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Chair

The Honourable Denis Paradis

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• (0845)

[Translation]

The Chair (Hon. Denis Paradis (Brome—Missisquoi, Lib.)): Good morning everyone and welcome to this meeting of the committee.

I would also like to welcome our two newcomers, Mr. Massé and Mr. Nault, who is the chair of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development.

We will now start the meeting. As per the agenda, we'll spend the first half hour on committee business, specifically, as regards the translation bureau.

Mr. Choquette put forward a motion on the subject. It reads as follows:

That the Committee invite the Minister of Public Services and Procurement, the Honourable Judy Foote, as soon as possible so that she can present and explain the government's official response to the Committee's second report entitled, Study of the Translation Bureau, and that this meeting be televised.

I will now turn the floor over to Mr. Choquette, who introduced the motion.

Mr. François Choquette (Drummond, NDP): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Allow me to briefly explain the reason behind the motion.

Like all of you, I saw and read Judy Foote's response to the committee's report on the translation bureau. We worked very hard on the file, even to the detriment of other issues, because it was important to dig deep in order to deal with the issue properly.

Unfortunately, the government's response does not follow up on any of the recommendations made by the committee. It should be noted that the report had the unanimous support of every committee member and party. We worked very hard on the issue, and we produced recommendations based on the input provided by experts.

All you have to do is read a few newspaper headlines to see where things stand, for example, headlines proclaiming that the status quo will continue at the translation bureau or that the changes requested have been rejected.

Other organizations in the translation sector were also very disappointed by the government's response. We asked a lot of questions about governance at the translation bureau. Who is responsible for the state the translation bureau is in? We didn't have a chance to speak to Judy Foote as part of our exhaustive study, and I was quite disappointed, indeed. She sent us a response, but I think that, had she had been here during our study, she may have given us

other answers and perhaps paid closer attention to our recommendations.

Important issues were also raised regarding reinvestment at the translation bureau, particularly in terms of succession planning. We did not get a response on that matter, either. I think the push to cut 140 translator positions in 2017-18 is still on. That worries a lot of people.

Therefore, we would like some answers. As I said last time, I'm prepared to work on the issue as a team because it's an effort we worked on together, as a team.

That is the reason I put forward this motion, and I am ready to discuss it and make any changes the committee considers appropriate.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Choquette.

Ms. Boucher, you may go ahead.

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher (Beauport—Côte-de-Beaupré—Île d'Orléans—Charlevoix, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Choquette, for putting forward your motion.

I, too, read Ms. Foote's response. I went over the recommendations we worked so hard on together, and nowhere in her letter does she mention funding.

I would like to meet with the minister to find out why she gave the response she did. Why did she completely disregard the recommendation to give the translation bureau more money? It's important that we meet with her to find out why she responded the way she did.

• (0850)

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Boucher.

Ms. Lapointe, you may go ahead.

Ms. Linda Lapointe (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Further to Mr. Choquette's motion, we, of course, would also like to understand why the minister responded the way she did. That's why we support it. We want to understand the position the minister took in the letter she sent to the committee.

Clearly, we will have to work around Minister Foote's schedule. We may not be able to meet with her next week, but I would imagine that we could find a time before the end of the fall sitting if that suits the committee. The important thing is that we meet with her to understand her response.

The Chair: Do I gather we have a consensus on the matter?

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: Yes.

The Chair: Very well.

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: We dealt with that quickly.

Since we have a few minutes left before we meet with the witnesses, I'd like to hear your comments on the committee's work.

It was brought to my attention that some groups had not been heard, including the Quebec Community Groups Network. I asked the clerk to make sure we heard from representatives of the network as well as its member organizations.

Do the committee members have any comments on the progress of our work or any suggestions on how to settle the whole thing? We had set the end of November as a deadline.

Ms. Boucher, you have the floor.

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: The end of November is next week.

The Chair: No, the end of November isn't for another month.

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: Of course, it's the end of October. I thought the time was flying by.

The Chair: We still have some time available to us.

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: Mr. Chair, the committee invited representatives from the Quebec government to appear, but they seem reluctant and nervous to meet with us, probably because of Mr. Lisée's election. I have friends over there, but I'm not as well-connected as other committee members. It would be helpful to know what's happening and why the Quebec government officials are reluctant to meet with the committee. The situation concerns me because the Government of Quebec could have proposed another way of doing things, which would have been very useful to our work.

The Chair: I will ask the clerk to fill us in on those discussions.

The Clerk of the Committee (Ms. Christine Holke): I have been talking to people at the ministère de l'Immigration, de la Diversité et de l'Inclusion du Québec for at least two and a half weeks. To be perfectly frank, initially, I was speaking with a receptionist who refused to give me an email address. She said she wasn't allowed to give out specific information so that I could contact the minister's office. After a few tries, I finally got the opportunity to explain that the committee wanted to meet with the minister or at least a department official. I managed to get through to Minister Weil's chief of staff directly, and I explained what the committee was working on, what it wanted to do, and what it wanted to know.

I sent an official invitation on behalf of the committee by email, and I'm supposed to get a response from her today or tomorrow. I asked her to accept or decline the invitation by today. She was hesitant. I didn't get any specifics, but I did pick up on some hesitation on her part.

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: All right.

The Chair: Mr. Lefebvre, you may go ahead.

Mr. Paul Lefebvre (Sudbury, Lib.): Do we have a set schedule for the people who will be appearing? I know the clerk is doing a

good job. We have a work schedule, but we don't have a witness list. You're saying there is one, but I didn't receive it.

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: There is one.

The Chair: We should hand it out right now.

• (0855)

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: The women are organized, and the men should be too.

The Chair: You'll have to add this to your schedule. On November 1, we will be hearing from the Quebec Community Groups Network, as well as its member organizations, for both hours.

Ms. Linda Lapointe: November 1, you said?

The Chair: Yes, November 1.

We could meet with the Quebec government minister on November 3, 15 or 17, and with Ms. Foote some time in the weeks that follow.

The Clerk: We also have to schedule some time for the Quebec government officials.

The Chair: Very well.

Ms. Linda Lapointe: I think Minister Foote will meet with the committee later.

The Chair: I will ask the clerk to contact her office.

Ms. Linda Lapointe: Yes, please. Thank you.

The Chair: Does anyone have anything to add?

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: We've had a look at the full list and—

The Clerk: I'm on to other lists.

Mr. Paul Lefebvre: If anyone turns down the invitation, could you let us know?

The Clerk: Yes, of course.

Mr. Paul Lefebvre: It would be worth knowing who has been invited, who is unable to appear, and why someone can't or won't meet with us. Going forward, it would be a good idea for the committee to have that information.

The Clerk: I have a list like that as well.

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: That way, we will know why they aren't meeting with us, because it's important to know why.

The Chair: The clerk has anticipated your questions.

Mr. Paul Lefebvre: That's great.

That's why I brought up the schedule. There's nothing planned for November. The clerk is still trying to arrange those upcoming meetings.

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: Next week, Mélanie Joly is appearing before the committee.

Mr. Paul Lefebvre: That's nice, isn't it?

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: She hasn't met with us yet. You can say afterwards whether it was nice.

Mr. Paul Lefebvre: I said that we are nice.

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: Okay.

Mr. Paul Lefebvre: We're very super nice. Can you say "very super"?

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: Not so much.

The Chair: I'm being asked, and rightfully so, to provide some dates. When are we going to begin writing the report to make sure that we are done by the end of November? That was the deadline we had set. How many meetings are we going to schedule for that?

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: If I recall correctly, it usually takes quite a while to go over all the issues and make recommendations.

The Chair: Indeed.

Mr. Paul Lefebvre: What do the clerk and analysts suggest?

The Chair: Pardon me?

Mr. Paul Lefebvre: What do the clerk and analysts suggest?

The Chair: I'll let the clerk speak.

The Clerk: Do the committee members wish to submit their report at the end of November or at the beginning of December?

Some hon. members: At the beginning of December.

The Clerk: Very well.

The House is not sitting the week of November 7. That will probably give the analysts some time to draft the report. It will then have to be sent for translation, and that can take more time.

Do you expect it to be a lengthy report? Do you have any idea, or are you leaving it to the discretion of the analysts?

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: I don't think a 400-page report would make for pleasant reading.

Mr. Paul Lefebvre: We can leave that up to the analysts. We've heard from a number of witnesses, and the report should reflect that input.

The Chair: Would you like a report outline?

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: Yes, it might be a good idea to have one.

Ms. Lucie Lecomte (Committee Researcher): Yes, beforehand, so we can discuss it.

