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Chair

The Honourable Michael Chong

Standing Committee on Official Languages

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• (1530)

[Translation]

The Chair (Hon. Michael Chong (Wellington—Halton Hills, CPC)): Welcome to the Standing Committee on Official Languages.

Today is Tuesday, March 10, 2015, and this is our 40th meeting.

We are here pursuant to Standing Order 108 for a study of the Department of Citizenship and Immigration's commitment to promoting Canada's linguistic duality and the development of official language minority communities.

Today, we are hearing from Ms. d'Entremont, Commissioner of Official Languages for New Brunswick. We are also hearing from Mrs. Rioux, Director General of the Fédération acadienne de la Nouvelle-Écosse. Finally, we also have with us Ms. Kamariza, who is a coordinator at the Réseau en immigration francophone de l'Alberta.

Welcome, everyone.

[English]

Before we begin, I just have a couple of points of information.

[Translation]

We have received the main estimates for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2016. If the committee wishes, we can ask the Commissioner of Official Languages to appear before us to answer questions on expenditures.

[English]

If it's the wish of the committee, I can organize to have the commissioner appear in front of us to review the estimates sometime in May before these need to be reported back to the House, so that we as a committee can vote on the estimates.

Is it the wish of the committee that I proceed in that fashion?

Okay. I'll organize that for some time in May.

[Translation]

Mrs. Rioux has a flight at 5:30 p.m.

Mrs. Marie-Claude Rioux (Director General, Fédération acadienne de la Nouvelle-Écosse): It's at 4:30 p.m.

The Chair: She has to leave the committee at 4:30 p.m. So if you have any questions for Mrs. Rioux, you have to ask them before 4:30 p.m.

[English]

On witnesses, we've asked for the commissioner and his staff to appear in front of our committee with respect to this study. He has indicated that he feels that would present a problem and asks the committee, respectfully, that he not appear because the topic at hand is closely related to the report that he's currently working on, which he will present at the beginning of May.

He doesn't want to violate parliamentary privilege by divulging details of that report ahead of its tabling at the beginning of May in the House of Commons. That's just a response we received from the commissioner regarding our request that he appear in front of our committee for this study.

We'll begin with an opening statement by Madame d'Entremont.

[Translation]

Ms. Katherine d'Entremont (Commissioner of Official Languages for New Brunswick, Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages for New Brunswick): Ladies and gentlemen, I am extremely pleased to be here with you today to talk about something that I feel strongly about—immigration. This issue is central to the future of our two official language communities across Canada. During this presentation, I will provide an overview of recent changes in francophone immigration to New Brunswick.

As Commissioner of Official Languages for New Brunswick, I have two main roles. The first is to protect the language rights of New Brunswickers. To do this, I conduct investigations into the application of the Official Languages Act, and I make recommendations. So, I have a watchdog role.

I will mention in passing that the Official Languages Act of New Brunswick applies everywhere in the province, regardless of numbers. Whether you are an anglophone living on the Acadian Peninsula or a francophone living in Saint John, you have the right to communicate with and receive services from provincial institutions in your language of choice.

• (1535)

[English]

My second role is to promote the advancement of French and English in the province of New Brunswick, a role that enables me to take an interest in all factors that ensure the vitality of a language in a given area.

In this regard, everyone will agree that immigration plays a central role in the vitality of our two official languages. This is particularly true today, at a time when the population is aging and the birth rate is low.

According to Statistics Canada, immigration will soon almost become the only source of population growth in Canada. Our future, therefore, depends on immigration. However, immigration must benefit both official language communities. That is why, for the past several years, the Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages for New Brunswick has been paying very close attention to this issue.

I should point out a unique characteristic of New Brunswick that must be taken into consideration before I proceed.

As you know, according to the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, “The English linguistic community and the French linguistic community in New Brunswick have equality of status and equal rights and privileges...”. Owing to this constitutional equality of status, the governments of New Brunswick and Canada have an obligation to ensure that their immigration policies and practices benefit both communities equally. Is this actually happening?

[*Translation*]

In 2010, the Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages for New Brunswick carried out a study of the Population Growth Secretariat, which was, at the time, the government body responsible for immigration to the province. That study resulted in two clear findings.

First, the secretariat had no official policy or guidelines for ensuring that each linguistic community benefited equally from immigration to the province. In 2010-2011, about 11% of the nominees chosen under the New Brunswick Provincial Nominee Program—a program under which the government of New Brunswick can choose candidates for immigration to the province—spoke French. The francophone community of New Brunswick makes up about one-third of the province's total population.

Also, we noted that the provincial government did not have a strategy, an action plan, or even any targets for francophone immigration.

Those two findings led to two recommendations.

First, the then commissioner asked the provincial government to develop an official policy and clear guidelines to ensure that both linguistic communities benefited equally from immigration. Then, he recommended that a francophone immigration strategy be adopted.

[*English*]

Data from the 2011 census confirm once again that the francophone community of New Brunswick does not benefit from immigration as much as the province's anglophone community.

An analysis done by the Canadian Institute for Research on Linguistic Minorities, using data from the last census, shows that in 2011 the vast majority of recent immigrants to New Brunswick, or 81.1%, had English as their first official language spoken, whereas only 11.7% had French. In addition, only 7.7% of recent immigrants

declared French as their mother tongue, compared with nearly 29% who declared English.

The results of the New Brunswick provincial nominee program are not much better. In 2012-13, the percentage of French-speaking and bilingual nominees—English and French—was only 12.2% of all nominees welcomed to our province.

Of course, it must be recognized that francophone immigration is a multi-faceted challenge. Indeed, it is not simply a matter of recruiting French-speaking immigrants, which in itself is a difficult task. We have to be able to retain them and help them integrate into the francophone community.

In this regard, it must be recognized that efforts have been made by both levels of government to meet the challenge of francophone immigration.

● (1540)

[*Translation*]

In 2009, the federal government made a commitment to pay to the province of New Brunswick a sum of \$10 million over the course of five years in order to preserve the population's linguistic profile with respect to immigrant recruitment. That financial support ended in March 2014. No renewal of that \$10 million has yet been announced.

[*English*]

Despite significant effort and some successes, it must be said that the recent investments have not been sufficient to correct the existing imbalance that compromises the demographic weight of the francophone community of New Brunswick in the long term. That is why I believe a federal-provincial framework agreement on francophone immigration to New Brunswick must be put in place. This would entail a long-term collaborative approach between the two levels of government to promote francophone immigration to the province.

[*Translation*]

First and foremost, this agreement would affirm New Brunswick's unique linguistic status and recognize that immigration programs and practices of both levels of government must absolutely maintain the demographic weight represented by the two official linguistic communities. It would also affirm the duty to compensate for past imbalances in immigration rates.

This agreement would build on federal and provincial resources in order to create a strong synergy of action. It would support the work of community stakeholders, such as the Réseau provincial en immigration francophone.

Furthermore, the framework agreement would contain a series of measures adapted to the socio-economic context and needs of the francophone community of New Brunswick. Special attention would be paid to the needs of francophone and bilingual businesses.

Finally, the agreement would provide long-term funding for the recruitment, settlement and retention of francophone immigrants, as well as establish an evaluation framework to measure progress.

[English]

Last July, the provincial government in New Brunswick released the “Population Growth Strategy” and the “Francophone Immigration Action Plan”. With this initiative, the New Brunswick government was finally acting on the two recommendations made by my predecessor: a clear commitment to maintaining the linguistic composition of our province, and the adoption of a strategy for doing so. This is an ideal opportunity to establish this new collaboration, this framework agreement, between the two levels of government.

Over the past few years, francophone immigration has been a topic of interest to the federal and provincial governments. It must now become a national priority, as it affects the very future of official language minority communities. For this to happen, we must now come up with the means to succeed.

That is why on October 30 my colleagues from Ontario, Graham Fraser and François Boileau, and I asked the different levels of government to step up their efforts to increase francophone immigration outside Quebec. In that regard, it is troubling to see that the strategic plan to foster immigration to francophone minority communities, which ended in March 2013, has not been renewed. Where is the new strategy? We are referred to the “Roadmap for Canada's Official Languages”. This argument appears to be a bit weak to me.

I read with great interest the “2014 Annual Report to Parliament on Immigration”, a very interesting document. It even contains a gender-based comparative analysis across policy, program, and research sectors of Citizenship and Immigration Canada. However, an analysis of the results of francophone immigration outside Quebec is conspicuous by its absence.

[Translation]

At meetings, New Brunswick civil servants responsible for immigration have boasted more than once about the defunct Francophone Significant Benefit Program. It was one of the main tools they used to recruit francophone immigrants to our province. It disappeared a few months ago to the consternation of everyone concerned with francophone immigration.

The new Roadmap for Canada's Linguistic Duality 2013-2018 provides an investment of \$29.5 million over five years for immigration to official language minority communities across the country, including \$4 million for New Brunswick.

