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Mr. Guy Lauzon

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•(0905)

[*Translation*]

The Chair (Mr. Guy Lauzon (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry, CPC)): Good morning to you all. I'd like to welcome our guests. During the first hour, we will hear from two representatives of the Cité collégiale: Ms. Andrée Lortie, the President of the college, and Ms. Linda Cloutier, the Director of Health Sciences.

Ms. Lortie will give a presentation, copies of which will be handed out.

Ms. Lortie, you may begin.

Mrs. Andrée Lortie (President, La Cité Collégiale): We thought we'd make the presentation a bit livelier and more interesting than ordinary, but you can follow along with the photocopies. If you will, I will now begin.

First, I would like to thank you for inviting us to speak about an issue that is very dear to us, ie, French language training in the health sector, in minority communities.

I know that several people around this table are familiar with the Cité collégiale. Some of you might not be so acquainted with it. The Cité is a community college of applied arts and technology in Ontario. There are two French-language colleges in Ontario : the Cité collégiale, in Ottawa, and the Collège Boréal, in Sudbury.

The Cité collégiale opened in 1990. We serve approximately 16,000 students/clients a year, including some 3,000 to 3,500 full-time, post-secondary students who are registered in one, two or three-year programs. In the health sector, approximately one third of our programs are in community services. This is a very important sector, which attracts many students.

Today, I would like to talk to you about our commitment within the CNFS, the Consortium national de formation en santé. In passing, slide number 4 lists all the health programs offered at the Cité collégiale. In fact, they are listed on slides 4 and 5. I will not enumerate them all. The list does give you an idea of the type of programs offered at the Cité. There are three-year programs, such as the respiratory therapy program, and two-year programs, such as the dental hygiene and paramedic programs. We also offer continuing education programs.

The Cité collégiale has been part of the Consortium national de formation en santé for a number of years.

The consortium is an association that was created three years ago; it comprises ten educational institutions in Canada, outside Québec.

The consortium includes three colleges: the Collège Boréal, the Cité collégiale and the Collège communautaire du Nouveau-Brunswick. The consortium also includes seven universities, which are listed here: the University of Sainte-Anne in Nova Scotia, the University of Ottawa, the University of Moncton — there are universities from all over — and the Collège universitaire in Saint-Boniface, Manitoba. The consortium is made up of these ten institutions.

The mandate of the consortium is to train health professionals in French in order to provide care and services to francophone minority communities. You have all heard of the problems and labour shortages in the health sector. The federal government's initial objective to increase as quickly as possible the number of professionals able to work in French. In francophone minority communities, this is a real problem because there often are no professionals able to serve francophones. This leads to serious problems, particularly in long-term care, for instance, in senior citizens' homes that hire practical nurses. We know that our seniors often have a hard time speaking English. And several studies have shown how important it is to be provided with health care services in one's own language. The consortium's mandate, therefore, is to address those issues.

The objectives of the consortium are to be aware of the needs of each community and encourage professionals to become part of those communities. The objective is not only to train health professionals, but to ensure as much as possible that they return to their communities of origin, once they have completed their studies, and to encourage access to training by all sorts of means, including distance education, partnerships and cooperation, without trying to reinvent the wheel at each step of the way. As you know, health is an area of provincial jurisdiction.

•(0910)

In francophone minority communities, there is little critical mass and resources are limited. Little can be done without partnerships, coordination and cooperation.

I would now like to talk about the value added of the consortium. I will do so briefly because I then want to talk about the impact it has had on the Cité collégiale. Of course, there is increased cooperation and greater networking between post-secondary institutions. Health and education are two areas with provincial jurisdiction. In many cases, minority communities work in silos, with few resources. In Ontario, for example, we are quite privileged. The province has two French-language and 22 English-language community colleges.

The problem in British Columbia and Manitoba, however, is more acute. British Columbia does not have an accredited, college-level institution. The Éducacentre College is doing some interesting things, but it is alone. In such cases, when you are working in an area of purely provincial jurisdiction and trying to provide training or develop study programs and course material, it is really very difficult to move things forward. This is where the consortium's value added of building partnerships between post-secondary institutions becomes meaningful.

Partnerships are also encouraged between health organizations and francophone communities. Although the consortium is an association of institutions, it also works with health centres, hospitals and senior citizens homes in the minority communities. The Société Santé en français, whose representatives appeared before you quite recently, if I am not mistaken, works very closely with consortium stakeholders.

As you are well aware, there are two solitudes in Canada: colleges and universities. There is no communication between the two. More and more students fail to understand this solitude. Whether they want to pursue college studies, work, go to university or transfer from college to university, students are paying the price for this situation, particularly when they try to have their courses accredited. Such is the case in several provinces, but not all. In fact, some provinces have developed very interesting initiatives. We, the members of the consortium, work together. We are forced to talk to each other which is a very good thing. We are in the process of establishing bonds.

Isolation leads to an under-appreciation of French-language health services in minority communities. Health professionals are often very isolated in their communities. In many instances, they will move to major cities, where there is a critical mass. This is really unfortunate because our small communities have enormous needs.

With regard to value added, I would like to talk about the specific example of the Cité collégiale. There are 10 such institutions. We have facilitated access, which has led to 410 additional registrations, or an increase of some 55 per cent over projections.

When the consortium was created, we had to apply and specify the number of registrations we planned to receive. Phase 2 of the consortium still has two years left to run. So far, we have obtained 410 additional registrations, i.e., registrations we would not have had without the consortium's funding. I will indicate which sectors benefited a little later on. I represent a college, and there are three. There are also seven universities. After only three years, we have had 110 additional graduates. This represents an increase of 108 per cent over projections, which is enormous.

Why are there fewer graduates? Well, because study programs last one, two or three years, and it takes some time before students graduate. That is even more so with medical studies at university.

● (0915)

The radiation oncology program has been developed but will only be launched in September 2007. We have developed a partnership with the University of Ottawa. There are huge needs in radiation-oncology. This will be a 2-2 program, or two years at both the college and university levels. The program will be launched next September.

There are also the paramedic programs. We even trained paramedics for anglophone cities such as Toronto. We were surprised when the City of Toronto called us asking for bilingual graduates. They asked us to send them some. Last year, Toronto hired seven paramedic graduates. We were not expecting that. We usually get this type of request from Ottawa, Sudbury or Moncton, but coming from the City of Toronto, that was somewhat surprising.

The new programs being developed include palliative care.

We have also developed some partnership programs that are unique in Canada, such as the clinical electro-neurophysiology program. If you ask me what this program is about, I would not be able to answer. That is why Linda is here with me this morning. So that is a new program.

There is also an autism program. Increasingly, parents are asking that schools hire professionals to work with autistic children. This is a whole new area. The Cité collégiale has announced some 14 courses.

The new partnerships have led to the creation of many new sites for clinical placements. Why are clinical placements important? In the course of training health professionals, we have to encourage regional retention, that is to say that people return to their home communities. We could take the example of Hearst or any other town for that matter. We determined that 75 % of students who do their internships at local hospitals are hired to stay on after they graduate. That way, students return to their communities of origin. These new sites for clinical placements are crucial, with regard to regional retention. Partnerships with other institutions are also important. I would like to give you some examples of new partnerships that have been developed.

The Éducacentre College in British Columbia was able to launch a program for personal support workers. The program trains people who provide long-term care for older people. This new program is offered in class in Vancouver and through distance education in Victoria and Whitehorse, Yukon. This brand new program was made possible thanks to the Consortium.

Together with New Brunswick, we developed palliative care and electro-physiology programs for college students. I mention it in passing because I mostly want to give you examples. At the Collège Boréal, in northern Ontario, there has been sharing and development teaching material for existing programs.

Sainte-Anne University, in Nova Scotia, wanted to offer a paramedic program. The people responsible were unable to develop such a program, but the Consortium was able to help them out. It worked with them to adapt the curriculum and develop teaching material.

Because health is a provincial area of jurisdiction, I want to underscore the fact that transferring programs that were created in one province to another is not always an easy task. In fact, standards vary from one province to another. We therefore have to see how existing programs can be adapted to different provincial standards, as we did in the case of Nova Scotia. We cannot simply transfer a program, we have to find ways to develop and adapt it, and make sure it complies with provincial standards.

