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Chair

The Honourable Denis Paradis

Standing Committee on Official Languages

Tuesday, September 27, 2016

• (0850)

[Translation]

The Chair (Hon. Denis Paradis (Brome—Missisquoi, Lib.)):
Good morning, everyone.

I would like to welcome the two new members, Jean Rioux and Brenda Shanahan.

As agreed, we are going to take the first half-hour to try to resolve the motion on Air Canada. At our request, Mr. Généreux and Mr. Samson met about that last week. They produced a document that seems to have unanimous agreement. I gave that document to Mr. Choquette to examine.

I am going to read you right away what that gives us as the final product.

Mr. Darrell Samson (Sackville—Preston—Chezzetcook, Lib.):
Mr. Chair, I have circulated a simplified new version with red markings. I would be prepared to reread the amendment, if you agree.

The Chair: All right, Mr. Samson.

Mr. Darrell Samson: Thank you.

I distributed a document with the additions and changes marked in red, after the meeting that Mr. Généreux and I had. We have not invented anything. It reflects the discussion we had at the last meeting and the suggestions that were made. I would like to read it, to make it official.

The Chair: Go ahead, Mr. Samson.

Mr. Darrell Samson: Just turn the page if you want the text in French or English.

The motion reads as follows:

Whereas Air Canada has been subject to the full *Official Languages Act* for close to 50 years;

Whereas serious concerns have been raised by the Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages in its special report on Air Canada published in June 2016;

The Committee recommends that the Government of Canada evaluate the feasibility and desirability of implementing the four (4) solutions proposed in the special report by the Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages:

a) That the government strengthen the enforcement regime applicable to Air Canada and expand the powers of the Official Languages Commissioner, in particular to enter into compliance agreements;

b) That the government amend the *Air Canada Public Participation Act* to give the Federal Court the power to award damages for violations of certain provisions of the *Official Languages Act* without the claimant having to prove

an actual loss stemming from the violation. The Federal Court could assess damages based on a number of explicit factors to be taken into consideration;

c) That the government introduce provisions for fines to be imposed by the courts for certain regulatory violations;

d) That the government provide for administrative monetary penalties that can be issued in response to non-compliance with the legislation.

That the Committee continue to study at a later date, the Commissioner's report on Air Canada, and present its conclusions and recommendations to the House of Commons.

Mr. Chair, that is my amendment to the motion proposed by Mr. Généreux.

• (0855)

The Chair: Are there any comments?

Mr. Généreux, you have the floor.

Mr. Bernard Généreux (Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, CPC): I have a brief comment to make.

In the sentence that has the words "évalue qu'il serait faisable et souhaitable d'adopter des quatre (4) pistes", "des" should be replaced by "les".

The Chair: Have you finished, Mr. Généreux?

Mr. Bernard Généreux: Yes.

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

Mr. François Choquette (Drummond, NDP): It is in the same place, where I have noted a mistake. I would have written "one or many of the four (4) solutions" but if we prefer "the four solutions", I have no objection.

The Chair: So are you proposing that we write "one or more"?

Are there any objections?

Mr. Darrell Samson: That's fine.

Mr. René Arseneault (Madawaska—Restigouche, Lib.): It is fine with me too.

What are we writing?

The Chair: Do you want to make a motion, Mr. Choquette?

Mr. François Choquette: I move that we write "one or more"

The Chair: It is passed.

A small change is being suggested to me, at the end, in the final paragraph. The words "Be it resolved" should be removed and it should start with "That the Standing Committee on Official Languages continue".

Are there other comments?

Mr. Généreux, you have the floor.

Mr. Bernard Généreux: Mr. Chair, when we say that we will set a date later, we agree that we will not wait until 2020. After we complete our study, by the end of December or maybe when we come back at the beginning of next year, we should make sure that we do not let this matter drag on forever.

The Chair: I would like your comments to be noted, that this should not be allowed to drag on forever and it should be dealt with speedily.

Mr. Bernard Généreux: At the same time, Mr. Chair, that gives the government some time. When the motion is tabled, the ball is in the government's court, and it will have to decide whether it is desirable and feasible. So there should be some kind of report or intentions that could be sent to us by the end of the year, so we would have some idea of where we stand when we resume our work at the beginning of next year.

The Chair: Do you want us to add, at the end of the final paragraph, "as soon as possible"?

Mr. Bernard Généreux: That is implied. I will rely on the good faith of the committee.

The Chair: I think we are in agreement.

Are there any other comments?

Some hon. members: That's fine.

The Chair: I propose that we proceed since there seems to be unanimous agreement around the table.

Who had moved the main motion? Was it you, Mr. Généreux? I propose that you withdraw your main motion and we unanimously adopt the one we have before us.

Mr. Bernard Généreux: That is fine with me.

The Chair: Is that acceptable to everyone?

(The motion is adopted.)

The Chair: The next point...

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher (Beauport—Côte-de-Beaupré—Île d'Orléans—Charlevoix, CPC): The list is being photocopied. I had problems with my computer. Everything is working fine in Parliament!

The Chair: So we will distribute the original witness list.

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: You made us work for that yesterday.

• (0900)

The Chair: Yes, but there are additions. Mr. Boissonneault submitted a list of additional witnesses, and Mr. Samson submitted one.

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: Are you talking about the roadmap or about immigration?

The Chair: I am talking about immigration.

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: Mr. Chair, last week, you asked that Mr. Samson, Mr. Arseneault, Mr. Choquette and I meet to prepare a list. When we met, we did not know there were other witnesses. We would have done it differently; we would have worked together.

The Chair: Pardon me, but I do not understand.

Mr. Samson, I am listening.

Mr. Darrell Samson: We had submitted this list at the last meeting, but we did not have it yesterday.

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: I had it, but...

Mr. Darrell Samson: Did we have it yesterday?

Mrs. Boucher, our process will not change, unless we realize something. For people who are not part of the government or community organizations, they are submissions. So we can have the four questions sent out to all these groups for them to answer them. I do not think that changes anything about yesterday's work.

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: We should stop going in circles, or we will not accomplish anything.

The Chair: I would like to clarify things. On Thursday, from 8:45 a.m. to 9:45 a.m., we will meet with representatives of the Fédération nationale des conseils scolaires francophones, and from 9:45 a.m. to 10:45 a.m., we will meet with representatives of the Réseau de développement économique et d'employabilité Canada.

Those are the groups we will be hearing from on Thursday.

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: I am going to ask my question again: why is all of that decided in advance? Why were we asked to form a small group to review the witness list and allocate hours or half-hours? Why did you ask us to work together, when once we get here, we find that everything has already been decided?

Mr. Darrell Samson: Mr. Chair, I would like to answer, if I may.

The Chair: Go ahead, Mr. Samson.

Mr. Darrell Samson: That is a good question. There is no problem with wanting to understand.

We cannot stop the bus when it is moving. The other day, we scheduled the first two or three meetings while waiting for the Committee to establish a process. That is all we did. If we had not done that, we could not have confirmed any witnesses for Thursday.

This group is the one that was on our priority list. This is not individuals from other groups; this is our community.

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: All right.

Mr. Darrell Samson: That is all.

The Chair: Mrs. Boucher, I am listening.

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: Except that we duplicated and triplicated the work.

Mr. Bernard Généreux: No, not from what I understand.

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: You were not at the meeting, so you cannot talk about it.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Darrell Samson: We did a good job yesterday.

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: We had lists. We were asked to review the lists, but if we had known that these people were coming to testify, we would have arranged for something else.

The Chair: It is a practical matter, Mrs. Boucher. It is just so that we do not waste time on Thursday.

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: I agree with that.

The Chair: There are two groups. The clerk or someone else has to give people a bit of advance notice.

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: We know that.

The Chair: Nothing else was decided in advance, except for Thursday's meeting.

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: That is perfect.

The Chair: It is the committee that will decide the priorities, and so on. Something had to be put on the schedule for the Thursday meeting, and that is what was done.

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: That is good.

The Chair: I am listening, Mr. Samson.

Mr. Darrell Samson: Mr. Chair, if it is okay with Mrs. Boucher, it is okay with me too.

I would like to talk a bit about the two witnesses who will be coming to the committee on Thursday. They are from the Fédération nationale des conseils scolaires francophones hors Québec. That is all the French schools in the country.

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: Will that take an hour?

Mr. Darrell Samson: Yes.

Can you remind me what the second group is, Mr. Chair?

The Chair: It is the Réseau de développement économique et d'employabilité Canada.

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: We had put it on the schedule as well.

Mr. Darrell Samson: All right.

Now, can we agree on the way we are going to proceed?

You know that I am of two minds between immigration, which is essential in minority communities, and what has happened about the roadmap and the possibility of improving it.

I have no answer and I am asking for the committee's opinion. Is it possible to tell the executive director of the Fédération nationale des conseils scolaires francophones to give a ten-minute presentation on immigration, and we will then ask questions for 20 minutes, and then to give a presentation on the roadmap and answer the questions that follow?

Last time, 80% of the time was devoted to the roadmap and 20% to immigration.

Mrs. Shanahan, you will be impressed.

• (0905)

Mrs. Brenda Shanahan (Châteauguay—Lacolle, Lib.): Oh yes?

