



HOUSE OF COMMONS
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES
CANADA

43rd PARLIAMENT, 2nd SESSION

Standing Committee on Official Languages

EVIDENCE

NUMBER 027

Thursday, April 22, 2021

Chair: Mr. Emmanuel Dubourg



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• (1535)

[*English*]

The Chair (Mr. Emmanuel Dubourg (Bourassa, Lib.)): I call this meeting to order.

[*Translation*]

Welcome to meeting No. 27^x of the House of Commons Standing Committee on Official Languages.

The committee is meeting for two hours today on its study on Government Measures to Protect and Promote French in Quebec and in Canada.

[*English*]

Just as a reminder, all comments by members and witnesses should be addressed through the chair.

[*Translation*]

Unless there are exceptional circumstances, the use of a headset with a boom microphone is mandatory for everyone participating remotely.

As you know, interpretation services are available for this meeting. You have the choice at the bottom of your screen of either the floor, English or French.

Almost all, if not all, of the witnesses are used to appearing before our committee. You know our rules.

First, I would like to welcome all our witnesses to this meeting. You will have a total of seven and a half minutes for your opening remarks, which will be followed by a period of questions. I will signal to you when you have a minute of time left for your remarks or your answer to a member. When you see a red card, that will mean your speaking time is up.

I would now like to welcome this afternoon's witnesses officially.

From the Assemblée de la francophonie de l'Ontario, we have Carol Jolin, President, Peter Hominuk, Executive Director, and Bryan Michaud, Policy Analyst.

From the Canadian Institute for Research on Linguistic Minorities, we have Éric Forgues, Executive Director.

As an individual, we have Rodrigue Landry, Professor Emeritus at the Université de Moncton and former Director General of the Canadian Institute for Research on Linguistic Minorities.

Without further ado, we will begin with the representative from the Assemblée de la francophonie de l'Ontario. I presume Mr. Jolin will be taking the floor.

Mr. Jolin, you have the floor for seven and a half minutes to make your opening remarks.

Mr. Carol Jolin (President, Assemblée de la francophonie de l'Ontario): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

First, I'd like to thank you for inviting me to speak as part of your study on government measures to protect and promote French in Quebec and in Canada.

As our national organization, the Fédération des communautés francophones et acadienne, or FCFA, wisely notes in its draft proposals regarding the Canadian government's commitment to protect and promote French across the country, the Government of Canada mainly promotes French in three ways: by funding the organizations and institutions of the francophone and Acadian communities; providing cash transfers to the provinces and territories for instruction in French as a first and second language and for providing French-language services; and funding official language learning in the public service.

Since I addressed Ontario's chronic underfunding of official languages during my last appearance here, I will not dwell on that issue today.

My remarks today will focus on federal transfers for postsecondary French-language instruction.

This funding is essential to our community. As you know, there is a shortage of francophone and bilingual professionals in many sectors, health and education in particular.

Postsecondary French-language education is the number one asset that will enable Ontario and the entire country to address the labour shortage.

Education is oxygen to our communities.

As you know, the Franco-Ontarian community is facing an institutional crisis, particularly in northern Ontario since the announcement that Laurentian University made on February 1^x.

Half the university's French-language programs have been cut since that announcement was made, and nearly 40 teachers in the French-language programs were laid off—in English. The position of officer responsible for recruiting foreign students for French-language programming has also been axed. The bulldozing is complete.

Bilingualism at Laurentian University has thus been annihilated.

While there is a glimmer of hope that the universities of Sudbury and Hearst can continue French-language university programming in the north, many questions remain.

How have we come to this pass? Is the funding that the Canadian and Ontario governments have provided actually being used for French-language programming and services? Or has it gone to debt repayments or to fund day-to-day operations, as would appear to be the case for part of the money earmarked for research as well as gifts from donors? I don't have the answers to these questions, nor, I would imagine, do the honourable members of this committee. I also very much doubt that the governments have them either. Laurentian University, like other minority community universities, is not required to account for funding related to official languages.

Laurentian University has not invested in francophones in the past 20 years. Since 2000, it has created 26 English-language programs, which have enabled it to increase its number of anglophone students by 2,170 this year.

Only five new French-language programs have been introduced during that same period, and they have added only 124 francophone students this year.

According to data gathered by Laurentian University's Regroupement des professeurs francophones, or RPF, on April 11, the university cut 45% of its French-language programming, but only 20% of its English offerings.

Incidentally, we are citing the Regroupement's figures here because those provided by Laurentian University have proven to be misleading.

When it comes to accountability...

Why such disproportionate cuts to French-language programs?

The Canadian and Ontario governments, as well as the Consortium national de formation en santé, or CNFS, invest more than \$12 million in Laurentian University annually to support its efforts to provide high-quality French-language programming and services.

Where does that money go? We don't know.

In March, our lawyers from the Juristes Power Law firm filed a notice of motion to have the Assemblée de la francophonie de l'Ontario, or AFO, instated as an interested party in the court-supervised financial restructuring process.

The local newspaper *Le Voyageur* reported a few days ago that several affidavits signed by Laurentian University professors and filed in court had outlined facts that revealed the limits of the university administration's willingness to invest in French-language programs.

• (1540)

They referred to nonexistent efforts to recruit francophones internationally, problems in securing what are considered flagship programs on the francophone side and obstacles raised to undermine the establishment of a French-language university, but especially

the lack of any decision-making power wielded by francophones at Laurentian University.

However, we are inclined to believe that the funding provided by the federal and provincial governments has helped make francophone needs count to a greater degree and to be better funded.

Consequently, as the process of modernizing the Official Languages Act begins, we feel it is essential that the act provide for new accountability models designed to ensure full transparency regarding government funding granted for this type of budget envelope.

We also consider it essential that all funding that the federal and provincial governments provide to support French-language education and services, as in the official languages in education program, for example, be withdrawn from Laurentian University as soon as possible and redirected to the University of Sudbury. The Franco-Ontarian community's trust in Laurentian University has now reached its lowest point, and the university no longer has any credibility in the community it claims to serve.

The Franco-Ontarian community's clear view is that the future of French-language university programming in northern Ontario lies with the University of Sudbury and the University of Hearst, not Laurentian University, which should transfer its French-language programs to those two institutions as soon as possible.

• (1545)

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

Thank you for staying within the time allotted to you.

We will immediately go to our next witness, Éric Forgues, who is executive director of the Canadian Institute for Research on Linguistic Minorities.

Mr. Forgues, you have the floor for seven and a half minutes.

Mr. Éric Forgues (Executive Director, Canadian Institute for Research on Linguistic Minorities): Thank you.

As you mentioned, I have been executive director of the Canadian Institute for Research on Linguistic Minorities, the CIRLM, since 2012. Rodrigue Landry, who is also here today, was executive director of the Institute from 2002 to 2012.

The institute was created in 2002 with funding that Canadian Heritage granted to the Université de Moncton. Its mission is to work together with its partners in conducting relevant research that can support the various stakeholders, the official language minorities and the framers of public language policy.

My presentation will focus on three points: the importance of research and data in formulating government official language action plans and developing public policy, the importance of engaging francophone populations and the need to clarify part VII of the Official Languages Act.

I will not be presenting figures or analyses to show how fragile the francophone communities are since that has been done on many occasions. We know that the communities' demographic weight is slowly declining, that the vitality of French is low in certain regions and that their institutions are fragile. We also know that there is an associative sector striving every day to combat the pressures of assimilation and that thousands of francophones and francophiles are helping to make French a living language.

What is missing, in my view, are research-based public policies. We lack any genuine official languages planning that includes clearly defined objectives and means or measurable results that are to be achieved. We must be able to measure more accurately the impact of action taken by government and francophone actors to address the communities' vitality. There must also be more transparency and accountability for the communities.

Consider, for example, the Action Plan for Official Languages 2018-2023: Investing in Our Future. That plan provides for official languages investments totalling \$2.7 billion. It states: "Our new Action Plan will help Canada achieve measurable, evidence-based goals supporting the vitality of official-language minority communities and the bilingualism of Canadians."

Two measurable objectives from the action plan are presented. First, the action plan's measures are designed to stabilize the proportion of francophones in the country at 4%. Second, the aim is to work toward a target of 4.4% of all immigrants by 2023. I don't think that's enough to determine whether the \$2.7 billion investment will have any real effect on the communities. Other indicators seem to be needed. I am thinking, for example, of indicators of the number of parent rights holders who send their children to French schools, educational infrastructure needs, the language young people use on social media, how they consume French-language cultural products and so on.

To live in French, young people and adults need a French-language social environment and well-established francophone institutions. They need francophone workplaces and educational spaces, childcare centres, sports, organized recreation, media and social media. They need a French-language public and media landscape. Have we analyzed the communities' sociolinguistic environment? Have we based the measures we take on those analyses? As far as I know, that has not been the case. This is one of the limits of government intervention. Government invests significant funding without basing its intervention on rigorous and precise planning that produces measurable results based on research, analysis and conclusive data. A community of researchers can assist government and the action it takes. We have extensive expertise in official languages. Many individuals, including Rodrigue Landry here, have contributed to this effort a keen understanding of the factors that influence a community's linguistic vitality.