In the university sector, there are joint offers of nursing programs. I have already spoken about radiation-oncology. I have also listed the names of partners in health services: Montfort Hospital, les Soeurs de la Charité of Ottawa, the Ottawa General Hospital and the Sudbudy Hospital. In New Brunswick, placements are being considered for programs not being offered, in such areas as respiratory therapy. At Bathurst Hospital, Enfant-Jésus Hospital in Caraquet, the Regional Hospital of Campbellton and Georges-Dumont Hospital, we were able to develop placements together with the New Brunswick Community College in Campbellton.

There is an example in Manitoba. We also have examples for placement sites in British Columbia.

In the handout, you will also find examples in the community sector. I remind you that our college has developed agreements with these centres.

• (0920)

I know wish to talk about the question of value added.

Up until now, I've spoken to you about value added in its relation to access. The notion of value added also comes into play in the quality and relevance of programs. The Cité collégiale was able to hire additional teachers and strike advisory committees made up of approximately 400 people.

We were also able to develop pedagogical material and purchase new equipment. For better or for worse, the health care sector is one in which training cannot be easily provided because of the very high cost. As you know, equipment used in the health care sector evolves very quickly.

Linda, would you like to comment?

Mrs. Linda Cloutier (Director of Health sciences, La Cité Collégiale): The equipment is highly specialized and must be a realistic reflection of the workplace. We have for you a few images showing technological developments involving mannequins. We have various health care training programs. We use different types of mannequins. For dental hygiene, students work on a simulated mouth. Here, you see an entire mannequin. We also use half mannequins, so on an so forth.

Mrs. Andrée Lortie: That, by the way, is a mannequin, not a baby.

Mrs. Linda Cloutier: That is not a baby. We added the picture to show you that we use leading-edge mannequins for simulations of health problems, such as heart attacks, hyperglycemia, etc.

Mrs. Andrée Lortie: Health care training is very expensive. What are the challenges? The greatest challenge is recruitment and making sure the students succeed. Remote areas are undergoing a decrease in

population. We often carry out recruitment activities, and the CNFS consortium is trying to find ways to increase the number of students.

Graduates of immersion programs and francophone immigrants are an absolutely incredible source of students, despite the accommodations that must be made. Immersion students and francophone immigrants, most of whom are first generation immigrants, must be integrated successfully into the workplace.

Allow me to share a brief anecdote. We offer a practical nursing program. In our long-term care centre based here in Ottawa, we noticed that our interns were leaving the program. In theory, they were doing very well, but they were dropping out of their placements. We met with people from the health centre and we found that clients aged 80, 82 or 85 were very aggressive and negative because they did not wish to be cared for by a non-white student. Those senior citizens were extremely harsh towards our female students.

It is very difficult to change an 80, 85, or 90-year-old. We then decided to organize many work sessions with our own students to teach them how to deal with this very specific situation and how to change it. After the workshops were held, we noticed an incredible increase in the success rate. The female students remained in the program. This proves that in dealing with different students, particularly new immigrants or first generation people, programs must be adapted if we want to succeed.

Another challenge is that of obtaining health care professionals in our regions. I already spoke about this and will not repeat myself.

Recruitment can often be difficult, particularly in a context where the health care profession is viewed negatively, and is seen as one that is not easy. In addition, students are very much attracted to English-speaking institutions, because they are bigger and well known, and often they end up working in English rather than in French. This is a challenge facing all the institutions in the consortium.

Another huge challenge is serving remote regions by means of e-learning and distance learning. E-learning is very expensive and is not easy; it must be done properly. In addition, health care training requires one-on-one meetings. Techniques can be taught, but attitudes must also be taught, which is not an easy thing to do from afar.

Recruitment of specialized professionals also is another challenge. People are under the assumption that the Cité collégiale hires frequently because they're constantly running across our ads in the newspapers. Sometimes we have to run an ad for a position four times before hiring someone; we have discovered that we have to actively recruit. This is a challenge for the entire consortium.

It is also difficult to find placements for students. This must be negotiated. Earlier, I showed you the long list of partnerships for a single institution. This involves meetings with care centres and hospitals to discuss practicum programs and so on.

I will not reiterate my comments on the very high cost of equipment. You are very familiar with the other challenges: the lack of pedagogical material, working in a setting that is changing at an incredible rate, and lastly the fact that health care comes under provincial jurisdiction.

For the Cité collégiale, the consortium has been a huge success. Why? Because we have seen that there is now greater access for our communities. Enrolment in the programs and the number of graduates have increased.

I took the liberty of focusing on the impact in the workplace. People from Saint-Boniface Hospital told me that when they began receiving French-speaking students, they discovered that some of their regular employees who never spoke French at work, were in fact francophones. They also discovered that there were anglophones who knew French. These placements had an impact on the hospital, on its ability and willingness to provide services in French. This is an outcome that cannot be easily quantified.

• (0925)

I talked about creating a synergy with teaching institutions, colleges and universities and with the community. With regard to developing national projects, I gave you the example of immigrants, first generation professionals. Instead of having ten projects throughout Canada, we wondered how we could develop best practices to ensure the integration, success and recruiting of our immigrants and newcomers.

The benefits are obviously the increased creation and development of programs and cooperation among the partners.

In conclusion, I want to make two points. Often, people wonder why the federal government supports one project at a time in health and education, which are two areas under provincial jurisdiction. What is it doing in these areas?

It is absolutely essential that this support be continued when it's a matter of francophones living in a minority situation. You know that there will be new discussions or negotiations on a phase 3 for 2008-2013. Not only must we support francophones, but we must absolutely ensure that this support is increased. In fact, the Canadian cooperation that has allowed interprovincial exchanges is not something that naturally occurs in areas under provincial jurisdiction. This is not done. This is not something that is necessarily considered as desirable.

Mr. Chairman, I apologize for taking so much time.

• (0930)

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Lortie. We have a problem: we do not have a lot of time for questions. We will begin with a first round, but we will be limiting the time of each questioner to four minutes. If there is any time remaining, there will be a second round.

We will begin with Mr. Rodriguez. You have four minutes. Both the questions and the answers must be very brief.

Mrs. Andrée Lortie: I will restrain myself.

Mr. Pablo Rodriguez (Honoré-Mercier, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The chair's comments are quite relevant. If I may give some advice, it would be to shorten your presentation. Generally, this

allows us more time to interact with you and thus obtain the information we need. This also benefits you.

Thank you for coming this morning. You have ties to institutions everywhere. Do you have such ties to institutions in Quebec? I have not noticed any.

Mrs. Andrée Lortie: With regard to the CNFS, there are some things happening in Quebec concerning the training of doctors, in cooperation with the Université de Sherbrooke. Often, when we have shortages or problems with equipment, we create our own ties to some CEGEPs, be they in Sainte-Foy, Quebec City, or Laval. A relationship is forged. Ahuntsic is also an excellent example. Things are being done.

The answer is yes.

Mr. Pablo Rodriguez: Do some of your graduates then go to Quebec?

Mrs. Andrée Lortie: The CNFS is in favour of retaining people in areas outside Quebec.

Mr. Pablo Rodriguez: That's preferable. However, sometimes, perhaps instinctively, it's easier to go to...

Mrs. Andrée Lortie: It would be easier, but much is done to ensure that this does not happen to those enrolled in the CNFS.

Mr. Pablo Rodriguez: Okay.

Are these basically the same programs provided at universities?

Mrs. Andrée Lortie: No. The universities offer all the medical programs, for example, at the University of Ottawa and at Laurentian University. There are nursing programs.

Linda.

Mrs. Linda Cloutier: In fact, health care programs at universities do not train general practitioners, but rather people who have increased knowledge in health care disciplines. The colleges provide highly technical training that concentrates on specific techniques.

Mr. Pablo Rodriguez: Right. Do you work in cooperation with Health Canada?

Mrs. Andrée Lortie: Absolutely, the CNFS program is funded by Health Canada.

Mr. Pablo Rodriguez: Is it 100 per cent funded by Health Canada?

Mrs. Andrée Lortie: It is 100 per cent funded by Health Canada.

Mr. Pablo Rodriguez: Right.

How could the Government of Canada help you, if we were to reflect together on what could be done to help you?

Mrs. Andrée Lortie: The project is due to end in two years. The CNFS is already in the process of developing a renewal submission for 2008. We are working closely with Health Canada officials. Mr. Clement's Francophone Advisory Committee is very familiar with the CNFS issue.

If you want to help us, we would ask that you support our next submission.

Mr. Pablo Rodriguez: Okay.

The Chair: Thank you for being so brief.

Ms. Barbot.

Mrs. Vivian Barbot (Papineau, BQ): Good morning and thank you for being here today.

You spoke about how the federal government has crossed into two areas of provincial jurisdiction. You also spoke about difficulties relating to the transferability of training from one province to another, etc.