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: It would help us figure out where we want to go.

● (0900)

The Chair: When can we have the outline?

Ms. Lucie Lecomte: Perhaps December 3?

The Clerk: December 3.

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: No, November 3.

The Clerk: Okay, November 3. Is that too soon?

Ms. Lucie Lecomte: No, I'll get right on it.

The Clerk: The analysts need at least some idea as to what direction they should take.

The Chair: Indeed. We need to be clear about the direction we want to go in.

The Clerk: And having it by the break week.

Ms. Lucie Lecomte: I need to mention two other things.

First, I didn't receive any briefs, so I wouldn't be able to include them. Second, I would need to know when the committee will stop hearing from witnesses.

The Clerk: The committee will have to decide when it will stop hearing from witnesses. Of course I kept some dates open so that the committee could meet with the Quebec government minister.

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: I want to make sure I understand.

Normally, the committee spends at least two or three meetings on a report. We have to submit it by the beginning of December, and we also have to look at the work plan. If we stop hearing from witnesses on November 17, will that leave us enough time to discuss the report?

The Chair: Yes.

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: We will stop hearing from witnesses on November 17, then.

The Chair: That's a good idea.

Does that work for you?

Ms. Lucie Lecomte: And what about the infamous briefs?

The Chair: We don't have the briefs we asked for?

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: Could we go back to those people and ask them to provide their briefs by November 17 at the latest?

The Clerk: Yes.

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: We definitely want to support them, but they, too, have to help us and themselves.

The Clerk: We have received briefs from some individuals or groups who appeared before the committee, but we are still waiting for others.

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: Okay.

The Clerk: I will follow up with them this week and ask again.

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: Fine.

Regarding the list you gave us, do we know why some groups turned down the invitation to meet with the committee?

The Clerk: There weren't many who declined. For some of them, it was a scheduling issue. I would have to fit them in somewhere else in the schedule.

I could forward you the email I received from the group Action Réfugiés Montréal. Its representatives simply weren't comfortable contributing to the discussion. I could forward you their email.

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: Very well.

Action Réfugiés Montréal couldn't contribute to the discussion. Fine. My goodness.

The Clerk: Precisely. I can forward you their email.

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: Okay.

I do find it a bit odd that Action Réfugiés Montréal, an organization that assists refugees, can't help the committee with its study.

The Chair: We had set aside an hour for this discussion, but since the witnesses are scheduled for 9:15 and it's only 9 o'clock, we can break for a few minutes if the committee wishes.

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: Okay.

The Chair: The sitting is therefore suspended.

● (0900) _____ (Pause) _____

● (0910)

The Chair: We are resuming our study on the roadmap and immigration in francophone minority communities. We are pleased to have with us this morning the French Language Services Commissioner of Ontario, François Boileau.

Welcome, Mr. Boileau. You will have about five to seven minutes for your presentation. We will then move on to questions and comments from committee members.

Mr. Boileau, you may go ahead.

Mr. François Boileau (Commissioner, Office of the French Language Services Commissioner): Mr. Chair, thank you for inviting me here today. Thank you, as well, to all the committee members.

First, I would like to congratulate you on the launch of the Canada-wide consultation on official languages. I think MP Randy Boissonnault had a rather busy summer.

This initiative, and the implementation of a whole new strategy, is an unequivocal indication of the federal government's intention of preserving and protecting the interests of official language minority communities.

I have no doubt that these consultations have generated some useful discussions, and will continue to do so. Most importantly, however, they have highlighted opportunities, particularly in terms of integrated services that involve the federal, provincial, and municipal governments and also—why not?—communities.

On that point, I would like to recognize Manitoba, which established bilingual service centres many years ago now. The centres offer services at all levels.

The Chair: Forgive me for interrupting, Mr. Boileau.

Would you mind speaking a bit more slowly to make it easier for the interpreters to follow?

Mr. François Boileau: Yes, of course. Thank you for reminding me.

The centres offer services at all levels—federal, provincial, municipal, and even community—under the same roof.

More importantly, it creates places where the language at work is French and where francophone clients can, without a doubt, receive services in their own language.

That kind of formula could certainly facilitate active offer of French-language services in areas where the French-speaking population is concentrated, but it could also, and most importantly, improve relations between the various levels of government.

Speaking of collaboration, I would like to draw your attention to the many agreements we have worked on during my term in office, with people like my federal counterpart, Commissioner Graham Fraser. We have collaborated on several occasions, through numerous reports on a number of subjects, and in particular on immigration, the Pan Am games, and access to justice in French.

● (0915)

[*English*]

In June we released a special report on active offer. Mr. Fraser, who very recently addressed the same issue at the federal level, did the same.

These two reports showed that regardless of the level of government, the rules governing official languages are still flawed today. It has therefore become essential that we improve our tools and our practices to enable the various government departments, organizations, and third parties to put in place active, high-quality offers of French-language services.

I would like to remind you that if there is no active offer, this can, in the long term, not only have adverse effects on the quality of the services offered but also have serious consequences for vulnerable individuals, especially in the health care and justice systems. That is why it is important that the federal government make provisions in its action plan to implement a strategy to promote the active offer of French language services.

[*Translation*]

Another sensitive area is access to justice in both official languages, which is central to many issues relating to federal, provincial, and territorial legislation.

In 2013, we collaborated with the Commissioner of Official Languages and the Commissioner of Official Languages for New Brunswick on the publication of a report.

Following one of my recommendations, the Attorney General of Ontario mandated a French Language Services Bench and Bar Advisory Committee, which, in turn, released two other reports, in 2012 and 2015. Essentially, the reports show that it costs more money and taxes and takes more time to proceed in French in Ontario courts.

Those reports also highlighted the many instances of progress made: for example, the formation of regional legal committees. The mandate of the committees is not only to highlight problems, but also to identify and implement concrete and durable solutions. Those committees represent a very remarkable achievement for French-language services.

However, those studies also indicated that the existing process does not guarantee an adequate number of judges with language skills in both official languages.

The addition of the new process for selecting Supreme Court judges is a significant advance. However, it leads to doubt as to the level of bilingualism of the judges who will be appointed to the court.

It is time to act and to set an example by calling for a genuinely bilingual Supreme Court. By that, I mean that the judges should be capable of understanding and conversing in both French and English without the help of an interpreter.

I would add, however, that this week's announcement would seem to confirm that the current process works because the new judge, if appointed by the House of Commons, Senate, and the Office of the Prime Minister, appears to be perfectly bilingual. That would be excellent news.

I would like to conclude my presentation by talking about education and, more specifically, about the Agreement on Minority-Language Education and Second Official-Language Instruction. That agreement is essential for components intended for education in French.

As you know, that agreement expires in 2018. It seems to me that this is the right time to explore new avenues to facilitate the continuum of learning in French and, more specifically, for early childhood development programs and post-secondary education.

Early childhood programs that are funded by the provincial government play a crucial role in maintaining young children's identity and French language, particularly among children of exogamous couples.

While federal funding for early childhood programs in minority communities is laudable, it should be included in the official languages in education agreement to be consistent with provincial programs. In fact, that would allow for greater weight to be placed on the early childhood component in negotiating the next agreement.

I therefore join with the Commissioner of Official Languages, who asked the federal government in his recent report at the beginning of October to make provision in its next five-year plan on official languages for sufficient funds for early childhood initiatives in minority communities.

[*English*]

At the post-secondary level, education in French protects, transmits, and most importantly preserves the French language and culture. This makes a major contribution to ensuring the continued growth of the Franco-Ontarian community.

Colleges and universities are an integral part of the education continuum and play an essential role in training future bilingual and francophone professionals. In doing so, they contribute in the longer term to the welfare of the province, and on a broader scale to the competitiveness of the Canadian economy.

In Ontario, and particularly in southwestern Ontario, we have observed inadequate access to quality post-secondary French programs.

On that point, I am pleased to report the recent announcement by the Ontario Minister Responsible for Francophone Affairs, Marie-France Lalonde, of the appointment of Dr. Dyane Adam, to chair the planning board of a French-language university in Ontario.

• (0920)

[*Translation*]

This is a great step forward, but we must not stop there. We must continue to increase the number of early childhood and post-secondary French-language programs, in areas where the francophone population is growing rapidly and where the programs available are sometimes limited.

In conclusion, I believe our governments have made considerable progress in recent years. The fact remains that this progress has been achieved at a glacial pace when it comes to French-language services. It is time for our governments to mobilize their efforts and collaborate at all levels—federal, provincial, municipal, and, why not, community—to remedy this imbalance.

Thank you all for your attention.