Now I will discuss public engagement.

Canadian government intervention should increase public participation in developing government action plans for official languages and government action as a whole. Public engagement should be based on consultation activities and discussions on the needs and priorities of the communities. And it should start with communication. It is important that francophone actors and the Canadian gov-

ernment inform the public of progress that has been made. We are in the third year of the Action Plan for Official Languages 2018-2023: Investing in Our Future. Where do we stand today? No progress reports have been released. The government and francophone organizations must do a better job of reporting their actions and achievements to the public.

• (1550)

Efforts must be made to work more closely with the public, who are the first ones affected by these measures. When I say the public, I am thinking of citizens. Consultations must not be restricted to francophone professionals. I believe it is dangerous to limit consultations to organizations because an organization, by definition, will always advocate a point of view related to the very purpose of its existence, mission, objectives and so on.

Of course, there are also benefits to consulting the public because those organizations have developed expertise in their spheres of action. That expertise should not be overlooked, but there has been a tendency to overlook citizen expertise in recent years. Many experiments are being conducted around the world to involve citizens to a greater degree in the democratic life of their country. A recent report by the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development, the OECD, reveals that a wave of formal discussion is under way. Promising ideas are waiting to be explored in order to urge francophone and francophile populations to engage with the francophonie relying on their collective intelligence.

I think we should encourage the creation of citizen deliberation spaces to determine the needs and priorities of the communities and to propose ways of addressing them, but, more broadly, to determine a society-wide project for the francophonie.

In closing, I will address part VII of the Official Languages Act, which directly concerns the communities. Part VII requires the government to take positive measures to enhance the vitality of the minorities and to assist their development. It is essential that part VII be clarified in order to minimize room for interpretation. For the government, it must be construed as narrowly as possible.

As lawyer Michel Doucet has said, part VII of the act has "a remedial character" and "its purpose is not to maintain the status quo but instead to remedy the historic and gradual erosion of the rights of official language minorities."

Thank you for your attention.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Forgues.

We will now continue with Mr. Rodrigue Landry, professor emeritus.

Mr. Landry, you also have seven and a half minutes to make your presentation.

Mr. Rodrigue Landry (Professor Emeritus, Université de Moncton, former Director General, Canadian Institute for Research on Linguistic Minorities, As an Individual): Good afternoon.

Thank you for having me here today to talk to you about the Official Languages Act and the vitality of the minorities.

I intend to provide you with a survey of the views I have developed in a forthcoming publication. My presentation will be divided into three parts.

First, let's talk about the impact of the Official Languages Act on the vitality of the linguistic minorities. Our research shows that contact with government cannot be distinguished from other types of linguistic contact in the public sphere. Linguistic contacts are statistically unrelated to individual linguistic identity. Instead they are related to subjective linguistic vitality, by which I mean individuals' perception of the status and vitality of a language in society. This subjective vitality is only faintly related to the desire to belong to the minority community.

The public services that the federal government provides represent only a very small portion of linguistic experiences in the public sphere. Consequently, the Official Languages Act has little impact on individuals' language development.

We therefore come to the first sociolinguistic principle respecting the potential impact of a language law on the vitality of a minority: no language policy or law has an impact on the vitality of a minority unless it promotes the linguistic and the cultural socialization of its members. In our view, only part VII of the Official Languages Act appears, at least implicitly, to offer that potential. We will return to this point.

Now let's consider the actors who are essential to the vitality of a language. Our theoretical models reveal three essential and relatively independent actors whose roles influence the vitality of a linguistic minority: the community, the civil society of the minority and the state or government.

The first and most important essential actor is the community itself, not in its broader and impersonal sense, but as the sum of the individuals and families who constitute what researchers call the "intimate community," of which the family is the basic unit. It guarantees the intergenerational transmission of language and the foundations of individual identity.

The second essential actor is the civil society of the minority, which manages the minority's social organization. It exercises invaluable leadership in creating and maintaining the group's institutions, its "institutional completeness." The civil society also acts as an intermediary between members of the minority and the state.

The third essential actor is the state, which supports the linguistic minority's vitality by legitimizing its existence in society through policies that recognize individual and collective rights. The state delivers programs and services in the language of the minority and may fund vital institutions.

Our second principle is therefore as follows: a language policy or act has an optimal effect on the vitality of the linguistic minority when it promotes the growth of the group's collective identity and coordinates a synergistic set of concerted measures taken by the three actors essential to its vitality.

Responsibility for the coordination of and synergy among the three actors that enhance the minority's vitality falls to the state. The state is the legitimate political decision-maker and holder of

power and resources. The state is in the best position to implement an effective language planning program.

Now I would like to discuss part VII of the Official Languages Act. Part VII is collective and remedial in scope and concerns the genuine equality of the two official language communities. This part of the act addresses the objective of enhancing the vitality of the minorities that the government has set, more particularly in section 41. Note that the English version of section 41 refers to "*enhancing the vitality*," whereas the French version contains the words "favoriser l'épanouissement."

• (1555)

From what I understand of the analyses conducted by the legal experts who interpret part VII of the Official Languages Act, considerable work remains to be done to clarify its object and scope. What does it mean to take "positive measures" in order "to enhance the vitality of the minorities," "to support and assist their development" and "to foster the full recognition and use of both English and French in Canadian society"? In my view, if these ambitious aims are not reflected in specific and actual objectives regarding community vitality or in clear government responsibilities and commitments, the Official Languages Act may well be important in appearance, given its symbolic character for the country, but have no substantial impact on the actual equality of the two major linguistic communities concerned.

Revitalizing a language is an ambitious and complex undertaking. No language can be revitalized without a genuine language plan. This plan is based on an extensive and ongoing research program that guides the precise nature of priority objectives, the implementation of actions designed to achieve them and evaluations verifying their effectiveness.

Paradoxically, since Official Languages Act was amended in 2005, as a result of which part VII is now justiciable, the federal government's engagement in its five-year plans appears to have regressed, if the five-year period from 2003 to 2008 can be taken as a reference point. The first action plan for official languages, in 2003, contained several elements of a true language plan. It was based on research and set genuine priority objectives tailored to each of the official language minorities. The plans and roadmaps that followed appear to have been more the result of political compromises than genuine language plans.

• (1600)

The Chair: You have 15 seconds left, Mr. Landry.

Mr. Rodrigue Landry: From a language revitalization perspective, in addition to the fact that the fundamental objective of the Official Languages Act and its part VII lacks clarity, three major flaws make it impossible for the federal government to make commitments to enhance the vitality of the minorities: the lack of a genuine language plan; the negligence of the main actor involved in enhancing the vitality of a language, which is to say the community itself, consisting of its individual members; and the lack of intergovernmental coordination between the federal government and the provinces and territories.

Thank you.

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

I would like to remind the witnesses that, if they wish to submit their briefs to us, they may forward them to the clerk. We would be very much appreciate that.

We will now go to the period of questions. I would remind members that we will have two periods of questions. The first will consist of our usual rounds of six minutes, five minutes, two and a half minutes and five minutes. We will have the same rounds in the second period of questions since the witnesses have agreed to stay with us for the next two hours.

We begin with the the first vice-chair of the committee, Mr. Blaney.

Go ahead for six minutes.

Hon. Steven Blaney (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis, CPC): Thank you, Mr. chair

Thanks as well to our eminent witnesses for making themselves available.

This is an important study for the members of this committee since we would like to expand the application of the Official Languages Act to include, dare I say it, French language minorities in North America.

My first question is for Mr. Landry.

You have conducted some extremely interesting research. You've previously spoken to us about statutory insecurity, which you have addressed in your writings. You've also presented some new information to us today.

We are, of course, examining ways to reframe the Official Languages Act for our francophone minority communities, but don't you think we should also take this opportunity to examine the decline of French in Quebec?

I'd like to have your perspective on that subject.

Mr. Rodrigue Landry: We've conducted research in Quebec on both francophones and anglophones. The francophone research dates back to the 1990s, whereas our last research project on Quebec anglophones goes back to 2008 or 2009. What struck me was that we observed no qualitative differences between francophones living in Quebec and francophones outside Quebec. In other words, when we study them based on a demographic profile and the vitality continuum, we see that, in a low-vitality context, they behave as minority francophones.

I must say that French is more protected in Quebec than in most other provinces. And yet the people who constitute the sector that I call the intimate community, that is, the individuals and families that constitute it, behave in the same way as people in the majority when they're in the majority and as people in the minority when they're in the minority.

We published two articles, one on francophones and the other on anglophones, and we focused on the factors in their lives that had an influence. For example, we know that the language used in public has a definite impact on subjective vitality and that the language used in private life, together with other aspects of lived experience, predict identity. The factors are the same for anglophones living in

Quebec and francophones outside Quebec. They behave as a minority when they're in the minority.