Mr. Darrell Samson: Our committee is very efficient. We have matched people who will talk about two things: immigration and the roadmap.

That is a very good idea from my Conservative colleagues. Rather than have people come twice, we will ask them questions about both subjects. But please, let us get organized!

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: Exactly!

Mr. Darrell Samson: So there will be a ten-minute presentation on immigration, and then there will be a 20-minute question period.

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: I love you!

Mr. Darrell Samson: Second, there will be a ten-minute presentation on the roadmap, and then questions for 20 minutes. Bing, bang, all done!

That way, we will be sure to have it.

Mr. René Arseneault: I agree with you.

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: I do too. We have to get organized.

Mr. René Arseneault: So, Mr. Samson, there would be two blocks of 10 minutes per witness.

Mr. Darrell Samson: Exactly, during the hour.

Mr. René Arseneault: We would take time out of the hour, but it is still...

Mr. Darrell Samson: That would only be the case for people for whom we schedule an hour. People for whom we schedule 30 minutes would have just 10 minutes.

Mr. René Arseneault: All right.

Mr. Darrell Samson: This is so they can discuss both subjects. It also depends on the group.

Mr. René Arseneault: Is it complicated to let our witnesses know to prepare on that basis?

The Chair: Madam Clerk, do you have the answer?

The Clerk of the Committee (Ms. Christine Holke): It is not that it is complicated to let them know, but some witnesses have their own specialty. Certainly, I will do what the committee wants me to do. Some will probably tell me that they cannot speak to the roadmap, for example. There will probably be choices to make and we will have to reorganize everything, particularly for Thursday, but we can do it.

That is why we sent a statement. The statement was adopted at the last meeting and it was sent to the witnesses.

Mr. Darrell Samson: I agree with my colleague Mr. Arseneault. Some groups specialize in one subject but not the other. That does not correspond to our objective. Those groups are going to have only 30 minutes. The groups that are able to address both subjects are going to have an hour. That is what is going to contribute to our work.

The Chair: We are going to start next week. On Thursday, we will see how things go with the two groups who are to appear before us.

Mr. Choquette, you have the floor.

Mr. François Choquette: I have a question about the speaking time.

How is that going to work? Will it be different, or not?

The Chair: We are going to spend one hour with the group. We will see on Thursday how easy it is for us to operate and whether we will have to make adjustments next week.

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: I think that is the best way to proceed.

The Chair: Since we are in agreement, we will not change anything. We will try to proceed somewhat as Mr. Samson suggests, but without being inflexible. We will simply see how things can work.

Mr. René Arseneault: To avoid unpleasant surprises, I would like to make sure that this will not apply on Thursday.

The Clerk: No.

Mr. René Arseneault: The witnesses have been invited and they have received the statement, so we will not have any unpleasant surprises. There will not be ten-minute blocks divided between immigration and the roadmap. On the other hand, that is how we will operate after that.

Mr. Darrell Samson: That will be starting on Thursday?

The Chair: No, that will be starting next week.

Mr. Darrell Samson: It is necessary because the two groups we are meeting with can easily address each subject for 10 minutes. They specialize in this area. There will not be any problems. They are actually going to want to speak to both subjects for 20 minutes. I can guarantee it. Rather than asking to speak to the two subjects for 20 minutes, we will ask them to speak for 10 minutes, then we will go to questions, and so on. We are not going to change anything.

The Chair: All right.

Mr. René Arseneault: So we have to let them know.

The Chair: The clerk will arrange that.

Is that okay with everyone?

All right.

Since there is nothing else, we will not move on to the list of witnesses for the study.

Mrs. Boucher, do you want to speak to that?

Mr. Dan Vandal (Saint Boniface—Saint Vital, Lib.): Is this just for immigration?

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: That is what we discussed yesterday. It is specifically about francophone immigration...

• (0910)

Mr. Dan Vandal: ... in minority communities.

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: Yesterday, we said that was what we wanted.

Mr. Dan Vandal: On the other hand, we are going to have other witnesses come to talk about the roadmap, is that right?

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: Yes.

Mr. Dan Vandal: All right, I understand.

The Chair: Mrs. Boucher, could you tell us the outcome of your discussion?

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: Mr. Samson, Mr. Arseneault and I talked about a lot of subjects because all three of us were a little lost. We said there had to be a structure. That is really necessary. We kind of have the feeling that everything is going back and forth and we repeat ourselves every time, the same things. There comes a time when we have to move forward. We do not have a lot of time to study immigration. There is a deadline to be met in the case of the roadmap. Last time, we talked about 22 hours in total. I checked in my documents. If we spend 10 hours on immigration, we will have 12 hours left for the roadmap.

The Chair: Is that 22 hours on top of the hours we need for writing the report, in particular?

Is it 22 hours with witnesses?

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: Yes. We had already got to a total of 22 hours and you asked us to condense it so that 10 hours would be allocated to immigration and 12 hours to the roadmap.

At some point, the present government will let us know what approach it is going to take on this. That will help us arrange ourselves in terms of whom we invite.

The Chair: On the sheet that was distributed to us, it talks about 10 hours for immigration.

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: We are hearing from representatives of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada today, and on Thursday from the Fédération nationale des conseils scolaires francophones and the RDEE.

The Chair: All right.

Mr. Samson, you have the floor.

Mr. Darrell Samson: How many hours do we have in total to cover the roadmap?

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: We have 22 hours. That is what we said last week.

Mr. Darrell Samson: So it is 22 hours?

The Chair: That is what we calculated.

Mr. Darrell Samson: I just wanted to confirm. In that case, in practical terms, we have to do our homework for Thursday. We can perhaps decide on candidates for addressing the roadmap.

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: Yes.

Mr. Darrell Samson: The people who will talk about the roadmap at that time will not be coming back before our committee.

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: No.

Mr. Darrell Samson: So we will have to dig a little deeper.

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: We have to go a little further. We already had a list you had prepared, and another I had drawn up myself. We could perhaps sit down together, look at our witness lists, and add some if necessary.

Mr. Darrell Samson: Yes. However, before we do that, I would like to give all members of the committee an opportunity to suggest witnesses, this Thursday or next Tuesday, so we can begin our work.

The Chair: Let's do that on Thursday, given that we want to proceed quickly at the beginning of next week. However, we have other lists to complete.

Mr. Darrell Samson: All right.

Mr. Chair, is it possible also—because we are in the middle of the planning stage—for the clerk to send a request to all of the groups that are still on the list to submit a brief in response to four questions?

Are we in agreement on the choice of questions, exactly? I think so, is that right?

An hon. member: We have not voted.

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: We have not yet voted on the four questions.

Mr. Darrell Samson: We could maybe get them for the meeting on Thursday.

The Chair: The document containing the four questions has already been distributed. You have them.

Mr. Darrell Samson: We have the four questions?

The Chair: Yes.

Mr. Darrell Samson: All right.

The Chair: However, we have not gone into the subject.

Mr. Darrell Samson: My objective is simply to move forward a bit. Let's agree on the four questions. It is not necessary to do it today, but let's do it by a week from now. We should also send them to all the other groups that appear on the list that will not be appearing before us.

The Chair: We could take 10 minutes at the beginning of the next meeting to resolve the subject of the four questions. I will ask the clerk to send you the document again, and we can look at it for 10 to 15 minutes at the beginning of the next meeting. We will delay the witness appearances, and we will take those few minutes to prepare the questions and review and adjust them.

Mr. Darrell Samson: We must not take too much time.

The Chair: No.

Mr. Darrell Samson: I am afraid of wasting ten to 15 minutes that could be spent on immigration, that I submitted myself.

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: I am going to make you immigrate somewhere yourself.

Mr. Darrell Samson: It would be a good idea to get the questions in advance. Then we would need only 5 minutes, unless someone had problems.

The Chair: There is no difficulty. I quite agree.

Mr. Darrell Samson: I would simply like us to proceed quickly.

The Chair: We will do it as fast as possible.

Mr. Darrell Samson: A 15-minute discussion scares me.

The Chair: That is fine.

Mr. Darrell Samson: It's that we can change the world in 15 minutes.

The Chair: There is no problem.

Mr. Darrell Samson: Thank you.

The Chair: If there are no other comments, let us bring in the witnesses who are waiting outside.

• (0915)

Mr. Darrell Samson: That is too bad. We still have some time. We still have ten or 15 minutes. We could discuss the four questions, if we had them.

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: Yes, I agree.

The Chair: Do you want to discuss them right away?

Mr. Darrell Samson: Yes.

The Chair: All right. Let's proceed.

Mr. Darrell Samson: The witnesses will take ten or 15 minutes to get settled.

The Chair: Does someone have the four questions at hand?

Ms. Lucie Lecomte (Committee Researcher): I will check whether I have the document.

Mr. Darrell Samson: That would be good.

The Chair: I agree.

Mrs. Boucher, you have the floor.

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: Mr. Choquette wants to speak.

Mr. François Choquette: I think that instead we should take the time to read the document properly and discuss it. We can take five or 10 minutes at the next meeting. It will not take long.

The Chair: All right.

Mr. Samson, you have the floor.

