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Chair

Mr. Steven Blaney

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• (0905)

[Translation]

The Chair (Mr. Steven Blaney (Lévis—Bellechasse, CPC)): Good morning, everyone, and welcome to this 14th meeting of the Standing Committee on Official Languages.

[English]

This morning, pursuant to Standing Order 108(3), we have our study of immigration as a development tool in official language minority communities.

We have the pleasure to receive three witnesses. I think at this very moment the third witness is coming along. As they are seated, I'll take this moment to introduce you to the first witnesses we have this morning. We've had them here recently and they're back with us this morning.

We have with us Ms. Suzanne Bossé, the director general of the Fédération des communautés francophones et acadienne du Canada.

Welcome back.

This morning, she is with Sylvie Moreau, acting assistant director, immigration.

Bienvenue, madame Moreau.

We also have with us Mr. Robert Donnelly of the Quebec Community Groups Network.

Welcome back.

You thought you were done with us, but it ain't over till it's over, like hockey, right?

[Translation]

Also here this morning is Ms. Michelle Dupuis, director of Community Support and Network Development. She is here specially to discuss the subject before us.

We are also hearing from Ms. Sylvia Martin-Laforge, director general.

Welcome, Ms. Martin-Laforge.

Just arrived from Manitoba, we have the representatives of the Société franco-manitobaine. Welcome to you. You will have the time to settle in, since we'll be hearing the addresses from the other witnesses first.

Ms. Bintou Sacko, Francophone Hospitality manager, and Mr. Ibrahima Diallo, chairman of the board, welcome to you too.

Without further ado, we'll hear from the representative of the Fédération des communautés francophones et acadienne du Canada.

Ms. Suzanne Bossé (Director General, Fédération des communautés francophones et acadienne du Canada): Good morning, everyone.

Ladies and gentlemen, thank you for inviting us to make a presentation as part of your study on immigration to the francophone and Acadian communities. In preparing our presentation, we revisited the discussions that took place in this committee during a similar study in 2003. From the committee's report at the time, we were able to see just how current many issues still are, but also how far we have progressed in seven years.

It must be borne in mind that the immigration file is a very recent one; it originated with the "Dialogue" tour organized by the FCFA in 1999-2000. Let's look at the advances that have been made since then.

In its 2003 report, your committee encouraged our communities to take over this file and to make immigration a long-term collective project to ensure our development. We have done that; we have taken the leadership role.

Networks have been put in place in virtually all provinces and territories to promote the recruitment, intake and integration of newcomers in our communities.

In 2007, at the Summit of Francophone and Acadian Communities, we adopted a definition that includes in our francophonie every person who chooses to live and communicate in French, regardless of his or her mother tongue or origin. An analysis recently conducted for the FCFA of the progress that has been made in implementing the Summit vision shows that immigration is the priority on which the largest number of organizations in the francophone community are focused.

That's not counting the impact in the field. I'm very pleased to see the representatives of the Franco-Manitoban community here this morning, in particular Francophone Hospitality, which has done an excellent job in support of hundreds of newcomers since it opened. I'm also thinking of the Centre d'accueil et d'intégration des immigrants du Moncton métropolitain, of the three major francophone immigration support networks in Ontario and of the Francophone Settlement Centre in Edmonton, to name only a few.

Let's also consider the figures. A snapshot of the French-language immigrant population reveals a number of issues and challenges that we are taking note of. It also shows some promising advances. We note that the immigration population whose first official language spoken is French, alone or with other languages, represents 13% of the population of our communities, compared to 8% in 1991.

French-language immigrants now represent more than 20% of the francophone population in British Columbia and more than 10% in Newfoundland and Labrador, Ontario, Alberta and the Yukon. The fact remains that we are still far from achieving our minimum target of 4.4% of the total immigrant population that enters the country every year.

However, our communities are changing, and we have done more than simply take note of that fact. We have seized the leadership role and have taken action to recruit, take in and integrate francophone newcomers.

Many factors have helped us in this effort. The current government launched the Strategic Plan to Foster Immigration to Francophone Minority Communities in 2006. I also want to note the renewed leadership of Citizenship and Immigration Canada, particularly the Steering Committee, in which the FCFA has moreover played a prominent coordination role.