However, there's a difference among Quebec anglophones. I don't think Quebec's anglophone community constitutes a threat to that province. It's the strength of English around the world, particularly in North America, that does that. You could say it's the epicentre. Researchers have drawn a planetary analogy: English is the big planet that attracts all the others. It's a very interesting model. English is now the language that everyone wants to use. You can see how people are drawn to English even in Quebec. I would note, however, that the concept of vitality applies to all groups, both francophones and anglophones in Quebec.

• (1605)

Hon. Steven Blaney: That's very interesting, Mr. Landry. You seem to be saying that francophone minorities outside Quebec are a twofold minority, since Quebec francophones behave, to a degree, as a minority when they're in a minority situation. That's more or less what we see happening on Montreal Island. However, anglophones see and feel the ambient appeal of the English language in North America even when they're in the minority.

Mr. Rodrigue Landry: I'd like to make a point here. Where this is most obvious is in the media. When we analyzed our research data on Quebec anglophones, we saw that it was entirely natural for them to consume English media. That's the case even when they're very much in the minority. However, it also has to be said that even Quebec's francophone majority consumes a great deal of English-language media.

Hon. Steven Blaney: But the fact remains that the final episode of *District 31* will be on this evening, Mr. Landry, and it will be broadcast in French.

Mr. Jolin, I unfortunately don't have much time left to devote to you. I hope we remember your remarks when we focus specifically on the situation of Laurentian University. I say that mainly for the analyst and the chair. I remember many points from your remarks, particularly the recommendations. However, I don't have enough time to go back over them. You made a case. You even called Laurentian University by its English name. That suggests a certain resentment of that institution on your part.

I am out of time. We'll catch up on the next round.

The Chair: Yes, absolutely. You will have an opportunity to get back to that, Mr. Blaney and Mr. Jolin, since we have a full round left.

Now we will hear from Ms. Lattanzio.

I remind members please to say to whom they are directing their questions.

Go ahead, Ms. Lattanzio.

Ms. Patricia Lattanzio (Saint-Léonard—Saint-Michel, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

My next two questions will be for Mr. Landry, but before getting to those questions, I'd like to ask him to send us copies of the two articles he mentioned in his reply to my colleague.

Here's my first question, Mr. Landry: what do you think are the vitality factors on which the OLMCs and the various orders of government should rely in establishing a community base for intergenerational language transmission?

Mr. Rodrigue Landry: I've written extensively on that subject, and I think early childhood is the leading factor. For example, I've heard from many spokespersons for various organizations. Mr. Forgues has written extensively on the interests that each association advocates. Some authors discuss neo-corporate interests, for example. In fact, all organizations want money so they can advance their own sectors. On the other hand, they don't agree on the importance of early childhood or, in particular, on increasing parent awareness in order then to encourage them to enrol their children in minority schools. However, everyone would benefit if we could really emphasize that. In overall terms, only 50% of the children of francophone minority communities attend French-language schools, although that figure comes from Statistics Canada's 2006 post-census survey on the vitality of official language minorities.

Consequently, I feel that the crucial factors are early childhood and education. Many encouraging points are also made in the white paper, which I recently read but hadn't read before I finished writing my article. It outlines some interesting aspects and, from what I understood, seems to single out early childhood.

• (1610)

Ms. Patricia Lattanzio: I also understand that you published a study on Quebec anglophones in 2008 or 2009. Is that correct?

Mr. Rodrigue Landry: Yes, it was published around then.

There's a more recent article in which we compare their behaviour and reactions to various situations. That study is actually quite similar to another one we conducted on francophones. I think that one was published in 2014.

Ms. Patricia Lattanzio: Would you please send us the most recent study as well as the one from 2008 or 2009?

Second, I want to ask if you could tell us about the specific issues that exogamous families face. In that particular context, what are the consequences for the transmission of the minority language to the children of those families? What are the trends in their educational and linguistic path?

Mr. Rodrigue Landry: Exogamy is a very interesting phenomenon. Take school enrolment, for example. Approximately 34% of exogamous parents in francophone minority situations send their children to francophone schools, compared to 88% of families where both parents are francophone. So you might believe that the entire burden rests on the shoulders of exogamous parents. However, our more in-depth analyses show that exogamy is the direct cause of failure to transmit the French language or to enrol children in francophone schools. Exogamy is a factor that influences the family language dynamic.

I like to compare exogamous families to the federal government. An exogamous family is a microcosm of society. In both cases, people have to learn to value both languages within the same unit.

Politicians have to do it in Parliament, and parents in exogamous families have to do it with members of their own family. That's how I view the federal government's role, which is to increase awareness among parents. All parents want their children to be bilingual, but our surveys show that very few parents actually understand the issues involved. So-called additive bilingualism, which is acquired when you learn a second language without losing your first, is always better when you focus on the weaker language.

Ms. Patricia Lattanzio: Thank you, Mr. Landry.

Mr. Rodrigue Landry: That's perhaps...

Ms. Patricia Lattanzio: I didn't want to interrupt you, Mr. Landry, but I'd also like to ask Mr. Forgues a question.

Mr. Forgues, you said that part VII of the Official Languages Act had a remedial character.

Could we say that the Canadian government grants the OLMCs institutional completeness under part VII?

Mr. Éric Forgues: No. I think that, as a result of one particular interpretation, the government took a long time to implement various measures pursuant to its part VII obligations. You have to understand that part VII is a more recent development in the history of the Official Languages Act. The federal government's duty to ensure that positive measures are taken is also recent. Consequently, it's a little early in the Canadian francophonie's history for those measures to have had a considerable influence on institutional completeness. More has to be done.

One of the problems with part VII is that the federal government's commitments have been interpreted in a somewhat minimalist manner.

• (1615)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Forgues.

Mr. Beaulieu will now have the floor for six minutes.

Mr. Mario Beaulieu (La Pointe-de-l'Île, BQ): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thanks to the witnesses for being with us. The three presentations were very interesting.

I have a general question. When the Official Languages Act was introduced 52 years ago, didn't we start off on the wrong foot by determining that the Acadian community and the francophone communities outside Quebec were equivalent to Quebec's anglophone community?

In 1996, for example, a study by the Commission nationale des parents francophones revealed that school funding under the official languages program had benefited Quebec's anglophone schools far more than francophone schools outside Quebec. And yet anglophone schools were already overfunded relative to francophone schools.

That's what we're questioning now as we acknowledge that the French language has declined in Quebec and that the federal government is also responsible for protecting French in Quebec.

What do you think about that?

Mr. Éric Forgues: I don't know for whom your question's intended, but I'll take the liberty of answering it first.

We had an act that defined two official language minorities in a way that didn't correspond to the way we had imagined Canada's linguistic landscape. We saw that the Canadian francophonie rested on a more fragile and more delicate foundation across the country as a whole, but that's not what's set forth in the Official Languages Act. So what the government is proposing in its white paper gives me the impression that we'd be going back to a landscape more consistent with the way we perceive ourselves as francophones in this country.

Quebec's francophones, and even Quebec's anglophones, don't necessarily consider themselves a minority. Quebec anglophones have only very recently begun to view themselves as a minority group. That wasn't how they previously imagined themselves.

The imagined political landscape of the Official Languages Act was thus quite the opposite. I believe that the government, in its white paper, is attempting to return to an imagined political landscape that's more consistent with reality. The francophonie across the country must be viewed as being in a minority situation.

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: I entirely agree.

This will be the first time the Standing Committee on Official Languages has undertaken a study on the situation of French in Quebec and on the impact of federal language policy on Quebec after 52 years.

This is all related to the fact that the federal government considered anglophones as the only minority in Quebec. Even the UN doesn't recognize Quebec anglophones as a minority because they're part of the English Canadian majority. The federal government also caused Bill 101 to be amended as a result of the Constitution Act, 1982.

I don't know whether Mr. Landry or Mr. Forgues would like to comment on this.

Mr. Rodrigue Landry: We wrote a book about a Canadian study on graduates of French-language schools and another about English-language schools. The analysis and all the data on ethnolinguistic vitality that we included in the study point to two possible scenarios. I'm not making any predictions here.

One of the potential scenarios is, on the francophone side, that, with government assistance in particular, progress can be made on plans for institutional completeness and linguistic legitimacy. That's the government's role. However, since we don't support the base, fewer and fewer people will attend French-language institutions and use the language.

On the anglophone side, our analysis points to a scenario in which people will have no problem using English because of the considerable attraction it exerts. However, as a result of the fact that Quebec strongly defends French with its Bill 101, it could lose

some of the control it exercises over its own institutions and over the legitimacy of that language in Quebec.

These two scenarios are somewhat based on the strengths of each group.

● (1620)

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: The concept of "institutional completeness" that you use is interesting. It's also used by Frédéric Lacroix. According to that principle, the stronger a linguistic community's institutions are, the greater its language's force of attraction will be.