Mr. Darrell Samson: I support my colleague's suggestion.

The Chair: All right. That will let the clerk return the document to you. As Mr. Choquette suggests, we will take five minutes at the next meeting to review the document.

We will now get back to the roadmap and immigration in minority francophone communities.

This morning we have with us, from Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada, David Manicom, Acting Assistant Deputy Minister, Strategic and Program Policy; Stefanie Beck, Assistant Deputy Minister, Corporate Services; Corinne Prince-St-Amand, Director General, Integration and Foreign Credentials Referral Office; and Donald Cochrane, Senior Director, International Region.

Welcome to the Official Languages Committee. We are going to hear your presentation for about 10 minutes, after which we will go to questions and comments from members of the committee.

Mr. Manicom, I understand that you are making the presentation. You have the floor.

Mr. David Manicom (Acting Assistant Deputy Minister, Strategic and Program Policy, Department of Citizenship and Immigration): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

My name is David Manicom and I am the Acting Assistant Deputy Minister of Strategic and Program Policy at Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada.

I am here today with my colleagues Stefanie Beck, Corinne Prince-St-Amand and Donald Cochrane. We are very pleased to be here before you today to discuss francophone immigration outside of Quebec.

[English]

Let me begin by speaking more broadly about our work at IRCC, which affects Canada's economy, security, and cultural makeup.

Our department facilitates the migration of permanent and temporary residents. We unite families and protect people displaced and persecuted elsewhere. We work hard to integrate newcomers, manage migration, and enable travel that promotes Canadian interests while protecting our health, safety, and security.

Our programs cover all aspects of migration, settlement, and citizenship. Under temporary migration, we facilitate the entry of business visitors, students, tourists, people on family visits, and temporary workers.

We support the development of a strong and prosperous country by bringing in permanent economic migrants across Canada. We support family reunification and provide for humanitarian considerations to be factored into decisions concerning prospective immigrants.

As I said, we protect the displaced and persecuted, we help newcomers make the transition to social and economic life in their new homes, we encourage and facilitate naturalization as citizens, and we seek to make people aware of the meaning of citizenship, its importance, the requirements to attain it, and the responsibilities that come with it. While we manage the movement of people, we also aim to protect the health, safety, and security of Canadians.

The success of our immigration system depends on ensuring that the hundreds of thousands of newcomers who arrive in Canada each year are welcomed and integrated into the Canadian family.

• (0920)

[Translation]

With all that in mind, Mr. Chair, I will now speak specifically about the ways Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada encourages and manages francophone immigration.

Over the past several years, we have taken many steps to attract more French-speaking newcomers to Canada and we will continue to do so. I should note that I am focusing on francophone immigration outside of Quebec due to the immigration provisions of the Canada-Quebec Accord, under which Quebec has responsibility for the selection of immigrants to that province.

Our department undertakes a number of activities to encourage francophone immigration in Francophone minority communities. It is also working to achieve the francophone immigration targets of: 4% of economic immigrants by 2018 and 4.4% of the total number of immigrants settling outside Quebec by 2023.

We have increased promotion and recruitment activities overseas to include more targeted activities by visa offices to promote immigration to francophone minority communities, information sessions available by web conference to candidates around the world, as well as various events promoting the Express Entry system.

Our missions in France, North Africa, Sub-Saharan Africa, and Mexico work with provinces and territories, and francophone minority communities, to encourage French-speaking foreign nationals interested in immigrating to Canada to consider francophone communities outside Quebec.

Our department also encourages the use of the Provincial Nominee Program as an avenue to permanent residency for potential French-speaking newcomers. We pursue collaboration with francophone minority communities to explore new measures to increase the numbers of French-speaking newcomers. As well, Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada works with employers to promote skilled francophone foreign nationals for permanent jobs in Canada.

To that end, earlier this year, the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship announced the re-establishment of the Labour Market Impact Assessment Exemption for skilled francophone temporary foreign workers.

Since June 1, the Mobilité francophone stream of the International Mobility Program has exempted employers from the LMIA process when they hire francophone workers from abroad on a temporary basis in managerial, professional and skilled trades occupations to work in francophone communities outside Quebec. This exemption makes it easier for employers to efficiently recruit French-speaking foreign workers to highly-skilled jobs on a temporary basis.

We know that many successful permanent resident applicants start out as temporary workers in Canada, and that is increasingly true. Once they are in Canada and working, we expect that many will want to make a commitment to stay for the long term and become Canadian.

The primary goal of the program, then, is the retention of new French-speaking workers in francophone minority communities.

Mr. Chair, in the last ten years, the proportion of French-speaking economic permanent residents admitted to Canada outside of Quebec has remained at 1.4% of the national total, far from that 4% target I mentioned earlier.

In order to reach our target, one of the things we hope to do is to encourage more French-speaking international students to remain in Canada after their studies are finished, and to help them to do so. We are also working in collaboration with Francophone organizations, communities, and provincial departments to discuss ways we can improve our outcomes, and how together we can best support essential integration services for francophone newcomers.

In March, the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship also met with the Fédération des communautés francophones et acadiennes at their 10th annual Journée de réflexion sur l'immigration francophone, which receives funding from Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada.

The department wants to be able to meet the needs of frontline service providers offering French services to newcomers. We do this work through partnerships and collaborations.

For instance, we continue to support and build upon the work of the 13 Réseaux en immigration francophone, or Francophone Immigration Networks, that receive funding from our department. Since their inception in 2003, these networks have helped foster a dialogue about the needs of francophone newcomers in all provinces outside Quebec. In collaboration with local and regional partners, the Réseaux en immigration francophone have mobilized community players and governments. This has led to better quality services for francophone newcomers.

This type of collaboration is increasingly important as we work to reach our targets, not only in attracting French-speaking newcomers to Canada, but also in welcoming, integrating, and retaining them in francophone minority communities.

The department recently revised its definition of "French-speaking immigrant" to better reflect the reality of French-speaking immigration. The new definition for "French-speaking immigrant" is an immigrant for whom French is the first Canadian official language of usage. This is more inclusive than the previous definition, and enhances the identification of the principal source countries of French-speaking immigration.

We are aware of the challenges and the opportunities in boosting francophone immigration to Canada. We remain committed to our department's role in helping to foster strong, vibrant francophone communities across the country.

• (0925)

[English]

Mr. Chair, thank you for the opportunity to speak to this committee on behalf of IRCC. My colleagues and I are happy to answer any questions that committee members may wish to ask.

[Translation]

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

We will now proceed with questions and comments, with everyone having 6 minutes to speak.

We will start with Mr. G n reux.

Mr. G n reux, you have 6 minutes.

Mr. Bernard G n reux: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I would like to thank the witnesses for being here this morning.

Mr. Manicom, evidently your department's target of having francophones outside Quebec account for 4% of economic permanent residents has not been met, since the proportion is still 1.4%. What do you think are the main reasons that explain why you have not been able to reach that target?

Mr. David Manicom: That is a good question.

If we knew the answer, we could meet the challenge better. Generally speaking, francophone immigrants have a tendency to settle in Quebec. It is not easy to persuade francophone immigrants that they can settle elsewhere than in Quebec.

Previously, selection programs favoured immigrants who spoke one or the other of Canada's two official languages, without distinguishing between them. There was no measure at that time for favouring applicants who had French language skills, even though not very many francophones settle in most of the provinces, except New Brunswick. In my opinion, our main challenge in terms of immigration outside Quebec is to make a chink in the wall that keeps francophone immigrants attracted to Quebec.

• (0930)

Mr. Bernard G n reux: This morning, I heard a report on CBC radio about the cost of our French tests for immigrants. I was astounded by what I heard. If I understood correctly, immigrants

who arrive in Canada have to pass a French test or an English test, as the case may be. It seems that the cost of the French test is higher than the English test.

Am I mistaken about that?

Mr. David Manicom: You understood correctly. We have just received the report of the Commissioner of Official Languages. We have several tests for English, including the IELTS which is administered by Cambridge University. For French, we have only one test approved by the government of Canada, and that test comes from France.

Mr. Bernard G n reux: You are saying there is no Canadian test.

Mr. David Manicom: That is correct. We have no official Canadian test. The test we use is not designed specifically to determine immigrants' language knowledge. They are also used in universities and elsewhere. The cost of it varies, depending on the market and the location where it is administered, whether in France, in Asia or in Canada. It is the organization that sets the price.

Mr. Bernard G n reux: I do not know whether you heard the report this morning, but one immigrant mentioned that the cost of the test discourages francophone immigrants from taking the French test even if French is their mother tongue. How can it be that Canada does not have a Canadian French test? How can it be that the price of the tests, in French or English, is not the same everywhere in the country?

Are these tests administered in the private sector?

Mr. David Manicom: Yes.

Ms. Prince-St-Amand is in a better position to answer your question than I am.

Ms. Corinne Prince-St-Amand (Director General, Integration and Foreign Credentials Referral Office, Department of Citizenship and Immigration): We do assessments in French in Canada. To get an equivalence, we provide a bridge between the tests taken outside Canada and the Canadian criteria.

To answer your first question about the target, we have found that a majority of francophones outside the country who want to immigrate to Canada choose Quebec because they believe it is the only province in Canada where they can live in French.

