthier: Yes.

Ms. Joyce Bateman: How much support does your department provide it per year?

Mr. Jean-Pierre Gauthier: We are very familiar with the people from the Conseil de la coopération de l'Ontario, with which we work in two capacities.

First, as I said in response to Ms. St-Denis' question, it is one of the organizations for which we provide operational support. We award it a grant or financial assistance of \$48,000 a year so that it can operate and pursue its objectives.

Second, it is an organization that we have—

Ms. Joyce Bateman: What is the amount?

Mr. Jean-Pierre Gauthier: It is \$48,000 a year.

Ms. Joyce Bateman: All right.

Mr. Jean-Pierre Gauthier: In addition to that, we selected that organization to deliver our Young Canada Works program in Ontario, which gives it an annual budget of \$600,000 to manage.

Ms. Joyce Bateman: Did you say \$100,000?

Mr. Jean-Pierre Gauthier: We grant \$48,000 for the organization's operation. We also selected it to manage Young Canada Works. In that capacity, it manages \$600,000 and will therefore distribute employment grants, for example, as part of our Young Canada Works program.

Ms. Joyce Bateman: All right, thank you.

What are that organization's key activities? I imagine that is for Ontario.

Mr. Jean-Pierre Gauthier: It carries out its primary mandate, which is related to cooperatives, in Ontario. It provides services to francophone cooperatives in Ontario, particularly agricultural cooperatives, cooperatives that are often associated with youth movements and youth initiatives. There are also housing cooperatives. It offers support services to those cooperatives in Ontario, focusing mainly on the cooperatives it serves or that are located in francophone communities.

Ms. Joyce Bateman: I see, thank you.

Mr. Johnson, I believe our government will be taking an interest in your department since it is concerned with job creation and matching resources with existing opportunities.

Unless I am mistaken, basic funding constitutes virtually half of the enabling fund. How does that compare with your department's other grant programs? Have any changes been made recently? Can you offer any comments on any incorrect ideas you have heard about those changes?

• (0950)

Mr. Stephen Johnson: Thank you very much.

This committee has previously discussed a number of changes to the enabling fund. I think it is important to clarify how that all works and what has changed.

First, the budget has not been cut. The overall budget, which is roughly \$12 million a year and is available to 14 organizations across the country, remains the same. To answer the other question in part, I would note that we have been working with the same organizations for more than 10 years. The idea is really to maintain a stable network.

Second, this is quite a separate initiative. Its main aim is to support a network. Some 70% of total funding is currently allocated to what may be called core funding or operating costs. Since the objective is to support a network, that network has to be funded. Consequently, that percentage is much higher than in the case of other grants and contributions awarded by our department, but that is because the objective is very different. The idea is to establish a stable network.

It is important to note that this 70% figure applies across the country, but it varies considerably from one province or territory to another. In some provinces where infrastructure is quite extensive, our network is not required to invest as much or to contribute to their core funding. Those provinces can allocate more funding to services. In a few provinces and territories, virtually all money is allocated to core funding, whereas the figure is about 50% in others.

Two important things have changed as a result of the roadmap. First, we are requesting a 30% increase in investments, resources from the private sector. As I mentioned, it is important that the private sector engage in these discussions in order to support economic development. We are not calling for a 30% increase right now; we want to see that increase by the end of the four years remaining in the term of the roadmap. This is a modest rise to be achieved over a period of four years.

Second, we want the 70% increase allocated to core funding to be reduced to 58%. Once again, we are talking about a gradual, modest reduction to be achieved by the end of the roadmap's four remaining years. This target does not apply to all organizations. We are asking each to move a little in that direction. We are asking those for which 100% of the money is allocated to core funding to reduce that percentage to 90%, not 58%. The 58% figure is an overall target.

Ms. Gareau is currently working with those organizations to see how they can achieve these targets.

The Chair: All right, thank you.

[*English*]

Mr. Daniel.

Mr. Joe Daniel (Don Valley East, CPC): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Thank you, folks, for being here. It's great to have you here and hear about the good work you are doing. Mr. Wilson has been very quiet, so I have a question for him first.