A problem faced by Quebec is that students from Gatineau tend to study in Ontario because the training is shorter. This creates the opposite problem whereby they are unable to work in Quebec because their training is not recognized. This means that we lose these students.

Given that your mandate is to train professionals living outside of Quebec, I would like to know what you are doing to resolve this problem.

● (0935)

Mrs. Andrée Lortie: Quebec students are not eligible to participate in the consortium's program. In order to be eligible, students must come from a province or territory other than Quebec. Quebec students are not eligible for the program that we are discussing this morning.

That said, your question is very pertinent in the context of non-CNFS programs.

Mrs. Vivian Barbot: To which programs are you referring?

Mrs. Andrée Lortie: Consortium students have reserved spots on existing province funding programs, such as auxiliary nursing, etc. Funding such programs is a matter of provincial responsibility.

The creation of the consortium brought about an increase in the number of places available. For example, if the province funds 30 students in auxiliary nursing, the consortium can fund an additional 10. These 10 additional students would otherwise not have been accepted or funded through the consortium.

Mrs. Vivian Barbot: So it complements an already existing program?

Mrs. Andrée Lortie: Exactly, it allows us to increase the number of trained professionals.

Mrs. Vivian Barbot: Could you tell us how many students are involved with the consortium?

Mrs. Andrée Lortie: We have had 410 additional registrations so far.

Mrs. Linda Cloutier: We have 110 graduates, and our overall target for phase 2 was 686 new admissions.

Mrs. Andrée Lortie: Those figures are for one institution, there are nine others. The number would be even higher were we to take all of the institutions into consideration.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Barbot.

Mr. Godin.

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

Your presentation was so good that there are hardly any questions left to ask.

Did you say that you had accepted 16,000 students since 1990?

Mrs. Andrée Lortie: The Cité Collégiale welcomes around 16,000 students a year.

Mr. Yvon Godin: How many people have you refused?

Ottawa and Sudbury are the only two places offering training in French in Ontario. As it happens, one of my daughters studied at Sudbury and she enjoyed her training. However, I know that there are people who want to attend college, but who are turned down due to a shortage of places.

Mrs. Andrée Lortie: It is difficult to give an exact answer to your question, but perhaps Linda will be able to help.

Mrs. Linda Cloutier: All I would say is that, like English-language institutions, the Cité Collégiale has established entrance criteria for its programs. Some students are not accepted into courses because they do not have the required credits.

In an attempt to remedy this, the Cité Collégiale offers a health specific pre-science program. It is a one-year skills upgrading program that allows students who were not accepted directly into their program of choice to gain health specific pre-science credits so that they can then be accepted to the program.

Mr. Yvon Godin: I do not fully agree with you. In New Brunswick, some students are not accepted simply because others have better grades. That does not mean that they would not be accepted if more places were available.

I recall the case of a student who had completed two years of the nursing program before leaving for personal reasons. When she tried to go back to her studies she was turned down. The problem was a shortage of available spaces, not whether or not she was qualified.

Mrs. Andrée Lortie: You are right that some health programs have quotas and that we can only accept a certain number of students. That is the case for dental hygiene for example. At the Cité collégiale, we can only accept about 60 students into the program. But that was not the case in the past. Before the consortium was created, the Ontario government limited our enrolment to 30. The consortium approached the Ontario government and told it that the number of students needed to be increased because waiting lists were very long.

So we were authorized to increase our enrolment in this program. We also received an increase because it was in French. Often, the profession sets quotas to limit enrolment. You are right in that it's an issue. There is also an issue of space and spots linked to institution funding.

● (0940)

Mr. Yvon Godin: Do immigrants who are accepted in college, for example, receive credits for the training they received at home? All too often, when you take a taxi, you meet a driver who says he has a diploma in such and such a profession, but that he cannot be accredited.

What are we doing to help these people get accredited in health care, for example, since we are facing a shortage of qualified workers in this field?

Mrs. Andrée Lortie: That is a big challenge for us. At present, some programs exist. Last year, for example, we offered a program for nurses.

Mrs. Linda Cloutier: In fact, the program was specifically for nurses who arrived in Canada and who had received their training abroad. They had passed the exam, but they were having trouble finding a job. In many cases, we realized that the immigrants did not have a problem with respect to knowledge, but rather with respect to their cultural knowledge of Canada, in other words, ways of doing things, what is accepted, and what is not.

The Cité collégiale has offered a program for foreign-trained nurses on two occasions.

Mrs. Andrée Lortie: But it is not enough.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We are sorry, but the time allotted is up.

Mr. Lemieux, you may ask the next question.

Mr. Pierre Lemieux (Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, CPC): Good morning, thank you for your excellent presentation.

As you know, last summer, I had the honour of attending your graduation ceremony. I was truly impressed by the number of programs you offer as well as by your students' motivation. I also congratulate you because you have increased the number of programs and students, and you have extended your services.

You have a campus in Hawkesbury, my home town. There is something that worries me. If students in Hawkesbury want to take courses at the Cité collégiale, they must travel to Ottawa, to your main campus, or else move to Ottawa. It is quite a distance, and as a result most students move to take their courses. But after they graduate, these students stay in Ottawa and find jobs there.

Do you intend to offer more programs at the Hawkesbury campus, to try and resolve this issue?

Mrs. Andrée Lortie: You have touched on a problem that is not limited to the Cité collégiale; it exists almost everywhere. Often, for post-secondary programs—you have had a glimpse of the type of equipment required—we really cannot afford for the very hands-on components, to offer this kind of program in several places, because it is so costly. We are a college. For a medical school in a university, you can imagine that the problem would be even more serious.

Through the Consortium national de formation en santé, and certainly the Cité collégiale, we try to meet needs, mainly those of adults, by providing more distance learning, e-learning and by trying to provide certain courses in regions for adults who have children and who are unable to travel. Often, young people leaving high school know that they will have to move, but at the Hawkesbury Hospital, they will try to organize themselves so that—

Mr. Pierre Lemieux: Do you have any expectations with respect to the hospitals in Hawkesbury and Alexandria in terms of jobs?

Mrs. Linda Cloutier: In fact, this year, some students in respiratory therapy will be going back there to do their practicums. In addition, the CNFS has authorized the reimbursement of part of their expenses, because these students will have to travel, etc. So they will be doing a four-day practicum in these hospitals.

Mrs. Andrée Lortie: And yes, we will be reimbursing their expenses.

So there are things that can be done, but in the health field, decentralizing is always a challenge because of the related costs.

One of the reasons why programs were grouped together in Ottawa, especially for three-year programs, which are more expensive, was that it was impossible to provide high-quality training and have infrastructure in more than one place. That is always a major challenge for us.

Mr. Pierre Lemieux: Okay.

You work in conjunction with the Hawkesbury Hospital, but also with the Alexandria Hospital, because there are many Franco-Ontarians living there.

Mrs. Andrée Lortie: Yes. We have links with both.

Mr. Pierre Lemieux: Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Lemieux.

We will have a two or three-minute round, because as I said, our time is limited.

Mr. Murphy, you have the floor.

• (0945)

Mr. Brian Murphy (Moncton—Riverview—Dieppe, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I too hope that the federal government will increase its support for this program.

I am from New Brunswick, and I have no doubt that there are many programs in the province. Assuming I were a member for another region, from Nova Scotia, for example. My question is simple. Are you sure that it is fair to divide up the funding and to choose the programs to be supported from among the francophone minority populations in the country? Is it fair and reasonable to do that? You are not favouring Mr. Godin's community, or Mr. Simard's community, or any other one.

Mrs. Andrée Lortie: We wouldn't even want to give preferential treatment to those.

To answer your question, I will explain the role of the Consortium national de formation en santé.

In the health care sector, we've seen that the provinces other than Quebec are not really on a playing field level. You are right; New Brunswick, Ontario and British Columbia don't all have the same training capacity. We try to create synergy between 10 institutions to increase the capacity to provide training in regions where almost nothing has been done in the past.

The example of Nova Scotia was a perfect one, because there were no paramedic programs. When we started to work together people told us that they were starting from scratch, and that there were no French-language programs. So we got together with them and we helped them adapt their program to their reality, to their province and their standards. Now, they offer that program.

It wasn't enough to say that these were 10 institutions that worked in parallel and that were fighting to obtain as much money as possible. In addition to that, we had to determine how to go about increasing the ability to provide French-language training across Canada, while paying attention to regional retention. That means that we must not attract them to Ottawa and keep them here. We have a responsibility to take action so that there is in fact retention.