• (1545)

[English]

Is this enough, given the results that have been achieved so far? Is this enough for such a fundamental issue? Because the issue here is linguistic duality, which defines us as a nation. Through immigration laws, policies, and practices, governments have a direct impact on the future, the vitality, and even the survival of official language communities. The time has come for francophone immigration to become a true national priority.

[Translation]

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. d'Entremont.

We will now hear from Mrs. Rioux, from the Fédération acadienne de la Nouvelle-Écosse.

Go ahead.

Mrs. Marie-Claude Rioux: Good afternoon.

I am pleased to be joining you today in my capacity as the Director General of the Fédération acadienne de la Nouvelle-Écosse.

Our organization is a true federation composed of 29 regional and sectoral agencies and clients working to advance the federation's mission.

The federation fulfills its mission by acting as the main spokesperson for the Acadian and francophone population of Nova Scotia; by facilitating cooperation and partnership among all the agencies working in Nova Scotia's Acadian and francophone community; by offering services and programs that address the needs of its members; and by supporting its members in promoting the vitality and development of Nova Scotia's Acadian and francophone community.

In 2003, the Citizenship and Immigration Steering Committee released its Strategic Plan to Foster Immigration to Francophone Minority Communities of Canada. To achieve the plan's objectives, the federal and provincial departments of immigration partnered with key organizations in Canada's minority communities. This spawned francophone immigration in Nova Scotia, an initiative spearheaded by the federation, which officially represents Nova Scotia's Acadian and francophone population at the various levels of government.

In 2006, the federation signed cooperation agreements with the federal government, represented by Citizenship and Immigration Canada, and the provincial government, represented by the Nova Scotia Office of Immigration, to develop promotion, recruitment, intake and integration capacity with a view to attracting French-speaking newcomers to Nova Scotia and encouraging them to remain in the province. Under these agreements and with continuing government support, Immigration francophone Nouvelle-Écosse offers a variety of services free of charge to French-speaking newcomers to Nova Scotia.

The objectives of Immigration francophone Nouvelle-Écosse, which is a project of the federation, are as follows: increase the number of French-speaking newcomers who choose to settle in Nova Scotia, and encourage them to remain in the province; assist these newcomers with their integration in the province; and increase the intake and integration capacity of Nova Scotia's Acadian and francophone communities.

To achieve these objectives, a number of key organizations in the community have come together under a steering committee to put together an action plan supporting the continued growth of francophone immigration. That's where we see how effective our federation is.

The following organizations are part of that steering committee: the Association des juristes d'expression française de la Nouvelle-Écosse, the Conseil de développement économique de la Nouvelle-Écosse, Université Sainte-Anne, the Fédération des femmes acadiennes de la Nouvelle-Écosse, the Regroupement des aînées et aînés de la Nouvelle-Écosse, the Conseil scolaire acadien provincial, the Conseil jeunesse provincial de la Nouvelle-Écosse, the Réseau santé Nouvelle-Écosse, a representative of the Citizenship and Immigration Canada steering committee on francophone immigration and a representative of the immigrant community.

Immigration francophone Nouvelle-Écosse offers pre-departure, settlement, integration and outreach services. These services are greatly appreciated by the immigrant community, who can turn to the dedicated employees of Immigration francophone Nouvelle-Écosse who can guide them step by step in this new environment and life.

Yet despite the excellent service provided by Immigration francophone Nouvelle-Écosse, our province's francophone immigrants are at a disadvantage on several fronts compared with anglophone immigrants. Many services provided by the Immigrant Services Association of Nova Scotia are not accessible to francophone immigrants. For example: crisis intervention services, including support with legal, financial and mental health issues; family support and counselling, including help with family law and domestic violence; refugee services; workshops given by professionals on a range of topics, such as income tax returns, as it's that time of year; and references to institutions offering second-language courses.

Immigration francophone Nouvelle-Écosse cannot provide any of those services. Moreover, some needs identified by immigrants themselves cannot be met by Immigration francophone Nouvelle-Écosse because these services do not fall under its mandate.

• (1550)

Those are support services for international students, support services to facilitate student integration, French second-language courses and certification, and language skills testing to be granted permanent residency. None of those services are provided because they don't fall under the mandate of Immigration francophone Nouvelle-Écosse.

More concerning is that people who contact the Immigrant Services Association of Nova Scotia and who could benefit from the services offered by Immigration francophone Nouvelle-Écosse are not referred to our organization because immigrants are not asked whether they also speak French. So they are not given an option between English and French services.

For example, this summer, we learned that 20 immigrants who spoke French and would have liked to use our federation's services were systematically referred to the anglophone system and found out about francophone immigration services only once it was too late. For Nova Scotia, 20 francophone immigrants is a lot.

In addition, some Citizenship and Immigration Canada programs that have been eliminated or recast, such as the Francophone Significant Benefit service and civil service jobs for international students, have created additional problems for employers wanting to hire francophone immigrants.

For example, our federation has for some years now welcomed francophone students who have responded to a civil service job offer. Until now, the process was relatively simple. A job offer was posted, interviews were held, and a candidate was selected who met certain conditions set by the Office franco-québécois pour la jeunesse and the Agence du service civique français.

In February, however, we were told that we now have to pay a fee to the CIC and fill out an online form before making a formal job offer. In principle, these extra steps should not pose a problem. However, it has been a real headache, since the instructions for the new procedure are unclear.

I usually have no problems, but it took me a whole day to get through the first step, which didn't even consist in filling out the form, but only in paying the fees. The "civic service mission" option was not available in the menu. I did select the option "other services", but that did not work. The other options were "permanent residence", "temporary residence", "Canadian citizenship", and so on.

I selected "other services", but I should have clicked on "temporary residence". A colleague from the Société nationale de l'Acadie helped me figure it out. If I clicked on "other services", I ended up on "application for Canadian citizenship with a criminal conviction", "with a criminal record" or "with a serious criminal record". It no longer made sense.

Navigating through that maze is almost impossible, and I have not even filled out the form. Think of all the time we waste in order to do that! Moreover, we can't speak to an officer. If I had these problems, you can be sure that other organizations that are trying to get a trainee as part of a civic service mission will just give up instead of wasting a whole day trying to figure out how to get into the system.

As for the Francophone Significant Benefit, as the program has not yet been replaced, and as the commissioner mentioned earlier, it can be assumed that many employers will turn to employees who are weak in French in order to meet their workforce needs.

In conclusion, although the CIC's programs have made it possible to accommodate a growing number of immigrants to Canada and Nova Scotia, it seems the services provided favour anglophone over francophone immigration because Immigration francophone Nouvelle-Écosse and employers in our community do not have the same tools as anglophone employers and service providers. This imbalance discourages francophone immigrants from settling in our great province and thus contributes to the erosion of francophones in Nova Scotia.

Thank you for your attention.

• (1555)

The Chair: Thank you, Mrs. Rioux.

I now give the floor to Ms. Kamariza, from the Association canadienne française de l'Alberta.

Ms. Ida Kamariza (Coordinator, Réseau en immigration Francophone de l'Alberta, Association canadienne-française de l'Alberta): Mr. Chair, members of the committee, good afternoon.

First, I wish to thank you very much for inviting us to share our perceptions of Citizenship and Immigration Canada's commitment to promoting Canada's linguistic duality and the development of official language minority communities.

I am Ida Kamariza, coordinator of the Réseau en immigration francophone de l'Alberta, which is governed by the Association canadienne-française de l'Alberta, or the ACFA.

The ACFA has been representing Alberta's francophone community since 1926. Today, we are here on behalf of the 238,000 Albertans who make up Alberta's francophone community. Since 2001, this highly diverse francophone community has welcomed over 10,000 immigrants who came directly to Alberta, as well as thousands of francophone immigrants who arrived from other provinces and territories, including Quebec.

Francophone minority communities have been rather active in recruiting immigrants since the 1990s, when studies and discussions led by the Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages marked the start of an openness toward the wider French-speaking world, along with an acknowledgement of the importance of diversity and immigration for these communities.

These studies and discussions laid the groundwork for francophone immigration to these communities, and they demonstrated the importance of immigration for the vitality of francophone communities as a way to foster their growth and their economic and cultural development.

In 2003, the federal government rolled out the strategic framework to foster immigration to francophone minority communities so as to enable them to reap the economic and social benefits of immigration over the coming years. It included five long-term objectives to increase the number of francophone immigrants coming to these communities and to encourage them to stay.

Later, in 2006, a strategic plan was released, one that outlined the key priorities to help identify initiatives that would support the achievement of these objectives. At the time, then-minister of Citizenship and Immigration Monte Solberg reiterated the Government of Canada's commitment as follows: "The history of our country and our roots tell us that we have a duty to preserve what we have already built—linguistic duality."

While there is an obvious role for francophone immigration in the growth and economic and cultural development of francophone minority communities, the question is how to attract immigrants, deliver government services and help newcomers adjust to local labour market needs.

One of the reasons for motivating francophone communities to become actively involved in immigration was that it allowed them to address the demographic issue they were facing. However, it is clear that francophone communities in Alberta, and elsewhere in Canada, have seen little benefit from immigration.