How do you see our francophone SMEs engaging and preparing to be able to engage in trade with the francophone EU countries as we move forward toward a trade agreement with them?

• (0955)

Mr. Randle Wilson: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

I thank the member for speaking to my condition as the Quakers say. The fact is that we're very excited about the possibilities that the Canada-EU comprehensive economic and trade agreement, or CETA, will bring. You have in the EU the biggest francophone market in the world and the second biggest anglophone market in the world. So there's something for everyone.

We will help every company we can that is interested, and our main task is reaching out and making companies aware of our services. What is particularly useful to us in the context of the OLMCs is that we have national and provincial partners who will fill a room for us, because it's not much use our going out to the people we already know. It's nice, as they build exports and they create jobs and sustain prosperity. What we want to do is to get the message to companies that may already be exporting and don't know that they can have government help. They may be exporting only to the United States, or to safe markets, and don't know they can now export to these other countries, to the world's single biggest market.

It's also a very important market, in particular, for francophone companies because of the partnerships you can make with French and Belgium companies that lead south into the francophone countries of Africa.

So this is where we're engaging. In fact, right now we're still designing an outreach program because, as you know, agreement in principle and actual agreement on a text are two different things. So we're not quite there, but it's expected shortly. So at this stage we're sending negotiators across the country to anybody who requests information, and we're pushing to bring them news of the potential. For example, one went to Miramichi in January, at the invitation of the local chamber of commerce, to talk to them exactly about this issue, which is what are the new markets. And I have to say that our companies are small francophone ones across Canada or anglophone companies in Quebec. They're not just looking at the obvious markets; they're looking at making partnerships but also going beyond and reaching into maybe newer markets like Poland.

So at this stage we're still describing the potential. On the next wave, what we'll try to do is to arrange, through every means—electronic, virtual, video conference, and webinars—to get people who are already present in our trade sections across Europe to describe in greater detail the potential of the markets and in the sectors where our companies are operating.

Mr. Joe Daniel: Thank you.

Mr. Gilbert, just on that note, how are you actually promoting our trade commissioners. I've recently been to India and met with many of the trade commissioners, but they're almost like a secret part of the establishment that not many people know about. What are you going to do to promote the trade commissioners so that these companies can engage better?

Mr. Randle Wilson: If I may, Mr. Chairman, it would perhaps be fairer for me to answer that one because Monsieur Gilbert is working on the immigration program. He probably mentions trade commissioners as often as is necessary, but it's our row.

First, we have an asset. We have the minister. I haven't looked at the numbers, but my sense is that he's been possibly the most active trade minister ever in crossing Canada and getting the message out. His standing line, which unfortunately is more true than good, is that the Trade Commissioner Service is Canada's best-kept secret. Regrettably, that means that what we pedal, which is knowledge—knowledge that reduces the risk but increases the opportunities for companies, especially small companies—isn't placed at the disposal of these companies. With a minister out there who can always attract a crowd, we are able to follow up through the doors he opens and to use partners like RDÉE, and its provincial members, like CEDEC, like the provinces and territories themselves, to raise the knowledge. And it's not just by the Trade Commissioner Service, but also EDC. It's about the complementary activities inside Canada by the Business Development Bank of Canada and the whole package of government services....

Mr. Joe Daniel: That's wonderful.

Do I have time?

My question is for the rest of you. We talked about one of the pillars being education, and that's absolutely wonderful, but I had the privilege recently of visiting the aerospace corridor down in Montreal, Pratt & Whitney, Bombardier, Bell, etc. The aerospace industry is one of Canada's best kept secrets. They export some \$22 billion worth of business. It's a \$29 billion business in Canada, but one of the big problems is that they're expecting growth of nearly 30% this year, yet they seem to be very concerned about being able to get francophone engineers into their establishments.

We had a witness just the other day discuss this, and if you look at the education system, there are very few places where people can actually learn aeronautics and engineering generally at a technical level.

Have you any ideas on how you can solve that, or what perhaps you might be doing about that?

That question is for both of the departments.

• (1000)

Mr. Jean-Pierre Gauthier: Perhaps I can give the beginning of an answer. It is important for us, first of all, to be made aware of that need, that lack of engineering in French, because we have some tools that we can use. Again, let's remember that education is definitely a provincial jurisdiction and even the professional associations of engineers are under provincial jurisdiction.