English schools in Quebec admit more students than there are anglophones, nearly three times as many at the postsecondary level, in the CEGEPs. As a result of the positive measures the federal government has taken, approximately \$50 million more is available for English-language primary and secondary schools. For the CEGEPs and universities, that's a lot of money.

What you think about that? Should we question that principle?

The Chair: Pardon me, Mr. Beaulieu, but that's all the time we have. You'll have a chance to come back to the subject during the period of questions.

Mr. Boulerice, go ahead for six minutes.

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I like to go back to the first presentation, which was made by the spokesperson or director of the Assemblée de la francophonie de l'Ontario, because a drama is playing out as a result of radical cuts to French-language programs at the Université Laurentienne. I still call it the Université Laurentienne, not Laurentian University.

Mr. Jolin, as my Conservative colleagues noted earlier, you frequently refer to the annihilation of bilingualism and the violation of a relationship of trust. That's tough language, but I can understand why you use it.

First of all, do you think all hope is lost for that institution, and is the relationship of trust actually broken?

Second, is there a genuine possibility that the University of Sudbury may acquire some independence by taking over French-language programs, particularly the midwifery program, which is unique outside Quebec?

Mr. Carol Jolin: Thank you for your question.

That's absolutely correct: the community has completely lost trust in Laurentian University's administration. Matters were already not going very well. As I mentioned, very little effort has been made to improve French-language programming in the past 20 years. We were also told that the marketing work done to recruit francophone students was not up to snuff.

I don't know whether I discussed this earlier, but the university hired someone in 2002 to recruit anglophone students internationally. As a result, the university has regularly admitted 350 to 450 foreign anglophone students every year. It wasn't until two years ago that it hired someone to recruit foreign francophone students. That initial attempt attracted slightly fewer than 100 students. We've learned that this position was recently eliminated as part of the university's budget cuts.

As for the second part of your question, the University of Sudbury's board of regents decided on March 11 last that the University of Sudbury would become a university governed by, with and for francophones. We firmly believe that the university, which now has its charter, has a chance to continue French-language programming in the mid-north; that's essential. Otherwise there will be fewer options for students in the region, province or even other provinces who would like to come and study in French in Sudbury.

The number of options available to students in the region who want to study French has been cut. Research has been conducted on this subject, and we know that a minority of those students will go to Ottawa, Hearst or Toronto, where the Université de l'Ontario français is offering new programs. [*Technical difficulty—Editor*] as far as possible, and they'll have to turn to the English-language universities in order to do so. I still call that the "assimilation highway."

The University of Sudbury is well equipped to offer French-language programs to students in the mid-north. It's also well positioned to work together as part of a network with the Université de l'Ontario français in Toronto and with the University of Hearst, which is now independent because it received its own institutional charter last week.

We're also able to provide better service to students who will be completing their secondary studies and who want to study in French. The business community urgently needs young people who can speak both official languages to provide services.

As...

• (1625)

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice: Pardon me for interrupting. You're enthusiastic, and I understand why. However, I'd like to ask another question. I only have six minutes, and time is flying by.

We discussed the obligation to have strong institutions, particularly in education and culture, in order to ensure the vitality of francophone communities. I think this is a good example of that.

What role do you think the federal government should play in this transition to stronger French-language universities in Sudbury and Hearst?

Mr. Carol Jolin: We've had several discussions on the subject with the provincial government, which has shown some interest in it. Minister Mulroney discussed an interesting project, and Minister Romano has set some reasonable conditions to make it happen.

In the federal government, Ms. Joly said she was encouraged and prepared to contribute to the creation of an entirely independent university by and for francophones in Sudbury.

I think the stars are clearly aligned. Work remains to be done between the two levels of government, somewhat as was done for the Université de l'Ontario français. Ms. Joly and Ms. Mulroney have worked well together to advance the file, and we're hoping the same will happen for the University of Sudbury.

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice: We hope so.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Boulerice.

Mr. Dalton, go ahead for five minutes.

Mr. Marc Dalton (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge, CPC): Thanks to the witnesses. Their comments are very interesting.

The government's white paper refers to a committee of experts that will have a mandate to develop criteria for recognizing regions with a strong francophone presence outside Quebec.

I come from the west, from British Columbia to be more precise, and we too have regions where francophone communities live. They aren't really grouped together geographically as they used to be. Those populations are more dispersed. In the Vancouver area, for example, the francophone community was previously concentrated in Maillardville, where francophones still live, but now they're more or less scattered around the region.

Should the committee address this question? What criteria do you think should be used to designate regions with a strong francophone presence outside Quebec?

My question is for Mr. Forgues or Mr. Landry.

Mr. Éric Forgues: I'll begin, and Mr. Landry can supplement my answer.

An amendment has already been made to the regulations, the exact name of which I forget, the purpose of which is to determine the regions where there's adequate demand for services in the minority language.

The definition of those regions is far more inclusive now. I can't remember it all, but I understand that we still want to work to that end and that we want an approach that's very inclusive from the standpoint of active offer of service in both official languages. I think we should expand active offer as much as possible. We've already mentioned this, but the underlying thrust of this act is that it must allow for a catching up, a righting of past wrongs.

Services must also be provided to help reverse assimilation trends. The regulations must therefore be as generous as possible and as inclusive as possible when it comes to defining the regions where there is deemed to be significant demand for services in both official languages.

• (1630)

Mr. Marc Dalton: Thank you.

Mr. Landry, would you like to add a comment?

Mr. Rodrigue Landry: Yes, thank you.

I'm going to discuss a concept that I use in my research, the concept of socializing proximity. I have a very good understanding of the situation in British Columbia, where communities are small and dispersed. In those kinds of situations, it's very difficult for parents, for example, to try to live in French because none of their neighbours or the people they know around them speak French. Consequently, it's aware and engaged people who make the effort to send their children to French schools because what's normal for children is to attend English schools.

The more concentrated the francophone population, the easier it is for its members to live in French. They have to make the effort. Very little research has been done on the subject, but what research does exist shows that the closer the schools are to the community, the more people tend to gather around them. The same demographic changes occur when parents group together near schools. These kinds of situations are possible, but they're nevertheless a very tough challenge to overcome from a demographic standpoint.

Mr. Marc Dalton: I'd like to ask another question now as my time is limited.

We've heard about another problem, which was specifically raised by the francophone community of British Columbia. It arises when the federal government decides to contract with third parties to implement agreements respecting a strictly federal jurisdiction. Where it does so, the measures necessary to comply with the act must be taken, but that's not always the case.

In a few seconds, do you have any comments on that subject? Do you have any suggestions as to the best way to remedy this kind of problem?

Mr. Rodrigue Landry: That's a question that should be put to a lawyer. When you hire a third party, that party has the same obligations as the federal entity. There's not much you can do if they aren't complied with.

Mr. Marc Dalton: Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Landry.

Mr. Lefebvre, you have the floor for five minutes.

Mr. Paul Lefebvre (Sudbury, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Good afternoon to everyone.

I'm very pleased to be back with the committee. I'm speaking to you from Sudbury. I am less than a kilometre away from Université Laurentienne, which I could also call, as Mr. Jolin did, Laurentian University. I will not go on at great length, as my good friend Darrell Samson used to do. He was in the habit of giving a long preamble and allowing only 50 seconds for the witness to answer his question. He was a past master at this. That being said, I really do want to get to the heart of the matter.

Mr. Jolin, you spoke about accountability. But after two years away from the committee, I can see that the problem persists. It's really a big challenge. As you know, the federal government transfers funds to the provinces, which do not want to be accountable to them at all. You also mentioned that provinces transfer funds to institutions. We might well ask about the institutions' accountability to the province.

Although I completely agree with you, I am wondering what option you might suggest to us. What I'm thinking about here are the recommendations we would have to make as part of this study. It's about the decline of French across Canada. I will of course speak to you about Laurentian University when I return, but for the time being, I'd like to know what option you would like to put forward with respect to accountability.

Mr. Carol Jolin: I believe that both levels of government need to discuss the issue of French in minority language communities and to make sure that the money really gets to where it is supposed to go. In this regard, I believe that the case of Laurentian University is rather clear.

Among other things, we're asking the two levels of government to send the funds initially earmarked for Laurentian University to the University of Sudbury. We're talking about approximately \$12 million to enable the University of Sudbury to restore governance by and for francophones, for francophone and francophile students who wish to come and study in the Sudbury region.

From the francophone standpoint, this accountability is even more important. Indeed, we're still asking ourselves whether we're getting what we're entitled to receive. At the moment, these questions are especially significant in Sudbury, with a university having been placed under the protection of the Companies' Creditors Arrangement Act.

• (1635)

Mr. Paul Lefebvre: That's a very good point. You spoke earlier about recruiting foreign students. My good friend Benoît Clément, who administered international recruitment, was dismissed. The position had existed for two years. I would like to tell my new colleagues on the committee that everything that happened at Laurentian University affected me deeply. I taught a course there[*technical difficulty*]. My wife teaches in the School of Medicine. As I'm very close to what has been happening there, I'm wondering whether I might not be in a conflict of interest situation.