I will now be pleased, Mr. Chair, to answer questions from yourself and your colleagues.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Boileau.

We'll now begin a round of questions where each committee member will have four minutes.

Ms. Boucher, you may go ahead.

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Good morning, Mr. Boileau.

I am very glad to meet you. You are the French Language Services Commissioner of Ontario, and I commend you for that.

I am from Quebec, so this really isn't a problem for me. Just about everyone speaks French in Quebec. In fact, people in Quebec often say that they are practically the only francophones in Canada. Here, though, we have proof to the contrary.

Some of the issues you talked about shocked me. The first is that it's more expensive for someone in Ontario to have a trial in French than in English. Why is that the case? Does it have to do with translators?

Mr. François Boileau: No. Ontario has a unique element.

Sections 125 and 126 of Ontario's Courts of Justice Act stipulate that English and French are the official languages of the province's courts. In theory, then, a francophone wanting their trial to be held in French can have such a trial in any of Ontario's courts, be it the Superior Court of Justice or the Court of Appeal.

In practice, however, obtaining a trial in French can take longer. If it's due to a lack of bilingual judges, it's more costly because cases have to be postponed. Counsel may be there, but if the opposing party isn't ready, the reason can be a lack of bilingual judges or the fact that the other party didn't show up to court with their own interpreters.

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: I see.

Mr. François Boileau: Oftentimes, it's not the francophones needing interpreters but, rather, the other party. In bilingual proceedings, the English-speaking party often needs an interpreter. They show up in court and request an interpreter if the service hasn't already been provided for as part of the proceedings. The judge will then say that they are ready to proceed because they understand French and English, but if one of the parties does not understand French and needs the services of an interpreter, the case has to be postponed.

Sometimes the problems are related to the court office itself. Today, here in Ottawa, the national capital region, a pilot project is in place; it's one previously recommended by my office. When you walk in to the Ottawa courthouse, you receive assistance immediately. Your initial contact can take place in French. What's important is to send the francophone subject to the court's jurisdiction a clear message that they can request French-language services the first time they are in contact with the courthouse. When they deal with the court office, individuals are sometimes told,

[English]

"Well, it would be so much easier if you were to proceed in English."

[Translation]

This of course sends a message to litigants.

We must remember that litigants increasingly represent themselves, especially in cases that are probably very important to them, but may be less important in the legal system.

Since citizens are representing themselves more and more, it is all the more important to let them know that they can represent themselves in French, and that this will not penalize them.

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: That is why it is more costly.

Mr. François Boileau: Yes, because it takes longer. In those cases, it often becomes a matter of representation by the lawyers.

These are the conclusions of the Federal Judicial Advisory Committee and of the Bar regarding services in French. The committee was chaired by Honourable Judge Paul Rouleau and counsellor Paul Le Vay, who was at the time president of the Association des juristes d'expression française of Ontario.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Mr. Lefebvre, you have the floor.

● (0925)

Mr. Paul Lefebvre: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Commissioner Boileau, welcome. I am very pleased to see you. I would like to congratulate you on the good work you do. You have been working extremely hard for several years. You are the first French Language Services Commissioner of Ontario.

Mr. François Boileau: I am the best commissioner the province of Ontario has ever had...

Mr. Paul Lefebvre: I agree with you entirely.

Mr. François Boileau: ... and also the worst, but that is another story.

Mr. Paul Lefebvre: Thank you.

The committee received people from Manitoba and New Brunswick who spoke to us about their initiative to increase francophone immigration in their provinces. As you know, Manitoba does excellent work, as does New Brunswick. That province has set targets and has in fact surpassed them.

I know that several federal-provincial agreements set a yearly objective of 5% for new francophone immigrants, but I know that the real percentage is less than 2%. What could the federal government do to support the province so that it reaches this 5% objective?

Mr. François Boileau: I will in fact be speaking about this later in another statement on immigration. That was the plan, but I will be pleased to speak about it right now.

A few years ago, Commissioner Fraser and myself issued a joint report on a problematic situation like the one you have just raised. What can we do to ensure that immigrants are well-informed about the situation here before they leave their country? We sell them a completely bilingual country, but when they arrive in your area, in Sudbury, that is not quite the case.

They have to be well informed and, especially, we have to take charge of them as soon as they get here. If they are guided by an anglophone organization, all of the services they receive will be in English, whereas these immigrants often need integration and retention services. We have to keep them here, particularly in your region. That is where the federal government can play a greater role by developing partnerships with francophone organizations. They should not be organizations that claim to be bilingual only to obtain a mandate from the federal government. Organizations really have to take charge of francophone immigrants and direct them toward services in French.

Let me be clear; we want newcomers to Ontario to learn English also; that is important. They have to be able to participate fully in society in Ontario. These people need services and need to be supported. The federal government and the Government of Ontario have to put in place recruitment, integration, retention and training strategies for these newcomers.

Mr. Paul Lefebvre: Thank you.

I want to talk about the Protocol for Agreements for Minority-Language Education and Second-Language Instruction, the OLEP. You mentioned that this extremely important program is part of the roadmap and the new action plan.

When it comes to early childhood programs, the offer is not sufficient to meet the demand. At this time, the OLEP does not fund that type of program. If the OLEP were improved, how could earlier childhood education programs benefit?

Mr. François Boileau: It is important to consider that at the constitutional level, we made spectacular gains in 1982 thanks to the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, particularly section 23. This section concerns the elementary and secondary levels, but education does not start and stop there. There is a learning continuum.

The OLEP was created under the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, and concerns elementary and secondary education. Nevertheless, it is essential that we begin with early childhood, especially when the rate of exogamous couples is as high as it is here in Ontario. Over 60% of francophone couples in Ontario are exogamous couples.

If we support the children of these families from early childhood on, we are sending an important signal that it is possible to have an education in French and that we can send children for their first year of schooling to a French school. It is not a panacea, but it would certainly help. It can't hurt. That is why it is important to consider early childhood education programs in a learning continuum.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Boileau.

Mr. Choquette, you have the floor.

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

Mr. Commissioner, I thank you for being here with us today.

I want to begin by reminding you of the huge amount of work Yvon Godin did regarding bilingualism and the judges of the Supreme Court. As you know, I am taking up the torch by presenting a bill so that this will be enshrined in a law. I don't know what you think of that. Is a law requiring that Supreme Court judges be bilingual needed, or is current policy in this regard sufficient?

● (0930)

Mr. François Boileau: Could the current policy change if we had a change in government? Possibly. Of course, I am somewhat partial since I am the French Language Services Commissioner for Ontario. It is my job to ensure that language rights enjoy better protection. So the question holds the answer, to some degree. Yes, of course, a law would provide better protection and ensure the permanence of that bilingualism.

I read an argument wherein it was claimed that it is difficult to find bilingual judges. I even heard a former Newfoundland and Labrador attorney put forward such an argument. A judge of the Supreme Court of Newfoundland and Labrador, which is a court of appeal, has just been appointed and is bilingual, which is very good. This shows that there is a way to find quality jurists who understand both official languages and will be able to follow a trial or a hearing in both languages.

Mr. François Choquette: In this regard, I would like us to discuss the 2013 report on access to justice in superior courts, on which you collaborated with Commissioner Fraser. In it you made several recommendations; one of them was that the highest instances of the federal and provincial governments discuss the number of bilingual judges needed, and ensure that the skills of these bilingual judges are subsequently assessed. Currently, there is a self-evaluation.

Mr. François Boileau: The evaluation is not done after, but before.

Mr. François Choquette: Yes. That is what I meant.

Mr. François Boileau: It is important to point that out.

Mr. François Choquette: I understand.

Can you give me more details on this? Why has it not already been implemented? What is happening, where are things bogging down, and what must we do to have things move forward?

Mr. François Boileau: The Government of Ontario had answered that it was ready to collaborate with the federal government. The Attorney General of Ontario, the Honourable Madeleine Meilleur, had sent a letter saying that. She stated that she agreed with the conclusions of the joint report and was willing to cooperate with her federal counterpart. However, as we are speaking here about judges who are appointed by the federal government, the initiative belongs to the Attorney General of Canada. At the time we were in fact given a polite answer which consisted basically in saying that things were going well.

We were not satisfied with that answer, but I now hope that with the current government, the attitude to this file will be different. We hope that the conclusion of our joint report will be looked at so that the needs of each province are better understood and that there is a common vision of what a bilingual judge is. That vision can in fact vary, both at the federal and provincial levels.