For some years, through pre-departure services and Destination Canada, which is in a way our standard-bearer, the department has tried to interest francophones from the four corners of the world to settle in Canada and to inform them that there are minority francophone communities everywhere in Canada and that it is very possible to live in French outside Quebec and to have your children taught in francophone schools.

For some years, the department has been making efforts to inform francophones who are considering the possibility of immigrating to Canada that they can also settle outside Quebec if they want to live in French in Canada.

Mr. Bernard G n reux: Do I have any time left, Mr. Chair?

The Chair: Your time is up. You had three seconds left.

Mr. Samson, you have the floor.

Mr. Darrell Samson: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I would like to thank the witnesses for being with us today. We are pleased to have you here.

We are also happy that you are examining the issue of francophone immigration in detail. As Mr. Généreux has shown, the target is 4%, but we only achieved 1.5% over the last five years. Clearly, it is not working. What should we do? I am concerned. We have to do something fast.

That being said, as Ms. Prince-St-Amand noted, people have to be made aware of the fact that there is French outside Quebec. That is the first thing.

The second thing is that it is complicated to recruit where Quebec has been recruiting for 20 years, because Quebec is already in the market and has expertise. So we have to agree on finding agencies to help us in this community. I am familiar with Destination Canada and that entire subject. On the other hand, I do not know what the solution is. You are the experts.

Can you tell me whether your office has a section that is dedicated solely to francophone immigration outside Quebec? Is there a team that works on strategy to make sure that we will have reached the 4% target in five years?

If not, in my view, you will probably have only 1.5% or 1.6% or 1.7% or 1.8% and the 4% target will not have been reached. Every time it does not work, we are not supporting the communities and we are not ensuring their vitality.

Do you have a team? If not, are you thinking about it, and in what way? I am going to start with those questions.

Don't take too much time to answer in case I have other questions. Please focus your answer.

• (0935)

Mr. David Manicom: Yes.

Mr. Darrell Samson: You have a team dedicated to that.

Mr. David Manicom: Yes.

Mr. Darrell Samson: How long has it existed?

Mr. David Manicom: For a long time.

Ms. Corinne Prince-St-Amand: For several years.

Mr. Darrell Samson: I am sorry, but you need to change the team.

Mr. René Arseneault: It is the trainer.

Mr. Darrell Samson: The math is simple. If a team is doing only that, morning to night, and achieves only 1.5%, that means something is not working.

I am not blaming the employees, but the strategy is not working. You have to shut yourself in a room and find solutions. We have a duty to do that. For the francophone communities outside Quebec, we need to build a structure and we have to do it together. We have to find one.

I may not have the right to ask, but we need to see the structure that is there. We need a report on your strategy for the next three years in which you—whether it is the department or one of its

sections—tells us clearly that you are confident you will reach the 4% target in five years. If we do not do that, we are going to have problems.

The Chair: If I may intervene.

Mr. Samson, you can ask for that, in fact.

Mr. Manicom, we are also asking that you provide us with a list of the people who make up the team and tell us how it works. You can send that document to our clerk so she can provide it to the committee members.

Mr. Darrell Samson: You can also provide us with the action plan.

The Chair: Yes, we would also like to have the action plan.

Mr. Darrell Samson: I have a second question. I do not have a lot of time.

Mr. David Manicom: Do you have a question?

Mr. Darrell Samson: My question is about the present roadmap. We know that \$149 million has been allocated to immigration, another \$120 million to something else, and so on. That is not what concerns me. It is rather the fact that the Commissioner is saying that the funding paid for immigration is being used for learning the majority language and not the minority language.

How much money and what measures does your action plan provide for the minority language, to achieve your targets? We will need the report on your action plan that you are going to submit. How much money is there in that fund for your action plan for francophones outside Quebec?

Ms. Corinne Prince-St-Amand: That is an excellent question, Mr. Samson.

I will start with the first point.

As Mr. Manicom said, we have a team in several places, throughout the department and abroad. Two or three years ago, we established an official languages secretariat. We have an excellent champion in the person of Ms. Beck. She looks after organizing and coordinating the whole department and all our efforts to make sure not only that our targets are achieved, but also that all aspects of the Official Languages Act are followed.

In the settlement branch, we also have a small official languages team, and outside Canada—in Paris and in other embassies—we also have people who handle pre-departure services and Destination Canada. Mr. Cochrane will be able to explain how that works.

As I said earlier, Quebec is known around the world as a place where everyone lives in French; that is a fact of life in Canada. It is fantastic to have this. We have to think not just about the 1.4% who are francophones who come to Canada outside Quebec, but also about all the people Quebec welcomes every year.

Achieving the target is a complex challenge. We have to give notice not just outside Canada, but also here, in Canada, in cooperation with our partners—the provinces, territories and francophone communities.

Take the example of someone from France who immigrates to Canada, to Saskatoon. If the community in Saskatoon does not welcome them and they cannot find a spot in a francophone school for their children, they are going to say that they cannot live in French.

Communities and employers also have responsibilities in this. The best way to keep someone in a community is to make sure they are able to work there.

We do a lot of work to encourage our employers to hire francophones, and we can always do more. With the help of our partners, we will succeed.

● (0940)

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Prince-St-Amand.

Mr. Choquette, you have the floor.

Mr. François Choquette: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Manicom, you said you had just received the Commissioner's report about the French test for immigrants, and that the test costs more than the English test. That surprised me. In fact, it costs almost double. The French test can cost as much as \$485, which is almost double the cost of the English test. In addition, there are only 12 cities that offer the French test, but half of those cities are in Quebec, while there are 33 cities that offer the English test. It can take up to five months to receive the results of the French test, while the time for the English test is only a few weeks. That is totally unacceptable.

You tell me you only received the report yesterday. In fact, people have been complaining about this since August 2015. So do not tell me you received the report yesterday.

Yes, you received the report yesterday, but you were aware of the situation well before that. You aware of it for a year. It was a very sure thing that the report was going to say that you were not abiding by the Official Languages Act. The two languages are on equal footing. You therefore cannot ask someone to pay double the price to take the French test, or to take a plane to do it. Think about the Yukon francophone communities. The people in those communities in Yukon have to take a plane to take the French test.

As Mr. Samson said, we want to make sure that francophones can settle in official language minority communities. Then they are told that the French test is not available, they have to take a plane to take the test and pay double the price of the English test. People are shocked, and you had known that since August 2015.

The Commissioner is making three recommendations. Of course, you will tell me that you are going to implement them very soon now, I am sure of it. How is it that you have done nothing since August 2015, when you knew very well that you were not abiding by the Official Languages Act?

Mr. David Manicom: Thank you.

We are well aware of this complex situation and we have been for over a year. We started using the standard tests for immigration in 2002. For the most part, these tests are meant for potential immigrants. The question of the availability of the tests affects the whole world and not Canada exclusively.

So far, only one organization has submitted its tests so they can be officially recognized by the government of Canada and be used by potential immigrants around the world. We had not succeeded, to date. We are in regular contact with other organizations that have language tests to encourage them to make a request to have their tests recognized. In the case of the current organization, this meant urging it to make its tests more widely available.

The cost of the test varies widely around the world. In some places, it is not higher, but it is in general, because the number of people who request it is smaller. We are continuing to look for a solution.

Very recently, we received the Commissioner's decision that this is a violation of the Official Languages Act. This inequality varies from country to country. That being said, it is clear that at the international level, this test is less available than the test in English, particularly in Asia.

This is certainly a problem, and we are well aware of it.

● (0945)

Mr. François Choquette: Forgive me for interrupting you, Mr. Manicom, but I have very little time. You are not answering my question.

People have sounded the alarm. This question has been covered on CBC news since early summer 2015. You have seen the news on this subject and you have received complaints. You therefore had no need to wait for the report by the Commissioner of Official Languages. We knew very well that the outcome would be that you are not abiding by Parts IV and VII of the Official Languages Act, you had to be certain of that, given that we are talking about the tests in French for which the price is twice as high and for which access is not at all the same.

Given that you were aware that you were not abiding by the act, why did you not immediately put measures into effect to improve the situation?

Mr. David Manicom: The problem was to find a solution. We are working on it, but we have not managed to find one up to now.

Mr. François Choquette: And yet you knew that the report was coming and that the problem was going to blow up in your face.

Given that this was the first problem, why did you not choose to subsidize the French tests to make sure they were more accessible and the cost was similar to the English tests?

How is it that no one thought of that, in that office, for a year?

Why did you not start taking measures, for example by subsidizing the French tests a little, to balance the costs?

Mr. David Manicom: We're considering these options. Our people have been working on them for quite some time, but the solutions are complicated.

Ms. Beck might have a few words to add.

Ms. Stefanie Beck (Assistant Deputy Minister, Corporate Services, Department of Citizenship and Immigration): If I may, I'd like to confirm that it's very complicated from the procurement standpoint. But I will not go into the details.

We're also considering the impact of the fact that the people can't obtain a test at a relatively moderate cost. What this means is that the people don't send their test results when they submit their application for immigration to Canada. In other words, they are normally not counted as francophones, but rather, as anglophones, or as people with another mother tongue. What we're considering is the impact this has on the ground thereafter.