It's a very important institution, but as Mr. Jolin said, what happened on April 12 led to a breach of trust. We are now wondering what to do to move things forward. Mr. Jolin and the AFO have suggested a number of options. They have the support of a community movement, a group that has been working with the University of Sudbury.

I'd like to comment briefly on the enumeration of rights holders. We worked hard on that when I was on the committee two years ago. We are talking about the decline of French, but it's also essential to factor in the positive measures that have been taken since 2015 to try and address the issue.

Mr. Jolin, what positive impact might a Statistics Canada enumeration have? I'm convinced that it would have a positive effect, but I'd like to know what the community thinks about it.

Mr. Carol Jolin: First of all, it would give us real numbers. Up until now, all we've had were estimates. In many instances, we didn't think they were truly representative of the francophone community. The figure mentioned was 744,000 franco-Ontarians, but I think there are more of us than that. Now, a proper enumeration of people who can express themselves in French will paint a much more reliable picture in my view. The number of people who can express themselves in French in Ontario is estimated at 1.4 million or 1.5 million. I suppose that there might be even more, because the way the census was conducted earlier failed to count some people.

I'm keen to see the numbers that will be published. They will allow us to better plan the services we want to offer and the projects, like the University of Sudbury project, that we want to focus on.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Jolin. I'd like to thank you too, Mr. Lefebvre

I would now like to give the floor to Mr. Beaulieu for a brief two and half minutes.

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: My last question is for Mr. Landry. In your opinion, to what extent has "overcompleteness", or extreme overfunding of anglophone institutions in Quebec, including CEGEPs and universities, contributed to the decline of French in that province?

Mr. Rodrigue Landry: I can't really answer that because I'm not aware of the circumstances of extreme overfunding. These are not subjects that I've studied. I would just be talking through my hat if I tried to deal with them.

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: Okay. But you'd probably reach the same conclusions as us. I'll send you the data we have.

I'm going to return to you, Mr. Jolin. I really liked your comments. You mentioned the importance of having universities "by and for francophones". You mentioned Université de Hearst, which would like to become a francophone institution. You also spoke about the University of Sudbury.

Should we not focus most of the efforts on universities "by and for francophones"? As for funding educational institutions, it's been said that immersion schools often foster assimilation. Should we not then be assigning priority to schools that are "by and for francophones" across Canada?

• (1640)

Mr. Carol Jolin: I'll talk about the Ontario experience. In all areas where Francophones took the situation in hand with respect to education, things are working well. That included elementary and secondary school management and the establishment of colleges. There are now two francophone colleges. These are doing very well and there is no indication that we could not do the same thing in administering university postsecondary education. I think it's important to head in that direction.

Francophones are in the best position to know what the community's needs are. The situation at Laurentian University is a good example of what happens when things are left in the hands of organizations like that. Decisions were being made on the basis of what sop they could give to francophones to keep them from making waves, and would then concentrate on services for the large anglophone majorityx.

The Chair: Thank you Mr. Jolin. Thank you Mr. Beaulieu.

Mr. Boulerville now has the floor for two and half minutes.

Mr. Alexandre Boulerville: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

My next questions are for Mr. Forgues.

Mr. Forgues, you have underscored the importance of establishing research-based policies, which I find very interesting. You said that the current statutes talk about measurable objectives, but that other indicators are needed for a more complete picture.

What indicators are you talking about? What precisely do you have in mind?

Mr. Éric Forgues: Minister Joly's White paper shows that this is the direction she would like to take as well. I believe that's a good thing. There have already been studies on the subject. Mr. Landry, who is here with us today, could speak about it. All kinds of indicators could be explored with respect to people's linguistic practices, whether in the family, in public places or at work. There is also perhaps not enough discussion about work.

Monitoring the language situation over time shows that the workplace is also where assimilation occurs, and I believe that an effort needs to be made, even though economically speaking, there are no recognized language rights for the workplace that would enable organizations like businesses to do things like improving and enhancing the use of French. Promotion of this kind is required. There are also indicators for existing institutions. Accurate analyses are required. We have the means to do so. We have the resources and expertise and we should use them for this purpose.

Mr. Alexandre Boulerville: That's a very interesting avenue.

I recently met some people from the Fédération nationale des conseils scolaires francophones. They mentioned a degree of stagnation in the official languages program in the field of education. They said it was difficult under such conditions to retain children who went to French-language elementary schools. They found English-language high schools more attractive because they had more sports programs, cultural programs and field trips. Even though enrolment is up in elementary schools, they felt that because of underfunding for French-language schools, there was a downward trend for high schools.

Have you observed this as well?

The Chair: You have 30 seconds, Mr. Forgues.

Mr. Éric Forgues: At the Canadian Institute for Research on Linguistic Minorities, Mr. Rodrigue Landry conducted research into school resources, which were not the same on the anglophone and francophone sides. The attractiveness of English may explain such phenomena, hence the importance of building educational infrastructures that can retain francophone students.

Mr. Alexandre Boulerville: Thank you, Mr. Forgues.

The Chair: Thank you.

There are two 5-minute periods remaining. The first will go to Mr. Godin.

Mr. Joël Godin (Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier, CPC): Thank you, Mr Chair.

I'd like to thank Mr. Landry, Mr. Forgues and the representatives of the Assemblée de la francophonie de l'Ontario for being here with us.

I'd like to remind you that the study in progress is about measures that the government could take to protect and promote French in Quebec and in Canada.

Mr. Jolin, I'd like to begin with you, because I found your presentation very interesting.

My colleague Mr. Lefebvre spoke about accountability. In your presentation, you said that you had serious doubts about the appropriate use of the amounts contributed by the federal and provincial governments, and that perhaps is where the heart of the matter lies.

Today, we've been speaking about Laurentian University, where decisions were probably based more on interest in the development and preservation of the institution. I don't feel that the University wants to promote and protect French. That is not its mandate. Perhaps it should be, but it isn't.

The federal government has its responsibilities and the provincial government has its as well. Each organization has different missions and objectives. Of course, institutional administrators are playing for time to stay alive. They see opportunities and hand out money, and student fees also generate revenue.

We're talking about Laurentian University today, but Ms. Risbud, who came to speak to us about Campus Saint-Jean in Alberta, told us last week that the spending by the various governments on education had not increased for 20 years.

Wouldn't it be possible for organizations like yours, which exist elsewhere in Canada too, to take on the specific mandate of performing a watchdog role to ensure that the financial contributions are used to good effect?

Wouldn't that be an option?

• (1645)

Mr. Carol Jolin: You referred to the mandate of Laurentian University, which is a bilingual university.

But the most important thing for us—and it is part of our mandate—is to ensure the sustainability of programs offered in French in the mid-north. Our work is to protect the rights of francophones and to improve their status in Ontario so that they can receive as many services as possible in French.

Mr. Joël Godin: Excuse me, Mr. Jolin. I am very familiar with your mandate, but you have no binding powers.

Could you not be assigned a mandate by the two levels of government to be the watchdog to ensure the best possible use of public funds?

The university has a mandate, but it also needs to survive in a competitive world.

Mr. Carol Jolin: If the funding required came along with the mandate, that would certainly be interesting.

Mr. Joël Godin: What's the answer?

Mr. Carol Jolin: Are you talking about options for accountability or funding?

Mr. Joël Godin: In terms of effectiveness, what's the best option to ensure that our institutions are there for good and that they respect and protect French while promoting it.

Mr. Landry mentioned that it was important to emphasize early childhood, but that it was also important to do so throughout the educational process. The drop-off appears to occur at the postsecondary level.

What's the answer, Mr. Jolin?

Mr. Carol Jolin: The main problem is transparency. The solution is to make the data public. That would mean nobody could alter the numbers. That in itself is a challenge. We know how universities are administered. We need to make all the data available, as businesses do, when shareholders are provided every year with data at an annual general meeting, for example.

Because public funds are used to finance education, people have a right to be informed.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Jolin and Mr. Godin.

Mr. Arseneault, over to you for five minutes.

Mr. René Arseneault (Madawaska—Restigouche, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I would like once again to welcome everyone to the Standing Committee on Official Languages. We have in fact met all of you before, at least once, if not more often.

Your testimony was excellent. We learn something every day, even though we may have the impression that we are always taken up with our desire and determination to move things forward on behalf of our language communities.

I'd like to reiterate what Mr. Godin said at the outset. We are conducting a study on measures taken by the federal government to protect and promote the French language in Canada and in Quebec. That's what I would like to focus on.

Before addressing the issue of modernizing the official languages act, I'd like us to talk about links. There are indeed many links in the chain of events that allow us to promote these much talked about linguistic minorities. I hope that I'm not wrong when I say that education is one of these links. Everything begins with education, which enables us to read and understand our minority language.

I'm going to follow up on what my colleague Mr. Lefebvre said about the new census to be conducted in 2021, which will provide us with information and results about rights holders. I'll begin with Mr. Forgues.

What do you feel will be the repercussions on the geographical map of our language communities in Canada? Will it have a positive or negative impact on our language communities?