In this regard, we would like to see harmonization and the participation of the legal community, including the francophone legal community in the provinces. This would allow us to determine that in a given region we need designated positions, whereas in other regions we would need to increase the number of judges. It would be up to the provinces to determine those needs, together with the chief justices of their courts. We would like to see memoranda of understanding between the federal and provincial governments to ensure that the process is launched.

I know also that my New Brunswick colleague, Katherine d'Entremont, had at the time received a very favourable reply from her government. What had to be done was precisely that the federal government take the initiative.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Boileau.

Ms. Lapointe, you have the floor.

Ms. Linda Lapointe: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Good morning and welcome, Mr. Boileau.

You spoke earlier of early childhood education. I can easily understand the importance of having available spots in French day care centres. If we are talking about a five-year objective for early childhood education, what should we be hoping to see in the next roadmap? Are you able to express that as a number of spaces?

You say that 60% of Ontario couples are exogamous. Are you in a position to list the places and determine how many spaces there should be?

I am from Quebec and I have observed that they always set an objective as to the number of day care spaces. I would like to have a more precise idea of that for francophone centres.

• (0935)

Mr. François Boileau: Thank you for the question.

I am not in a position to do that because we have done no analyses, studies or reports on that question. I would however eventually like to consider that aspect closely.

My federal colleague has just produced a report on this topic. They got on board the bandwagon when it went by. We feel the report produced by my colleague is excellent. I wondered if I should also prepare one for Ontario. It is a reasonable thought. As for determining the number of spaces, I am not certain that this is the work of my office. However, it would certainly be the work of the Government of Ontario. Indeed, this is more a matter of provincial jurisdiction.

As to the role of the federal government, it should at least begin discussions with the provincial governments and include this topic in the next action plan or the next roadmap, whatever we choose to call it. This would make it possible to have this discussion with provincial partners, and it would be their job to determine the number of spaces needed. However, we would need input from the community.

Ms. Linda Lapointe: I am going to continue on the topic of early childhood education.

So, the percentage of exogamous couples is 60%. Let's suppose a couple wants to send its children to a francophone early childhood centre but cannot find one. In such a situation, would you be able to determine what consequences this can lead to, what schools the children would go to and whether they choose the francophone or anglophone system?

Mr. François Boileau: I am sure there are many studies on that question. I have none with me today, but I know so many researchers who have studied the issue that I am convinced the answer is out there.

All of the studies show that proximity is the main factor in the parents' choice of a school. It is first and foremost a proximity issue.

We have to encourage all exogamous couples to understand that if the immersion school is a little closer, and if the French language school is further away...

Ms. Linda Lapointe: We are also talking about early childhood.

Mr. François Boileau: Let's talk about early childhood.

In the French-language schools of Ontario, they have included a program for kindergarten and junior kindergarten, which is part of early childhood. This integration took place more than 10 years ago. In most cases it allowed the schools to keep the children. My daughter is a good example, even if it is not perfect since our couple is not exogamous.

We note that students stay in the French school in grade 1 because they are already there, either in junior kindergarten or kindergarten. Since they are already in the physical premises, this creates a habit, either for school buses or routine. It creates habits that the parents keep because they don't want to disrupt their children's lives.

It isn't just a matter of day care spaces for very young children, but also for kindergarten and junior kindergarten.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Boileau.

Thank you, Ms. Lapointe.

Before moving on to the second part, I would like to welcome certain observers who are here this morning. They are taking part in the Parliamentary Officers Study Program and are from various points around the globe.

Welcome to our committee, ladies and gentlemen.

We will now move to the second part of our meeting, which will be about immigration. Mr. Boileau will have five to seven minutes. Afterwards, we will have a question and answer period.

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

Yesterday, the committee asked me to do a 10-minute presentation. I will do my best. Once again, I would like to thank you for having me here today.

In recent years, Ontario has demonstrated leadership by setting a target of 5% for francophone immigration. As I noted in my previous presentation, I collaborated with the Commissioner of Official Languages on the publication of a report written to show how to remedy the imbalance in relation to francophone immigration.

That report led to the creation of a group of experts, that includes a representative of the federal government, to develop a government-wide strategic plan for achieving the 5% target for francophone immigration in Ontario. We are very much looking forward to the report of this group of experts. We still note the lack of good evidence concerning the impact of the changes made to the federal government's immigration system since 2012.

This situation in Ontario is critical as we are far from the expected 5%.

• (0940)

[English]

This is why we wanted to lead by example. In November 2014 my federal colleague Mr. Graham Fraser and I published a joint report to present an overview and analysis of the issues surrounding immigration to francophone communities.

We formulated eight recommendations, primarily to the federal government, but also to the Government of Ontario. These recommendations deal with support for French-speaking immigrants through francophone institutions and organizations, information and resources for French-speaking newcomers, co-operation with the provinces, incentives for employers to recruit and select francophone and bilingual workers, and accountability.

[*Translation*]

We believe that the Government of Canada and the Government of Ontario must join forces and show leadership so that immigration truly contributes to the development and vitality of francophone minority communities.

As proof, in 2014, 2.2% of the immigrant population had French as its spoken official language, according to the Office of Francophone Affairs. However, the situation is more alarming because the percentage has been decreasing since 2012, and in 2015 we only have 2%.

Consequently, as is the case for the Canadian population as a whole, we need immigration to offset the sharp decline in the birth rate and higher rates of population aging.

Immigration has a direct impact on the community's vitality. It is clear that over the years, Canada and Ontario francophone communities have benefited less from immigration than have anglophone majority communities.

On another note, the very recent announcement of an agreement signed by all provincial and territorial premiers, apart from Quebec, represents a step forward on this issue. This means that unless a strategic plan is put in place for attracting, recruiting, welcoming, integrating and retaining francophone immigrants at both the provincial and the national levels, it will be very difficult for us to achieve that target.

As you know, this is a subject that is under shared federal and provincial jurisdiction, which means that the different levels of government must collaborate to facilitate progress.

Another major challenge presented by immigration is labour market integration. Newcomers continue to face many obstacles when it comes to integration that prevent them from entering the labour market and practising regulated professions.

[*English*]

In fact, the introduction of the mobility francophone program by the federal government is very good news since the capacity to attract new francophone immigrants to Ontario is still a major challenge today.

I would like to take this opportunity to welcome the innovative initiative taken by Collège Boréal, which recently signed its first two student mobility agreements outside Canada, with Belgium and France.

This international recruiting strategy is a good fit with the program to facilitate the process for francophones who want to come and work in Ontario. Other initiatives have been put in place by other post-secondary institutions in order to improve labour market training.

[*Translation*]

Nonetheless, we must still note that we are also admitting qualified professionals like doctors, nurses, engineers, teachers and others.

Unfortunately, however, they face many challenges and are unable to practise in the fields to which their skills apply. Most often

they have to go back to school, something that can be very expensive, particularly for recent immigrants.

It is also a waste of money for the host society when it fails to benefit from the contribution these professionals can make. Yes, this falls under provincial jurisdiction, but the federal government has to play a leadership role so that an immigrant who has had their credentials recognized and has been admitted to a professional body, can also do so easily in Ontario once they move here.

Similarly, people who move from one province to another also face this obstacle, since in most cases provincial and territorial professional bodies do not recognize diplomas granted by the other provinces and territories.

It is therefore our duty to put in place a strategic plan with the aim not only of facilitating their transition into the work world, but also of equipping them so they are able to have the work experience and education they acquired in their country, province or territory of origin recognized.

[*English*]

In recent decades the Government of Ontario has taken important steps toward protecting and improving the availability and quality of services in French and, most importantly, enhancing the feeling of belonging.

One of the most ambitious measures is the adoption of a new inclusive definition that has applied to the francophone population of Ontario since June 2009. This new inclusive definition of francophone reflects the new diversity of Franco-Ontarians regardless of their place of birth, their ethnic origin, or their religion.

I will take this opportunity to note that Ontario is the very first province in Canada to implement this initiative. In fact, Manitoba very recently enacted new legislation, the Francophone Community Enhancement and Support Act, which also contains a more inclusive definition and presents a more accurate picture of the Franco-Manitoban community.

● (0945)

[*Translation*]

The recent announcement of Ontario's application for membership in the Organisation internationale de la Francophonie is very timely, since it will certainly have an impact on the recruiting strategy. Research done by the OIF has shown that there will be over 700 million francophones in the world by 2050.

In addition, 85% of that population will come from Africa and that will happen within less than 35 years. Ontario must therefore look to Sub-Saharan Africa, which offers vast economic opportunities for the province's businesses, but which is also experiencing major population growth, primarily in the francophone countries there.