One of the main objectives of phase 3 of the CNFS was to provide a good follow-up system. For instance, there are institutions such as the University of Ottawa that have certain mechanisms. That's one of our main challenges, and we have to work together so that this doesn't favour only one province. All the provinces have to be at the same level. In addition, they're not all starting from the same point.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Petit, you have the floor.

Mr. Daniel Petit (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Good morning Ms. Lortie, Ms. Cloutier.

First of all thank you. You made a very good presentation. I missed a few minutes of it, but your work is nevertheless extraordinary, because you're working under two jurisdictions at the same time: federal and provincial. Goodness knows that's not easy. Indeed, the provinces are often jealous of their respective powers and sometimes the federal government wants to interfere when we don't want it to.

The topic of my question is education. Of course, when we talk about education, we're always talking about bringing the student to us, that is to our educational institutions. You also talked about distance education and the Collège Éducentre in Vancouver, among others.

Is this a "modern" way of operating the one you promote, if only to provide training to francophones in Vancouver who may be interested in a course in practical nursing? These people could take a theoretical course through a video and camera system among other things. Of course it may be different for practical courses. Do you promote this option because it may be the only way to save some money, maximize your budget and perhaps broaden your sphere of activity?

Mrs. Andrée Lortie: To answer your question, it's ironic to see that the only thing that was cut in phase 2 was e-learning. We did this because we all agree that this is a non-negotiable option for francophones in Saskatchewan and those who live in small communities.

In phase 3, we are in the process of preparing the 10 institutions, and e-learning is a large part of that. This time, we hope it will happen. It's certainly the way of the future, one of the ways of the future.

In each province, there are francophone organizations. There is the Saint-Jean Campus of the University of Alberta, the Service francosaskois d'éducation des adultes, the SEFFA, the Collège Éducentre in British Columbia. We have to take into account how we can work with these small critical masses. Indeed, there are health components that will always require some one-to-one training. So we're more or less forced to combine our training delivery styles.

So phase 3 is a major priority for all the institutions in the consortium.

● (0950)

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Lortie.

Ms. Brunelle, you may ask the next question.

Ms. Paule Brunelle (Trois-Rivières, BQ): Good morning, ladies. As you put it so well, health care is a matter of provincial jurisdiction. I would like to know the total budget of the Consortium national de formation en santé.

Secondly, what amount do you receive from the federal government? How is this assistance sent to you? Do you receive the money directly or is it through a provincial ministry of education?

Mrs. Andrée Lortie: The overall budget is \$64 million for the current phase, phase 2. The Cité collégiale receives \$4.3 million. The money comes directly from Health Canada, and the 10 institutions sign 10 agreements with Health Canada.

When the Cité collégiale received the funds, we signed an agreement directly with Health Canada. We were responsible for certain outcomes, namely the enrolment level, the number of graduates and the number of placements. Therefore there were very specific elements in this contractual agreement.

Ms. Paule Brunelle: How much do you receive from Health Canada?

Mrs. Andrée Lortie: We receive \$4.3 million, but the consortium receives \$64 million.

Ms. Paule Brunelle: Out of a total budget of how much?

Mrs. Andrée Lortie: For the Cité collégiale?

Ms. Paule Brunelle: Yes.

Mrs. Andrée Lortie: The total budget of the Cité collégiale is about \$56 million.

Ms. Paule Brunelle: So you're saying that this is done directly through agreements, based on the number of students and so forth. That being the case, isn't this an attempt to interfere directly in an area of provincial jurisdiction supposedly in an effort to provide French-language services?

Mrs. Andrée Lortie: If the consortium didn't exist, the initiatives I told you about, the links with the collège Éducentre and the joint programs that we're developing with New Brunswick would not exist either.

That's why I tried to give you many examples of truly interprovincial efforts. In Ontario, obviously we receive funding for health care training, but that's really local training, and interprovincial interventions and initiatives are not funded at all.

The consortium allowed us to increase the clientele from outside the province and organize important activities with other provinces, especially those where there's very little training in French.

Ms. Paule Brunelle: You say that you had agreements with the University of Sherbrooke. Were they signed directly with the consortium?

Mrs. Linda Cloutier: The consortium, which includes 10 institutions, signed an agreement between Quebec and New Brunswick, and this year for the first time, 24 students were able to start the medicine program in Moncton.

Ms. Paule Brunelle: In Sherbrooke?

Mrs. Linda Cloutier: In fact, they are in contact with Sherbrooke and they have video conferences about three hours a week. The rest of the courses for the most part are given in Moncton. So there is a sharing of information between the University of Sherbrooke and the University of Moncton in this regard.

The Chair: Thank you Ms. Brunelle and Ms. Cloutier.

Mr. Godin, you may ask the next question.

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

Ms. Brunelle's question is an important one because I do know that the Constitution provides that health care comes under provincial jurisdiction. I don't have a problem with that.

Is the province of Ontario against these agreements with the federal government?

Mrs. Andrée Lortie: No. Ontario is not against it at all.

Mr. Yvon Godin: The province accepts this partnership?

Mrs. Andrée Lortie: Yes. Its representatives are perfectly aware of it. The minister is perfectly aware of it and he thinks this is a very good initiative.

Mr. Yvon Godin: All right.

Mrs. Andrée Lortie: There have been no negative reactions from that side.

As a matter of fact, we were allowed to increase our quota of dental hygienists, because we received additional funding.

Mr. Yvon Godin: This is a partnership between the federal government, the province and the college?

Mrs. Andrée Lortie: No, not the province.

Mr. Yvon Godin: No, but does the province of Ontario—

Ms. Andrée Lortie: In our case, the province agrees.

• (0955)

Mr. Yvon Godin: What I mean is: this is not a partnership with the province, but the province agrees to it.

Mrs. Andrée Lortie: However, it's not included in the agreement.

Mr. Yvon Godin: But it agrees.

Mrs. Andrée Lortie: Absolutely. We've had no problem. People are perfectly aware of it.

Mr. Yvon Godin: It's up to Ontario to decide, just as Quebec makes its own decisions.

Is there greater demand for the training you provide, or do the courses you provide satisfy the demand?

Mrs. Andrée Lortie: Not only is there greater demand, but there are sectors of programming that are absolutely non-existent in French in certain provinces.

Let me give you the example of some new programs that were developed, such as radiation oncology, which did not exist in French.

With the launch of this program the University of Ottawa next September will be a first.

The demand is much greater than our capacity to respond to it right now. In some provinces outside Quebec, there are some programs that absolutely do not exist in French. The further you get from Ottawa, the fewer programs there are.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Lortie.

Mr. Simard would like to ask a very important and very brief question, please.

Hon. Raymond Simard (Saint Boniface, Lib.): It's not necessarily very important.

I apologize for having missed your presentation, Madam. I simply wanted to know one thing regarding follow-up of your graduates. Do you provide some follow-up? For example, do you know if people go back home? Unlike Ms. Barbot, I am wondering whether we are losing young people who decide to settle in Quebec?

I imagine that Quebec also needs well-educated people who speak both official languages. Are you aware of the needs throughout the country? For example, if Saskatchewan needs doctors, is any attempt made to help graduates get in contact with employers there, or vice-versa?

The Chair: I would ask you to answer very briefly.

Mrs. Andrée Lortie: First of all, the current follow-up is not at all satisfactory. That's why it will be a critical part of the third phase. With regard to the Cité collégiale, the Government of Ontario compels us to do a follow-up of our graduates six months after they receive their diplomas. A provincial firm, hired by the government, phones our graduates. We provide the lists.

When we ask them if they were working, we do not try to find out whether they went back to the place they came from. We simply try to find out whether they have a job in a field related to their studies. For my part, this work isn't being done and it has to be.

The Chair: I thank Ms. Lortie and Ms. Cloutier for their presentation. I see that the minister has arrived. We will adjourn the meeting for two minutes and then continue with the minister.

• (1000)

The Chair: May I have your attention please; we will resume our hearing.

I'd like to welcome Mr. Monte Solberg, Minister of Citizenship and Immigration.

[*English*]

Welcome to Minister Monte Solberg, Minister of Immigration, and Mr. Daniel Jean.

[*Translation*]

Welcome, Mr. Jean.

[*English*]

The minister has a presentation that I believe you have in front of you. The minister will give us a brief presentation, followed by a first round of questions of about seven minutes, and we'll continue after that.

Thank you very much for coming, Mr. Minister. You can start your presentation at your leisure.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Monte Solberg (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. It's a pleasure to be here to discuss my department's efforts to ensure the strength of Canada's francophone minority communities.