This doesn't mean that they will not immigrate to Canada, or settle in Manitoba or Quebec. Not at all. However, for us, the consequence is that we aren't able to make an adequate determination of who is francophone and who isn't. That's another thing we want to rectify. The purpose of the test is to be able to give those people more points because they're francophone, and could also become bilingual later on.

It's a good idea to provide a subsidy, and we've thought about it, but how can we do it when prices vary so much internationally by region?

Should we set the amount at \$100 in Cameroon and \$200 in Canada?

I think you can see it isn't easy.

Mr. François Choquette: You're referring to people who already live in Canada, are you not?

Ms. Stefanie Beck: Yes, but the test is really intended for people outside Canada. The objective is for them to immigrate to Canada. The people who wrote to you live here now, but are submitting their application under the Express Entry program and as part of the economic class.

In reality, the test needs to be accessible to the whole planet. Consequently, we need to be transparent with regard to the procurement for the contract, and its management thereafter.

• (0950)

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Beck.

I give the floor to Mr. Arseneault.

Mr. René Arseneault: Ms. Beck, forgive my naïveté, but I'd like to continue considering the remarks made by my friend Mr. Choquette.

Ms. Stefanie Beck: The CBC might have waited one more day before making the news public.

Mr. René Arseneault: Forgive my naïveté, but when I sit on the couch and listen to the news, the solutions seem really simple.

Ms. Stefanie Beck: Yes.

Mr. René Arseneault: To continue along the lines of what Mr. Choquette was saying, wouldn't it be more sensible for the department to take control of the famous language test, to ensure its uniformity, continuity and ease of administration? That would strike me as easy to do. From my perspective as an observer, it seems so straightforward.

Does the department have the power to determine what the language test is, in French or in English? The same test would be taken out of the drawer each time.

Ms. Stefanie Beck: I need to answer "yes and no" in this instance.

Yes, we determine what needs to be included in a test, but no, we simply don't have the capacity to deliver a test like this one throughout the world. We don't have employees in all the different cities. We don't have the capacity to administer it, correct the test and receive the results. It would be impossible for us. We absolutely must sign a contract with an external resource in order to do that.

Mr. René Arseneault: Is the test taken outside Canada, before arriving?

Ms. Stefanie Beck: Yes.

Ms. Corinne Prince-St-Amand: That's right.

Mr. René Arseneault: But through the—

Ms. Stefanie Beck: It has to be available everywhere people apply to immigrate. Some people are in Canada when they immigrate.

Mr. René Arseneault: When someone applies to come to Canada, he or she wants to get points for being francophone.

Ms. Stefanie Beck: Yes.

Mr. René Arseneault: For example, the person would go to the Canadian embassy in Gabon. Is that how it starts?

Ms. Stefanie Beck: Yes, the person can go to the embassy, ask questions, and request the documents to be filled out later. Or the person can do it online.

Mr. René Arseneault: Can the person take a written test which the embassy then sends to the office in Canada?

Ms. Stefanie Beck: No, that would take much more time, and we don't have the capacity to do it. As you know, hundreds of thousands of people apply each year. It would be impossible for us to operate that way.

Mr. Darrell Samson: In minority environments? Hundreds of thousands...

Ms. Stefanie Beck: It would be nice.

Mr. Darrell Samson: That's the team we're looking for.

Ms. Stefanie Beck: Yes.

Mr. Darrell Samson: We're looking for a team that focuses only on that.

Mr. René Arseneault: Thank you, Mr. Samson. I was getting to that.

Ms. Stefanie Beck: We would still have to—

Mr. René Arseneault: Mr. Samson read my mind.

Ms. Stefanie Beck: If it were the case, we would also have to do it in English. We would not be able to administer the tests in French only.

Mr. René Arseneault: To go back to what my friend Mr. Samson was saying, the problem of getting a team does not arise with English. It's not where the resources are needed.

Ms. Stefanie Beck: Yes, but if we did that, the Commissioner of Official Languages would immediately ask us why we're offering the service to francophones, and not to anglophones.

Mr. René Arseneault: It would be to correct the injustice and inequality from the standpoint of the Official Languages Act, or to standardize things in some way. It seems to me that it would be so easy to standardize, but I'm saying that as a casual observer.

Mr. David Manicom: The objective would be to provide equal services, equivalent to those of the organization that administers the IELTS test in English, worldwide. There are similar tests in English, such as the TOEFL, which is very popular in the United States. At a certain price point, this would probably be possible. Those tests are administered in hundreds of cities throughout the world.

If there were testing centres in hundreds of cities worldwide, including countries where there are few francophone candidates, the unit cost would be very high. It's not that the government would be unable to do it, but that the cost would be enormous.

Mr. René Arseneault: Has your team assessed the magnitude of those costs?

Mr. David Manicom: We don't have the numbers because, from the outset, we have encouraged other organizations to make us proposals for preparing the test. We've been in talks with those organizations for a few years. We're encouraging the TEF organization to offer its services. We're encouraging the people to change their pricing system.

Large business organizations administer these tests for many reasons other than Canadian immigration. For example, they use the tests for university admission purposes throughout the world. It's worth noting that the level of services varies a great deal depending on the country, and naturally, companies that do a lot of business in one country, and less in another, organize the frequency of their tests, and the testing sites, based on that.

• (0955)

Mr. René Arseneault: Do I still have time, Mr. Chair?

The Chair: Yes.

Mr. René Arseneault: We were talking about immigration in minority environments. At least that's what I'd like to discuss, whether it be anglophones in Quebec or francophones outside Quebec. I'm in the latter group. Is there no way to standardize a test for linguistic minorities who are based in majority communities? Here is a suggestion. What about standardizing the test by working with the embassies of the countries the applicants come from, and to send the written test to your office in Canada, or the office of someone under your jurisdiction, for analysis, whether it be in French or English?

It would be standardized, accessibility would be uniform, and official languages would be respected. I am talking about the minority context, that is to say, anglophones who'd like to settle in Quebec, francophones who'd like to settle outside Quebec, or a few anglophones who'd like to settle in northern New Brunswick, where the population is homogeneously francophone to some extent. In my view, it would be simple and affordable.

Mr. David Manicom: It would be extremely expensive. We have organized tests in embassies. It takes a group of experts, a security team, people to administer the tests, and so forth, throughout the world. And it should be borne in mind that there are many countries with no Canadian embassy.

In short, we are well aware that this is a problem. We're determined to fix it, but it's complex. It takes time, and will probably take money. Officials can prepare options and present them to the

government, and we're in the middle of doing that. But the solutions are complex and costly.

Mr. René Arseneault: I understand what you're saying, Mr. Manicom. I'm naive, and I hope you'll forgive me.

Your way of addressing the situation is to delegate to other bodies the responsibility for providing the service. As for me, I'm talking to you about other ways of helping people who want to settle in a minority community. That can't be too many people.

Ms. Stefanie Beck: We're also trying to say that the fact that they can't take the test where they want, at a reasonable price, in no way prevents them from settling in a francophone minority community. That's not at all what prevents them from doing that. People have the right to go where they want, regardless of which exam they wrote so that they—

Mr. René Arseneault: I understand, but your objective—

The Chair: Mr. Arseneault, your time is up.

I give the floor to Mr. Vandal.

Mr. Dan Vandal: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'm going to follow up on the same subject. If the test isn't what's preventing people from coming to Canada, what's the purpose of the test?

Mr. David Manicom: The immigration categories are quite complicated. We establish classes of immigrants using a points system. The points are mainly granted for the person's qualifications. It's one element, along with the points for language proficiency in English or French. It's then submitted to the Government of Canada.

For 15 years, we have been using standardized tests prepared by language professionals, since we are not experts in that field.

Mr. Dan Vandal: Are the tests administered by Canadians?

Mr. David Manicom: Pardon me?

Mr. Dan Vandal: Are the tests administered by Canadians?

Mr. David Manicom: No. They are standardized international and local tests. There are enormous fraud problems in all sectors, including this one. For example, impostors sometimes show up for the tests.

When I was starting my career, visa officers were the ones who determined people's language proficiency, and they did it in interviews. It was not professional at all, nor was it objective. Each officer had somewhat different standards. They chatted with the person for a certain period of time, and then granted points on that basis.

In 2001, the government changed the approach and started using standardized tests to allocate a certain number of points based on linguistic proficiency.

Mr. Dan Vandal: It's a bit like a classification system.

Mr. David Manicom: Yes, and the system has been in place since then. So it isn't new.

Mr. Dan Vandal: I understand that it's a complex system. I have no experience in immigration, so I'm broaching the subject.

How do you manage economic immigration compared with non-economic immigration when it comes to people who have family in Canada? How do you manage it in minority communities?

Mr. David Manicom: The non-economic programs are the family class and humanitarian class. For the family class, it can be someone who sponsors a spouse, grandchildren, or, in some circumstances, parents. The government doesn't decide where those people will live. It's never the federal government that decides where the people will settle. They're free to move around the country.

However, with the humanitarian programs for refugees sponsored by the government, we have resettlement in Canada. We are the ones who place those refugees in certain communities and decide on their destination. There is a whole host of reasons for this. Is there an existing family connection somewhere? Are there special medical or other needs?