It is against this backdrop that I encourage the province of Ontario and Canada to launch a recruiting campaign. It is important that we look to this new demographic wave and benefit from it by recruiting and attracting skilled francophone immigrants.

As the celebrations to mark the 150th anniversary of Confederation in 2017 approach, it has become a matter of the highest priority that the two levels of government collaborate and more specifically that they demonstrate leadership in the area of francophone immigration to ensure that the Canadian population thrives. First and foremost, we must find concrete ways of remedying the current imbalance that the francophone communities are experiencing when it comes to immigration.

Thank you for your attention, and I will be pleased to answer questions from yourself and your colleagues.

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

We will begin our question period immediately. Each member of the committee will have four minutes.

We will begin with Mr. Généreux.

Mr. Bernard Généreux (Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you for your testimony, Mr. Boileau.

Do you think it is fair to ask whether the objective that had been set for the percentage of francophone immigration was too high, or poorly structured? What was the problem, in your opinion? Was the target too high or too low? Was sufficient effort put into trying to reach the objectives? It is all well and good to have objectives in life, but we have to have the means to attain them.

Mr. François Boileau: Thank you for these questions.

In fact, we could reverse the situation. The objectives may not be high enough to allow the community not only to maintain itself, but to grow. That is what we are trying to achieve.

Let's take Manitoba as an example. I remember that at the time we had 7% targets in Manitoba. Why? Precisely in order to allow the community not only to maintain itself, but also to grow. I could mention that in Ontario, when we talked about a 5% objective, that was already a victory. It was the first time that the government publicly committed to a target. I consciously chose to react positively and not...

Mr. Bernard Généreux: And not put a damper on things?

Mr. François Boileau: I did not want to put a damper on things at the time so that we could move forward. It was after all a positive strategy.

What I note is that it has been a long time since Ontario developed that target, and we are still waiting for the report of the group of experts to tell us how we can reach it, in concrete terms. I am very much looking forward to having that information. The report should be made public any time now.

It was at the federal level that the recommendations Mr. Fraser and I made were very timely. In order to ensure that we would reach that target, we made recommendations to include more francophone communities in the promotion and recruitment strategies.

It is very commendable that there are some very good initiatives like Destination Canada, which takes place in France or in Belgium. My message today is to suggest that you also think about Sub-Saharan Africa and other places in the world where there is demographic growth among francophones. We could also recruit future immigrants in these locations.

Mr. Bernard Généreux: I conclude from what you have just said that you would like to see existing tools broadened, or that they be broadened at least in the locations where we are using them, so that we can go and get francophones in different places.

Once again, are federal-provincial relations, and the tools that have been put in place, like Destination Canada, adequate? Are there enough of them?

• (0950)

Mr. François Boileau: It's really not my place to start discussing federal strategies. You can understand why I want to show discretion in that regard.

The important thing for me was to pass on the message that the two levels of government must work together. I'm pressuring my own government, in Ontario, to create an integrated strategy for francophone immigration.

However, this strategy is like a dance. It's like a tango. It really needs two people to work. The federal government and the Ontario government must dance together. That's why the group of experts I referred to in my presentation includes a representative from Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada. We therefore think we'll have the beginnings of a common strategy.

That said, regarding francophone immigration, the federal government must not think we're doing this only to comply with the Official Languages Act or the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act. We're actually doing this out of necessity. It's a reality.

We see it in our area, in Toronto. In the Greater Toronto Area, nearly one in two francophones wasn't born in Canada. That's a large number of people. We must make sure they're properly integrated when they arrive here. The challenge is not only to find the immigrants, but to integrate them properly when they arrive in Ontario. Otherwise, they'll think the society as a whole or the government provides only English services, which isn't the case.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Boileau.

I'll now give the floor to Mr. Vandal.

Mr. Dan Vandal (Saint Boniface—Saint Vital, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Boileau, thank you for mentioning Manitoba a number of times.

Mr. François Boileau: I'm biased toward Manitoba, since I lived there.

Mr. Dan Vandal: I attended the opening of the Bilingual Service Centre in Manitoba, in 1999. At the time, the mayor was Glen Murray and the minister was Don Boudria. The centre is still a model for the country.

Regarding the three components of immigration, which are recruitment, intake and integration, I would like to know in which area your province is successful and in which area it's less successful.

Mr. François Boileau: That's a good question.

When we consider the number of new immigrants, we think they could be much more involved in the francophone community. We wonder whether all these people know that French services and French-language schools are available.

Ontario has reacted. Before, the school boards had quite high criteria for selecting future students. They needed to pass an entrance test and so on. The government was asked to issue a directive to ensure that francophone school boards show more flexibility. The criteria are now more flexible.

In the case of new immigrants, the fact that parents and children are interviewed at the French-language school, whereas the English-language school accepts people without asking them questions, can cause concerns. It doesn't help with integration. These are the issues we're trying to resolve. Things are getting better in that area.

Are new immigrants familiar with the francophone community? Are they aware of the services provided? When they leave Lester B. Pearson International Airport in Toronto, Macdonald-Cartier International Airport in Ottawa, or James Armstrong Richardson International Airport in Winnipeg, do they know that francophone communities provide services in French?

It's important to properly guide them from the start. In most cases, they're perfectly bilingual, but French isn't necessarily their first official spoken language. Whether they speak Arab or Wolof, the important thing is to look after them as soon as they arrive and help them integrate.

• (0955)

Mr. Dan Vandal: So we need to improve the recruitment method.

Mr. François Boileau: That's why the Mobilité francophone program is important. The renewal of the program helps us apply a recruitment strategy that focuses more on the needs of Canadian businesses, including francophone businesses looking for bilingual or francophone staff. However, we still don't know how well the program is working.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Choquette, you have the floor.

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

Mr. Boileau, you just referred to the Mobilité francophone program. I think it's very important. For a long time, we had wanted this type of program to be implemented again. It had existed before, but had unfortunately been eliminated. As you said, since it's a new program, we can't measure the results yet. Other witnesses have told us that employers are no longer accustomed to the program, that they no longer know exactly how to use it and that they're not entirely confident. There's a great deal of work to do to reassure employers and encourage them to choose the program.

The program is aimed at temporary workers. Express Entry, however, is aimed at immigrants who will stay and integrate into our communities. The people from New Brunswick who we met with—I believe last Tuesday—explained that they had integrated a francophone lens into the Express Entry program. The lens is not included in the program at the federal level, but New Brunswick integrated the lens on its own. I don't know Ontario's position in that regard. I see that not all provinces have opted for the francophone lens.

How can we help improve the intake of francophone immigrants in each province?

Mr. François Boileau: My job was to ensure that the two levels of government communicate, in order for them to become familiar with and understand the needs of Ontario's francophone community.

That's why I recommended that a group of community and governmental experts meet to discuss recruitment, integration, training and retention strategies. I'm very eager for the group of experts to release its report to see whether the issues you've just mentioned have been addressed.

I'm not in a position to analyze what the federal government is doing. That's my colleague's job. I look specifically at what Ontario must do. That's why I must show discretion. Of course, I could tell you it's a good idea. However, I don't think it would be responsible on my part to comment on the federal government's actions when my job is to comment on the Ontario government's actions.

Mr. François Choquette: Mr. Boileau, I know you asked—I don't remember what year the report was released—for a group of experts to be established to determine the proper strategies. Aren't you currently negotiating the establishment of the group of experts?

Mr. François Boileau: We have the group in place.

Mr. François Choquette: Okay.

Mr. François Boileau: The Ontario government agreed. The group carried out its work over the past year and a half. I'm now waiting for the group to release its findings to the public.

I participated in the working group, and I told the group that I hoped the work wouldn't involve building castles in the air. That's more my specialty at another level. I asked the group to carry out the work and to propose concrete solutions for the field and to identify organizations and very specific strategies at the federal level, but especially in Ontario. This will help us make progress and change the result, because 2% is not acceptable.

Mr. François Choquette: If I understand correctly, there's currently no francophone lens regarding immigration.

The Chair: Mr. Choquette, I must stop you here.

Mr. Boileau, please keep your answer short.

Mr. François Boileau: I won't comment on the situation at the federal level, but I'll say that, in Ontario, the group of experts uses a francophone lens. That's already a step forward, since it wasn't the case before.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Lefebvre, you have the floor.

● (1000)

Mr. Paul Lefebvre: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you, Mr. Boileau, for your comments on immigration.

We haven't discussed the immigration of students much in the committee. Students come to the country to study in French and they don't go only to Quebec. They come to study at the bilingual colleges and universities in certain provinces.