Demographics continue to be a very real issue, and it is highly unlikely that the new Express Entry system will be the panacea we

so frequently hear about. In light of the significant reforms we are currently going through, organizing and delivering services in French to immigrants is a major issue for francophone minority communities.

Despite current economic conditions, Alberta continues to attract a large number of immigrants. However, statistics show that there has never been a large number of francophone immigrants coming directly to Alberta from abroad. That said, the province has seen an influx of secondary immigration, mostly from Quebec. Immigration practitioners fear that the new reforms will result in a further significant curtailment of the already small number of francophone immigrants coming from abroad. Some have said that, despite the many entry paths available to immigrants, the way the immigration system is currently arranged disadvantages third-world francophone countries, which make up a large source of francophone immigration.

Current efforts by CIC to promote francophone minority communities, as well as Destination Canada, provide abundant evidence that the large francophone pool is not always targeted, despite the handful of timid attempts made for about a year now.

All of this is to say that there are mixed results with respect to francophone immigration to francophone minority communities, especially given the cancellation of the Francophone Significant Benefit Program in September.

• (1600)

We appreciate the government's commitment over the past decade and a half, reiterated recently in the Roadmap for Canada's Linguistic Duality 2013-2018, to maintain the vitality of francophone communities outside Quebec through immigration. However, we remain puzzled about the current approaches that do not appear to take the unique francophone situation into account.

In Canada, there are two paths of entry for immigrants—permanent immigration and temporary immigration. Therefore, attention must be paid to each one.

Let's start with the permanent stream. Modernization, which is driving major reforms in the Canadian system, is placing a decidedly economic focus on immigration, which is shifting from immigration based on the supply of immigrants coming to Canada to one where Canada encourages immigrants to come to the country. This orientation is based on the growing involvement of employers, as clearly announced by Minister Chris Alexander in his press release on April 8, 2014, and I quote:

With "Express Entry," employers will have a key role in selecting economic immigrants and providing advice to the Government of Canada.

In our view, the proposed key role for employers in selecting immigrants, together with the major influence offered to the provinces and territories, none of them subject to linguistic obligations, risks diluting the federal government's commitments to official language minority communities. We do recognize the economic benefits of the kind of immigration our government is focusing on. However, we are concerned that community vitality will suffer without additional support measures.

Furthermore, the 2014 Economic Action Plan states the following:

The expression of interest (Express Entry) system would allow the Government of Canada, provinces and territories, and employers to actively target highly skilled immigrants under key economic immigration programs, including the Federal Skilled Worker Program, the Federal Skilled Trades Program and the Canadian Experience Class.

As you can see, there is no mention of the communities. The same economic action plan goes on to say the following:

In the future, the Government will explore with provinces, territories and employers approaches to developing a pool of skilled workers who are ready to begin employment in Canada.

It should be noted that all consultations on launching this program, which began in January 2015, have been ongoing for several months with the provinces, territories and employers, but without any involvement or input from official language minority communities. We are concerned, since we do not believe that these key stakeholders will see francophone community vitality as a priority.

Fortunately, Canada-wide community consultations have just begun with our francophone communities to look at options for adapting the program already in place. However, the realities of the situation mean that there are more challenges than there are solutions. Francophone communities would have liked to be consulted right from the design phase of the program, so that the government would have brought forward a well-informed approach that takes their unique characteristics into account. Although knowledge of one of Canada's official languages is one of the selection criteria, we doubt that unilingual francophone immigrants will be selected. As well, we have concerns that training standards, which are different in francophone systems than in anglophone ones, will be seen as stumbling blocks to recognizing the credentials from some francophone countries.

I would now like to share a few thoughts about temporary immigration. According to recent reforms, temporary immigration, made up essentially of temporary foreign workers and international students, will be the preferred route toward permanent immigration.

The major impact on francophone communities will therefore depend on the source countries for the temporary foreign worker class. Except for France, there are few francophone countries in the temporary immigrant pools.

Francophone communities are making an effort to educate employers about recruiting immigrants from francophone countries. However, we see somewhat of a contradiction. While the Government of Canada is eliminating all funding for promotional activities overseas, it is at the same time promising in the roadmap to increase spending on activities overseas in order to expand the mandate of Destination Canada and to include more job fairs and more promotional and recruitment activities aimed at employers.

Lastly, looking at how much the government plans to invest in this area in the coming years, we see that the foreign student category will be a focus of the new immigration system. However, we have some concerns about this, as well.

• (1605)

Given that the government's focus under this category is on targeted countries, we are concerned that the target does not include any countries in the Organisation internationale de la francophonie, the OIF. Furthermore, tuition disparities among educational institutions for foreign students will have a major impact on attracting students to certain regions.

For example, the University of Ottawa recently decided that foreign students taking three courses in French would pay the same tuition as Canadian citizens or permanent residents. Could this example be copied across the country to make tuition an incentive to promote francophone immigration?

Regarding government services for newcomers, it is important to discuss pre-arrival services. Currently, and as has been the case for some years now, these services are provided around the world by Colleges and Institutes Canada, or CICan. A pilot project for francophones was launched very recently and will end on March 31. Even though this organization mentions the existence of francophone communities, there is lingering doubt about the selling points used for encouraging students to choose francophone minority communities as their new home in Canada.

Regarding services for francophone newcomers in Canada, while we appreciate the fact that there are about 240 service points across the country, they are not all funded by CIC and their ability to deliver resources and programs is still not up to the level of their majority community counterparts. Those who control the purse strings keep hiding behind numbers, as if the unique francophone aspects that warranted the creation of these service points in the 2000s were no longer relevant.

CIC encourages service delivery in both official languages, which is not in itself bad, but this creates a sort of competition between service providers, while performance reporting for institutional services is more quantitative than qualitative. Francophone newcomers served by bilingual agents in organizations operating in English will not be referred to French-language schools or other French-language agencies and institutions, and their contribution to francophone vitality would be only on paper. When, on the off chance, they actually hear about French-language services available in a francophone community, we are then dealing with people who have received services not suited to their needs, meaning they have to start all over again while their settlement funds have already been spent elsewhere.

Lastly, with respect to helping newcomers adjust to local labour market needs, this is done through francophone organizations, which are still having to make do, delivering programs with the limited resources available, which can be frustrating for clients who do not always understand that conditions imposed by funding bodies allow only for a limited set of services.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Kamariza.

We will stop here.

We have your six recommendations, but we need time to allow the committee members to ask you and the other witnesses questions.

We have an hour and twenty minutes for questions and comments. We will start with Mr. Nicholls.

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

Thank you very much to our witnesses for their presentations. I'm going to warn them that, unfortunately, most of their input and criticisms regarding the government will no doubt be censored and kept out of the committee's report. I've seen it happen; that's how the government operates. When you expose its weaknesses, it is in the habit of suppressing any and all criticism. That's just how it operates.

Ms. Entremont, you asked about the strategy. I'll explain it to you: there isn't one. It's nothing but an exercise in marketing. When the minister says that he wants to promote francophone immigration, during the first week of 2014, only to cut the francophone significant benefit program in the second week, it shows exactly what the government's strategy is. That strategy is to pull back from official language minority communities and their rights. Further to the court's decision in *Desrochers v. Canada*, the government is responsible for providing services of equal quality in both official languages. I gather, however, from your comments that we still aren't there.

Now for my questions. My first question is for Ms. Rioux and Ms. Kamariza. It's about the funding for the Destination Canada and francophone significant benefit programs.

Have your organizations received funding through either of those programs in the past?

• (1610)

Mrs. Marie-Claude Rioux: I'll go first.

Yes, absolutely. As you know, the francophone significant benefit program was eliminated. Citizenship and Immigration Canada did, however, give us money this year to launch Destination Acadie. I'll stop there. I don't want to make any partisan remarks; I'll just give the facts.

My sense is that, no matter who is in power, all programs have their benefits and drawbacks. I've come across shortcomings, yes, but I want to emphasize that CIC has done some things very right.

The Chair: Ms. Kamariza, your turn.

Ms. Ida Kamariza: Like my colleague, I want to highlight the assistance we receive from Citizenship and Immigration Canada, but more support is needed.

With respect to Destination Canada funding, I would say that our Atlantic friends are more fortunate than we are. We've never received funding for our community to participate in Destination Canada.

The francophone significant benefit program was quite helpful as an incentive for employers, encouraging them to hire French speakers. Unfortunately, the program is no more.

When we speak with employers, we do our utmost to educate them on hiring francophone workers. They ask us why they should hire a French speaker who will probably have problems with the language. They have very little confidence in that option.

Even though francophones are sufficiently qualified from a language standpoint, it's extremely difficult convincing employers that the labour market has highly skilled and bilingual francophones to offer. The only incentive program we had is gone now.

Mr. Jamie Nicholls: Thank you.

I have a second question about Destination Canada for you, Ms. Kamariza.

You said you don't have the same benefits as the francophone community in Nova Scotia. I looked at Destination Canada's Web site today, because I wanted to know more about Alberta. I clicked on the link for Alberta and saw that the site was available in English only.