Nonetheless, we do work with their education agreements on post-secondary projects and everything, so we can definitely sound out the provinces and see what their level of interest would be to focus on something like that.

We also note that in the economic development initiatives, which you heard about last week from our colleagues from industry and the various regional development agencies, I know that FedDev in southern Ontario, for example, is focusing quite a bit on encouraging youth to undertake careers in science, in engineering, and so forth. So we can explore what we can do further along that kind of a... [Inaudible—Editor].

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We're actually going to go to Mr. Nicholls now.

Mr. Jamie Nicholls (Vaudreuil-Soulanges, NDP): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

My questions are about the enabling fund you talked about in your presentation, Mr. Johnson. You said the funding ensures the financial stability of the economic development networks and allows the linguistic minority communities to make long-term plans. I remind you that the definition of "ensure" is to make certain or to guarantee that something shall occur, and quite simply, this is not the case. We've had witnesses before this committee. We've heard that service organizations have to use resources and time for fundraising activities other than leveraging activities for private fundraising, and they still fall short.

Simply stated, the fact that these organizations have to go out and do bake sales or silent auctions or whatever kind of fundraising

activities is taking away the time they have and the energy to provide services to the OLMCs. For 14 organizations, \$12 million simply isn't enough, and there is a discrepancy between what Heritage Canada is saying in the road map of \$69 million for the enabling fund and the \$48 million that's actually being funded by ESDC.

The partners on the ground have come here before us, and they have testified that they need more to provide services to their organization.

My question is for Mr. Gauthier. The Commissioner of Official Languages talked about the fact that Canadian Heritage's official languages initiatives aren't tailored to the needs of Quebec's English-speaking communities, and the new road map doesn't appear to have corrected this problem, so what will you do to ensure that the specific needs of Quebec's English-speaking communities are recognized when implementing these road map programs?

My follow-up question would be about the EDI, the \$10.2 million to CEDEC, the funding that's announced in the road map. Is that a yearly funding of \$10.2 million, or is it spread over five years? Are we talking about \$2 million every year for CEDEC?

Mr. Jean-Pierre Gauthier: Let me start with the question at the end, which is the easiest to answer. It's basically over five years, so it's \$10 million out of the \$30 million that we have for five years for the community development initiative.

The needs of English-speaking Canadians in Quebec are something that we're very mindful of. We have, I would submit, a number of elements in our programs, including the road map, at Heritage Canada where we are supporting them. The needs are even greater. For instance, we supported the community in its efforts to talk among themselves, to establish a priority plan. They did that about a year and a half ago and came up with a plan. That's an initiative that we supported completely from the beginning, and financed as well, because we need that information on our side as well to make sure that we can tailor a response.

It doesn't mean we're going to have additional funds overnight to basically address whatever needs are there, but we definitely need to be aware of where to set the priorities and make the right choices and decisions, and we do that very much in discussion with them.

We meet with the QCGN a couple of times a year just to review those kinds of issues and have open and frank discussions with them to see where the priorities are and what to do, what best we can do, and we also intervene with colleagues sometimes to draw their attention and to make sure they are tracking the different needs.

• (1005)

Mr. Jamie Nicholls: I have a follow-up question for both Mr. Johnson and Mr. Gauthier that involves tracking.

The QCGN came up with a vision and a strategy for the English-speaking community. We had one of the enabling fund organizations testify here just a couple of weeks ago. In fact, it was CEDEC. They basically said that they weren't really aware of the QCGN strategy, and that they met perhaps yearly or every two years. There seems to be a sort of disconnect between your two ministries in terms of how the rollout of these programs is happening.

How are you going to address coordination amongst your ministries? Just the fact that you've come before committee and Heritage is saying that there is \$69 million for an enabling fund while ESDC is saying there is \$48 million for an enabling fund.... There are a lot of discrepancies going on. There's the fact that Heritage says it regularly consults with the QCGN and the fact that we've heard CEDEC saying they weren't even aware, when they came to testify, that there was a vision and strategy for the English-speaking community in Quebec in the QCGN's actual report that they did with the communities.