That said, the immigration file is a very complex one and presents a number of challenges. I am going to touch on three major classes of challenges: recruitment, integration and intake.

First let's talk about the recruitment of newcomers. A noteworthy advance has been the organization of "Destination Canada" tours, through the leadership of Canada's embassy in Paris. Our communities have been taking part in this program for a number of years now, together with their provincial and territorial governments, and we are already seeing promising results.

However, recruitment also means preparing for arrival in Canada. Our experience in recent years has taught us the importance of orientation and preparation sessions preceding candidates' departure to facilitate their economic integration once in Canada. We know that these sessions are currently being offered in China, the Philippines and India, and soon will be offered in London. However, they are not being offered in francophone countries, and this is definitely a shortcoming that must be corrected.

Now let's talk about integration issues. It will not be news to you that the recognition of credentials is a crucially important aspect of economic integration.

● (0910)

There are a number of promising initiatives in this area. In particular, the Consortium national de formation en santé has developed a project designed to assist professionals trained outside Canada. In this credential recognition file, however, we must deplore the major weaknesses in interdepartmental and intergovernmental cooperation, particularly with regard to key professions in the francophone community such as speech therapy, teaching and medical disciplines.

It is essential that we correct this situation. There is a clear role for Human Resources and Skills Development Canada and the

economic departments of the provinces and territories, but also for Citizenship and Immigration Canada in the area of coordination.

Since we're talking about provincial and territorial governments, I want to say how pleased we are that the Ministerial Conference on the Canadian Francophonie has made immigration its major priority. In particular, the Conference met with its network of francophone affairs officers in March and, for the first time, also invited those responsible for the francophone immigration file in the provinces and territories.

However, the action taken by the provincial governments must be linked to the communities' priorities. It is essential that the provinces and territories set francophone immigration targets, and here I will cite the example of Manitoba, which is actively using its provincial nominee program.

Another step forward is definitely the systematic inclusion of language clauses in federal-provincial/territorial agreements, as this committee recommended in 2003, and we want to recognize that fact. That said, however, we must monitor how those clauses are interpreted and enforced in the field.

This leads me to intake-related issues. As I said earlier, a number of francophone immigration networks have been established across the country. Some have already proven themselves, while others are developing. All need reinforcement. Achieving the objectives of the Strategic Plan, particularly with regard to the intake and integration of newcomers, will depend on our ability to support francophone intake and settlement structures already in place and to create new ones.

Lastly, now that we've discussed the issues concerning the recruitment-intake-integration chain, let's talk about evaluation. Citizenship and Immigration Canada currently has a set of criteria based on the Roadmap for Canada's Linguistic Duality and on its own programs. However, that does not take into account, for example, what is being done at Human Resources and Skills Development Canada. To get a complete picture of our progress, to determine the actual impact our actions have had on communities and immigrants, we need an evaluation framework that goes beyond the Roadmap, beyond the department, an evaluation framework that includes all partners and be defined with the communities.

Ultimately, we somewhat get the impression that we are delivering the same message as two weeks ago in our appearance on the mid-term evaluation of the Roadmap: the future of the francophone immigration file will depend on strong leadership, better interdepartmental coordination, better intergovernmental cooperation and better linkages with the communities.

So I will close with four major recommendations that I invite you to include in your report:

That a national immigration policy be put in place in the francophone and acadian communities. That policy, which is referred to in the Strategic Plan, would more clearly define intergovernmental and interdepartmental cooperation in this matter and would ensure better linkages between government and community actions.

That Citizenship and Immigration Canada work with Industry Canada, Human Resources and Skills Development Canada and with the provinces to develop a plan for the economic integration of francophone immigrants. From time to time, it should be possible to relax program criteria and to provide for targeted initiatives for francophone immigrants.

That Citizenship and Immigration Canada develop a comprehensive evaluation framework for francophone immigration that includes all partners and is developed jointly with the communities.

That the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration also proceed with a study on francophone immigration and, more broadly, that it include the issue of francophone immigration in all its studies.

The work that awaits us in the francophone immigration file is of course considerable, as are the challenges and issues we must face. We have been committed to this path for 10 years now, and we are here to stay because we have a vision—a vision of open, inclusive and diversified communities where all francophones, regardless of origin, can find a home, grow and develop and contribute to the development of their community. It is these living communities that we want for our children.