What message does it send to prospective immigrants when the information is available in English only?

Ms. Ida Kamariza: I'm not sure I can adequately interpret that message here, but of note is the fact that it automatically excludes unilingual French speakers from the process. And yet all advertising to promote immigration sends the message that any immigrant who can speak either of Canada's official languages is welcome in our country.

Mr. Jamie Nicholls: I have a question about the unemployment rate among francophones.

According to a study, the unemployment rate among francophone immigrants is higher than that among native Canadian francophones.

Could any of you comment on that?

Mrs. Marie-Claude Rioux: Francophone immigrants to Nova Scotia have a much easier time finding a job than francophones who stay in Nova Scotia, and the reason is simple. Francophones are leaving Acadian areas by the hundreds to work in Alberta. I don't, in any way, resent Ida for that, it's simply the reality. The economy in Acadian areas isn't exactly booming, so young people are making the tough choice to move to where they can find work.

Conversely, francophone immigrants to Nova Scotia go to the capital city, Halifax. Bear in mind that Halifax is home to most of the head offices of the Fédération acadienne de la Nouvelle-Écosse's member organizations.

We meet those immigrants and we talk to them. We learn to appreciate them and we discover just how educated and skilled many of them are. They apply for jobs in droves. When a job is posted in our network of Acadian associations, very few, if any, Acadians apply for jobs that require the person to be bilingual or speak French. So the immigrants are the ones who get the jobs.

My understanding is that it is easier for a francophone immigrant to get a job in Nova Scotia than a francophone Acadian.

•(1615)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Nicholls and Ms. Rioux.

Mr. Gourde, you may go ahead.

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

I'd like to thank all three of you for being here today.

My question concerns francophone immigrants who decide to settle in one of your three provinces. Are there any examples you can give me? Where do those immigrants choose to live? Do they really choose to settle close to where they work?

We want to know whether it is possible to build stronger official language minority communities in your provinces, stronger francophone communities. These communities would like to welcome more French-speaking immigrants in order to grow, but jobs aren't necessarily available in those areas. Do immigrants tend to stick to those francophone communities or do they simply choose to live close to where they work?

Mrs. Marie-Claude Rioux: Their first tendency is to settle in the epicentre of the province, Halifax, the capital. Then, Immigration francophone Nouvelle-Écosse introduces them to Acadian areas. Usually, people fall in love with those areas and decide to move there. It's a bit of a funnel effect, if you will. The majority of immigrants arrive at the Halifax airport and settle in Halifax, where they have access to French-language immigration services. We don't have enough money to offer those kinds of services in every Acadian area.

The only situation where the immigration gateway is different is in the case of international students coming to study at Université Saint-Anne. The university's main campus is in Pointe-de-l'Église in the beautiful St. Mary's Bay region.

Immigrants arrive at the Pointe-de-l'Église campus and look for summer jobs so they can stay. Some even apply for permanent resident status and Canadian citizenship. Generally speaking, they arrive in the capital and then move out to the regions.

Ms. Ida Kamariza: In Alberta's case, I would say that immigrants settle mainly in large cities. Like all other francophones, they settle close to their workplaces because the communities they live in don't have high concentrations of French speakers.

They live in the same neighbourhoods as other francophones. Nevertheless, as a way to attract these immigrant communities, activities are organized—as is done in other communities—within the francophone communities where all these immigrants gather. It's a way for them to build a social network and learn about the francophone community, its roots and its development. Above all,

these events are an opportunity for immigrants to build networks, integrate more fully as members of the francophone community and continue to live in French.

Mr. Jacques Gourde: Ms. Entremont, do you have an example to share with us?

Ms. Katherine d'Entremont: I'm not an expert in immigration, as it isn't my area of expertise. In terms of your questions regarding immigrants' experience in New Brunswick, I would suggest that you invite immigration officials from the New Brunswick government.

As commissioner, I'm here today to discuss New Brunswick's stance on immigration. We are urging both the federal and provincial governments to keep our province's demographic weight. That is the message I want to leave with you today. I'm not an immigration specialist, so I would encourage you to invite other provincial representatives to answer your questions on that topic.

Thank you.

•(1620)

Mr. Jacques Gourde: I'm going to pick up on my question.

Do you have any examples of official language minority communities, in either Nova Scotia or Alberta, that made a genuine effort, through initiatives, to encourage immigrants to come to the province? Are there any success stories that could be used as models? If you have any examples to share, it would be helpful to hear them.

Mrs. Marie-Claude Rioux: Nova Scotia's Chéticamp region is home to an extremely dynamic young man named Stéphane Sogne; he's from France. He decided to try his luck and move to Canada, passing through Halifax first, as most do. And, after travelling around the province, he fell in love with Chéticamp. Those who know the area will understand why. He also fell in love, plain and simple. Love has a way of making immigrants stay. He is a drone expert and knows all about their uses for a variety of applications. It's a highly specialized field, and that's what he does from his home in Chéticamp. That's a success story.

We certainly have success stories of immigrants who settled in Acadian areas, but they have been there for so long, we end up forgetting that they were immigrants. Families like the Batas come to mind, families who've been in Nova Scotia for two, three or four generations. We forget that they chose to live in Acadian areas long before a program was put in place to actively encourage immigrants to move to those places.

Ms. Ida Kamariza: In Alberta, once we sensed that immigrants were focusing on the economic dimension—with a significant employer presence—it paved the way for a success story that started in Grande Prairie and is now spreading throughout the entire province.

Alberta's francophone community decided to take control of its future, starting in the Grande Prairie region. We began working with a private recruiter, Prudhomme International Inc., which finds skilled and bilingual workers for the province's employers.

What do we do within our community? We assist them with the small stuff, and we do it on a volunteer basis, given that no funding is attached to this work. These immigrants who come to Canada on a temporary basis, in other words, as temporary foreign workers, are greeted at the airport. We help them find homes to rent because they don't have the time to go through the settlement and integration process. As soon as they get here, they start working the next day.

The day after they arrive, we start working with them, helping to guide them and walking them through how to live in our city or keep their jobs. We show them the behaviours and attitudes they should adopt as employees.

We help with little things that people probably take for granted but are extremely important. When we greet these individuals, when they get to their rented apartment, there's nothing there. Sometimes, not even any furniture. We make sure the apartment is stocked with fruit, for example. So if the person is hungry, they can eat a piece of fruit or drink some juice. We help with the human element, giving them that personal support.

In supporting these employees, we go as far as to ask them how we can help, what we can do to make them stay. And when they finally obtain a permanent job, they are very close to our community and help it to grow.

• (1625)

The Chair: Fine. Thank you.

Ms. St-Denis, you may go ahead.

Ms. Lise St-Denis (Saint-Maurice—Champlain, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'd like to thank the witnesses for being here today.

Ms. Rioux, as I listen to you, I get the impression that the French cause in Nova Scotia is hopeless. That's the sense I'm getting.

Historically, however, everyone from France would arrive there, before going to Quebec.

Mrs. Marie-Claude Rioux: Yes.

Ms. Lise St-Denis: The situation is a bit discouraging.

You said it was easier for a francophone to be an immigrant than an Acadian.

Mrs. Marie-Claude Rioux: Yes.

Ms. Lise St-Denis: What does that suggest? Does it mean that francophone Acadians don't care about the French language and are becoming anglicized?

Mrs. Marie-Claude Rioux: Ms. St-Denis, thank you for your question. It's a great one.

Yes, sometimes it is discouraging. I'll put in in concrete terms. In 1981, Nova Scotia had 80,000 francophones. And 15 years later, only 42,000 were left. So that gives you an idea of assimilation in Nova Scotia. That was before the province had exclusively French schools, before K to 12 education was available there.

It wasn't until 2000 that Acadians finally got their own K to 12 schools. So it isn't surprising, then, that when young people look for a job, they aren't at all comfortable applying for a job that requires

candidates to be proficient in French. It's unfortunate. These students graduated from dual stream schools where half the classes were in English and the other half, in French. UNESCO, not me, said that dual stream schools were a civilized way to assimilate a people.

I predict that, in one generation, things will change. The fact remains, however, that the people currently applying for jobs, whether in the community or the government, are immigrants. I talked to some of my government colleagues about the issue, and they are having the same problem: the francophones applying for jobs are indeed immigrants.

That's not a bad thing. It enriches the French language and enhances its value in our province. When an immigrant comes to Nova Scotia and speaks French, they are demonstrating the language's importance. Acadians and francophones in the region realize that they aren't alone in their tiny community and that the francophonie is much bigger. It attaches importance to the French language and strengthens it. But what I see happening now is heartbreaking and very worrisome.

Ms. Lise St-Denis: You said things were going to improve. Do you mean that francophone immigration is the thing that will save the French language in the Acadie region?

Mrs. Marie-Claude Rioux: No. I mean that, thanks to our French-language K to 12 schools, students graduating from grade 12 have better French skills. Once they complete their bachelor's degree or other schooling, they will be able to apply for those jobs.

Ms. Lise St-Denis: Do those Acadians have a positive view of French or do they tend to favour assimilation?