Can you explain how you're going to improve on this discrepancy?

Mr. Stephen Johnson: Sure. Let me start perhaps by clarifying the discrepancy. There is not a discrepancy. The enabling fund is an amount of approximately \$13.8 million per year, of which \$12 million goes to the 14 organizations. That is what I focused on in my conversation, because I thought it would be of most interest to committee members. So \$12 million over five years is \$60 million *à peu près*.

The \$1.8 million in funds to national committees also funds, if you will, operating dollars within the department and pays for evaluation of research and some other activities. That's how the full amount that is cited in the road map breaks down into its components.

In terms of the disconnect between QCGN and CEDEC, I wasn't aware of that in terms of their plan. In fact, I was looking at some material from CEDEC and RDÉE Canada last night which suggested that in fact the work they're doing aligns very well with those higher-level strategic plans, so I'm not in a position to talk in much more detail about that.

I can just add by way of information that I chaired our national dialogue sessions on January 22 and 23. We had RDÉE, CEDEC, the QCGN, and the FCFA all around the table discussing and sharing plans and priorities.

[Translation]

We are doing our best to bring people together. Organizations in the communities also have to talk to each other.

[English]

The Chair: Okay.

We are going now to Mr. Falk.

Mr. Ted Falk (Provencher, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you, witnesses, for coming here this morning and presenting.

I'll start with Mr. Gauthier.

On page 3 of your report, Mr. Gauthier, you talk about the disadvantages that are faced by both anglophones and francophones in OLMCs. Can you talk a little bit more about what those disadvantages look like and what your department is doing to level the playing field or to address them?

Mr. Jean-Pierre Gauthier: The disadvantages actually will vary from region to region, as I was explaining. One thing is to make sure

that we get people close to the ground to work with the communities. That's partly why we have the design that we have with the community development initiative, where it's actually each regional development agency close to the ground that will help with the funding they have with respect to the road map. That is true in Quebec for the English-speaking community as well, where they can actually engage in discussion, being on the ground with them, and try to sort things out.

With respect to the disadvantages in general, again, since it varies so much from region to region, we have to engage locally. At Heritage we have a network of regional offices. Again, we divide the country into various regions. Regional offices are very much in charge with respect to official language programming in regard to receiving the requests for funding, engaging in discussion, and making sure that we address the priorities of the community and provide value for money in terms of putting the investments where they will actually generate the best results that we can have with the communities.

This is a kind of structural way of trying to make sure that we get close to the people so that we can actually learn, observe, and study what the issues are and engage in discussions with them. For me, I think this is paramount to making sure that we are sensitive with respect to the challenges.

Now, challenges aren't always solved. Actually, some challenges are continuing and are confronting us, and the work is continuing within the amount of resources that we and the communities have in trying to do the best we can. We could review various regions to discuss what these are in northern New Brunswick and what's going on in northern Ontario and so on and so forth, because you can find different challenges in different places.

But the real answer is to try to get close and engage with the people who are actually going through the challenges and the issues and to support them if we can.

● (1010)

Mr. Ted Falk: Maybe I'll expand a little bit more on that question.

Are you finding that the challenges are with groups that are of the minority in a community or those that don't possess linguistic duality?

Mr. Jean-Pierre Gauthier: There are different kinds of challenges, I would say. Some challenges are actually common to the whole population, in the sense that you're struggling with people leaving some regions and moving to bigger centres, for example. That will affect both majority- or minority-speaking communities per se.

That being said, we are much more interested in making sure that we focus on the minority communities per se. That's our mandate. It's not that the other issues are unimportant, but other programs and departmental initiatives try to deal with the rest of the issues.

We do have issues, therefore, that are specific to minority communities that are addressed as such. There issues are part of a broader trend that we're trying to address as well at the government level.

Of course, when you're dealing with accessing employment with revenue levels and so on and so forth, we observe that people who are bilingual are actually doing better in general, and that's at the individual level. In going from community level to individual level, we observe statistically that those people are usually faring better in finding employment and getting better remuneration.

Mr. Ted Falk: All right, good.