Immigration is a key factor in the growth and vitality of francophone communities outside Quebec. Our government plans to attract more French-speaking immigrants to these communities, and to work with our partners to help these newcomers succeed.

[*English*]

As I am sure the committee is aware, both the previous Commissioner of Official Languages and minority communities themselves have expressed concerns in the past about the impact of immigration and of my department's policies on the development of official language minority communities. This is also a great concern for Citizenship and Immigration Canada.

My department has a key role to play in building Canada's economic and social future. That most certainly includes maintaining and contributing to the linguistic duality that is our heritage. Part of accomplishing that goal is meeting the need to attract more francophone immigrants to our francophone minority communities, integrating them well, and encouraging them to stay in these communities. Canada's new government is committed to doing what is required to support this strategic plan.

A cornerstone of this support is ensuring the resources are there to better integrate newcomers to Canada. In Budget 2006, our government backed up that promise when it provided \$307 million in new settlement funding. But there is more we can do and more that we are doing.

• (1005)

[*Translation*]

I am pleased to be able to report today that the department has made significant progress in addressing these concerns. As the members of the standing committee know, immigration is an area of shared jurisdiction, and we have numerous federal-provincial-territorial agreements under which the provinces and territories exercise their authority in this regard.

[*English*]

There is much more to it than that. Immigration may be an area of shared jurisdiction, but it is a matter of universal concern. We must go beyond agreement and strive for true collaboration if we are to meet our goals for attracting and retaining immigrants to our francophone minority communities.

This collaboration is embodied by the efforts of the members of the Citizenship and Immigration Canada-Francophone Minority Communities Steering Committee. The committee was established in 2002 to develop strategies to promote immigration to francophone minority communities. It is co-chaired by a senior official of CIC and a representative of Canada's francophone minority communities.

Many of the committee's members are drawn from francophone minority communities across Canada, and there is also participation from the provinces, territories, and other federal departments. Our government—Prime Minister Harper, Minister Verner, and CIC—is supporting the strategic plan with the new reception and settlement infrastructure that can be found in Edmonton, Calgary, and Ottawa. Similarly, we are supporting the strategic plan with a number of tools to help in the integration of newcomers, such as the reference guides on services available in French in six cities in Ontario, including Ottawa, Toronto, Hamilton, Windsor, Sudbury, and London.

Along with our partners, we are supporting the strategic plan by engaging in promotional and recruitment activities in countries like France, Morocco, and Mauritius. Provinces and communities have joined CIC in recruitment events that have been held in francophone cities such as Nice, Brussels, Paris, and Rabat, to encourage applications in the skilled worker category. Several provinces were among our partners in staging and publicizing these events, which attracted more than 1,200 people.

I know the committee heard recently from both Daniel Jean and Marc Arnal, co-chairs of the francophone minority steering committee, which provided a briefing on our strategic plan to foster immigration to francophone minority communities.

I had the pleasure of launching the strategic plan last month in Winnipeg. The plan gives a realistic assessment of the challenges and the steps we can take to meet those challenges. Our goal is to increase the number of French-speaking immigrants to a minimum of 4.4% of overall immigration by 2008. We want especially to increase the number of French-speaking economic class immigrants and students in francophone minority communities. To meet those challenges, we need to continue to work internationally to recruit new French-speaking immigrants to our francophone minority communities and we need to work in and with these communities to support our goals of integration and retention. That means expanding and refining the types of initiatives I've just described and bringing forth new initiatives.

The strategic plan offers a number of examples, including providing intensive language training tailored to the workplace; offering training and extended internships to upgrade skills and improve employability; continuing to support vulnerable clients, including women and youth; and raising awareness in local communities of the potential benefits of immigration. These efforts will be supported by other measures already implemented by our government, such as cutting the right of permanent residence fee in half, giving foreign students the opportunity to work off campus so that they can learn more about our country and our languages, and our \$18 million investment in streamlining the assessment and recognition of foreign credentials.

Everything we do to make Canada more attractive to immigrants will also make Canada more attractive to francophone immigrants.

• (1010)

[*Translation*]

In conclusion, Mr. Chairman, let me sum up by saying that the measures I described may be directed specifically at building strong francophone communities in Canada, but in the process, we will also build a stronger Canada.

Canada's linguistic duality is the foundation of our country, and my department, like our government, is determined to maintain and strengthen that foundation.

Thank you. I welcome any questions the committee may have.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Minister, and allow me to congratulate you on your French.

[*English*]

I must congratulate you on your command...I'm somewhat embarrassed, being francophone, to see an anglophone with such confidence in French—

Hon. Monte Solberg: Well, that's taking it a long way, Mr. Chairman. Wait till people ask me questions. Then we'll see how I do.

The Chair: For what it's worth, I'm very impressed, and I must congratulate you on your ability to speak French as well as you do.

We have a round of questions for seven minutes.

We are going to start with our resident guru, Mr. Simard.

Hon. Raymond Simard: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Welcome, Mr. Minister and Mr. Jean.

You were in Winnipeg, Mr. Minister, a little while back signing an agreement, and I think it was an excellent thing. I'm not sure if it was in partnership with the Province of Manitoba, with the province setting an objective of 7% francophone immigrants.

One of the challenges we have, and I'm sure you're aware of this, is with the settlement resources after we get the people here. It's all very nice to set targets and bring them here, but it's a huge issue in Manitoba, and in French Manitoba, in the sense that we have one person right now who's looking after the whole settlement office. In some cases, when immigrants come to Winnipeg, they're even stuck bringing the families home with them. It's to that extent.

I like the idea of setting objectives that are higher than the percentage of francophones in Manitoba. I think it's a great idea, because that is how we're going to expand our population.

How do we make sure the resources are there in the second place to ensure we can welcome them properly?

Hon. Monte Solberg: Thank you very much for the question.

Manitoba is particularly activist when it comes to recruiting not just francophone immigrants but using its provincial nominee program overall to recruit. Minister Allan in Manitoba is doing a great job of demonstrating his commitment to this.

The good news is that the new settlement funding for provinces outside Quebec will mean a very large increase overall for settlement funding for all provinces. Manitoba will do very well by this and will be announcing this very shortly. Knowing Minister Allan and the commitment of the Government of Manitoba to settlement funding also for the francophone communities, they see this as a very important sector for them to address.

We've already started to do some things in St. Boniface. Because of the strategy, initiatives are already under way to help people find suitable housing, as this is a real challenge. We are very aware of this, but the strategy, combined with the \$307 million, means we now have the means to implement the strategy in a meaningful way.

Hon. Raymond Simard: You hit the nail on the head—my second question is on housing. One of the issues we have is that people coming to St. Boniface want to integrate with the francophone community, but there's absolutely no housing available. They end up living downtown somewhere and being brought into gangs. It creates a whole different socio-economic problem.

Is there a strategy between Immigration and CMHC in terms of this? There should be some kind of an integrated strategy to make sure that when we bring people to a francophone community they are able to live within that community.

Hon. Monte Solberg: I've talked to the minister about Manitoba. We have to do much more, I acknowledge that. I have not talked to CMHC about this issue, but I know it's becoming more and more of a challenge even in my own province. In Alberta, and Calgary, for instance, it's a huge challenge, and it really requires not just interdepartmental cooperation but intergovernmental cooperation. I'm sure the provinces are working on this as well, but we have a long way to go. It's not an easy challenge.

• (1015)

Hon. Raymond Simard: A last question. Past immigration ministers have thrown the idea around of bringing immigrants into Canada and having them live in very specific areas. That is one option when you're trying to allow people to live outside of Toronto, Vancouver, or Montreal, because that's where 95% of our immigrants go. Is that something you're thinking about as a strategy and something you may want to develop?

Hon. Monte Solberg: One of the things we are working on is regionalization, so we spread the wealth around. Overwhelmingly right now, immigrants in general go to Montreal, Toronto, Vancouver, and to an increasing degree to places like Calgary and Edmonton. We have to find ways to encourage them to go outside those communities. We do have some regionalization strategies we're working on, and this is critical for many provinces. Provinces like Newfoundland are losing population. New Brunswick has some real challenges with respect to this.

We've been talking to the provinces. One of the great tools the provinces have, and we're encouraging them to use more, is the provincial nominee program. Manitoba is using it very effectively. New Brunswick has been the most aggressive of the Atlantic provinces in the past in looking at ways to use this to bring both anglophones and francophones to the province. Certainly in the case of New Brunswick, there are some real opportunities to use this to attract francophones.