Mrs. Marie-Claude Rioux: I would say they tend to have a positive view.

Ms. Lise St-Denis: We talked about cities. No matter where they go in the country, immigrants settle in cities. Everyone knows that.

Is the situation completely hopeless in rural areas, given that, on top of everything else, services aren't available?

Mrs. Marie-Claude Rioux: We don't have the resources for that.

Ms. Lise St-Denis: You say you don't have the resources.

Mrs. Marie-Claude Rioux: We would love to be able to work with international students, but, as I mentioned in my brief, that isn't part of our mandate. We can't work with international students or refugees, who often choose to settle in small areas and communities where they feel safer. It's really unfortunate, but we don't have the resources we would need to work with them.

Ms. Lise St-Denis: My next question is for Ms. Kamariza.

You described some of the immigration happening in Alberta as secondary immigration. You said that francophones, mostly from Quebec, but also from New Brunswick, were moving to the province.

What is their integration into the community like? Do they tend to stick with francophones, or do they try to speak English and forget about their French culture? What is that process like for those secondary immigrants, as you describe them?

• (1630)

Ms. Ida Kamariza: Thank you.

I think you have to speak English when you live in a predominantly English-speaking province. But that doesn't preclude living in French. These immigrants receive services, especially given that most of them aren't able to speak much English when they arrive. If they need assistance, it has to be provided in the language they are most comfortable in, and that speeds up the settlement and integration process. It's also the best way to connect them with the French-speaking community. In fact, once they receive services in that community and become aware of what goes on there, they come back. They are the ones who lend the vitality of the francophone community to our activities.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Hayes, over to you.

[*English*]

Mr. Bryan Hayes (Sault Ste. Marie, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'm not a regular on this committee, so pardon me if my questions might be naive. I do want to assure Mr. Nicholls that if I were on this committee I would absolutely ensure that everything got into that report, even if it were critical of the government.

As a matter of fact, I was born in France, so I do have a bit of a French background. I don't want you to hold this next comment against me, but I've been from Sault Ste. Marie for the past 35 years. Our city council in Sault Ste. Marie endeavoured to pass a resolution 25 years ago—and Mr. Gravel will remember—making Sault Ste. Marie English only. It made the national news. I wasn't on city council at that time.

Madame d'Entremont, I have a question for you. I believe you mentioned in your comments that there was \$10 million in federal investment that has not yet been renewed. Did you make that comment?

Ms. Katherine d'Entremont: Yes.

Mr. Bryan Hayes: What is the investment that wasn't renewed and what evaluation process was used? If you're aware specifically, could you tell me what were the funds were used for? What were the proposed deliverables for those funds? Were those deliverables met? Was there analysis done to determine why that fund wasn't increased? When you said "not yet", is there still some thought that money will still be available?

Ms. Katherine d'Entremont: My understanding is that there's a hope that it will be renewed. With respect to your previous questions, I don't run the immigration program in the province. I'm the Commissioner of Official Languages and those are not answers that I could provide to you, but I'm sure that I can send you in the direction of those who may.

It's the Department of Post-Secondary Education, Training and Labour in New Brunswick that is responsible for immigration. They

could probably provide you with that information on the specifics of the renewal.

Mr. Bryan Hayes: Fair enough. Thank you.

Ida, you'd also mentioned funding. It was called the French significant benefit program. I hope I'm not incorrect and that you did mention that. If that is the case, can you tell me about the deliverables of that program, what the funding was used for, and whether the program achieved its targets?

[*Translation*]

Ms. Ida Kamariza: Thank you.

First, I'd like to say that the francophone significant benefit program didn't provide funding but, rather, an exemption for certain occupational categories, or francophones; it made an application for a labour market opinion unnecessary. It applied to NOC skill types 0, A and B. When a French speaker wanted to immigrate to Canada as a temporary foreign worker through Destination Canada, the employer didn't have to apply for a labour market opinion, which is now the labour market impact assessment. It was very positive for us and really sped up the process for the employer because the employee could be on site in six weeks or less. It was a wonderful incentive program.

[*English*]

Mr. Bryan Hayes: That leads me to my next question. Can you explain to me how your organization works with the private sector to attract Francophone immigrants to your province? I'm interested in the role you play and the role that you feel the federal government needs to play, and also if there's a role for the province. I'm trying to establish who should be responsible for what and who is doing what, if you could encapsulate that for me.

• (1635)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Ida Kamariza: Thank you.

The reason we work with a private recruiter stems from our belief that the community should take charge of itself. We could, of course, do more if we received funding for these activities. The private recruiter has an agreement with employers. The company looks for qualified bilingual workers and brings them to Alberta. As a well-organized community, we assist these immigrants, on a volunteer basis, with everything right down to the small stuff. They feel close to their community. And there is no question that when they go from a temporary job to a permanent one, they stay in our community because they feel they are being supported. We also support them through the process of moving from temporary to permanent status.

You wondered whether the federal or provincial government had a role to play. I would say definitely, given that, as of now, we operate on a volunteer basis, so there is a limit to what we can do. If we were to receive financial support, however, we could do more. Employers are very satisfied with the program, mainly because they don't like constantly having to start over with new employees. When an employee has the assistance and support of their community, they stay longer and the employer benefits, as well. So it's a win-win for both parties.

If we received support from both levels of government, we would have a fantastic program.

[English]

Mr. Bryan Hayes: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Hayes.

I want to clarify some facts so everyone is on the same page.

Between 2008 and 2013, the Government of Canada provided \$10 million over that five-year period to ACOA for settlement programs in New Brunswick.

In the following version of the roadmap, for the period 2013 to 2018, the government reduced that amount to \$4 million and bundled it into a larger \$29 million amount that was given to the Department of Citizenship and Immigration for settlement programs in New Brunswick.

It went from \$10 million to \$4 million, from the first roadmap to the second roadmap, and it was shifted from ACOA to the Department of Citizenship and Immigration directly. That's where the funding went, just so everybody's on the same page.

We will now hear Mr. Chisu.

Mr. Corneliu Chisu (Pickering—Scarborough East, CPC): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Thank you very much for your testimony. I listened with interest.

I have a question for the Commissioner of Official Languages of New Brunswick concerning your presentation. How is the Government of New Brunswick using Citizenship and Immigration's provincial nominee program to attract new francophone immigrants? How is the Government of New Brunswick attracting francophone people from abroad?

I know that la Francophonie has 70 members. I was born in Romania, so I know that Romania is part of la Francophonie and a lot of people speak French there. What did they do? They came to Quebec because of the nominee program. But after that, they left Quebec and went elsewhere in Canada.

My interest is how you are attracting francophone people and retaining them, because that is a very important thing.

Ms. Katherine d'Entremont: Thank you for the question.

I have with me a couple of documents that the department responsible for immigration has produced. I would invite you to consult the documents and invite the experts who may have authored these to come and answer those specific questions.

The government has implemented an action plan on francophone immigration further to recommendations by me, my predecessor, and I am pleased to see that the provincial government has set an objective of attracting 33% francophone immigrants by the year 2020. That is reflected in this strategy. If you recall from my presentation, recent immigration patterns have attracted about 12% francophones. Our population is 33%. The position of the commissioner is that we want to maintain the demographic weight. Because the population is not increasing, we need to rely on immigration to maintain the linguistic balance of our two linguistic communities.

I am pleased to see that the provincial government has adopted an objective of achieving 33% between now and the year 2020. I will remind this committee that about 75% of the control of immigrants is within the provincial nominee program and the other quarter is under the control of the federal government's programs. Again, I am not the one to get into detail about that, but it is a shared jurisdiction, as you know. Whether the funding is enough, I will leave that to others to comment on.

What I have asked for and worked on with my colleagues, both Commissioner Fraser and Commissioner Boileau... We issued a joint news release back in October. I have personally met with Minister Alexander, and with our provincial Minister Landry, who is responsible for immigration in New Brunswick, to impress upon both ministers and both levels of government the priorities that we have identified in terms of making sure that our demographic balance is maintained.

When Minister Alexander talks about 4% and 5% across Canada for francophone immigration, that does not resonate in New Brunswick because we are aiming for 33%. That is one message that I want to make sure is clear here today. There needs to be a recognition of the specificity of the New Brunswick situation in terms of our constitutional framework, legislative framework, which recognizes that we have two linguistic communities that are equal and have equal status.

Immigration practices that perpetuate *un déséquilibre*, a lack of balance, in attracting immigrants is something that I have been alerted to. I have taken several steps to impress upon both levels of government that efforts have to be undertaken not only to rectify past imbalances, but also on a go-forward basis to step up these efforts.

• (1640)

Mr. Corneliu Chisu: If you are achieving that immigration, the 33% and so on, what are your recommendations for the retention of these people? We cannot force any people. You know, "I'm coming to New Brunswick. I am using immigration. I am from that 33%, but after a while I am leaving."

What is the recommendation you have for retaining, that you really have that 33% that you propose to have and they are not leaving?

The Chair: Okay. Thank you, Mr. Chisu.