Thank you. I am now ready to answer your questions.

• (0915)

The Chair: Thank you for those recommendations, Ms. Bossé. We take particular note of those concerning the recognition of credentials in key fields for French language learning here.

We're going to continue with the people from the Quebec Community Groups Network.

[English]

Mr. Donnelly, would you like to start? Ms. Dupuis will follow.

Mr. Robert Donnelly (President, Quebec Community Groups Network): Thank you, Mr. Blaney.

Good morning, *mesdames et messieurs*.

Thank you again for this opportunity to talk about the immigration dossier. It is, of course, important to us.

You're probably sitting there wondering what I'm doing here again on immigration. It seems like, as Mr. Blaney has suggested, we have a special subscription to this committee, but this is an important issue for us.

I will be rather brief, and then, with your permission, Mr. Blaney, I will ask Michelle to address the committee.

It is clear that Quebec needs immigrants. The continued vitality of our province and, within that, of the English-speaking community, greatly depends on immigration. However, under the assumption that English-speaking Quebec has already largely benefited from immigration, little attention has been paid to the needs of the English-speaking official language minority community in Quebec.

Yet renewal is of critical importance to the development and vitality of our community. The goal of the QCGN is to encourage politicians and policy-makers to consider this fundamental issue as

the Standing Committee on Official Languages undertakes this new study on immigration in official language minority communities.

I read with great interest the blues reports from last week's meetings. I was very pleased to see that Mr. Jack Jedwab was talking about, obviously, the English-speaking minority in Quebec, the other official minority community.

Cultural diversity is a fact in Canadian society. This trend will only increase in the future. During the Bouchard-Taylor commission's "reasonable accommodations" hearings in 2007 and 2008, the QCGN stated that the debate on the cohabitation of different communities was essential and that it should focus on the equilibrium between the rights of the majority and the rights of the minority.

We believe it is vital that we understand who makes up our minority communities and that we understand their values and their needs. During the commission, the QCGN also highlighted ways in which immigration has positively affected society and reminded the commission that our English-speaking community is recognized as being progressive in the way it has dealt with our changing community.

In 2006, immigrants to Quebec for whom English was the only official Canadian language knew upon arrival that they represented approximately 20% of the total provincial immigration. That was up from under 16% in 2002. This proportion actually exceeds the share of Quebec's English mother-tongue population, which stands at just under 10%.

Considering the important percentage of immigrants who are English speakers, we see that it's inevitable that English-language institutions will be involved in the process of integrating newcomers and managing diversity.

We are happy to note that a significant portion of Quebec's intelligentsia do not support the alarmist views of sovereigntists like Pierre Curzi, the PQ cultural critic who recently argued that too many new immigrants were integrating into the English-speaking community. André Pratte, the chief editor of *La Presse*, has remarked that while French is threatened by English, the threat would remain even if all English speakers left the province. In other words, Pratte recognizes that the threat is not coming from Quebec's English-speaking community, but rather from the dominance of the English language in a global world.

Ideally, the QCGN believes that the English-speaking community could be seen as a bridge to help newcomers who speak English to learn French and integrate into Quebec society. It is important to note that language and community are distinct issues. Indeed, the English-speaking communities of Quebec are excellent role models for new immigrants because, despite facing similar challenges, they have successfully learned to speak French and have respectfully integrated into Quebec society.

Mr. Chairman, with your permission, I will introduce Michelle Dupuis, who has been working for us for about five years on a full-time basis in our Montreal office.

Michelle is responsible for two major dossiers. One is the promotion of community development and vitality in our English communities across Quebec. Secondly, she has been very active in the diversity and development of GMCDI, the Montreal community development initiative.

• (0920)

The Chair: Please go ahead.

Ms. Michelle Dupuis (Director of Community Support and Network Development, Quebec Community Groups Network): Thank you very much.

Good morning, ladies and gentlemen.

Historically, the arrival of new immigrants has played a fundamental role in shaping English-speaking Quebec, particularly in the greater Montreal area, where the diversity of the population is a defining characteristic of our community.