That leads me to my next question. I'm going to direct it to Ms. Gareau, just so that she can feel like she's participated here this morning.

Voices: Oh, oh!

Mr. Ted Falk: In the report from your department, on page 5, it says there are "economic advantages of linguistic duality". Apart from finding employment in government, for which we know there's a distinct advantage, can you give me some examples where there is that economic advantage to people who have that ability?

Ms. Denise Gareau (Director, Enabling Fund for Official Language Minority Communities, Skills and Employment Branch, Department of Employment and Social Development): Thanks very much for the question.

We heard earlier about the shortages of engineers. So on a human capital basis, in terms of labour market competencies, we see that there are economic advantages to linguistic duality.

I think also of some of the interventions that we heard from Mr. Wilson around accessing.... There include things such as being able to build trade relationships with more countries, being able to attract, as the colleague from CIC noted, immigrants who are French-speaking to communities across the country.

We have a lot of communities that have shortages in certain trades, in certain sectors. They're able to open up their pool of skilled labour to welcome both English-speaking professionals and French-speaking professionals, and actually have the infrastructure there to welcome them.

I think there are a number of ways in which linguistic duality really benefits the country.

Mr. Ted Falk: Thank you.

Am I out of time or do I...?

The Chair: I'll allow a very brief question.

•(1015)

Mr. Ted Falk: Okay.

I don't really who to address this question to, either Mr. Wilson or Mr. Gilbert, but when international students come to Canada, is there a higher demand for francophone or anglophone education?

Mr. Rénaud Gilbert: If I can answer part of that. A lot of students from France prefer to go to Quebec because there's an agreement between Quebec and France about tuition fees, which allows a French student to go to study in Quebec for the same fee that a local student pays. However, we see a trend where the University of Ottawa, for instance, has allowed students coming from francophone countries to have the same tuition fee as an Ontario student. That

movement probably needs to be encouraged to increase the number of francophone students going to institutions outside Quebec.

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. Gilbert and Mr. Falk.

Ms. Perreault, you have the floor.

Ms. Manon Perreault (Montcalm, NDP): Good morning.

I am going to go back a bit to the Enabling Fund for Official Language Minority Communities. I know we have talked about it a lot thus far. However, we have learned that various regional economic development agencies were not following the same guideline in paying operating costs.

You have made changes to the enabling fund. For example, you are seeking cost cuts. Are these new criteria harder to meet than the previous ones?

Ms. Denise Gareau: Thank you.

There is in fact no guideline. The program is quite flexible. As my colleague Mr. Gauthier said, the differences among the communities are enormous. Some communities have extensive local infrastructure and capabilities. We can work together to maximize the network. In New Brunswick, for example, relations among the organizations are excellent, and they work very well together. We therefore do not need to focus as much effort on remote services. Consequently, we are achieving economies of scale.

This is more difficult in other places because they have few other capabilities. The organizations work on the ground and have no network through which they can work together. In that case, it is harder. We see that operating costs are higher.

Ms. Manon Perreault: So there is no direct connection between them. It is not harder for you to meet the current demand.

Ms. Denise Gareau: That is precisely why we have not set a target for everyone. Consequently, some organizations are already performing well above the target level. In other instances, there is a lot of work to do. We take the 2012-2013 year as our benchmark, and all organizations will have to improve on the performance they achieved in that year.

We are working with the network to generate leverage and lower operating costs. The organizations are trying to find ways to work together to meet the targets.

Ms. Manon Perreault: I understand what you are telling me, but I find it hard to understand one point. The overall budget of \$12 million has not declined, but you are cutting operating costs and calling for more private resources. I am wondering whether the overall budget is the same and whether all that—

Mr. Stephen Johnson: The enabling fund pays operating costs and funds special initiatives. We want to cut operating costs and proportionately increase project funding. Overall amounts have remained the same, but we want to allocate more money to projects in order to achieve specific results rather than cover operating costs.

Ms. Manon Perreault: Were these changes made at the minister's request?