There is no program in which the federal government decides where someone will live, except in relation to refugees sponsored by the government.

• (1000)

Mr. Dan Vandal: Could you give me an idea of the importance, to francophone minority communities, of cooperation agreements with the provinces and territories?

Are there agreements with certain provinces that encourage francophone immigration to these communities?

Ms. Corinne Prince-St-Amand: We have entered into agreements with several provinces on the subject. We are working closely with New Brunswick to add an appendix to our agreement in order to improve our cooperation and integrate francophones into minority communities in New Brunswick.

Mr. Dan Vandal: Are there provinces other than New Brunswick?

Ms. Corinne Prince-St-Amand: We're negotiating with several other provinces, including Ontario.

Mr. Dan Vandal: Sorry to interrupt, but I don't have much time.

Are they specific agreements to encourage francophone immigrants to come and live in our communities? For my part, I represent Saint-Boniface, in Manitoba.

Mr. David Manicom: Yes.

Mr. Dan Vandal: Are they specific programs to encourage francophone immigrants to come to Manitoba?

Mr. David Manicom: Yes.

Mr. Dan Vandal: We have that type of agreement?

Mr. David Manicom: Yes.

There is the Provincial Nominee Program, which gives them the power to select a certain number of economic immigrants.

Mr. Dan Vandal: The Provincial Nominee Program?

Mr. David Manicom: Yes, exactly.

The purpose of the program is to encourage francophone immigration outside Quebec. The program is very active in New Brunswick. The new program in Ontario is very ambitious, because it has set a 5% target.

In its dealings with the provinces, the federal government doesn't always insist they use the Provincial Nominee Program to encourage francophone immigration, but it's a principle of our agreements with the provinces. Some provinces are more active than others.

Mr. Dan Vandal: We're talking about New Brunswick, but what about the other provinces, like Manitoba, for example? Are there specific agreements to encourage francophones to come to our communities?

Mr. David Manicom: There are programs in New Brunswick and Ontario. I think there's a program in Manitoba, but I'd like to check before giving you an answer.

Mr. Dan Vandal: So it's important to get the provinces involved.

Mr. David Manicom: Yes, absolutely.

Mr. Dan Vandal: That's what we want to do with this.

Mr. David Manicom: It's part of our discussions with the provinces. We will be having a ministerial meeting with the people in Manitoba in a few weeks, and francophone immigration outside Quebec will certainly be on the agenda.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Vandal and Mr. Manicom.

Mr. Darrell Samson: Mr. Chair, I'd just like to add that I've spoken with the Premier of Nova Scotia, and he told me his province has a strategy for francophones on the subject.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Samson.

Ms. Boucher, you have the floor.

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I thank the witnesses for being here with us today.

I find this interesting, but rather complex. Like Mr. Arseneault, I have all kinds of solutions.

The French test that immigrants are asked to undergo is from Europe, isn't it? The Test d'évaluation de français, or TEF?

Mr. David Manicom: Yes, the TEF is from Paris.

Ms. Stefanie Beck: That's correct.

• (1005)

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: Has anyone here had the opportunity to take the test? I took it, and it was extremely difficult, even for a Canadian.

I'd like to make a special request. Could you send the TEF to this committee so we can see what the questions are like? I'm from Quebec. Sometimes, fellow citizens tell me it's very difficult to pass that test. I am very good in French, and I had a hard time.

Is the Quebec test the same as the TEF? Is there a specific test for Quebec?

Mr. David Manicom: We have done—

The Chair: Mr. Manicom, could you provide the clerk with a copy of the test in response to Ms. Boucher's request?

Mr. David Manicom: Yes, but I would like to clarify something about our points system. For both the French test and the English test, linguistic experts establish equivalencies in relation to Canadian standards. Accordingly, a grade of x on the TEF is equivalent to a grade of y under Canadian standards.

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: In other words, Canada's specificity is incorporated into it.

Mr. David Manicom: We do a translation, but I know that the equivalency, as far as the TEF is concerned, is complicated.

[English]

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: I know, yes.

[Translation]

Mr. David Manicom: It's why we have a group of language experts that gives its opinion on these questions, and helps us determine how many points must be granted to people as immigrants.

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: Could we see this test?

Mr. David Manicom: Yes, of course.

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: That would be nice.

Thanks to an immigrant from my riding, I had the opportunity to take the test at one point, and can assure you that it wore me out.

Mr. David Manicom: Okay.

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: So the test has a specifically Canadian element.

Mr. David Manicom: Yes. We receive the same complaints about the English test.

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: It might be a good idea for us to have a look at the English test too. I find the reason the English test is less expensive than the French one problematic.

Mr. David Manicom: It's because of the number of people who take the test.

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: So there are more people who take the test in English.

Mr. David Manicom: Yes. It's a question of markets. That said, it's very variable. There are parts of the world in which the French test isn't less expensive.

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: Understood. That was one of my first questions. I'm pleased we will be able to see the test. We'll be able to take it together.

Mr. Samson, I'm looking forward to your seeing it. I think you're in for some real fun.

To change subjects, immigration and refugees are two separate things. Being parliamentarians, we know the difference between the two. But in our communities, people come to see us and say they are refugees when they are immigrants. It's not the same thing.

Refugees don't take this test, do they?

Ms. Stefanie Beck: No.

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: They come here directly.

Ms. Stefanie Beck: Yes.

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: However, do they take it if they want to settle in francophone communities? If so, is the test intended specifically for refugees?

Indeed, since they are refugees, they come through the front door. They don't proceed the same way as the other immigrants, who come here and ask to take a test.

Do refugees take a test before being directed toward a francophone community?

Ms. Stefanie Beck: No.

Mr. David Manicom: No, refugees are part of a humanitarian program. Once they've settled in Canada, they have permanent resident status, and they live where they want.

The test is specifically intended for the principal applicant from economic class families. The language test is not used for the family class, for spouses of economic class principal applicants, or for refugees.

The test to which we're referring enables us to determine how many points can be granted to a person based on our selection grid. Quebec has the same type of grid for economic class programs. The points are not exclusively reserved for people who speak the language fluently. There are selection grids for the high level, medium level, medium low level, etc.

• (1010)

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: When refugees arrive, do you have to direct them toward minority francophone communities, or do they settle where they want?

Mr. David Manicom: There are two types of refugees. Refugees who are sponsored by the private sector arrive in the community where their sponsor is located.

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: Okay.

Mr. David Manicom: Once they're here, they have permanent resident status. They can live in that community, or move.

As for refugees sponsored by the government, it's the government that decides where they will settle. Linguistic proficiency is a factor taken into account when the decision is made, but other factors are also considered, such as the fact that the person has a relative in a given region. We won't send someone to Halifax if he has a brother in Vancouver. There are special medical needs to consider as well.

Once they've arrived, the people receive financial support from the federal government for one year. During that period, they have access to all our integration services. After a year, they can move if they wish—it's a free country—but they normally remain in their community of settlement for a certain amount of time.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Manicom.

We will now take a five-minute break. Based on my list, the next people to intervene will be Mr. Arseneault, Mr. Nater and Mr. Choquette.

• (1010)

(Pause)

• (1015)

The Chair: Kindly return to your seats, please.

Ms. Boucher, you have the floor.

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: Thank you, Chair.

It's about the French test I asked to obtain. After considering the subject of immigration, I would like the members of this committee to take the time needed to attempt the French test given to immigrants.

Mr. René Arseneault: I am willing, but don't administer it to my wife.

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: No, you'll be the one who gets to take it.

The Chair: Many thanks for your suggestion, Ms. Boucher. We will see later.

We will now go person by person around the table. You each have four minutes.

We will start with Mr. Arseneault.

Mr. René Arseneault: Thank you, Chair. I will be quick, because I'd like to leave some of my time for our friend Brenda Shanahan.

Ms. Prince-St-Amand, we know that you work with minority francophone communities to find new measures that could increase the number of francophone immigrants. The main objective of the program is to retain new francophone workers in minority francophone communities, and that often happens through employment.

I have several questions for you. I hear nightmarish stories about the equivalencies that professional bodies establish for people who come from abroad and settle in places like New Brunswick. I won't cite any specific cases, but I could tell you about a few.

I know you don't have jurisdiction over all this. It's the beauty of our vast and beautiful federation that some things fall under provincial jurisdiction, and some things fall under federal jurisdiction. That said, is the problem a recurring irritant in retaining new francophones in minority communities?

•(1020)

Ms. Corinne Prince-St-Amand: Thank you for the question.

Recognition of occupational credentials acquired outside the country is always a challenge, and this is true for francophones, anglophones, and people of all other linguistic groups who come to Canada.

You are correct. In every province and territory, the self-regulating professional bodies are responsible for the recognition of professional credentials. However, for several years, the federal government has been working closely with its provincial and territorial partners to ensure that no matter where immigrants arrive—be it Vancouver or Newfoundland—they have access to a transparent and coherent system.

I think we're the only country in the world to have implemented a standard for credential recognition. Currently, the standard is 12 months, but the federal, provincial and territorial governments are working on reducing it to six months. With certain professions, it's often much shorter. So this is not just a challenge for francophones. It's a challenge for Chinese people, and all other people.