In Quebec, the Quebec-France agreement enables exchanges, and tuition fees are kept as low as possible.

Does Ontario have a similar agreement with countries such as France, Belgium and Switzerland so that students from those countries can easily enrol in our colleges or three francophone universities?

Mr. François Boileau: I haven't done a comprehensive analysis of the situation, but to my knowledge, the premier of Ontario has followed in the footsteps of her predecessor. The province attracts foreign students by offering to reduce their tuition fees.

Mr. Paul Lefebvre: For French studies, are there incentives like the Quebec-France agreement?

Mr. François Boileau: They apply to students in general. I would be surprised if they were aimed only at francophones.

Mr. Paul Lefebvre: A similar strategy could enable Ontario to achieve its objective of 5%.

Mr. François Boileau: I understand your question. At this time, it's more often up to institutions to develop that type of strategy, as Collège Boréal just did with France and Belgium.

Does the department let them do it? Perhaps, but I think there's more of a laissez-faire attitude in that regard.

Mr. Paul Lefebvre: That's what I wanted to discuss. Collège Boréal made an agreement with France and Belgium. Can you give us more details on what the agreement contains? How could we encourage the other institutions and provinces to consider this type of initiative?

Mr. François Boileau: I'm not in a position to give you more details on the agreement, but one thing interests me. At least people are having a discussion and this possibility exists.

Let's set Sudbury aside for a bit. Let's look at what's happening at La Cité, better known as La Cité collégiale, and at what programs exist in Côte d'Ivoire. They can develop a partnership to enable Côte d'Ivoire to establish a police training program, for example. Collège Boréal already has facilities in other African countries to develop teaching programs for the mining sector, an important sector in the region.

I see that major potential progress is being made with these countries because Africa, especially francophone Africa, will experience a significant population explosion. This situation creates new possibilities and business opportunities. It's more than simply a matter of attracting new immigrants here. The training programs provided together with La Cité or Collège Boréal in these countries have major benefits for us. The professors who travel to Africa come back with greater knowledge. They have a better understanding of diversity and of the world. They therefore become better professors. This enables us to have better knowledge of the field and to establish contacts to then develop business opportunities. Everyone wins across the board.

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

That brings our meeting with you to an end. Thank you very much for your presentation. All the members of the committee found it very helpful. It was a wonderful presentation. My thanks to you on behalf of the committee members.

We are going to suspend the session for a few minutes so that we can establish contact with the Yukon. We will be hearing from the next witnesses by videoconference. We will reconvene in five or 10 minutes.

In the meantime, I suspend the session.

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: Before you do, Mr. Chair, may I talk about something else? Can you wait two minutes?

The Chair: Let's do it when we come back.

● (1000)

(Pause)

● (1000)

The Chair: The session is resumed.

Mrs. Boucher, you have the floor.

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I would like to tell you that you will be receiving the following notice of motion tomorrow or on Monday. It reads as follows:

That the committee invite the newly nominated judge to the Supreme Court of Canada, Malcolm Rowe, to appear on Tuesday, October 25, 2016.

I am making this request because of what happened to us before when we formed the government. People said they were bilingual but they did not speak French. I would like to make sure that the judge in question speaks both languages well and is able to understand them.

The Chair: Thank you, Mrs. Boucher.

We receive your notice and we will discuss it in an upcoming session.

Have we been able to reach our friends in the Yukon?

We are going to try and establish communication with the folks in the Yukon in the next few minutes.

Mr. François Choquette: That's a long way.

The Chair: Yes, indeed, it's a long way.

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: Yes, it's a long way.

The Clerk: It is about 7 a.m. there.

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: It's early for them.

[English]

The Chair: We might just go up there, but not today.

[Translation]

While we are waiting, I want to tell our friends watching from other countries that, in a few minutes, we will be in communication with the Yukon, which is on the other side of Canada. There is a major time difference between there and here. It is early in the morning for our friends in the Yukon, very early, in fact.

The Clerk: The difference is three hours.

The Chair: So it is 7 a.m. in the Yukon. The people there are going to contribute to our work by testifying by videoconference.

Can you hear us in the Yukon?

Mrs. Isabelle Salessé (Executive Director, Association franco-yukonnaise): Yes, we hear you loud and clear. Do you hear us?

The Chair: We hear you loud and clear too.

Thank you for getting up early this morning to join us. We know that it is much earlier where you are.

We are continuing our study on the roadmap and immigration in francophone minority communities. We are going to listen to your presentation for six or seven minutes. After that, we will move into a period when committee members will ask questions and make comments.

In the first part, you will be telling us about the government's next roadmap, or action plan. Thereafter, we will hear what you have to say about immigration and what it means for the Franco-phonie community in the Yukon.

Welcome, Mr. Nolet, Mrs. Salessé. Without further delay, I open the floor to you.

Mrs. Isabelle Salessé: Thank you very much, Mr. Paradis.

Mr. Chair and members of the committee, first, we thank you for inviting the Association franco-yukonnaise today to talk to you about the roadmap and about francophone immigration.

I will start by talking about our organization. The Association franco-yukonnaise, or AFY, is the official voice of francophones in the Yukon and a pillar in the development of the Franco-Yukon community. Our mandate is to improve the quality of life in French for French-speaking Yukoners. We provide services in a number of areas, including arts and culture, health, education, economic development and, of course, immigration. Our association has been in existence since 1982. During the celebrations of the 150th anniversary of Confederation, we will be celebrating our 35th birthday.

In order for you to get to know us better, one other point may interest you. Given the size of our community and the fact that it is geographically concentrated in Whitehorse, we preferred to bring most of the services under the same roof instead of creating a number of organizations. So we have adopted a one-stop model that allows for better integration and greater efficiency in our services as well as giving us the benefit of the economies of scale.

All the AFY's services use the same resources in accounting, information technology, communications and reception. We have therefore made best use of the money that we invest in projects that are useful for our community.

Clearly, this approach also works to the advantage of the clients who come to our offices. For example, most immigrants take advantage of our job search services. With this model, those immigrants also receive settlement services and employment assistance services from the same person under the same roof. They can therefore use all our services without having to leave the building.

Let me now turn to another point. I do not know if you are aware, but the French-speaking Yukon is expanding, both in numbers and in size. The francophone school and daycare are short on space. The French immersion schools cannot meet the demand. Furthermore, the Yukon is ranked third among provinces and territories in terms of bilingualism. With a bilingualism rate of 13%, we are third after Quebec and New Brunswick, which is no small achievement.

The AFY is also a member of a number of national organizations, such as the Fédération des communautés francophones et acadienne du Canada, whose representatives you met yesterday, I believe, and the Réseau de développement économique et d'employabilité, or RDÉE Canada. Through those national networks, we can provide our community with access to a number of programs and initiatives.

Let me now move directly to the roadmap. I call it "the roadmap" but I am actually going to be talking about an official languages action plan. It is clear that the roadmap that will end in 2018 responds but poorly to the needs of francophone minority communities like the franco-Yukon community. That is why we are insisting on the importance of the future official languages plan.

It must give priority to supporting the development and the vitality of francophone minority communities. This is essential. Our communities' needs in terms of health and education must be recognized. For us, when we talk about education, we mean lifelong education. It starts in early childhood and goes through adulthood to the old age. For us, it means literacy, skills, community economic development, culture and identity, and the media. It must include services to French-speaking seniors, young people and immigrants.

For several years, we have been advocating for a new service for seniors. This population is growing. So it is important not to neglect this aspect of our francophone minority communities.

The government can find support in the recent consultations that were held right across Canada, but also in some reports from the Commissioner of Official Languages, specifically one of the most recent about early childhood. This report insists on how crucially important it is for our communities in order to ensure linguistic continuity; it adds that we must have access to daycare and preschool services in French in our communities. First, we are talking about services of a quality equal to those available to the majority. Early childhood is where our survival begins.

One single approach is not possible if we wish to reach genuine equality. We cannot look at a wall-to-wall approach and say that the situation is the same in Prince Edward Island as it is in the Yukon. It is very different. As you know, Ontario has the largest critical mass of francophones but that does not mean that Ontario solutions can be applied to the Yukon. Even with francophones representing 4.8% of the community, the figures are very small. Sometimes criteria are imposed that are extremely difficult for us to meet.

There is one other thing that we feel is extremely important. All federal departments must be included in the plan and all must fulfill their obligations in terms of official languages. We must keep in mind that Canadian Heritage is not the only department responsible for implementing official languages measures. Who is to ensure that the money identified for OLMCs is spent for and by OLMCs? How do we avoid the roadmap's errors in that respect?