Hon. Raymond Simard: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Simard.

The floor is yours, Ms. Barbot.

Mrs. Vivian Barbot: Good morning, Minister. Thank you for being here today.

The issues surrounding immigration are extremely complex, particularly when it comes to encouraging French speakers to settle in provinces other than Québec. As the population pool in question is very limited in size, it is difficult to introduce effective measures. It is difficult to implement an action plan that will truly create ideal conditions for first attracting people and then holding onto them. A number of people have told us that the plan has serious shortcomings on this front, making it difficult for us to know where exactly we are heading.

For example, the plan does not provide us with an overview of the situation. It does not explain what our starting point is. It provides us with various insights and statistics but, at the same time, informs us that there has been no specific study into the current or targeted number of immigrants in Canada. By way of example, we are told that Canada plans to open its doors to 225,000 to 255,000 immigrants in 2006.

When the plan was launched, you and Ms. Verner opted to maintain the initial targets, meaning that you intend for 4.4 per cent of Canada's immigrants in 2008 to be French speakers who would settle in communities in provinces other than Québec. If immigration levels were to remain stable between now and then, that would mean that French-speaking communities outside Quebec would welcome between 9,900 and 11,200 French-language immigrants per year. However, the same plan also forecasts that 15,000 French-speaking immigrants will settle in provinces other than Quebec over the next five years. This gives us an entirely different figure, and one that is four times less than the official target.

When members of the steering committee appeared before us they explained that this confusion has stemmed from a change in the definition. Under the terms of the new definition, the target is 1.25 per cent, which is equivalent to current levels.

We are finding it difficult to pinpoint the actual target. I would like you to tell us about your targets for 2008 onwards and the instruments you will be using to measure whether they have been met.

• (1020)

Hon. Monte Solberg: Thank you very much for your question.

[*English*]

I guess the answer is that we are setting a more ambitious target, because we are maintaining the 4.4% by 2008, but we are changing the definition of what is a francophone. We want people whose working language is French, because otherwise I think we could meet the target in a superficial way but not really strengthen francophone minority communities, and we don't want to do that; we want to make a good-faith effort to strengthen francophone minority communities. So that is why not only have we changed the definition, but we have maintained the target, and we put in place all kinds of new settlement funding to ensure that we have services that are available to people when they come to these communities and that they are retained in these communities. So I think we've actually added some resources to back up the plan and the new definition.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Vivian Barbot: Could you provide us with some examples of the type of services that you offer and that will help you meet your objective?

[*English*]

Hon. Monte Solberg: First of all, presently we've started to do some recruitment activities, which we've already described, and I think Daniel Jean described them when he appeared before you earlier. So we're intent upon doing more recruiting, and we have some great partners to do that. It's not just the provinces, but when we go to recruit, we're using the expertise of the minority communities themselves. They come along; they know the types of things that are attractive to immigrants who've already come to their communities. This is very important, and I don't think it can be overstated how valuable it is to have that kind of expertise when we recruit.

Then when we do get people to come to our communities, in the past we've had some services to offer them, but they've been inadequate. The new settlement funding arrangement will ensure that there are more resources for language training, for career training, to help people find housing—all these types of things. It's my hope that those resources, spent wisely, will help us get closer to that target and ultimately achieve that target.

I think it's disingenuous to have a target like that but not have the resources, and I think finally now we have the resources behind it to take some very important steps toward attaining those goals.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Vivian Barbot: You spoke about attracting immigrants to the regions. In Québec, we have invested a great deal in this, but have made scant headway.

In light of this reality, are you planning on introducing new and innovative measures?

[*English*]

Hon. Monte Solberg: One of the things I've learned is that when it comes to immigration and attracting people outside of large cities, you need to have a critical mass of people from a community, so that when immigrants come they can feel at home in that community.

I want to give you an example. The community I live in—Brooks, Alberta—was a small oil and gas and farming community for years and years. About ten years ago the meat packing plant expanded there, and they couldn't find workers from within Canada. Soon, many refugees, in particular from Sudan, but from all across Africa and really from around the world started to come. Now there are different communities within Brooks that are welcoming to new immigrants; now there's a bit of a critical mass. You have people from all around the globe who come and end up staying now for longer periods of time than they used to, because they can work and there is a welcoming community.

Of course, the community of Brooks is two hours away from Calgary. It's a rural community. Interestingly, not long ago they formed a new francophone organization in Brooks. It's l'Association francophone de Brooks. It's probably, as far as I know, the only one in southern Alberta outside of Calgary. This would be for immigrants from places like Rwanda and Congo and so on. So it can happen, but it requires a number of different things to come together: jobs, a welcoming community, and of course some leadership, typically especially from the immigrant community, but also of course from people who are already in the community and who can help.

• (1025)

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

[Translation]

The member for Acadie—Bathurst will be asking the next question.

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

Good morning, Minister. I believe this is the first time that we have met since your appointment, even though it took place approximately nine months ago.

One thing concerns me, and I would like to know what the government intends to do in this area. Quebec has immigration offices in several countries. I understand; that is not a problem. Quebec is promoting francophone immigration to Canada. I have visited other countries where Quebec was not present, and it seems as though Canada has no presence in the Francophonie. It is as if we expect Quebec alone to attract immigrants to Canada. Obviously they attempt to bring them to Quebec; that is normal. In Canadian Embassies in certain countries, there is not even information provided in French, nothing is translated into French. I have often found that because I travel everywhere, I have been to a number of countries. You arrive at the embassy and it is insulting to find that there is a lack of information in French. It seems to me that if there is no information at the embassy and if there are francophones in the country...

Who at the embassy is responsible for speaking with the local people and promoting francophone immigration to Moncton, Caraquet or Shippagan? With all due respect, Quebec is not responsible for that. It promotes immigration to Quebec, to attract immigrants to the regions of Quebec. I understand that. The federal government has given Quebec some of the responsibility for immigration, so that it can attract the francophones to Quebec. We, the francophones outside Quebec, are missing the boat, as we say in the baie des Chaleurs.

[English]

Hon. Monte Solberg: First of all, thank you for your question. If in fact there are embassies where we do not provide brochures in both languages, that's not acceptable. I would be pleased if you were to provide specific examples. I would be happy to follow up with respect to it.

One thing we are doing is developing more information services on the Internet in both languages. Our "Going to Canada" portal on the Internet will have very extensive services. It already has extensive services, obviously in both languages. We intend to drive more of the inquiries about Canada to the Internet, but that said, I take your criticism. If there are examples of this, we'll follow up and make sure those brochures are in both languages, absolutely.

[Translation]

Mr. Yvon Godin: I will ask you another question.

You know, Mr. Minister Solberg, that before you got your limousine, you would take a taxi as would I, to go to the airport. How many times have you and I spoken to taxi drivers who turned out to be professionals? I use this as an example. These are people who live here in Canada, and who have training and so forth.

The committee is studying the issue of French in the health care sector, while there are qualified people whose credentials are not being recognized.

This morning, members of one group told us that the problem these professionals have is not really their training, but that it is rather an issue having to do with their culture, customs, roots, etc.

What will happen in the future? Do you have any programs that will allow these people to integrate into Canadian society? I find this situation most unfortunate. It would be a different story if we had a surplus of professionals, but that is not the case. They closed the hospital in Caraquet because of a shortage of doctors; they closed the hospital in Dalhousie because of a shortage of doctors; they closed the hospital in Lamèque because there was a shortage of professionals. In the meantime, we are getting into taxis and talking to drivers some of whom are doctors, but they are doctors who cannot practise their profession.

I would like to know once and for all what your department is doing. We can talk all we want, but when you were in the opposition, you talked and talked and talked. Now that you are on the government side, we want to know what you intend to do to allow these people to practise their trade, which is something they love. I find that this is an unacceptable loss.

• (1030)

[English]

Hon. Monte Solberg: First of all, my limousine is a Buick Impala, but that's okay.

Mr. Yvon Godin: I have a Grand Prix and it's not a limousine.

Hon. Monte Solberg: Your point is an important one. In the budget, to try to unknot this problem, we announced \$18 million in funding for consultations with the provinces, professional bodies, new immigrants, and the business community. There are some good signs. Some provinces are very aggressive on this. Quebec, in particular, has done a great job. I've talked often with Lise Thériault regarding what they've done with doctors. In the spring, they will be introducing legislation that will require the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons and the Quebec Medical Association to work with foreign-trained doctors. They will have to do more than provide them with testing. They will have to mentor them so that they can pass the tests. The problem is partly with procedures and that kind of thing, but very often it's also with the technical vocabulary. So they will get help with this, so that they can pass the test. In exchange for all this, they will often agree to work for a while in rural areas. Eventually they can go and work wherever they wish. Part of the agreement is that they go through this process.