Mr. René Arseneault: I will finish with that point. I have only two minutes of the four allocated to me.

What's your plan to retain new francophone workers in minority francophone communities? If the answer is in the document you'll be sending us, you don't need to answer. Otherwise, what is your plan, and how much do you expect to budget, in percentage terms, for this specific aspect of your service?

Ms. Corinne Prince-St-Amand: It's a multi-pronged strategy, if you will.

At the federal level, we are working closely with Canadian Heritage, which has primary responsibility for the 2013-18 Roadmap. The federal government has nearly completed its consultation of Canadians, provincial and territorial organizations, and employers throughout Canada, for the purposes of the next multi-year plan or action plan, as the Liberal government calls it.

It's not finished, but it will be the next five-year plan. The plan sets an immigration target. We will focus even more efforts on francophone communities outside Quebec.

The settlement program is second. The results of our most recent call for proposals, from 2015, will be announced soon.

We also provide funding for organizations outside Quebec to ensure that the communities have access to services that meet the needs of francophones from abroad who join minority francophone communities.

•(1025)

The Chair: I see that time is tight, Ms. Prince-St-Amand, and I'm going to have to move on to Mr. Nater.

Ms. Corinne Prince-St-Amand: Very well.

[English]

Mr. John Nater (Perth—Wellington, CPC): I have a couple of questions. I'm going to ask them all at once to provide you with an opportunity to respond.

I want to touch on the 4% target. I am interested to know where the origins of that target came from. Why is it 4%? I know we're not meeting the 4%, so it might as well be 20% if there's not some justification for that 4%. What's the reasoning behind the 4%? What's the strategy for that?

I also want to follow up a little bit on encouraging international students to remain in Canada after they complete their studies. What's the strategy for that? Are we encouraging them to move to minority communities?

In my past life, I was a university lecturer. I taught at King's College in London. I was pleased to have many francophone students, but they were taking studies in English. What is going to be done to encourage them to stay? What more can you do as a department to encourage them to stay after four years of living in Canada? They're either going to stay or not, I would suspect.

What's the benefit of encouraging a francophone student to stay in Canada if they're going to be in an English-dominated area where they won't be in a French community and they won't necessarily be interacting in their mother tongue, in French?

I'm interested in your thoughts on that.

Mr. David Manicom: Ms. Beck may wish to add, but my understanding of the 4% target is that it's based on the francophone population outside of Quebec at the time the standard was set, so it's to maintain that level.

Mr. John Nater: It's not an increase; it's a maintenance level.

Mr. David Manicom: Yes.

I do want to take this opportunity to add very quickly that although it's been a big challenge over the last number of years—as civil servants we implement the policies of the government of the day—we certainly do have reason for optimism that we're going to increase that number dramatically.

Our most recent draw from express entry did have 4% of self-identified francophones in the pool. It's been about 3% for the year, as opposed to 2% last year, so it's rising steadily. My minister is very actively examining and publicly consulting on measures to see if we can boost that as well.

One further measure he's looking at changing in the express entry system, as he's been saying publicly, is with regard to international students. Some combination of particular selection benefit for international students and for having the preponderance of language skills in French, we think, is probably the most likely way to boost the economic numbers significantly.

It doesn't mean that our promotion or recruitment activity efforts aren't important. It doesn't mean the retention efforts aren't important. It doesn't mean that employers in communities have to really work hard to retain the francophone immigrants they get.

With federal government tools, we think that providing graduating international students with open work permits for a couple of years after they graduate and providing them with additional bonus points through our selection grid is probably the best lever the federal government has available. My minister certainly signals his intention to use these levers, with details to come soon.

[Translation]

The Chair: Mr. Choquette, the floor is yours.

Mr. François Choquette: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

You see what I'm getting at.

I'm going to talk about the French tests again, because the following can be found in the report. I have the French version with me, and I might be able to file it with the committee at the end of the meeting. I'd like to translate the following excerpt: “Part IV of the *Act* [...] seeks to ensure that the public has access to services of equal quality in both official languages. [...]”

Further on, the report states, and this is once again a translation of the French: “The same duty applies to other offices, in Canada or elsewhere”, but only where there is “significant demand in both official languages.”

Earlier, it was mentioned that, in small offices where there are only one or two requests per year, the Official Languages Act does not apply, and that it only really applies to places where the demand is strong. Access to these tests is so important that the commissioner

wrote as follows further on, and I am translating once again: “[...] [IRCC] has not taken any measures to offset these obstacles, which could have negative consequences for the intake of francophone immigrants in [official language minority communities], and ultimately for the vitality of those communities.”

Thus, since the objective is ultimately to achieve 4%, and we've only achieved 1.5%, the commissioner says that one of the obstacles is equality of access to the criteria, including the French and English language proficiency tests. Three recommendations are made in this regard.

I know that you had already started to do some work in this regard, and that you met with, and obtained suggestions from, official language communities. However, at the time, you responded that you could not do anything about the cost of the tests. But surely you must have analyzed certain avenues for solutions with respect to those costs.

How far along are you in your reflection about the solutions you might adopt to comply with the Official Languages Act, given that parts IV and VII of the act are not presently being complied with?

• (1030)

Mr. David Manicom: I don't have much to add to my previous answers. I'd just like to note that we talk frequently with the people at TEF who are responsible for the French test. We encourage them in their work, and we're considering the possibility of subsidizing the exams. It will be expensive, but we're examining the options, and are preparing them.

I don't want to leave you with the impression that the French exam costs double what the English one costs. It's more expensive in some places, and less expensive in Paris, to mention an example. As a general rule, the exam costs \$330 in Montréal and \$460 in Ottawa. As for the English exams, they cost roughly \$300 throughout Canada. There is certainly a price difference. We would like the exam to be available where there are applicants, but it's difficult to offer it in places where there aren't any.

Mr. François Choquette: I'm really sorry, Mr. Manicom. I have very little time at my disposal. I have one last question for you.

Is there a mechanism for identifying the official language adopted by new refugees in Canada? When they settle in a province, is there a mechanism for determining which language a Syrian who arrives in New Brunswick ends up adopting?

Ms. Stefanie Beck: We can find out what language course he chooses. If he chooses French or English language courses, we know it, and can compile statistics on the subject. However, we can't say which language the person chooses to use in the workplace, or in everyday living.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Généreux, you have the floor.

Mr. Bernard Généreux: Thank you, Chair. Thank you for granting me this time.

I will continue on the same subject.

We have only obtained a partial answer about the number of potential immigrants who can come and settle in Canada's official language minority communities.

If immigration applicants outside the country learn it costs more to take a test to come to Canada, they will go where it costs less. In my view, this could lead to immigrant diversion. Once again, the report broadcast this morning was quite clear on the subject.

You just said that you're analyzing the possibility of subsidizing the exam. Are you able to sort out which immigrants want to settle in a minority community, and which ones simply want to come to Canada? Is there a way to separate the applications from the start, according to that choice?

Ms. Stefanie Beck: When people submit their application, they sometimes say where they want to go. We normally have statistics by province. A bit more research would be needed to have them by city, or by minority community.

But I should repeat that it isn't necessary to have taken a French test in order to settle in a minority francophone community.

Mr. Bernard Généreux: I understand, but sometimes, when someone is encouraged to do something, there's more of a chance they will do it.

Ms. Stefanie Beck: That's true.

Mr. Bernard Généreux: I don't know if it would be discriminatory to do this, but let's say someone decides to settle in a francophone area of Manitoba. If he's asked where in Canada he'd like to settle, and he gives that as an answer, couldn't his test be subsidized, so it's less expensive? Earlier, you were saying that there are hundreds of thousands of applications. I imagine this also includes English, and not just French applications. Is it possible to separate the francophones from the others? Is there a way to determine subcategories? Could one decide to subsidize the test for certain categories, so as to increase the number of people interested in settling where there are francophone communities outside Quebec?

Mr. David Manicom: That's a good question, and we will have to consider the possibility of subsidizing tests.

I presume the most important thing is probably the regular availability of the tests, because the price difference, globally, is really not very high. For example, in Nigeria, the price difference is \$28.

Mr. Bernard Généreux: I understand.

Mr. David Manicom: In Paris, it's less expensive.

I presume that offering the tests regularly, each week rather than each month, in more cities and more locations—

Mr. Bernard Généreux: I understand that you are also making efforts in specific countries, with a view to attracting specific types of clients. When you already know what kind of clientele you're seeking, isn't it possible to choose those places and ensure the French tests, which are more limited in number, will be less expensive than, say, the English tests, to encourage people to choose to go where there are minority communities?

Before I conclude, I'd like you to provide the committee the organization chart showing what a person submitting an application

must do. Once someone submits an application, anywhere in the world, to immigrate or settle in Canada, what are the steps? Which tests need to be taken before being accepted in Canada?

Ms. Stefanie Beck: Are you referring to economic immigration?

Mr. Bernard Généreux: Indeed. If there's another type of immigration, I'd like to know that too.

Ms. Stefanie Beck: With families—with spouses—it's different.