Should we identify a federal body to coordinate a new plan with genuine, effective accountability mechanisms, not only for the communities but also for all of the departments involved? The action plan must be one of the mechanisms that support the full implementation of the Official Languages Act, not a little Band-Aid to put on little boo-boos. We must avoid having to start again in two years, only to find that we are at the same level.

It goes without saying that a substantial increase in budgets is required. If we really want to work towards a strong and bilingual Canada, we must make corresponding investments in our communities. Project financing has its interest, but it is insufficient for developing OLMCs. Multi-year funding is required and it must include a basic core amount in order to allow organizations like the AFY to hire qualified and committed people so that we are able to aim for long-term results.

We would also like to stress the importance of not confusing bilingualism with the constitutional right to live in the official language of one's choice. We must distinguish between the importance of preserving all the languages in Canada—the importance of one's personal choice to speak one, two or three languages—and the federal responsibility for linguistic duality, which implies that Canadians have the right to be unilingual anglophone or unilingual francophone all across Canada and to have access to services in the language of their choice.

To bring this matter to a close, I also invite you to consult a bilingual position statement developed by the AFY in September 2016, entitled *Taking action for a vibrant and dynamic Yukon Francophone Community*. Can you see it on the screen? The document describes the concrete actions that each level of government must take to support our community. In the document that we sent you, we

put the address of our website so that you can access and download this document.

That is what I had to say about the roadmap. I believe that I kept to the time I was given.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Mrs. Salesse.

Mrs. Isabelle Salesse: If you have questions, we are ready to answer them.

The Chair: We are going to start the time for questions and comments.

[*English*]

We'll start with John Nater, for three minutes.

[*Translation*]

Mr. John Nater (Perth—Wellington, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I want to thank the witnesses for taking part in our work.

Mrs. Salesse, you mentioned that there are not enough places in the bilingual and francophone schools to meet the demand. You would like the next roadmap to contain more support for education. How could the roadmap improve your situation? What resources do you need in order to improve the situation you are currently dealing with? Can you give some examples?

Mrs. Isabelle Salesse: The roadmap contains a number of agreements that have to do with those matters, specifically the bilateral education agreement. Since at least 2003, the amounts available have been identical. Every four years, we go back to the bargaining table. In fact, there is no bargaining table. Instead, we are told the amount that we will be getting. The amount is the same as for the previous year. We are not asked to submit a plan that matches the amount. We are not asked to submit a plan that matches our needs in an attempt to fund them.

We are well aware that the budget envelope is not limitless and that money does not grow on trees. However, there must also be an awareness of the fact that our communities need financial support for their development and that educational services in French need additional support in order to ensure true equality. Just like anglophone schools, we also need the services of psychologists, guidance counsellors, and, in a word, the same services that majority schools have. Just because we are fewer in numbers does not mean that we do not need the same services.

So it is important to have funding that matches our needs. In recent years, the opposite seems to be happening, meaning that we have to try to satisfy the government's criteria. In terms of our needs, we have to make choices.

In terms of space, you need to know that the francophone school in the Yukon was built for a maximum of 190 to 200 students from kindergarten to grade 12. Today, we have more than 240 students. The secondary level is disappearing because there is not enough space. Students are quitting because they are in portable classrooms or they are sharing space with four-year-old kindergarten kids. It is a real problem for our community.

At the moment, the school board is negotiating with the territorial government and Canadian Heritage to build a community high school. The negotiations are going well. We hope that construction will begin in 2019, but in the meantime, we still need services. In addition, when that school is built, services will remain important for our students.

I don't know whether I have answered your question.

The Chair: Thank you, Mrs. Salesses.

Your turn, Mr. Massé.

Mr. Rémi Massé (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you for helping the committee with its work, Mr. Nolet and Mrs. Salesses. It is very much appreciated. This is the first opportunity I have had to sit on this committee. I find what you said this morning to be particularly interesting.

One thing in particular caught my attention. I am talking about the impressive figures that you gave us about the number of francophones and the increase in the number of francophones in your territory. I would like to know what you did to obtain that kind of a positive outcome in the Yukon.

Mrs. Isabelle Salesses: We are often asked that question, whether we have some kind of magic formula that explains why francophones are motivated to come here. There are a number of reasons for it. We like to think that our organization, the Association franco-yukonnaise, has something to do with it.

We also have a French-language school and a French-language daycare. We try to provide high-quality services, but the Yukon itself attracts people. A lot of people come to the Yukon for its wide open spaces, for a change in their lives, or for a number of other reasons.

In recent years, more and more families have come to the Yukon to settle. The young couples settling in the Yukon have children. They stay here because we can provide them with access to a daycare, a school and to other services in French. It all encourages those who come here to stay.

We are seeing a second generation in the school. Those who graduated from the École Émilie-Tremblay, in Whitehorse, now have children themselves and those children are now in grades 2 or 3. That is very encouraging for us.

Our impression is that francophones stay in the Yukon whereas once, they were just passing through. People came, had their minds blown, and went home again. We are seeing more and more people settling here permanently. We work hard to establish services with the help of the territorial government. An election campaign is going on at the moment, but up to now, the government has shown it-

self to be open to working with us to increase French-language services.

Of course, there are still major challenges in health care and education in French. As I said, the Garderie du petit cheval blanc is short of space. The waiting list contains the names of a number of French-speaking students. That is a problem for us because, if we do not reach those students immediately, right from early childhood, there is a danger that we will lose them. There is a much greater chance that they will go over to the anglophone side and do all their studies in English.

In my opinion, one of the main reasons is that people come to the Yukon for the Yukon. Once they are here, they realize that they can live a lot of their lives in French. A lot of people who come to visit us even say that the number of francophones, or people who speak French, is incredible. If you go to the grocery store, you will be served in French. If you go to the restaurant, a waitress will serve you in French. Service in the language is sometimes beyond what you find in Ottawa. It really is quite impressive.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Mrs. Isabelle Salesses: French immersion is also extremely popular.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mrs. Salesses.

Mr. Choquette, you have the floor.

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

Welcome, Mrs. Salesses and Mr. Nolet. I am very glad to hear from you.

Let me tell you about immigration and the return of Mobilité francophone. Have you started talking to your business leaders and employers about the return of Mobilité francophone so that they can use it? Have you started using the program?

How is economic development on that front? You are saying that immigration is going well. When people arrive, is the integration into the workplace smooth? I wanted to hear what you have to say on those issues.

There is also express entry. I was told that there is no francophone lens for express entry yet. How is that working out in the Yukon? What are your needs?

Mr. Frédéric Nolet (Director, Economic Development, Association franco-yukonnaise): Thank you for the question.

I would not say that francophone immigration is going well in the Yukon because we have a lot of needs in that area. We must do a lot of promotion because, unlike other parts of the country, people do not necessarily know where the Yukon is, period.

The Mobilité francophone is an excellent tool. We were pleased to see that such a program is back. We have started talking about it to employers here. In addition, we are returning to Destination Canada this year for the first time since 2011.

The response of our employers is that this is very relevant. It will work especially, for example, for people with permits for the Canada-France Working Holiday Program who already have jobs. They will be able to extend their stay.

That said, how can that type of immigration become permanent? There are a number of francophones currently in the Yukon who want to stay there. How can we ensure that they do not need to keep taking steps? That is our biggest obstacle right now. How do we help those people transition from temporary status to permanent status?

Let me give you a specific example. I have obtained permission to discuss the case.

Chrystelle Houdry comes from France. She came here with a working holiday permit in 2008. She returned in 2013, just after the francophone significant benefit program was eliminated. Since then, she went back to school to obtain a permit. Her son went to the Garderie du petit cheval blanc and now attends École Émilie-Tremblay. Chrystelle now sits on the AFY's board of directors. Their dream is to have a dog sled business here in the Yukon, but there is no program to help them. We know of no way for them to obtain a more permanent status in Canada. For us it is important to retain people like that.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Nolet.

We will now move to the second part on francophone immigration. Mrs. Salesse, go ahead for about six minutes.

Mrs. Isabelle Salesse: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Let's talk about francophone immigration. For five years, from 2005 to 2010, the AFY provided settlement services in French and English to the people of the Yukon.

In 2010, we lost the contract to an anglophone organization that had no obligation to provide services in French and still does not. Since 2010, the AFY has encountered much reluctance from Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada, whose acronym used to be CIC.

As for the legitimacy of the need for services in French for francophone immigrants in the Yukon, we have had to fight for two years to obtain some minimal funding to provide support to francophone immigrants. That funding did not allow us to hire a full-time person.