• (1650)

Mr. Éric Forgues: We often carry out analyses for communities that need to know how many rights holders there are in their school zone and district. We do these piecemeal with limited means, because we do not have all the data required to come up with an accurate estimate of populations that meet the criteria set out in section 23 of the charter.

This new census will enable us to do a Canada-wide estimate for each of the zones. We will be able to meet a need. It will enable planners, by which I mean those who need to make decisions, to know where to build, renovate or expand schools. They will need an accurate number for the rights holders and thus for potential in the communities.

I'd like to reiterate that we are currently operating on a piecemeal basis and with limited means and data. Although we can make estimates, the number of rights holders has been seriously underestimated in some instances. We were building the school for a certain number of rights holders' children and came to the realization shortly afterwards that there were many more than expected.

We will be able to do a much better job of planning school infrastructures for the whole country with the new census results in hand.

Mr. René Arseneault: I'm really looking forward to seeing these results. I think we will have them in 2022.

Might I be so bold as to ask you whether you have an initial impression of what the figures will be. Have there been assessments in Canada that can already give us a taste of what we might expect from the next census about rights holders?

Mr. Rodrigue Landry: I can answer that.

In 2020, Statistics Canada published a study based on its own questions and its test of the new census. It feels that with the addition of these new questions, which take the three criteria that define rights holders into account rather than only mother tongue, there would be 56% more rights holders. In some provinces, like Saskatchewan, there would be an increase of more than 80%. It's encouraging to see that there are more rights holders.

However, the major challenge is to not only enumerate them, but to get the children to school. The 2006 post-census survey showed that lack of access to schools, and distance, were the reasons often given by parents for having sent children to another institution.

Mr. René Arseneault: Excuse me Mr. Landry, I have only a minute left, but I still want to hear from you.

Once we have the actual numbers, will we be able to settle the problem of what you call negligence by the community itself?

Mr. Rodrigue Landry: I wouldn't call it negligence on the part of the community. What we often see, as Mr. Forgues was saying just now, is that the schools being built are too small and it takes years to build them. This leads parents to make poor decisions.

With the new figures, we will at least be able to do better planning.

Mr. René Arseneault: Thank you very much.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Arseneault.

You had 10 seconds left.

We are now going to start a second round of questions. The four next interventions will therefore be six minutes each. If any members wish to share some of their speaking time with other colleagues, they shouldn't hesitate to tell me.

I'll begin with Mr. Blaney.

• (1655)

Hon. Steven Blaney: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

That's extremely interesting.

I, and no doubt a few others here, need some clarification about the term "overcompleteness" being tossed around here. Could Mr. Landry or Mr. Forgues explain this concept to us.?

Mr. Éric Forgues: I'll start, and Mr. Landry could finish.

I have never encountered the concept of "overcompleteness" in the literature. Things are either complete or incomplete.

One can speak about levels of institutional completeness in various sectors of life, but I could not really comment on "overcompleteness".

Hon. Steven Blaney: Mr. Landry, I'm waiting to hear from you now.

Mr. Rodrigue Landry: That's not a concept I've ever heard about either. In minority communities, it would be very unusual to find "overcompleteness", because it's more likely to be the opposite.

Hon. Steven Blaney: I'm not sufficiently erudite to define that word.

I'll go now to Mr. Jolin.

Mr. Jolin, you said that there were options for francophones in northern Ontario. You are working actively on this and I congratulate you for it.

I'll go over the recommendations quickly and then give you the floor.

You mentioned that it was important to have accountability. It was discussed. You would like the funds to be redirected to the University of Sudbury and for some French-language programs to be transferred there from Laurentian University.

Could you explain the mechanics of that? I know that the committee will return to it, but things appear to be evolving. I'd like you to talk about this aspect because we understand, as you were saying, that ties have been cut with Laurentian University. We're going to get them, but I'd like to hear what you have to say about it.

Mr. Carol Jolin: Transfers of this kind have occurred in the past. One example is what happened when Cité collégiale was established in Ottawa. Algonquin College had a wide range of programs in French, and these were transferred to Cité collégiale.

I think that we can use this kind of model successfully to transfer the French courses to the University of Sudbury. Of course, we will need assistance from both levels of government to effect this transition. I'm not talking only about costs here, but also teaching staff and infrastructures, because these are extremely important. There are already infrastructures in place, some of which were made possible through money from the francophone community.

Hon. Steven Blaney: Would you like this transition to occur in time for the coming academic year, in September 2021? Is that realistic? Do you have a timeline?

Mr. Carol Jolin: We've asked the provincial government for a one-year moratorium to give us time to do things properly.

Hon. Steven Blaney: Excellent.

My last question is for everyone.

There has been a lot of discussion about institutions.

Mr. Landry, You're a Quebecker and you live in Quebec. In that province, we can count on the state, which is our leading institution. Things are very different for francophones living in minority communities, and the importance of their francophone institutions, like schools and universities, is understandable.

I'd like to hear what you have to say about the importance of institutions in minority communities and how the new version of the act, by broadening a number of definitions among other things, could contribute to their vitality.

I'll stop there, but if I've understood correctly, what's really needed is an asymmetrical vision of official languages in areas where the status of French, in Quebec and elsewhere, might be described as "dominated"—I know that's a strong word—by English.

I'd like to broaden the discussion to hear your comments.

Mr. Rodrigue Landry: If we properly analyze the situation as it affects the linguistic vitality of communities and people, there is not necessarily any asymmetry. Each receives what it needs.

As for the institutions, I distinguish between two major types of institutions. There are what I call solidarity institutions, which nurture people's identity. These include early childhood centres, day-care centres, schools, postsecondary institutions, the media, and in some instances, workplaces. These are not only institutions, but living environments. People develop their identity by living in their language.

The second type of institution includes what I call status institutions. For example, there are health services, which put us into the public arena. These are not places where we become socialized in our language, but that inform people that they have access to services in their language. This nurtures subjective vitality, which nevertheless has some importance. To use a language, one must not only identify with the group, but also believe that one's language is worth being spoken. That's what subjective vitality is. And there are different ways of acquiring identity.

• (1700)

Hon. Steven Blaney: Good. Thank you very much.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We will now move on to Ms. Martinez Ferrada for the next six minutes.

Ms. Soraya Martinez Ferrada (Hochelaga, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'd like to thank the witnesses here with us this evening. I found their testimony truly fascinating. They said some interesting things that we are certainly not going to forget.

I'd like to hear you speak about immigration, because not much has been said about it. I believe that it would be important to discuss this subject. We heard witnesses earlier who have said that immigration is one of the key determinants of the vitality of the French language. According to them, immigration drives population growth, but the mother tongue of the vast majority of immigrants is neither French nor English.

What immigration strategies would you suggest to us to maintain demographic weight across the country?

What trends have you observed in the integration or inclusion of francophone immigration from one end of the country to the other?

Who would like to be the first to answer?

Mr. Rodrigue Landry: I could say a few words, but I'm not an immigration expert.

If families no longer have enough children to stabilize the population or have it grow, immigration comes into play. I find that we also tend to set targets. For example, in the white paper, I noticed there was talk about aiming at 4% for the Francophone population. When you aim at 4%, and things become very complicated, you end up with 2.5% or 3%.

What we should do here is imitate the National Hockey League. When a team is losing all the time, it gets to be first in line in the draft. That enables the team to get better. In other words, to keep things more balanced, you don't give the first draft picks to the team that won the Stanley Cup. The teams at the bottom of the heap get the top draft picks. It should be the same for immigration.

There are all kinds of figures out there about the number of francophones, and we know that those who speak only French tend to go to Quebec. They don't stay outside Quebec. So when it's difficult to recruit immigrants, I think we should aim higher for minorities, so that they get their share of the pie.

Ms. Soraya Martinez Ferrada: Thank you, Mr. Landry.

Official language minority communities constitute important networks for the integration of immigrants.

Would you like to add any comments, Mr. Jolin or Mr. Hominuk, about the integration of immigrants into official language minority communities?

Mr. Carol Jolin: Through the Fédération des communautés francophones et acadienne, much is being done in terms of immigration and welcoming new immigrants into our communities. Just over a year ago, the Welcoming Francophone Communities initiative was launched. However, the program needs time to gain a solid footing. What I'm hearing has been very positive, thanks to a sound structure in place to help people.

It's a fact that many of the francophone immigrants who come to Ontario move mainly to the Toronto area. There are many organizations there to welcome them and it begins when immigrants arrive at the airport. At the end of November, it will have been two years since Toronto's Pearson International Airport introduced a kiosk that facilitates integration and familiarizes people with the francophone community by welcoming them and referring them to these communities. I think that we are on the right track.

Ms. Soraya Martinez Ferrada: Do you believe that the government could do more about reception and integration structures like these for communities that would like to keep francophone linguistic vitality strong, and for which immigration could become a useful tool?

Could we not in fact do more in terms of integration?