Madame d'Entremont.

Ms. Katherine d'Entremont: I have not yet made recommendations on retention; I have simply made recommendations about the targets that should be achieved.

I published my annual report in June of 2014. I did talk about immigration in the annual report. I will be talking about immigration again in my next annual report, so you may want to stay tuned for that.

The Chair: Okay.

Thank you very much.

[Translation]

Mrs. Day, you have the floor.

Mrs. Anne-Marie Day (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, NDP): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

To reply to Ms. Rioux, who is unfortunately no longer with us, I would like to say that the point is not to put forward a partisan approach or to put anyone on the spot.

The Immigration Act, which was amended in 2002, has linguistic provisions in it. I would like to be sure that the decisions made under this act are in compliance with the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. We are talking here about the equality of French and English as the official languages of Canada. That is a fact, a vested right.

Earlier we talked about shared responsibilities. We have this in Quebec. Since I have a riding office, I know that Quebec frequently accepts people Canada refuses for various reasons.

In her text, the commissioner said only 11.7% of immigrants were francophones, whereas 32% were anglophones. There seems to be quite a wide disparity between francophones, anglophones and allophones among the immigrants who arrive in Canada.

The allophones make up 80%, and they speak neither French nor English; do they all adopt English, or is it fifty-fifty? One thing is certain, and that is that the choice belongs to them.

I would like to know how newcomers break down along linguistic lines, based on the data from the studies.

• (1645)

Ms. Ida Kamariza: The allophones who immigrate to Alberta automatically choose to integrate into the majority. In my brief, I talk about people who come from Quebec. Allophones who have resided in Quebec have usually had the opportunity to learn French. In that case, they feel more at home in the francophone community because they do not have a command of English. They are then supported in their integration into the francophone community.

Mrs. Anne-Marie Day: Do you know what percentage they make up?

Ms. Ida Kamariza: Unfortunately, I do not have these figures with me. I must say, however, that people who come from Latin American communities and settle in Alberta integrate into the French milieu. That is the case of the Colombian community, which is quite large in Alberta.

Mrs. Anne-Marie Day: Ms. d'Entremont, in your 2013-2014 report you indicate that the federal government's efforts to increase francophone immigration were not sufficient to correct the current imbalance. You also say that this imbalance compromises the demographic weight of the francophone community in New Brunswick.

Can you provide more details on that?

Ms. Katherine d'Entremont: In preparing the report we noted that only 12% of immigrants are francophones or integrate into the francophone community. The results speak for themselves. The office of the commissioner maintains that efforts must be made by both orders of government if things are to change in New

Brunswick. There have to be efforts on the part of the two levels of government.

Mrs. Anne-Marie Day: Ms. Kamariza, I would like us to talk about the Express Entry program. As we know, French is the fifth most prevalent language in the world; English is the second and Chinese is the first.

Could you briefly describe for us the profile of people who arrive here through the Express Entry program? Are they francophones from European countries, or Africans? Where do they come from?

Ms. Ida Kamariza: That is a good question. Unfortunately, we have not yet had the time to assess this statistical trend. As you know, the Express Entry program came into effect in January 2015. The first draw took place at the end of January.

Quite recently, during the Day of Reflection on Francophone Immigration, this question was asked, but no one answered it. We are told that francophones are given preference, but there is nothing to support that statement. It remains theoretical.

When the first draw was held, I attempted to check certain statistics and I saw that these were all people who were already in Canada, and not immigrants coming from abroad. That is why we insisted that a francophone component be added to the programs for temporary foreign workers and international students, as they are pathways to permanent residency.

• (1650)

Mrs. Anne-Marie Day: The biggest pool of francophones lives in Africa. We know that, overall, there is a lower level of education on the African continent. With the Express Entry system, will there be as many African immigrants, or is there a risk that there will be discrimination?

Ms. Ida Kamariza: I would not speak about discrimination as such, but we are concerned that the program as it stands may not take this large pool of francophones into account, especially because of the recognition of degrees issue. That is why we made the following recommendation:

Conduct a comparative study of foreign training standards in the francophone and anglophone systems, which would look at the qualification chances that francophones now have under the current policy.

We have worded it that way because it is not official. It is subject to verification.

We learned that people of African origin had trouble having their diplomas recognized, and especially that the private organization that analyzes the equivalency of diplomas and would allow these people to get into the pool would consider excluding certain institutions. The word "francophone" is not used as such, but we are concerned that francophones would be a part of this group, especially those from Africa.

The Chair: Very well, thank you.

Mr. Daniel, you have the floor.

[English]

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

Thank you, witnesses, for being here.

I have a couple of questions.

One of things you said in your recommendations, Commissioner, is to conduct a comparative study of foreign training standards in the francophone and anglophone systems, which would look at the qualification chances that francophones now have under the current policy.

Is there a method that they can actually evaluate education standards in the Francophonie and compare those with Canadian standards?

Ms. Katherine d'Entremont: I'm sorry, what recommendation are you referring to, Mr. Daniel?

Mr. Joe Daniel: Oh, sorry, I was thinking it was your recommendation. No, it's Ms. Kamariza's.

Okay, but maybe as commissioner you can actually advise us whether there is an institute that will actually assess the qualifications of francophones immigrating to Canada.

Ms. Katherine d'Entremont: I wish I could answer your question. I'm not an immigration specialist and I don't know the answer to that question.

The Chair: Mr. Daniel, you had a question about recommendation number two for Madame Kamariza.

[Translation]

Ms. Kamariza, Mr. Daniel asked a question about your second recommendation. Could you provide some explanations about that recommendation?

Ms. Ida Kamariza: We observed that training standards in the French and Anglo-Saxon systems are not always the same.

I will use physicians as an example. There was a time when immigrants who had been trained in England or in South Africa would arrive in Canada and were authorized to practise, but those who were trained in francophone countries such as France or Belgium were not. We suspect that this was due to training standards. There is no reason for these people not to practise medicine, as the human body is the same whether in Belgium, South Africa or Canada.

[English]

Mr. Joe Daniel: Okay. This question is to both of you.

Can you explain what you think the role post-secondary institutions can play in the recruitment, intake, and integration of francophone immigrants?

Ms. Katherine d'Entremont: I'll take a stab at that one, at the role of post-secondary institutions. I think their role is vital.

I just want to tell you a little bit about New Brunswick. In New Brunswick we have a francophone university, l'Université de Moncton, with three campuses. We also have a few anglophone universities. We also have our community college system, which has duality. We have community colleges on the English side,

[Translation]

and community colleges on the francophone side.

[English]

New Brunswick being officially bilingual, we are well equipped with post-secondary institutions in English and in French. In fact I

know, although I don't have the stats here today, that our post-secondary institutions play a key big role in attracting francophone immigrants to our province. I do know that L'Université de Moncton's numbers, in terms of attracting francophone immigrants, are quite impressive. I don't have that information with me, but I'm sure it's something that's readily available.

In New Brunswick it definitely is a tremendous asset for us in recruiting immigrants of both linguistic communities.

• (1655)

Mr. Joe Daniel: Is that to employ them in the secondary education system, or is it for them to train for different skills in Canada?

Ms. Katherine d'Entremont: I would not have data to answer that question, sorry.

Mr. Joe Daniel: Any comments, Madame?

[Translation]

Ms. Ida Kamariza: Post-secondary education plays a major role in francophone immigration as it does in immigration in general.

Earlier in my presentation, I referred to Canada's International Education Strategy. On page 10, this document states that: "According to Citizenship and Immigration Canada, within the next decade, immigration is expected to account for 100% of net growth in the workforce, up from 75% today."

Let's have a look at what happens with Express Entry. Already, when the first draw was held, people who were already in Canada were the first to be extracted from the pool. This shows that these were people who had Canadian experience, which is a major asset in the selection; there were people who knew the language, which is also a major selection asset. And, most of all, they had received a Canadian education, so no comparison was necessary. Education thus plays a major role.

My sixth recommendation is to include a francophone component in Canada's International Education Strategy, which currently focuses on six priority markets: Brazil, China, India, Mexico, North Africa and the Middle East, and Vietnam. We feel that this is an important means of strengthening francophone immigration, especially since Canada's International Education Strategy aims to increase and even double the number of international students, which will increase from 239,000 to 450,000 by 2022.

The Chair: Thank you.

We will now hear from Mr. Gravelle, Mr. Gourde, Mr. Nicholls and Ms. St-Denis, in that order.

Mr. Gravelle, you have the floor.

Mr. Claude Gravelle (Nickel Belt, NDP): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

[English]

I'm anxious to see Mr. Hayes become a permanent member of this committee. Obviously, by his comments, he hasn't seen Mr. Gourde's whip.

You'd better be careful what you wish for.

[*Translation*]

Ms. d'Entremont, according to an analysis by the Canadian Institute for Research on Linguistic Minorities, the vast majority of immigrants who reside in New Brunswick, that is to say 81.1% of them, had English as their first official language in 2011, whereas only 11.7% had French as their first spoken official language.