As mentioned in the QCGN's presentation to this committee on February 17, 2003, immigrants have always played an important role in the vitality of English-speaking Quebec. We value the diversity arising from immigration and generally view newcomers as making significant contributions to our community and Quebec society.

In a brief to the National Assembly committee on immigration in 2007, the QCGN argued that immigrants whose first official language spoken was English could identify with the English-speaking community while successfully integrating into Quebec society.

As Dr. Jack Jedwab explained in his presentation to you last week, the choice of definition, whether it be mother tongue or first official language spoken, leads to significantly different numbers. The first are immigrants who readily identify with the English-speaking communities of Quebec. The latter is a group that may have more affinity to the English-speaking community because they are more comfortable in English than French.

Identity and identification are at the intersection of official languages policy and immigration policy in Quebec, and these issues impact the more substantial challenges of renewal and retention that our community must address.

In his latest annual report, the Commissioner of Official Languages, Mr. Graham Fraser, dares to tackle the issue of renewal of our community head-on. Mr. Fraser acknowledges that the community has many years of experience in integrating newcomers and managing cultural diversity. He suggests:

...it would be important for English-speaking community organizations to obtain the resources they need to continue working on integrating newcomers and helping them realize their full potential in Quebec.

For a multitude of reasons, the federal government has had difficulty fulfilling its responsibilities toward the English-speaking minority community under part VII of the Official Languages Act.

First, responsibility in the area of immigration has been devolved to the provincial government.

Second, the creation of a steering committee by Citizenship and Immigration Canada for francophone minority communities did not have an equivalent for the other official language minority

community. The strategic framework and summary of initiatives that was produced by the steering committee did not consider or contribute to the vitality of our community.

Finally, the report tabled in 2003, entitled "Immigration as a Tool for the Development of Official Language Minority Communities", was unable to address the needs of English-speaking immigrants to Quebec. We are here today to offer some innovative ideas and hopefully start a dialogue around this issue.

Too often, immigrants to Quebec who speak English fall between the cracks, and the federal government has an opportunity to offer them services and help them integrate into Quebec and Canadian society through the English-speaking community. This can be done in a win-win fashion, particularly in the regions of Quebec.

The provincial government has a strong desire to regionalize new immigrants. There are English-speaking communities in most regions of Quebec, and if English-speaking immigrants were able to count on those communities for guidance, services, and networks to help them integrate, this might motivate them to move to the regions. Without this support system, new immigrants are more likely to remain in Montreal, where they will find support from their own communities.

This is one area where the federal government can play a role in supporting the vitality and development of English-speaking communities: by helping those organizations working in the regions to offer services such as referral services for French as a second language, help in seeking jobs, and employment referral services.

Secondary migration of immigrants is something that both the province and the English-speaking community would like to avoid. An interesting—although slightly outdated—poll produced by CROP and the Missisquoi Institute in 2000 shows the reasons why immigrants who speak English tend to leave the province.

• (0925)

The poll reveals that they are more inclined to leave for educational and economic opportunities. Those are the main reasons they cited. They also cited discrimination and problems associated with integration as influencing the decision to leave the province.

As the QCGN suggested in 2003, English-speaking institutions can provide a sense of community to immigrants while facilitating the transition to Quebec society and its linguistic reality. Successful integration is closely linked to the institutional vitality of communities, and Quebec's English-speaking population is no exception.

Mr. Chairman, as you and your fellow committee members sit down to write up your report and recommendations on immigration as a development tool in official language minority communities, we hope you will address the need for renewal of our community. We also hope that politicians and policy-makers will invest in this some time and innovative thinking that will inform longer-term investments in Quebec, ahead of the next road map.

What we would like to see is more research, particularly action-based research such as pilot projects, that would lead to meaningful investment in the development of Quebec's English-speaking minority community. In the meantime, we suggest that more multi-sectoral and interdepartmental efforts be put into an assessment of the needs of the English-speaking minority in terms of immigration, immigrant retention, and community renewal.

Thank you very much.

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Thank you very much, Ms. Dupuis and Mr. Donnelly.

We'll now continue with a representative from the Société franco-manitobaine.

Mr. Ibrahima Diallo (Chairman of the Board, Société franco-manitobaine): Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Good morning, everybody.