Mr. Bernard Généreux: I'd like to know this for each type of immigration. I don't know if it's possible. Does such a study exist?

●(1035)

Ms. Stefanie Beck: There are many.

Mr. Bernard Généreux: You say there are many.

Ms. Stefanie Beck: Yes, but—

Mr. Bernard Généreux: Well, I'd like to know in general terms.

Mr. David Manicom: As a general rule, the people take the test before submitting their application, because the test results are part of the application.

Mr. Bernard Généreux: Quickly, I'd like—

The Chair: One moment, please. I want to clarify. Do you want to know the critical path in that regard?

Mr. Bernard Généreux: Yes, if that's the appropriate term.

The Chair: Critical path means the way the person prepares the application, and the way it moves forward.

Mr. Bernard Généreux: Exactly. I would like to know, essentially—

[English]

The Chair: It's the critical path.

[Translation]

Mr. Bernard Généreux: It's one of the reasons the committee is considering the question at this time. What is the critical path, as you call it, for someone who wants to live in Canada? What are the reasons for his choice? At some point, I presume the person has choices to make, and decides to go right or left.

Ms. Stefanie Beck: Yes.

Mr. Bernard Généreux: It would be interesting to know that.

I have another question, and it's for Mr. Cochrane this time.

You haven't spoken yet. I think it's important for each witness to be able to express himself or herself. You are the senior director for the international region. What exactly does that mean? What role are you playing in relation to our study?

[English]

And you can speak English; that's not a problem.

Mr. Donald Cochrane (Senior Director, International Region, Department of Citizenship and Immigration): I will respond in English.

The international network of CIC oversees the visa offices overseas that deliver our program, which includes, in the instance of official languages, the promotion and recruitment of French-speaking individuals who might wish to go to communities outside of Quebec.

There is a major initiative done every year from our embassy in Paris. There are also some other embassies that conduct some promotion recruitment activities. Destination Canada is the largest such activity that we carry out.

We have a network of visa offices overseas. Obviously we have offices in areas where the tendency for immigration is higher than from other parts of the world. The areas of most concern for this committee would be the visa office in Paris, as well as the offices in the Maghrib area and sub-Saharan Africa, particularly western Africa.

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Thanks very much.

Mr. Bernard Généreux: Mr. Chair, if possible, I'd like a document that explains exactly what Destination Canada is. There have been several references to it, so I'd like the explanatory documents on the subject to be submitted to our committee this morning.

The Chair: Very well. That will be a document we'll need to receive.

Ms. Boucher is requesting the floor for one minute, to address a specific point.

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: Just a short minute.

The Chair: And then, I will give the floor to Mr. Samson.

Mr. Darrell Samson: Okay.

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: Considerable time was spent discussing solutions for the French test, which is apparently long and painful. With the technology we have today, such as iPads, iPhones and other digital technology, isn't it possible to have people take the test online?

Ms. Stefanie Beck: We would very much like that to be possible. What worries us about such a test is program integrity. How can we know it's the actual applicant who took the test and pressed the button? As long as we're not able to confirm the identity of the applicant who took the test, we can't be sure we have the correct result for the correct candidate. It's an avenue we're exploring, and we would very much like to be able to use it.

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: That makes sense.

Thank you.

The Chair: Many thanks.

Mr. Rioux, you have the floor.

Mr. Jean Rioux (Saint-Jean, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair. And I thank the witnesses for being with us.

I have three questions for you, and time is limited.

My first question is about the cost of the tests. Is it possible to grant a subsidy to a person who is applying to immigrate to Canada,

in order to cover the difference between the cost of the English test and the cost of the French test?

My second question is about the goal of increasing immigration to minority communities outside Quebec by 4%. This increase is important to the survival of minority communities outside Quebec, but it's also important for Quebec's profile, because, when French outside Quebec has the opportunity to grow, it also helps ensure our overall survival. I acknowledge there's a problem in that regard. Are the objectives not being attained because you have a resource problem?

My third and last question is about host groups in the different provinces. Does the department offer financial support to these groups, to help them welcome immigrants well?

I invite you to provide a brief answer to each of those three questions.

• (1040)

Mr. David Manicom: To answer your first question, we're assessing the possibility of granting a subsidy. However, it's very complicated, because a lot of people ask to take the test, but don't submit their immigration application. There are also people who take the test, but whose immigration application is rejected. Moreover, the price difference varies by country and even by city.

There are cities where the French test is more expensive. The administration of this matter is complex, even nightmarish, but we consider it one of the possible solutions.

Ms. Stefanie Beck: I will also try to be brief.

The 4% target is for 2018. We haven't yet met the objective, but it doesn't mean we won't achieve it in 2018. What more can we do on the subject? When we study the immigration continuum, we see that not enough francophones are submitting an application?

The problem is not to know where the new immigrant will settle if his or her application is accepted. The problem is finding the means to improve the francophone immigration rate in Canada, because we don't receive enough applications. In fact, that's why we have increased our efforts abroad. We observed a 2% to 3% increase in Express Entry and even 4%, the last time we sent out an invitation to francophones interested in immigrating to Canada.

How does one incentivize francophone immigrants to settle in francophone minority communities? It takes a lot of publicity. We use videos, seminars, webinars and other similar products to get francophone immigrants interested in living in French in communities outside Quebec where we need more francophones. We aren't having enough children in Canada.

I give the floor to Ms. Prince-St-Amand.

Ms. Corinne Prince-St-Amand: As far as hosting in francophone communities outside Quebec is concerned, the department has been subsidizing the francophone immigration networks, commonly known as RIFs, for several years. We subsidize 13 networks located in the different provinces and territories other than Quebec, except Nunavut. It's a partnership between the communities, the employers, the provincial governments and the federal government. All the community members work closely to give a good welcome to the francophones who settle in those communities.

Mr. Jean Rioux: Many thanks for answering my questions so quickly.

The Chair: Many thanks for answering so quickly.

The last person to intervene is Mr. Samson, and he has the floor.

Mr. Darrell Samson: Thank you, Chair.

Ladies, gentlemen, if you have the time to answer, all the better. Otherwise, you can add the information to your report, which will be enhanced with all kinds of data.

I want to thank you. It's not easy to do what you're doing here today. Our group is usually very nice, but there are times when we are very stimulated by the questions and subjects being addressed.

I'd like to see the report. I see that this great committee has been devoting more than an hour to discussing francophone immigration to regions other than Quebec. I expect results.

In your report, could you talk about the objectives that were established in the last three or five years, and about the objectives fixed today? What adjustments are you making? You said you've only achieved 1.5%, but that there's still time until 2018. What will the new objectives for the coming two years be? For example, you can say that there were five objectives before, but seven now, for the next two years. I would certainly like to see that.

There's a second thing I'd like to see in the report, and you can all answer my question.

On what principles is the Government of Canada's francophone immigration policy based with a view to respecting the demographic weight of the official language communities? Do you put more emphasis on the policy depending on the needs?

•(1045)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Samson.

Mr. Darrell Samson: I have one last question.

What tools does the government use to monitor progress?

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Samson.

Ms. Stefanie Beck: I might have missed something with all these questions.

If I remember correctly, our objectives are 4% for 2018, and 4.4% for economic immigration.

Mr. Darrell Samson: I am not talking about the objectives, but about the strategies to achieve them.

Ms. Stefanie Beck: Understood.

There's a whole series of things in that regard. There's what is stated in the roadmap. There are consultations with a view to the

action plan that will follow the roadmap. We are spending money each year to increase immigration.

Above all, we are asking ourselves how we will go about getting more people to come not only to Canada generally, but also to francophone minority communities. It does not depend on us alone. I know you're studying francophone immigration, but our federal colleagues, the provinces, the territories, and especially the municipalities and communities, need to make their contribution. We can't create jobs for these people, or find them family, schools, medical services, and other such things that will retain them in those places.

Mr. Darrell Samson: It's not your responsibility.

Ms. Stefanie Beck: No, but—

Mr. Darrell Samson: Don't worry about that.

Ms. Stefanie Beck: We, too—

Mr. Darrell Samson: Are involved in attracting people.

Ms. Stefanie Beck: We're as passionate as you are about this question. We are working with the communities, and are trying to give them as much money as possible to increase their capacity to welcome these immigrants—to attract them and retain them.

It's not easy. You also have quite a job ahead of you.

The Chair: Thank you.

We can complete this discussion at another time.

Mr. Choquette has asked to say a few words.

Mr. François Choquette: Since the question of French tests has elicited a lot of interest among us today, I will take advantage of the opportunity to give the clerk the report of the Commissioner of Official Languages on French tests and on the department's non-compliance with the Official Languages Act.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Choquette.

Mr. Généreux, you have the floor.

Mr. Bernard Généreux: Thank you, Chair.

The witnesses are responsible for putting policies in place. After the committee hears all the other people, it might be interesting to have these witnesses back. They will inevitably keep each other apprised of what happens in the committee over the coming weeks. It would be interesting, later on, to share the concerns or possibilities that the other witnesses will have shared with us.

The Chair: We are counting on your being available, of course.

In closing, I'd like to thank you very much for helping the committee in its deliberations today.

This meeting is adjourned.

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