•(1020)

Mr. Stephen Johnson: The idea of increasing private sector participation and drawing more resources from the private sector was announced in the roadmap. That idea has in fact been around for a long time. The support fund was established 15 years ago, in 1999. The aim was to create capacity and to evolve. That evolution began under the last roadmap. Now there has to be a greater focus on actual results and less on core funding, although that is all related. The goal is not to have a network for the sake of having a network; the goal is to have a network in order to achieve actual results. It is in that sense that we want to see actual results in the communities.

Ms. Manon Perreault: Does that mean the enabling fund is facing new challenges? You definitely have new challenges.

Ms. Denise Gareau: We issued a call for proposals a few weeks ago, asking the organizations to develop a plan indicating how they would achieve their targets. They have until October to do that. We are also asking them to outline risks and issues in their communities in that plan. We clearly do not mean to cause problems on the ground. On the contrary, we are trying to strengthen our programs.

The organizations have already done a very good job of generating leverage. As Stephen said, every dollar invested generates two. The networks with the private sector are already well established. My colleague Mr. Wilson used the expression "to fill a room" in reference to the work of organizations such as RDÉE. There are capabilities and networks of professionals.

In their plans, the organizations will describe their issues and problems. We will work with them. Our objective is to promote work in cooperation with the private sector, but not at all to force them to make choices that are too difficult.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Perreault.

Mr. Williamson, you have the floor.

Mr. John Williamson (New Brunswick Southwest, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thanks to the witnesses for attending our meeting today.

Mr. Gauthier, you said the following in your presentation: "In the past 50 years, francophone minority communities have closed a historic gap (education level and socioeconomic status)." That sounds like good news to me. Successive governments have made efforts, as have the communities themselves. That should never be forgotten. This is the result of their efforts.

However, you note that some regions have not yet caught up to the majority.

Based on your studies, what regions are those?

Mr. Jean-Pierre Gauthier: People in New Brunswick are facing very definite economic viability challenges, particularly in the north. That is particularly true of the predominant francophone minority community in that region. This is clearly a place where there is a significant economic dynamic and special challenges.

In southern Ontario, certain classes of immigrants, particularly francophones, need additional assistance. Our colleagues at FedDev have previously examined this particular group in economic

development studies. The idea here is to target investments a little more to assist this group.

Mr. John Williamson: There are also francophone immigrants in Toronto and Ottawa, are there not?

Mr. Jean-Pierre Gauthier: The area of the southern Ontario Federal Economic Development Agency, FedDev, includes Toronto and Ottawa. However, in speaking with those people, I understood that they wanted to focus more on the community on the peninsula, that is to say in Toronto and St. Catharines, in particular. In fact, this is a sub-group of the francophone minority community in southern Ontario. We are focusing our attention on those two groups.

We are also closely monitoring what is going on in northern Ontario, particularly in Sudbury and surrounding areas. The situation there is not bad, but FedDev and FedNor are joining forces to stimulate the economy there as much as possible. The same is true of RDÉE Ontario, which is focusing on those needs.

Those, briefly, are two or three specific examples that emerged from our reviews.

•(1025)

Mr. John Williamson: Very well, thank you.

Mr. Gilbert, thank you for coming to meet with us today.

You said in your speech that French citizens were considering the option of settling in Montreal. I am intrigued by that. Is that because it is a francophone city, region and province, where even the French feel comfortable with the fact that it is a French environment where they can live in their language? Is it also because the economy is in good enough shape for them to find a job?

Are those the main two reasons why they are attracted? Are there any others?

Mr. Régnald Gilbert: I would not necessarily say it is because of the job opportunities. Some reasons are partly historical. The French community has a lot of socio-cultural connections with Quebec. It is impossible for them to turn on the TV in the evening without seeing a Quebec artist. For many reasons of that kind, Montreal is well known to them. In fact, the French community is concentrated in one part of Montreal, the Plateau Mont-Royal, and that causes a ripple effect. However, it is not necessarily for economic reasons.

I would note that the French go where the jobs are. In many cases, those who want to leave the French community, if I may put it that way, do go where there are jobs, in Saskatchewan or Alberta. They are not necessarily fixated on Montreal.

On the other hand, those who in a way want to find a small part of France in a place where there is a large francophone community tend to choose Montreal.

Mr. John Williamson: I agree with you.