• (1705)

Mr. Carol Jolin: We can always do more. We talked about the three welcoming communities in Ontario, which is a first step. We could extend this type of program to other cities. People around the world are learning about this successful initiative, which could bring in even more immigrants, because they know they will be welcome and that we will work to integrate them and have them play an active role in the life of the community.

Ms. Soraya Martinez Ferrada: In the cities you're talking about, is the immigration objective only for welcoming francophones or does it include meeting the economic needs of the cities? How would you describe it?

Mr. Carol Jolin: I can't remember how Hamilton, Sudbury and Hawkesbury were chosen, because those are the three we are talking about. These are not cities with millions of inhabitants. I think that one of the objectives was to enable immigrants to learn about places other than the Toronto area.

Ms. Soraya Martinez Ferrada: Do you believe, then, that francophone immigrant integration programs could be beneficial to the economy in certain regions, in the tourism industry for example, if there were more francophone immigrants?

Mr. Carol Jolin: It would definitely be worth checking out. There are other circumstances, economic considerations for example, where there are needs. The entire infrastructure would benefit from programs like these.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Jolin and Ms. Martinez Ferrada.

We will now go to Mr. Beaulieu for six minutes.

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

On the one hand, Mr. Landry, you grasped the concept of "overcompleteness", meaning extreme overfunding. Mr. Frédéric Lacroix defined it as an overabundance of services, in areas like health or postsecondary education, in English, in Quebec.

You said that there was no "overcompleteness" for linguistic minorities, but that's certainly not the case for Quebec anglophones. For example, 45% of jobs in the health field in Montreal are in the anglophone network, whereas anglophones represent about 17% of Montreal's population. That's a very interesting point.

And what do you think about Quebec's language policy, which is based on the common language concept?

As you said earlier, it's very clear that English will become the common language for newcomers who settle anywhere other than Quebec, because they won't be able to function unless they speak English.

In fact, 99% of allophone language transfers are towards English in the rest of Canada and 40% of francophones whose mother tongue is French use mainly English at home. I therefore think that we need to address future action from this standpoint.

There has been an increase in language transfers towards French through the selection of "francotrope" immigrants. However, if we were successful in making French the common language in Montreal, we would probably succeed in counteracting the decline of French.

Do you think that if we were to make French the common language in regions other than Quebec where there is a critical mass of francophones, at least in federal institutions, it could be part of the solution?

Mr. Rodrigue Landry: I think it would be difficult to legislate this outside Quebec. Bill 101, as legislated in Quebec, is recognized worldwide. The three linguistic groups that have succeeded best in defending their minority language are the populations that speak Hebrew, a nearly dead language that became a state language, followed, on an equal footing, by the people of Catalonia and Quebec.

The concept of a common language is something I find very meaningful. I believe that it's section 59 that authorizes Quebec to disallow mother tongue as a criterion for becoming a rights holder for education. If this criterion had been applied, one can only guess that owing to the attraction of English, there would already be many francophones who would choose to send their children to an English language school because of what I call "social naïveté", meaning that they believe the best bilingualism program is 50-50.

In the United States, the education program based on the principle of dual immersion is the most highly rated in terms of bilingualism. Spanish speakers spend 50% of their time studying in their own language and 50% in English, and English speakers do the same. It's a very good program, but if we were to try to apply it in a minority setting, it would amount to collective suicide.

Common language is a very useful concept for Quebec, one which allows Quebec to protect itself. In North America as a whole, the overall percentage of francophones is very low. Quebec therefore needs to become a bastion, and to defend itself.

• (1710)

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: Basically, there is a kind of battle going on. The Quebec government is trying to make French the common language, but the federal government advocates institutional bilingualism and an ever-expanding range of services in English.

That's why it's important to take stock at some point. I believe that we, the francophone and Acadian communities, would benefit from joining Quebecers. I believe that the Official Languages Act has divided communities. At all official languages events, it's always anglophones who are invited to represent Quebec.

Following all the statements made in the throne speech, I believe that we ought to invite groups for the defence of French in Quebec to attend these meetings. This might eventually help to build solidarity. I believe that Quebec also has an important role to play in supporting the francophone and Acadian communities.

What do you think about this?

Mr. Rodrigue Landry: I like the "societal culture" concept. Two great societal cultures in Canada gave birth to two official languages. The point is simply that francophones outside Quebec share the same societal culture as Quebec and, reciprocally, that anglophones in Quebec share the same societal culture as anglophones in Canada.

It's here that we can make use of a concept that I probably don't have enough time to explain, and that is the concept of "cultural autonomy". New Brunswick is probably the best example of it with its duality concept, in which institutions belong to the groups. The more we can apply this concept, the better it will be for the minority groups.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. Landry and Mr. Beaulieu.

Mr. Boulerice, you have the floor for six minutes.

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

In my previous career, I worked for a union affiliated to the FTQ, the Fédération des travailleurs et travailleuses du Québec. The FTQ's programs placed a strong emphasis on respect for the French language at work. I was very happy about this. Afterwards, within the NDP, we always argued that the Charter of the French Language should also be applied, which was not the case for companies subject to federal regulation on sectors like telecommunications, air transport, and shipping.

The reform document shows a desire to defend the language rights of workers so that they can work in French and also communicate with their employer in French. It's a step in the right direction, and it's what we've been requesting for years.

The reform document also partly opens the door to companies subject to federal regulation outside Quebec, in communities or regions where there is—it's not clear yet—a high percentage of francophones.

Mr. Forgues, You spoke about indicators the last time I asked you some questions, and you began by pointing to the importance of the working language.

What's your view of what the reform document might have in store for us?

How important is it to make an effort to ensure the vitality and survival of a language in a specific region?

• (1715)

Mr. Éric Forgues: One aspect of the white paper that I liked was the desire to harmonize the federal linguistic framework with those of the provinces. In Quebec, for example, harmonization might be achieved by encouraging federal institutions to comply with the intent of Bill 101. Similar arrangements could then be made with the other provinces.

As can be seen with respect to language of work, there is a degree of anglicization in the workplace, even in Quebec. I can't remember the precise figures, but we could obtain them if required. I therefore think that a harmonization like this of the linguistic frameworks could help somewhat to improve the situation, or to create francophone spaces in workplaces.

The workplace does lend itself to assimilation because many francophones work in English. This can have an impact on the vitality of some communities

We have fewer options for taking action in the workplace, but wherever we have an opportunity to do so, we should. I am therefore in favour of initiatives like this.

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice: My first question will be for Mr. Forgues, and I'll address the other witnesses after that.

We haven't yet spoken about the role of the CBC with respect to minority language francophone groups. Is this neglect deliberate? Should this role be less important than it was before, now that the media environment for news and culture has changed so much because of new technologies?

Should we continue to rely heavily on regional news in French to hear what francophone communities outside Quebec have to say?

What, according to you, Mr. Forgues, is the role of this public broadcaster?

I'd also like to hear what Mr. Landry has to say about this.

Mr. Éric Forgues: I'm not a media expert, but the CBC certainly has an important role to play. However, the media environment is being utterly transformed because of a shift towards digital. It's also important to understand just how this shift will play out, and the role of the francophonie in this new ecosystem, particularly in social media, where a major transformation is underway.

I believe that we have a lot of catching up to do in terms of developing ideas. This too is something that is discussed in the white paper. It's being talked about, and people are aware of it. Minister Joly has been holding discussions about the digital transformation. It's important for francophones to be properly positioned for their own digital governance.

Mr. Sylvain St-Onge, a student of Mr. Rodrigue Landry, has just written a thesis on the issue of social media among young people. Young people spend an enormous amount of time on social networks. It's a place for socialization that is very important to them. It's important to assess the impact of this phenomenon and to identify the language in which people are browsing and communicating on social networks.

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice: Thank you, Mr. Forgues.

The Chair: I'm sorry to interrupt, Mr. Boulerice, But the bells are ringing. We need to decide on whether we have the consent of all the members. We have 15 minutes left. We could proceed to a final round, because the bells sound every 30 minutes.

If we have the unanimous consent of members, we could allow Mr. Boulerice to finish his intervention and go to the next 15 minutes. After that we could end the meeting to vote.

Are there any objections to continuing the meeting for the next 15 minutes? I don't see any.

As there are no objections, we'll continue to hear our witnesses.

You have a minute left, Mr. Boulerice.

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Forgues, I have children and teenagers at home, and I can tell you that they spend a lot of time on social networks. It would be helpful if we had an overview of the societal impact of this phenomenon on what language is being used.

I'd like to return to Mr. Landry on the subject of working language.

Mr. Landry, What's your view on the importance of French at work?

• (1720)

Mr. Rodrigue Landry: It's very important. As I said earlier, the workplace is not just an institution. It's also a living environment. The workplace, for instance, has an influence on identity.

I have not conducted many workplace studies, but I have done a study for the federal government to determine the language in which public servants wanted to receive their training. I analysed their networks of contacts and looked at linguistic vitality indicators for the areas they came from. The percentage of public servants who wanted to receive their training in English was unbelievable. They said that because they spent most of their time working in English anyway, they might as well learn the vocabulary they would have to use.