Ontario is now taking some steps. My hope is that the federal government can help to coordinate and share best practices with all the provinces. My department plans to be more aggressive in our missions. We mean to be clear with people proposing to come to Canada. We will tell them that just having a medical degree doesn't mean they can automatically practice in Canada. Then we will help them find out what they need to do, depending on which jurisdiction they're going to, to decide if they want to upgrade before they go, or if they even want to go to that jurisdiction. Basically, we want to let them know what they're up against before they come. Also, once they get here, we will help them navigate their way to the right people in whatever province they're going to, to find out what they need to do to meet the criteria so that they can practice in their field.

The Chair: Minister, Mr. Godin, thank you both.

Mr. Sweet.

Mr. David Sweet (Ancaster—Dundas—Flamborough—Westdale, CPC): Mr. Solberg, thank you for your presentation.

On the public record, I want to thank you also for your and the department's hard work. We've interacted a lot.

My riding, Ancaster—Dundas—Flamborough—Westdale, is part of the amalgamated greater city of Hamilton. I'm not certain why, maybe because we have two universities and one of the largest colleges in the country, but we get a large population of immigrants and refugees. So I want to thank you for your work.

We also have an organization, whose executive director will be happy that I'm sitting in on this meeting today, called CESO, which is a settlement organization in Hamilton. It is quite a sophisticated organization, with a large staff and a large volunteer component as well. They're very frugal, do very good work. I had a meeting with them almost directly after the election and saw the great operation they have, everything from helping immigrants do résumés, to helping find other services so that they cannot only settle in the community but can be contributing citizens in the community as well.

They've had a number of concerns. One of them was the fact that their funding was frozen. Now we've made some promises, but there's some concern as to whether that reserve will continue to be

there, the history of which I don't know because I was only elected on January 23. Therefore, I have something of a multi-faceted question for you.

Number one, why was that funding frozen and when? As to the resources that are flowing now, can I give them some assurance that it's going to continue? I think that funding has been alluded to already, but for the record, will that \$307 million that you mentioned also get into the francophone communities?

• (1035)

Hon. Monte Solberg: Well, thank you for the question.

First of all, I've met with CESO a couple of times. Let me say about settlement agencies in general, I'm always impressed. The people who work in settlement agencies work there because they want to make a difference. They don't work there to make much money, because they don't. Many of them, of course, volunteer, and they do an outstanding job. I always feel that when we give them a dollar, we get \$3 or \$4 worth of value in return. They're great organizations.

The settlement funding was frozen when the previous government was dealing with the deficit issue. It was never really substantially raised after that. The result has been that there have been long line-ups for language training, long line-ups for career training and those kinds of things, and we've seen outcomes for newcomers drop dramatically. In 1980, the average newcomer, one year after arriving here, had an income 25% higher than the Canadian average. Today, they have an income 32% lower than the Canadian average. So we have to do more in terms of ensuring that they get the skills they need, the training they need, and that's what those settlement dollars will do.

There will be announcements very soon regarding how that money will be allocated, but it will mean dramatic increases for all provinces. I'm excited about that. I think this is a sector where people have toiled for a long time, again with scarce resources, trying to do the best they can, and now they'll have some money to really do what is their life's work and help people get the skills they need so they're not isolated, so they can integrate and get the jobs. That's exciting to me. So you can pass that message along.

Of course, in a province like Ontario, where we have a very substantial francophone community, francophone settlement agencies and groups will see a big increase in the funding they get. Actually, in Ontario, CIC has a very direct say in how funding is allocated, but we take input from settlement agencies and obviously from the Province of Ontario.

Yes, there will be substantial increases in funding for all settlement agencies.

Mr. David Sweet: Good. Thank you, Mr. Minister.

If I have any time left, I'll be glad to share it with my colleagues.

The Chair: Two minutes left.

Mr. Pierre Lemieux: Okay, I'll ask a question.

Minister, I'm interested in the provincial nominee program. I don't know much about it. I wonder if you can explain it to me, what the aim of it is, how it's being applied by the provinces, by us.

Hon. Monte Solberg: The provincial nominee program is a program whereby the provinces can set the criteria for bringing people to their province to ultimately become permanent residents. The federal government still maintains a role. We still have a role to make sure that people meet the standards with regard to criminality, security, and health, but beyond that, the provinces really get to set the criteria.

The most successful province so far in employing the provincial nominee program is Manitoba. Manitoba last year brought in 4,600 people under their provincial nominee program, versus my province of Alberta at 611, and I think B.C. had 800. So Manitoba is very aggressive, and they do a number of things with it. They use it to target a couple of specific groups that are already established in Manitoba, in particular the Filipino community. They have a population in Winnipeg, in particular, so they reach out to the Philippines and say, "Come here. We'll find you a job. We have a welcoming community you can step right into."

Also, there's a large Mennonite community, of course, in Manitoba, so they use that to reach out to Germany, particularly, and bring people very often into rural communities in Manitoba—Steinbach, and places like this.

They have different streams. They have a family stream, a community stream, and a business stream. If you have family members you want to bring in, or a particular community needs someone—maybe it's a doctor, for instance—or there are business people looking for employees of a type, then they can nominate these people, and then once they are approved by the province, they come in and away they go.

It's been extraordinarily successful, and we're hoping that other provinces use it more aggressively.

• (1040)

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

[Translation]

We will have a second round starting with Mr. Rodriguez.

You have five minutes.

Mr. Pablo Rodriguez: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Given that there are only two rounds, I will share my time with my colleague, Mr. Dhaliwal.

Good morning, and welcome to you all.

I would like to understand your overall approach. Can you tell me whether you, personally as Minister, believe that linguistic duality is an asset for Canada? Is it essential to the national identity of this country?

[English]

Hon. Monte Solberg: Well, it is such an important part of what the country is, and the value of our linguistic duality can't be overstated. I tried to make that point in my opening remarks. Canada is a great country, in part, because of its tremendous past and the fact that we were founded by these two great peoples, and now we want to perpetuate that. I think it's a great strength of our country, no question.

[Translation]

Mr. Pablo Rodriguez: In drafting your strategic plan, did you consult immigrant groups who have had real experience?

[English]

Hon. Monte Solberg: The groups we consulted and that are part of the steering committee are the francophone minority communities themselves. They include obviously many immigrants as well.

Yes, in fact, these groups really drive the strategy. They're the ones we rely on to come up with ideas to bring people to francophone minority communities, and then once they're there, to retain them, because the concern is that they'll drift away, particularly to large cities.

[Translation]

Mr. Pablo Rodriguez: You say that you want to support the host communities in their reception services for immigrants. They must be given the tools to develop themselves. On page 9 of your plan, you state:

the Strategic Plan recommends supporting the communities at risk to support French-speaking refugees in the following ways:

Then you talk about immediate reception and emergency settlement services. Then you specifically mention—it is a separate point—legal support. I am wondering if the plan suggests that legal support will be given.

How do you reconcile that with the elimination of the Court Challenges Program?

[English]

Hon. Monte Solberg: I would say, in answer to that, we're talking about two different types of legal assistance. That said, on the court challenges program, our approach is to make sure that the laws we introduce are actually constitutional.

I think the more important point I would make is that very often the court challenges program was used to fight for services in francophone communities. We're spending \$307 million in the next two years to provide those services. So I would argue that the \$5 million that is being reduced for the court challenges program will be more than overcome by the \$307 million we're putting into settlement services to actually provide the very services the court challenges program was used to fight for. So I think we're going way beyond what would be available through fighting through the courts with the court challenges program.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Mr. Dhaliwal, your colleague was not very gracious in welcoming you here. He leaves you with one minute.

Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal (Newton—North Delta, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Welcome, Minister, and thank you for sharing your views with us.

I will carry on with Mr. Godin's question. Credential recognition is a big problem. We can't solve this in one minute here, of course, but particularly you've mentioned that Quebec is bringing in something about the doctors. It is not only the immigrants; in fact, I see Canadian-born students are going abroad to acquire qualifications and then they come back.

The biggest problem we have is the residency spots; it's not the training. I have travelled across Europe, where my daughter is taking a degree in medicine as well.

How would you particularly work to create those residency spots?