Twelve years ago, I lived in Hong Kong, where a lot of French were living as well. It was quite a large community. I believe it was the third largest after the Canadian and American communities. There was also an English population.

You said the French economy was not currently doing well. Going back to a point that Mr. Godin raised, we do not have a lot of francophones or francophone immigrants back home in New Brunswick. I am a member from southern New Brunswick. If we want to attract people there, we have to offer them economic opportunities.

Do you agree with that?

Mr. Rénaud Gilbert: That is true.

Perhaps I should have explained this earlier. We occasionally take what we call liaison trips. Colleagues from Ottawa, Dakar or Rabat, Morocco, travel to various parts of the country. Some colleagues of mine have just returned from Ontario. We do at least one trip a year, to the Maritimes, for example, to speak with employers. These trips are organized by RDÉE and the Fédération des communautés francophones et acadienne du Canada. We meet with employers so they can tell us about the opportunities they offer.

There are several examples of French and Belgians who settle in New Brunswick. Most of the time, I have to admit, they settle in the Moncton area.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Gilbert and Mr. Williamson.

• (1030)

[English]

I want to thank all of our witnesses for their testimony. It will help us in drafting our report.

We will suspend for a few minutes to allow our witnesses to depart before we reconvene to consider the motion to be presented by Monsieur Godin.

This meeting is suspended.

• (1030)

_____ (Pause) _____

• (1030)

[Translation]

The Chair: We will resume the 20th meeting of the Standing Committee on Official Languages.

We will be discussing Mr. Gourde's motion in the second part of our meeting.

Mr. Jacques Gourde: Mr. Chair, could we go in camera to study my motion, please?

[English]

The Chair: Okay. I will call the vote.

All those in favour of going in camera? Opposed?

We have a tie vote.

I am going to vote to stay in public because it is to continue debate. I am going to err on the side of being in public.

(Motion negatived)

The Chair: So we are in public. We have a motion in front of us.

But before we do,

• (1035)

[Translation]

I would like to say something.

[English]

It came to my attention that the briefing notes that are being prepared for this committee are ending up in the department. Now, these briefing notes are not confidential.

[Translation]

However, they are prepared for the members of this committee. I hope the documents that are confidential, such draft reports, will remain so.

[English]

These briefing notes are distributed normally by email to you. Anyway, it has come to my attention that these documents have been appearing in the department. In fact, I think one of the witnesses today actually had a copy of one briefing note.

They're not confidential. By that, I mean that you're free to use them as you see fit. At the same time, they are produced for the members of this committee in much the same way that research is produced by the Library of Parliament for members of Parliament, and not for other organizations through members of Parliament. I think it's important that we respect that.

More importantly, I hope that the draft reports produced by this committee are not distributed to the department. This is a legislative committee; it's not an executive committee and not a committee of the government. While I don't think there's any breach here from a briefing note being given to the department, I do think it's important that any draft reports of ours remain with committee members or their direct staff.

I just wanted to make that point out of an abundance of caution.

Yes, Madam Bateman.

Ms. Joyce Bateman: I find these reports prepared by our analysts exceedingly helpful. I think it's quality work. What comes from the Library of Parliament to this committee is, bar none, exceptional. I've been on other committees where that's not always been the case, quite frankly. I think this is excellent material.

I don't know why it would be a problem sharing it. I mean, this is a woman who's capable of looking at these complex programs from 37,000 feet and giving clarity, so maybe that's helpful for the people in the department.

I mean, why would we build silos of information when we're all about working together effectively and efficiently in the best interest of all?

[Translation]

We work in the interests of all Canadian taxpayers.

[English]

The Chair: Well, it's because there's a division of powers, and between the—

Ms. Joyce Bateman: I understand that, but there's nothing untoward in these documents.

The Chair: I understand, but the bigger point I was trying to make is that I hope that draft reports are not being distributed to the department.

Ms. Joyce Bateman: But that's a completely different issue.

Mr. John Williamson: I think that's quite a leap.

These documents are produced for all committees by the Library of Parliament. Because of their quality, I wouldn't have a concern even if they ended up in the hands of the media.