Between 2012 and 2015, we calculated that, for the same work as the AFY was doing, two francophone organizations in the Northwest Territories received four times more funding. That is legitimate and enables francophone organizations in the Northwest Territories to provide quality services. We clearly don't think it's a bad thing that they had so much money. However, we don't understand why there is such a discrepancy between the Yukon and the Northwest Territories.

Let us stress that, for welcoming francophone immigrants in minority communities, it is essential that the service be provided by the francophone community. The "by" and "for" are especially important in francophone immigration if our goal is to integrate immigrants into our community. It's sort of the same thing as early childhood. If we do not reach out to them right upon arrival, we will definitely lose them. An anglophone organization will not direct francophones to the francophone community.

We have tried to do as much as possible with the resources available, but staff retention is very difficult when you just have a part-

time position to offer. It is worrisome to see that we are still forced to convince the Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada officials in our region of the need to support francophone immigration in the Yukon.

Actually, it's always the same question of the chicken or the egg. The officials say that the funding depends on the number of eligible immigrants using our services. However, we believe that it's impossible to reach those numbers without adequate funding and services—particularly promotion and recruitment.

We have been going around in circles for a number of years, especially because few potential immigrants have heard of the Yukon. If they have heard of it, they sometimes think that we live in igloos and that our streets are haunted by polar bears.

However, our model makes it possible to have the entire continuum of services for immigrants, including promotion, recruitment and reception or social, cultural and economic integration.

We believe we have some momentum because, as Mr. Nolet mentioned, we are taking part in Destination Canada for the first time since 2011 with funding from the Yukon government. Let's also note once again that we had to work very hard to convince the authorities to support us as a result of the cuts at CIC from a few years ago; it is no longer helping the provinces and territories to fund Destination Canada.

The target of 4.4% is the department's target, but it is essential that it be reached. We feel that we can be a good partner to help achieve this target and to increase the number of francophone immigrants in the Yukon. As I said earlier, the AFY has recently published the document entitled *Taking action for a vibrant and dynamic Yukon Francophone Community*. This document includes requests from the Franco-Yukon community to the federal and territorial governments as well as to the City of Whitehorse.

With respect to immigration, the AFY made three specific requests. The first is to implement a strategy to achieve the 4.4% francophone immigration target set for the Yukon, and to include all immigration continuum components (recruitment, reception, integration and retention). That target is very important. Yet without a strategy and action plan, it will never be achieved. From January to September 2015, Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada programs have admitted no francophone immigrants to the Yukon. That has to change.

Another request from our document is to fund the AFY so that it can offer full-time French-language services for francophone immigrants to the Yukon. As mentioned earlier, resources are still essential to accomplish the work. The only recruiting tools that we currently have are a web page and a Facebook page. We'll still be able to participate in Destination Canada this year thanks to funding from the Yukon government.

In addition, the IRCC criteria for eligible clients are very restrictive. Many people come to our offices without being eligible clients. We do our best to help them without violating the terms of our agreements, but they do not count in the results and in the calculation of the workload of our employees.

Furthermore, we request that the French test required to obtain permanent residency be available in the Yukon, at the same cost as the English test. We think the current situation makes no sense. Not only is the French test more expensive than the English one, but it is not even available in the Yukon. Someone who needs to take it must go to either Vancouver or Montreal. So you need to add the cost of the plane ticket and accommodation there.

Clearly, the Yukon is not for everyone, but even so, there are a number of francophone immigrants there. They come with temporary permits or working holiday permits. They want to stay, but finding ways to do so is very complicated for them. The IRCC funding should allow recruitment and immigrant service organizations to serve anyone potentially interested in becoming permanent residents, including international students.

Finally, in closing, let me reiterate that, in order to achieve the target identified by the government, it is essential that we give ourselves tangible tools to do so. This must not be another empty promise. The IRCC must consider the different realities of the provinces and territories. An important and significant consideration is that we should not view immigration in silos. We need to encourage co-operation among all those working toward the reception and integration of francophone immigrants.

Once again, thank you for inviting us. We are ready to answer any questions you may have.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mrs. Salesse.

We will go around the table and each committee member will have about two minutes. We'll start with Mr. G n reux, followed by Mr. Vandal and Mr. Choquette.

Mr. G n reux, the floor is yours.

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

My thanks to the two witnesses for their remarks.

Mrs. Salesse, you are saying that services provided by the community would be a winning formula rather than having the government look after them. We have heard that on a number of occasions since the beginning of our meetings. We were told that the money should be given to the communities so that they organize themselves.

If you had additional funding, what would you do that you are not doing now?

Mrs. Isabelle Salesse: I'll let Mr. Nolet answer the question.

Mr. Fr d ric Nolet: If I may, Mr. G n reux—

Mr. Bernard G n reux: Go ahead, Mr. Nolet.

Mr. Fr d ric Nolet: In terms of immigration, we would simply increase our services.

Other provinces and territories have a lot more services that we are not able to provide. This is the first year we've had a full-time

immigration position. We were able to hire someone by reducing other activities. It was the only way to hire someone full time.

When you have only one part-time employee, it is often more difficult to carry out activities than with someone working full time. Right now, we are able to do a lot of activities, but we don't have the funding we need to organize them. Beforehand, we didn't have the human resources to organize the required activities. It's sort of a chicken or egg issue, as mentioned earlier.

I hope that answers your question.

Mr. Bernard G n reux: Yes, thank you.

Have you previously estimated the amounts you would need to be more active in immigration?

Mr. Fr d ric Nolet: If I'm not mistaken, we have asked—because a new call for proposals was made—for \$125,000 a year. Right now, I think we receive \$88,000. An amount of \$125,000 is significant, but I don't think our request is unreasonable.

Mr. Bernard G n reux: Are you talking about additional amounts?

Mr. Fr d ric Nolet: No, that's the total.

Mr. Bernard G n reux: So, in total, we are talking about an additional \$40,000.

Mrs. Isabelle Salesse: It's about \$40,000.

Mr. Fr d ric Nolet: That's about it.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Mr. Vandal, you now have the floor.

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

My name is Daniel Vandal, and I'm from Winnipeg.

You have a 4.4% target in francophone immigration. What is the percentage of francophone immigrants right now?

Mr. Fr d ric Nolet: Actually, the 4.4% target is the federal government's target. It's not really ours. However, we fully support it.

What is the situation in the Yukon? It is difficult to have the numbers on that. I think Mr. Choquette asked a question about that. In the presentation, it was mentioned that, between January and September 2015, there were no francophone immigrants to the Yukon through the IRCC programs.

I know that the provincial nominee program has brought in one or two francophones out of 160 immigrants in the past few years. So we have been way off target.

However, in previous years, we were much closer. Actually, we even exceeded the target a number of times through the Yukon nominee program. I think we even had 10 or 13 people in one year. I think it was mainly because of our participation in Destination Canada.

Mrs. Isabelle Salesse: There's also the francophone significant benefit program, which was eliminated for a little over a year. That doesn't help us.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Choquette, you have the floor again.

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

To wrap up, you said earlier that there are francophones who end up in your region temporarily. They settled there, they know and like the region. They would like to obtain Canadian citizenship, but it's extremely complicated. How could the federal government improve things here, and how could it facilitate the process of obtaining citizenship for people who are already in the Yukon, who enjoy life there and have settled there?

Mrs. Isabelle Salesse: There are two things to consider.

The first would be to broaden the clientele we can serve. Currently, all settlement and welcoming service providers can serve only permanent residents or refugees who already have status. There are temporary workers, students and people with a working-holiday permit who we cannot serve. We can't give them any support, and we shouldn't even speak to them. That said, we speak to them in the context of other services, but the IRCC needs to broaden the clientele we can meet with.

We should also reassess the criteria for speeding up access to permanent residence for people who are already here, who have already integrated into the community and whose children are already going to school in our region. Several things could ensure that these people have access more quickly to permanent residence. We understand that we can't do everything and anything, but it would be good to consider this matter, especially in communities like those in the Yukon, where people come simply to see how it is. Then, they fall in love with the Yukon and don't want to leave. Unfortunately for them, it's extremely difficult to stay there. These people exhaust themselves and go away or leave because they are asked to leave.

These two things are really important.

The Chair: Mrs. Salesse and Mr. Nolet, thank you for this excellent presentation. Congratulations on the work you are doing.

You have three very specific requests relating to immigration. The committee members very much appreciated your presentation, and it was very helpful. Once again, we thank you very much.

This ends our meeting for today. I would like to remind committee members that we will meet again on Tuesday.

The meeting is adjourned.

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