The end result was disparaging their own language to succeed in the public service.

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

Mr. Williamson, You have the floor for five minutes.

Mr. John Williamson (New Brunswick Southwest, CPC): Good afternoon and thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Landry, you mentioned New Brunswick and its duality system.

Can you explain why this works in New Brunswick and how a system like this could improve the situation for minority communities elsewhere in Canada?

Mr. Rodrigue Landry: My view is that duality is an example of cultural autonomy. Autonomy does not mean separation, but the power to handle one's own affairs. New Brunswick duality system recognizes that both communities are culturally autonomous. Each administers its own institutions.

I don't think we can expect a population that has only 5% francophones would have the same duality experience as New Brunswick, where 70% to 74% of the population live in regions where francophones are in the majority. That's probably a factor that explains why the system works in New Brunswick.

I believe that the concept is a good one. It has been shown repeatedly that bilingual institutions don't work. In 1963, for example, if we had followed the bilingual model of the University of Ottawa when Université de Moncton was established, the latter would not have contributed as much to the vitality of the minority. That's why I don't believe it all in bilingual systems.

Cultural autonomy needs to be adapted to the vitality of each community. I believe that's the best option.

Mr. John Williamson: I agree entirely.

The University of New Brunswick in Fredericton is a completely Anglophone institution. Université de Moncton functions very well today because it's priority is the French language.

Mr. Forgues, do you have any comments to make on the New Brunswick duality concept? How might it help us elsewhere in Canada?

Mr. Éric Forgues: My comments are generally in line with what Mr. Landry said.

The more a linguistic group has its own institutions, the better it is for the community. French-language living environments are also essential. The more of these there are, the more people will tend to express themselves in their language. Otherwise, they are condemned to using the language of the majority.

Mr. John Williamson: That's my experience as well.

I have a B.A. from McGill University in Montreal, an English-language educational institution. Right beside it is Université du Québec à Montréal, or UQAM, and other francophone campuses. The anglophones who studied at UQAM speak better French than I do. Likewise, francophones who attended McGill University are now more bilingual.

We can see how it works for both communities.

I'd like to thank the witnesses.

I have no further questions, Mr. Chair.

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

Over to you, Mr. Duguid, for five minutes.

• (1725)

[English]

Terry Duguid, the floor is yours.

Mr. Terry Duguid (Winnipeg South, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'll be sharing my time with Mr. Arseneault.

Thank you to our witnesses.

I have one question for Mr. Landry.

Mr. Landry, I'm from Manitoba in western Canada. It's interesting. Even within western Canada you see regional differences with regard to the decline of French. In Alberta and the northern territories, it appears to be increasing, in some cases very rapidly, but in Manitoba and Saskatchewan, it's declining. As you know, in Manitoba we have a very tight and geographically focused community in Saint Boniface and some of our southern Manitoba communities.

I wonder if you could reflect on and give us some picture of what's going on in western Canada with respect to the vitality of French. Perhaps you could use your framework of the various actors, community, family, civil society, government. If we understand what the problem is, hopefully we can develop solutions.

Mr. Rodrigue Landry: In western Canada there may be a few exceptions, but generally the problem is dispersion of small communities. I remember testing in Saskatchewan and travelling for three days just to test about seven or eight students in each school. Saskatchewan is a good example of dispersion.

What's missing there for the first actors, the parents and the family, is that they don't have social proximity to institutions, to other francophones, so it's a major challenge on that side.

The second component is the institutional completeness. That's also dictated by numbers.

The third factor is the state legitimizing the language. In that case, governments could be more generous in legitimizing the language, giving them access to communities.

I have testified a few times in court cases in western Canada. They build small schools. They quickly outgrow the schools. There's a lack of vision. You might remember the last court case in B.C. that went to the Supreme Court. The judge herself said it's true that we don't give the francophones what they need, but they are going to assimilate just the same. We should not invest too much.

With those kinds of attitudes, we have problems.

Mr. Terry Duguid: Mr. Arseneault.

[Translation]

Mr. René Arseneault: Thank you, Mr. Duguid.

I'd like to return to the question I asked earlier about rights holders and the new census form.

Mr. Forgues and Mr. Landry, will this federal government initiative protect and promote OLMCs in Canada?

Mr. Rodrigue Landry: It's a measure that will give us an accurate picture of the situation.

As I was saying earlier, simply having more rights holders is not going to change anything about the situation. If the children don't go to the schools, the attendance rates might even drop.

Mr. René Arseneault: Thank you, Mr. Landry.

My next question is for Mr. Landry or Mr. Forgues.

You spoke earlier about community bases and the intergenerational transmission of the language. Which of the vitality factors should our OLMCs focus on? What should the different levels of government do to solidify this base?

Mr. Rodrigue Landry: We have an action plan on official languages, but we have no plan for communicating with the main stakeholders, who are the parents. During my short introductory remarks, I mentioned that one of the factors that has been contributing to poor communication is that we are neglecting the main players. The federal government should keep parents informed.

Research has indisputably shown that when the emphasis is placed on the weaker language, children become extremely bilingual. We educate 80% of children in French and their English is as proficient as that of anglophones. They therefore become more bilingual. Parents need to be informed of this.

• (1730)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Landry and Mr. Arseneault.

The bells are still ringing; we have 17 minutes left before we need to vote. To remain on schedule, I'm going to allow two minutes for Mr. Beaulieu and two minutes for Mr. Boulerice.

Mr. Beaulieu, you have the floor for two minutes.

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: Yesterday on the CBC we heard about a litany of complaints from Mr. Conrad Tittley. There has also been a study showing that 40% of francophone public servants are not comfortable working in French in regions that are designated bilingual. We were told that Canada's Commissioner of Official Languages will have more powers after the act is modernized.

Why then can the government not strengthen measures on the use of French for its own public servants? What's preventing it from acting when it's the boss?

Mr. Éric Forgues: I believe that it's important to meet the challenge head on. It's often about changing the organizational culture. When people are part of a mainly anglophone group, certain dynamics become established. If these dynamics are to be reversed and replaced by a culture that provides equal space for French and English, then this fact needs to be taken seriously and it's essential to invest resources and time.

I don't believe that we've fully tackled the problem yet. It needs to be done, if we're willing to invest all the resources required.

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: Does this mean that the political will is not there? The Official Languages Act has been there for 52 years, and we still haven't managed to make francophone public servants in Quebec feel at ease working in French. They sometimes go so far as to say that there is systemic discrimination.

I believe that firm action is needed. The problem stems from the fact that people can work in the language of their choice. In regions that are mainly francophone, French should come first; otherwise English will become the official language of work, as shown by the current situation.

The Chair: Thank you for your comments, Mr. Beaulieu.

We don't have much time left.

I'll give Mr. Boulerice two minutes.

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'd like to return earlier to the immigration issue raised earlier by Ms. Martinez Ferrada. The 4% objective for francophone immigration was discussed. For years now, the Quebec government of has been selecting its own economic immigrants, who are in the vast majority of immigrants, and can include a knowledge of French among its selection criteria. For example, being able to speak French gives applicants extra points.

What would be the best tool for provinces like New Brunswick and Manitoba to be able to select immigrants on the basis of their French-language proficiency, so that they can strengthen minority language communities?

Could you field this one, Mr. Landry, or perhaps one of the other witnesses?

Mr. Rodrigue Landry: First of all, I believe that immigration raises a problem that no one has mentioned, the possibility of a per-

verse impact. We know that immigrants go to big cities, but that's where assimilation is strongest. We can't expect immigrants who undergo francization as a result of contact with other francophones to be any more resistant to assimilation than old-stock francophones. So the danger of a perverse reaction remains.

I'd like to talk again about the importance of properly integrating immigrants. For example, if we allowed more immigrants to settle in locations where the French language is already relatively strong, they would help to preserve French. I'm not saying they shouldn't settle in the big cities, but it would require complex gymnastics.

The Chair: You have only 10 seconds left, Mr. Boulerice.

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice: In that case, I wish everyone a good vote.

The Chair: Thanks, we'll stop now.

I'd like to thank all the witnesses for having contributed to the study we are currently working on. It has been very interesting. I would also like to remind you that you you can send us your briefs through the clerk.

On behalf of all the committee members and myself, I would like to thank the representatives of the Assemblée de la francophonie de l'Ontario, Mr. Carol Jolin, President, Mr. Peter Hominuk, Executive Director, and Mr. Bryan Michaud, Policy Analyst. I would also like to thank Mr. Éric Forgues, the Executive Director of the Canadian Institute for Research on Linguistic Minorities, as well as Mr. Rodrigue Landry, Professor Emeritus, Université de Moncton and former Director General, of the Canadian Institute for Research on Linguistic Minorities, who appeared as an individual.

Thanks also go to committee staff—the analyst, the clerk and the entire team.

On that note, I too wish us all a good vote.

The meeting is adjourned.

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