These are quasi-public documents. They are not marked secret; they are not marked confidential. I think to go from that to even the suggestion that a serious breach might be happening is a bit of a leap.

Now if you have evidence—

• (1040)

The Chair: No, I don't.

Mr. John Williamson: I think, in particular, that if you're suggesting that something untoward might be happening on the evidence that briefs are finding their way to departments, you're comparing apples to oranges.

The Chair: I'm not suggesting that anything wrong has happened. All I'm saying is that it's come to my attention that the briefing notes are being distributed to bureaucrats, and there are just two fine points to make here. One is that the resources of the Library of Parliament are intended solely for parliamentarians, and not for anyone outside. In fact, when you request a research note from Parliament as an individual member of Parliament, it actually says on the inside cover that it's not to be reproduced or not to be published elsewhere. That's just to make the point that these documents and the resources used to produce them are for parliamentarians and not for other organizations.

[*Translation*]

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

[*English*]

The Chair: I just wanted to make that fine point, but also to make a second point just as out of an abundance of caution that draft reports—we don't have a draft report right now—should not be distributed to the department or to anyone outside of members of this committee or those who report to them directly.

I just wanted to make that point out of an abundance of caution just in case—

Mr. John Williamson: I take some exception to that, because in the past I've requested research through the PBO and was told within two days of their giving it to me that it would be released publicly.

The Chair: Yes.

Mr. John Williamson: So information that's prepared for me is not available just for me or even other members of Parliament, but is released generally. So if there's a difference with these, I'd like to know what it is, but I don't believe they're....

I think just as a point of principle, I recognize the difference between this and the need to maintain the confidentiality of a report, but at the same time, I don't want to be told that everything is off

limits and to be told in hindsight that a breach has occurred when no such thing has happened.

The Chair: No, no, I'm not suggesting a breach has occurred. I'm not suggesting that any rules have been broken; all I am saying is the following two points.

First, the research prepared for this committee is intended for members of this committee and the witnesses appearing before us should not be relying on research that the Library of Parliament is producing. The government witnesses should not be relying on the research that the Library of Parliament is preparing, because they have their own resources, allocated by parliamentarians under the budgeting process.

Second, to make a broader point, if documents are being distributed from this committee to bureaucrats to whom we should not be distributing draft reports.... I have been on committees where that has happened, where draft reports have gone to the department, so I just wanted to be careful that it doesn't happen.

So just out of an abundance of caution, I have made the point.

Monsieur Godin, you have a comment?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Yvon Godin: Mr. Chair, right now we are taking time to discuss this motion, whereas it is my motion that is on the agenda.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

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

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

The Chair: Do you wish to introduce your motion?

Mr. Yvon Godin: With all due respect, I think the subject you have raised should be discussed at greater length. I have an opinion on it as well, but my motion is on the agenda right now. Here it is:

That the Standing Committee on Official Languages invite the Minister of Canadian Heritage to appear before May 29, 2014 to discuss the plans and priorities for 2014-2015 of the department for a two-hour televised session.

I am pleased that our meeting is not in camera because we can see that it makes no sense for the government constantly to refuse to allow ministers to testify before the Standing Committee on Official Languages. I have been in Parliament for 17 years, and I have never seen this. A government normally wants its ministers to appear before the committees.

In this motion, we are asking the minister to come and discuss her department's plans and priorities and her responsibilities. I can see what the government wants to do. It wants to sit in camera solely so that it can say that the minister will not be appearing in committee.

The last time, the minister herself said she was pleased to have been invited. If she was that pleased, let her come back to the committee. She even said she was extremely pleased that we had invited her to come and talk about her department.

I cannot wait to see whether the government representatives will vote in favour of the motion. This is the minister responsible for the issue before our committee. Will the Conservative members object to our inviting her? I cannot wait to see whether they will vote in favour of the motion. Our motion shows once again that we want our committee to work.

I am going to request a recorded vote. I am anxious to hear the government.

●(1045)

The Chair: We are out of time. We will therefore continue this discussion at the next meeting.

We will discuss this motion at the next committee meeting, after the break, for 15 minutes.

[*English*]

Without further ado, thank you for your cooperation.

This meeting is adjourned.

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