Could you comment on this and explain why, in an officially bilingual province, the figures are so different?

Ms. Katherine d'Entremont: There are probably several reasons for that, but I am not the proper person to answer you. I would invite you to put these questions to the immigration specialists.

At the Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages for New Brunswick, we wonder whether the immigration practices of both levels of government—federal and provincial—are maintaining the respective demographic weight of the communities. That is the issue we are looking at.

As to whether there is enough money, and whether people arrive, leave or do not arrive, the Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages for New Brunswick does not have the necessary expertise to answer those questions. We do not look at these issues. These questions would be better put to those who work in the immigration area.

In my opinion, the results are not very positive. I have taken some steps. I wrote to both ministers and met with them. I'm continuing to work with my colleague Graham Fraser. We have issued press releases. We have encouraged both levels of government to adopt a framework agreement for New Brunswick so that both levels of government can work together to increase the 12% figure, which has remained the same for several years. We have to attract more francophones so that this reflects the demographic weight of our community.

That is all I have to say on that topic. As to why this has not been a success, others besides me may have things to say to you about that.

• (1700)

Mr. Claude Gravelle: Fine. Thank you.

Ms. Kamariza, in your presentation, you said that you had not been consulted. If you had been consulted, what type of recommendation would you have made? Could you explain that to us, please?

Ms. Ida Kamariza: If we had been consulted, we would have highlighted the fact that francophones are currently at a disadvantage in the Express Entry program.

As I said, there is the matter of the recognition of diplomas and the selection of unilingual francophones. People say that both official languages are equal, but the provinces and employers are not subject to linguistic obligations. These are concerns that could have been raised right from the outset. Solutions might have been found.

In fact, what the francophone community of Alberta would like to see is some official consultation so that together we may build programs that are effective and will be beneficial for both the

majority community and the minority. I am sure that that is also what the other francophone minority communities wish to see.

[*English*]

Mr. Claude Gravelle: I'm going to read from a press release here. It's in English.

A program that assists businesses in minority francophone communities outside Quebec hire temporary foreign workers is to close after September 30. The French Significant Benefit Program allowed employers to recruit internationally without needing to apply for a Labour Market Impact Assessment, which entails job advertising obligations and strict auditing of the business making the application to hire foreign workers on temporary work permits. Workers brought to Canada under this LMIA-exempt program then had the option of staying in Canada permanently if they fulfilled the criteria of one of the federal immigration programs, such as the Canadian Experience Class.

"This is unquestionably a big setback for francophone immigration", said Gilles Benoit, president of the Coopération d'intégration francophone de l'Île-du-Prince-Édouard.

Has this cut to this program affected either of you, and how?

Ms. Katherine d'Entremont: I said in my presentation that the public servants responsible for the immigration program in the government of New Brunswick have told us that it was a program that was helpful and useful to them in attracting francophone immigrants. That's all I have been told by them, and that is what I said in my remarks.

Mr. Claude Gravelle: So has it hurt the recruitment of francophone immigrants?

Ms. Katherine d'Entremont: That is what we have been told by those people, yes.

The Chair: Okay. Thank you.

Monsieur Gourde.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jacques Gourde: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

My question is for Ms. Kamariza.

You seem to say that you have more success with the francophones from other provinces who immigrate to Alberta than with those who come from other countries. Let's talk about the retention of these francophones. Do those who come from other Canadian provinces have more of a tendency to return to their province than the immigrants who come from other countries? Is there a similarity?

• (1705)

Ms. Ida Kamariza: We have not yet done any comparative study of both categories, but it is obvious that very few of them return home, especially when they come from foreign countries.

As I was saying, we don't welcome many of them, but we receive a large number from Quebec. Currently we are studying new settlement methods for the new francophone arrivals.

We asked a consultant who is helping us to carry out a comparative study of the movements of immigrants who settled first of all in Quebec and then came to Alberta, and those who settled in Alberta and then returned to Quebec. Although the result is not perfectly accurate, it provides an indication. The data he was able to collect showed that 700 people from Quebec immigrate to Alberta every year and that 100 of these immigrants return to Quebec. So they do a reverse trip. What this means for immigration results is that there is an advantage of 600 people a year for Alberta.

It is just an indication, but if we look at the figures on the people we receive in our reception and settlement centres, we can see that we receive far more than 600 people, and these people stay here.

Mr. Jacques Gourde: Francophone immigrants, whether they come from other provinces or other countries, go to Alberta essentially because there is interesting work there and good salaries. They certainly don't go to Alberta because there is a lot of French spoken there. Is it really economic immigration?

Ms. Ida Kamariza: One does not prevent the other. If we have this economic advantage, I think we should take advantage of it to strengthen our francophone vitality, because if we say that they come for economic reasons and do nothing, our francophone vitality may suffer.

Yes, there is economic immigration, but it is unlikely that that alone will allow us to reach the 4.4% target by 2023.

Mr. Jacques Gourde: There must be a few francophone entrepreneurs in Alberta. Do they take advantage of francophone immigration to hire more francophone employees in their businesses? Do they choose employees according to the skills of those who are in the market?

Ms. Ida Kamariza: All of the employers choose francophone immigrants first because of their skills. There is a reality, which is that they encourage francophone immigrants, of course, and hire them, insofar as they have the needed skills.

However, we must not lose sight of the fact that even those entrepreneurs work in an environment that is mostly anglophone. They do business with anglophone and francophone clients. So they cannot limit themselves to francophone employees.

That is why in our work to mobilize and raise awareness among employers, we target francophone employers as well as anglophone ones. In fact, even if people can work in English, they will live in French in our communities and strengthen the vitality of those communities, which is, finally, the primary objective of francophone immigration in francophone minority communities.

Mr. Jacques Gourde: You said that these communities had other networking activities, but is there anything beyond that? Is anything being done for culture, the arts? Are there community meetings, meetings of community associations for the purpose of strengthening the francophone community?

Ms. Ida Kamariza: Yes. These immigrants take part in all of our activities. They register their children in the schools and they take part in all the activities of francophone life. In fact, even if they work in English, they live in French. This is all to the advantage of the francophone community.

Mr. Jacques Gourde: Thank you, Ms. Kamariza.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Gourde.

Mr. Nicholls, you now have the floor.

Mr. Jamie Nicholls: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Ms. d'Entremont, you said that you would like to see the demographic weight preserved in New Brunswick.

• (1710)

[English]

Are you aware there's a StatsCan warning box saying that on census data, "Data users are advised to exercise caution when evaluating trends related to mother tongue and home language that compare 2011 Census data to that of previous censuses"? This is because of the changes to the way that this census was done and the abolition of the long-form census.

Here's my question for you. On the data we have, are they reliable enough to use to go towards the preservation of the demographic weight in New Brunswick?

Ms. Katherine d'Entremont: I would say that as commissioner I have been looking at population trend data over not just the last 10 years, but over five decades anyway. In New Brunswick, it shouldn't be a big surprise. Our population in terms of demographic breakdown, in terms of linguistic community, has been pretty steady, so it wouldn't be just in the last census that anything different happened. The 33% is over many decades, and there are different variables. I'm well aware of those, such as mother tongue and first official language. We look at all of that. I take the long view—

Mr. Jamie Nicholls: But going forward—

Ms. Katherine d'Entremont: —and I take the go-forward long view as well in terms of... It's for the people who come to New Brunswick, the new immigrants, that the information is captured by the provincial government departments, so—

Mr. Jamie Nicholls: The provincial government departments are doing data collection. Is that right? Does this doubling of work make sense for New Brunswick taxpayers, in that the province has to do what the federal government is not doing anymore?

Ms. Katherine d'Entremont: I believe you may have misunderstood.

Mr. Jamie Nicholls: Okay.

Ms. Katherine d'Entremont: The New Brunswick government does not do census data collection. I mean that for the new immigrants to New Brunswick, the provincial government of course knows which new immigrants—

Mr. Jamie Nicholls: Yes.

Ms. Katherine d'Entremont: —are francophone first language, anglophone, neither, etc. It's not a duplication of census; it's pertaining to immigrants. The data that we have looked at in our office is over the past several years. Of recent immigration patterns, the 12% is fairly consistent, which is a far cry from the 33%. With respect to the 33% long-standing demographic balance in New Brunswick, it's pretty much a third and two-thirds, so—

Mr. Jamie Nicholls: But going forward, with the abolition of the long-form census, how will we know that you've avoided the risk of assimilation if we don't have reliable data about home language and mother tongue? For these new immigrants arriving today, we won't know 10 or 20 years down the road, say, if they have maintained French as the home language. Would you not recommend to the federal government that they return to a more reliable data collection?

Ms. Katherine d'Entremont: Mr. Nicholls, I have not examined in any depth yet the effects of changes of the long form and the short form. It may be something that I turn my attention to. I'm in the second year of a seven-year mandate as commissioner, so thank you for the question. If it is something that I think New Brunswick should be concerned with, I will certainly make recommendations at the appropriate time.

[Translation]

Mr. Jamie Nicholls: Ms. Kamariza, if you are able to discuss the matter of data, the risk of assimilation and also to answer the question put by my colleague, and I am going to let you do so.