• (1045)

Hon. Monte Solberg: I think you're right. First of all, it is very complicated. There are no simple answers, but part of it is to make sure that this does not become an issue where we're pitting the federal government against the provinces and against the professional bodies. It is in all of our interests to fix this problem. As Mr. Godin pointed out, we have, on the one hand, people who have tremendous skills—medical skills, for instance—who are driving cabs, and on the other hand, a shortage of doctors in the country. The only thing that prevents them from practising are some artificial barriers. In some cases, they are barriers that were set up perhaps in the past to protect some of these professions. That's not a good enough reason to bar people from entry into these fields.

In other cases, they may be well-meaning barriers that are designed to ensure that people meet a certain standard, but if that's the case, then we all have an obligation, at every level of government and in the professional bodies, to find a way to help people who already have tremendous skills and lots of training to overcome those barriers.

That's what has happened to some degree in Quebec, and I think my job, in part, along with Minister Finley, who is taking the lead on credentials recognition, is to work with the provinces and the professional bodies and convince them that this has to become a very high priority.

Health care, as you know, when you talk to people, is one of the biggest priorities people have. I think we're getting close to the point where the public is starting to really understand what's going on here, which is that we have doctors who aren't practising and we have people who go without doctors. It's a good opportunity, frankly, for federal and provincial politicians to finally say we have the public behind us to tackle this big problem. So I'm hoping that's what we can do in the days and weeks ahead, with the help of my colleagues on all sides of the House.

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

[Translation]

Ms. Boucher, you have the floor.

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher (Beauport—Limoilou, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Solberg. Your appearance here this morning has answered some of my questions. We know that you work in co-operation with

several entities, such as the provinces, the territories and communities.

Can you tell us how the strategic plan was received by the communities, the provinces and the territories? Are these people ready to work with us?

[English]

Hon. Monte Solberg: Actually the plan was received very well. I think again of Manitoba. When we launched the plan in Manitoba, it might have been somewhat counterintuitive given that we have an NDP government in Manitoba and a Conservative government in Ottawa, but we get along extraordinarily well. I think the reason for that is that there really is a genuine desire on all sides to make this work, and both sides can see that already this strategic plan is making a difference and there are some very positive initiatives coming out of the plan. Now, with the new settlement funding, they see that we're prepared to put some substantial resources behind it to really make it work. That has been my experience wherever we go.

We have a new government now in New Brunswick, and I'm looking forward to meeting with my counterpart there. But I think New Brunswick is ideally placed to take advantage of the strategic plan, especially, again, with the new resources that go with it. This is a wonderful opportunity to take the strategic plan, where we were promoting francophone minority communities outside of Quebec, and now to say, not only is this a good place to come to because French is spoken in these communities, but we also have the resources now to welcome people and to provide them with the training they need to integrate into this new Canadian culture.

So it has been extraordinarily well received, and even in B.C., where I met with the francophone federation, it's going over extraordinarily well.

• (1050)

[Translation]

The Chair: Ms. Brunelle, you may ask the next question.

Ms. Paule Brunelle: Thank you, Mr. Solberg.

I appreciate your presentation, particularly since you face a considerable challenge, as far as I can see. You said that you must attract immigrants, and obviously keep them, help them fit in and encourage them. I think that sums things up quite well.

At the end of your presentation, you said: "Everything we do to make Canada more attractive to immigrants will also make Canada more attractive to francophone immigrants."

That is true, but it seems a little short to me. I think that you wanted to summarize things for us. Having worked a great deal on the preservation of French in Quebec, I am wondering if you should not plan for some kind of coordination. In fact, we know that in order to keep people in communities, so that they can speak French in communities outside Quebec, it takes more than just a critical mass. To preserve the language, first there is the issue of the language of work, then education in French, health care and perhaps a family reunification program.

Do you not think that in order to achieve your goal of 4.4 per cent, you will have to try and coordinate things? Perhaps you are already doing so. Talk to me a little about this, please.

[English]

Hon. Monte Solberg: It is important to forge alliances with communities within Quebec. Of course, even today, to some degree, that happens naturally. When people immigrate to Quebec, just like in every province and every community, a number of people don't stay in Quebec. They will come there initially and then they will go to other provinces. This is something that occurs quite naturally in every province. To some degree, that happens already, where someone will come and become established for a year or two in Montreal or Quebec, and then move to wherever, to Moncton or to St. Boniface, or perhaps to somewhere outside of a francophone community.

There's no doubt we need to take advantage of the expertise we have in Quebec, and of course, also just the sheer numbers.... Although that is to some degree beyond my area of expertise, it's clearly a part of what has to happen to make sure those communities remain strong.

Again, by ensuring that we have settlement funding in all these communities, that we provide resources for training and all these other things that are so important, it's my view that this can only help ensure we retain people in these communities and that these communities do get that critical mass. As I point out, even in my little community of Brooks, where there was really no francophone presence...except for me, of course, in my ability to speak French so well...before we had a large number of immigrants there was nothing, and now we do have the Association francophone de Brooks, and that's great. Hopefully we can see more of that because of both labour situations that attract people and also because we provide the resources.

[Translation]

Ms. Paule Brunelle: I believe that you are quite right when you talk about critical mass, but I am worried. When I think about critical mass, I also think about ghettos.

We saw the integration difficulties they had in France. Because of its geographical position, France had to integrate a very large number of immigrants, and this created pockets of tension. I do not have a question on this subject, but I would like to make a comment. I think that a critical mass may be necessary, but you have to be careful. In order for this to work well, there has to be a will to integrate large groups of francophones outside Quebec.

• (1055)

[English]

Hon. Monte Solberg: I think one of the most important differences between Canada and so much of Europe in general is that when people come to Canada as immigrants, we make it clear that we want them to ultimately be citizens. Over 85% of people who come to Canada ultimately become citizens.

When we make it clear, I think we state both implicitly and explicitly that we expect people to accept core Canadian values. Yes, we are a country of many cultures and many languages. But it will always work as long as we accept some core values beneath that, which it rests on, such as mutual respect for other religions, other beliefs, and other languages. If people buy into that, we can then have a very pluralistic society, and it will all work, as citizens.

I think a big key difference between us and Europe is that we have the expectation of becoming citizens, and in many places they don't have that expectation. In fact, being a citizen is very difficult in many European countries, and in some cases it is almost impossible for people to attain.

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

We have a very brief question, our final question, from Mr. Murphy.

Mr. Brian Murphy: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Minister, thank you for coming here.

You spoke about upping the program by \$300 million. We certainly want to know whether it's specifically within your department, whether it's specifically above the action plan as presented by the department, and whether it's specifically for francophone communities.

I'll let you answer that after I ask my second question, which is really more of a comment.

I'm from Moncton, New Brunswick. It's a tremendously vibrant community, not only culturally and linguistically, but it has a great economy. It should be a centre and a target for immigration in this country.

I'm a little disturbed because the deputy mayor of my city, the former premier, and Monsieur Patry, from our party, attended. I don't recall any discussion from those individuals on the issue of immigration to Canada. Moncton itself has a *consulat général* for France in its community, as well as a *consulat de Roumanie* in our community.

The buck stops at your desk and you have to take responsibility. I'm not sure that you as minister emphasized the importance of the francophone minority population and the economic vibrancy that exists in New Brunswick or that you promoted it as a department. I don't know what role you had at the *Sommet de la Francophonie* and whether you were maximizing it, but I don't think you were.

Hon. Monte Solberg: Well, I appreciate your question.

I have spent a lot of time in the past with the Minister of Immigration from New Brunswick and talked about these issues. In the past, it was Percy Mockler. Of course, he had an abiding interest in the issue of francophone minority communities and services, as well as the tie to regionalization and finding ways to encourage people to come to live and work in cities or areas outside Toronto, Montreal, and Vancouver.

You're right that Moncton is a very exciting place these days. There's lots going on and that's great.

It's true that I wasn't at *la Francophonie*, but we have a deep interest in this.

The \$307 million is new funding that was announced in the budget. It's going to settlement services in general around the country. But obviously, in New Brunswick, our only bilingual province, a lot of the money will end up going to support settlement services for francophone minority communities.

I'm excited about that. I think this is a great chance to really put the resources behind this strategic plan. Now when we go abroad and encourage people to come to places like New Brunswick, we'll also

have the resources to make sure they feel very welcome when they finally arrive.

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

On behalf of my colleagues on the committee, I want to thank you for taking the time out of your busy schedule to assist at our committee. Your information has no doubt been very helpful. I'm sure we'll be talking in the future.

Thank you. The meeting is adjourned.

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