Ms. Ida Kamariza: I would like to go back to the question regarding data collected through the International Household Survey. There is a risk that the data collected there may not be reliable. Earlier I gave as an example the exercise we did to determine how many immigrants from Quebec settle each year in Alberta. However that figure is two times lower than the one indicated by the statistics in our francophone reception and settlement centres. This means that these data are not providing accurate information. Even if there are cases of assimilation, we will not be able to identify them if we use that data collection tool.

As for your colleague's question on the Francophone Significant Benefit Program, its termination puts us at a huge disadvantage. Indeed, as I was saying earlier, it was like a carrot that encouraged employers to hire temporary foreign workers.

Among the mobilization efforts we made, there were liaison tours in cooperation with the FCFA and the Canadian Embassy in France. We invited employers to come to an information session. Now, however, when we invite them, they answer politely that they are very busy, but we can see that they are no longer interested.

In short, this incentive we had has unfortunately disappeared. There is now no longer any incentive to really allow them to benefit from economic immigration, which is the current trend.

• (1715)

The Chair: Thank you.

Ms. St-Denis, you now have the floor.

Ms. Lise St-Denis: First I would like to ask Ms. d'Entremont what type of complaints she receives in New Brunswick regarding the use of French.

I would then like to ask Ms. Kamariza if the attitude of the provincial government is positive concerning the federal action plan and francophone immigration.

Ms. Katherine d'Entremont: Thank you.

We get all sort of complaints in New Brunswick. Each citizen has the right to be served in the official language of his or her choice, throughout the province, regardless of numbers. The complaints we receive concerning the lack of services in French often involve the lack of personal service, for instance when someone goes to a government office.

There's also the matter of active offer. Under the law, the services must be provided, but they must also be offered by the employee, just like at the federal level. There's also the lack of telephone services. Sometimes people complain that documents are not available in one language or the other. These are all complaints that are also heard at the federal level.

The complaints from anglophones are rarer, but there are in fact francophone communities where service in English is not always available. We hear from both sides, but most of the complaints concerning the lack of services are made by francophones.

Ms. Ida Kamariza: As for the interest our province has in francophone immigration, that is quite an interesting question. The attempts we have made to encourage cooperation from the province regarding francophone immigration have not always met with great interest.

That said, we appreciate the small sum that is allocated to one of Edmonton's reception and settlement centres. However, the province could do more to support francophone immigration. That is why throughout my presentation I have repeated that we are worried about the important responsibility that is entrusted to employers as well as to the provinces and territories, even though they are not subject to linguistic obligations at this time.

The Chair: Thank you.

Are there any other comments or questions?

Mrs. Day, you have the floor.

Mrs. Anne-Marie Day: I would like some additional information, so I will not use all of my five minutes.

In Quebec, most of the population is French-speaking. Moreover, there is a migration toward the western provinces, Alberta being one of these. Often, these are young people who are looking for work. Since the unemployment rate is about 14%, it is advantageous to go somewhere where there is work. They leave to settle elsewhere, even if they don't speak English. They are hired by English-speaking employers, who explain the work to them with all kinds of gestures. Often it is repetitive work, for instance road work or manual labour. Gradually, they are assimilated. Does this correspond to the profile of our young people who go to settle in your province?

My second question is about the Express Entry system. Earlier, I did not have time to finish what I wanted to say. We have not yet received the figures, as the commissioner said earlier, but I believe that the Express Entry will give precedence to anglophone immigrants.

If we give precedence to a certain category of people, if you were not consulted, if the need to include a third of francophones in the Express Entry system was not taken into account, and if we are furthering the immigration of people who entered the country thanks to this system, are we not in this way creating a new imbalance between the francophones and anglophones in our country?

• (1720)

Ms. Ida Kamariza: As for the young people who come to Alberta, I would say there are two categories, depending on the work they do.

Those who work in the trades can do that work, even if they don't speak English very well. Often, their employer assigns them to a supervisor who speaks both languages, so that that person can give them work instruction in the language they understand best. In spite of everything, those young people will tend to get assimilated, because they won't see any benefit in speaking French.

I'll go back to the question put by your colleague about the interest the province has in francophone immigration. We have taken steps to offer English classes in francophone environments so that these people, even if they learn English, stay in touch with the francophone community. We have already begun taking steps to do that, but this has not been successful up till now.

I apologize, but I forgot the topic of your second question.

Mrs. Anne-Marie Day: It was about the Express Entry system. If anglophones are chosen, mostly, and if immigration favours those who have gone through that system, what will happen? We understood that the employers have been consulted, but that you were not. What is going to happen? In Canada, will anglophone immigrants always be in the majority?

Ms. Ida Kamariza: Yes, absolutely. This is going to make the imbalance worse, whereas francophone immigration had been put in place to redress the demographic imbalance. With regard to selection, we see that certain avenues are going to favour anglophone immigration. Temporary immigrants will become permanent immigrants. We don't have much confidence in that avenue either. We see nothing that will encourage francophone immigrants to settle here. The imbalance will be evident.

I'd like to change something I said regarding consultations. After the fact, in February, CIC began to hold pan-Canadian consultations to see how the Express Entry system could be adapted for francophone communities. On February 19, people from that department came to see us. I also spoke with my colleagues from the other provinces. The consultations highlight the challenges rather than the solutions. We don't quite know what they are going to produce.

[English]

The Chair: Mr. Chisu has a short question.

Mr. Corneliu Chisu: I would like to ask Madame Kamariza a question with regard to the second recommendation that you are making: conduct a comparative study of foreign training standards in the francophone and anglophone systems, which would look at the qualification chances that francophones now have under the current policy.

When you are looking at the qualifications of a profession, for example, to be a professional engineer or a medical doctor, that is under the jurisdiction of the provinces. Can you elaborate a little on that? What kind of study? This is a provincial responsibility that enables one to exercise a profession. I was the vice-president of Professional Engineers Ontario, so I know a little bit about how the professions are regulated in this country, which is a provincial responsibility.

Can you elaborate a little bit on this recommendation?

[Translation]

Ms. Ida Kamariza: In fact, training is a provincial jurisdiction, I know, but there is a lot of collaboration between the provinces, the territories and the federal government regarding immigration. That has been expressed quite clearly in everything I quoted up till now. As for the Express Entry system, I can quote a few words from the 2014 Economic Action Plan. It states that:

The Expression of Interest system would allow the Government of Canada, provinces and territories, and employers to actively target highly skilled immigrants [...]

As you can see, the provinces have a big role to play.

The plan then says:

In the future, the government will explore with provinces, territories and employers approaches to developing a pool of skilled workers who are ready to begin employment in Canada.

So we see that there are possibilities. The federal government, which has linguistic obligations to francophone minority communities, could work with the provinces in the context of these collaborations we were referring to, and try to see how to encourage francophone immigration. Of course, if the francophone communities were involved in that process, it would be even better.

• (1725)

[English]

Mr. Corneliu Chisu: For example, with the engineering profession, the Province of Quebec made an agreement with France. There is no problem in recognizing the qualifications.

I'm just telling you that it is a provincial responsibility to establish and to be able to exercise a profession.

The Chair: We'll now go to Monsieur Nicholls briefly because we're running out of time.

[Translation]

Mr. Jamie Nicholls: Ms. Kamariza, I have some fairly simple questions.

How much money do you receive from the federal government? Does it meet all of your needs, given that you have a lot of services to deliver? Is it sufficient?

Ms. Ida Kamariza: Thank you for the question.

We are very thankful for the support we receive from the federal government, but there is room for improvement. As I said in my presentation, in light of the amounts we receive, we cannot offer the programs that are available in the majority community in francophone communities .

Moreover, when we submit requests to offer these programs in francophone communities, the numbers are used to turn down our submissions, and we are told that the numbers do not justify this. It is as though the francophone specificity was forgotten. Since these programs are not available in francophone communities, the immigrants go and get them where they are offered, in a language they do not always understand well. That is a slippery slope toward assimilation, because the immigrants go there and sometimes they stay there.

The Chair: Fine.

I thank our witnesses for their testimony.

Ms. St-Denis wants to table a notice of motion so that the committee can discuss it on Thursday.

Ms. Lise St-Denis: We had tabled a notice of motion for Thursday. I won't table it again today. I am going to reword it and you will receive a different version.

This concerns the report of the committee Mr. Gravelle sat on just before the last general elections. There was a complete report from

the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration. I did not know this when I presented the motion. I just wanted to inform you that a report existed and that the government had never replied to it, because the elections came up and the report went unheeded. Nevertheless, it contains 21 recommendations .

I simply wanted to inform you that I will be tabling a motion in that regard on Thursday.

[*English*]

The Chair: Madame St-Denis has given us notice of a motion that we will discuss and vote on Thursday to receive the study and the testimony of the 2010 immigration study that this committee undertook. We can debate that and vote on it on Thursday.

Thank you for that notice of motion.

Thank you to our witnesses.

This meeting is adjourned.

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