Our presentation will be made in two parts. First, I'm going to provide some background for the Manitoban model—since everyone talks about models—a model that should definitely not be exported like that. Then I'm going to let Ms. Bintou Sacko make a detailed presentation to you on what Francophone Hospitality does.

When we talk about Manitobans, it has to be said that there are 47,000 Franco-Manitobans, two-thirds of whom are concentrated in Winnipeg. I think it's a good idea to keep that fact in mind. The rest are scattered across some 40 villages around Winnipeg, more specifically to the south. However, it must be said that there are more than 100,000 people in Manitoba who speak French. That in a way shows the importance of French, which is not just spoken by old stock Franco-Manitobans.

In addition, three Winnipeg neighbourhoods are designated bilingual: Saint-Boniface, Saint-Vital and Saint-Norbert. This creates a network, a nucleus. I think the francophonie is very important, since we're talking about bringing francophone immigrants to our communities. We also have a major asset. We have more than 50 francophone agencies, including the Centre culturel franco-manitobain, the CDEM, which is very much concerned with the economy, ANIM, the Agence nationale et internationale du Manitoba, which is also concerned with the economy, the Collège universitaire de Saint-Boniface, an institution that has been in existence since 1918, the Cercle Molière, which is one of the oldest theatre companies in North America in any language, the weekly *La Liberté*, the Centre du patrimoine, and so on. We also have well-established institutions in Saint-Boniface. So all that lends considerable importance to the issue of the vitality of francophones.

I won't go back over the historical points that you all know. Manitoba has been subject to measures since 1890, with the Official Language Act, which abolished French-language instruction in the public schools. To go from a francophone majority population in the 1860s to a francophone population of 4.3% of total population in 2010, some events definitely had to occur. I don't want to go back over the history because everyone knows it. In addition to this abolition, there were internal migrations that had the effect of diluting the francophone population in Manitoba. Now there are German speakers, Ukrainians, Filipinos and Icelanders. These populations are rapidly expanding. However, in the meantime, the

francophone population has stagnated, as it were, and even declined. Assimilation doesn't help, and that's why immigration is important. All these populations that I've just named have also developed through immigration.

In one sense, the page has been turned, since Manitobans now form a proud, modern, dynamic and resistant community that wants to achieve its full potential, to continue living in French and to contribute to the development of the province and of the country. That is why the community has organized. Work is being done on a number of aspects, including sectoral, community, cultural, communication and other aspects.

Here's the point I want to make. An effort at reflection was started in 2001, at the very time when we took a close look at how to function within society, and when we asked ourselves what we were going to become in the next few years. Five strategic axes were developed with the intention of "expanding the francophone space". We established a joint strategy for the period from 2001 to 2050 in response to the question concerning what we wanted to become in the coming years. This strategy to expand the francophone space consists of five axes, which focus first of all on old stock francophones. We want them to be proud of what they are and proud to ensure continuity of the francophonie through their families.

● (0930)

There are also what we in Manitoba call exogamous couples. The data on this phenomenon are extremely important because many young people under 20 years of age—I think it's 60 percent—are the product of couples in which each member comes from a different official language community. There are the newcomers who are having a significant impact, there are bilingual anglophones who must not be forgotten, and there are even unilingual anglophones. Consequently, all kinds of action is being taken to find support, to develop the francophonie—I don't mean "to sell the francophonie" since people are already open to it—to ensure that the francophonie is accepted and that it serves as a development lever for our communities.

I believe there has really been a great expansion in this area since 2001. It should be noted that, between 1960 and 1990, we took in roughly 30 francophone immigrants a year. Starting in 1990, that figure increased to 200, and now it's approximately 300. The objective is to take in 700 and even 1,400. Those figures I've just cited have been established based on the representation of the francophone population in our communities. They are also related to the provincial strategy to increase the number of immigrants generally. We're asking that a percentage of francophone newcomers be included in the calculations for increasing the number of immigrants. Having regard to assimilation and all kinds of things, we'll thus be able to maintain the situation of the francophone community.

I'll close by saying that it was on that basis that we asked ourselves how we could welcome these francophones who come to us from outside the province, hence the creation of Francophone Hospitality—I'll leave it to Bintou to talk to you about that. We've put structures in place to welcome francophones to an environment in which they are part of the minority, which involves preparing them to live in that type of environment. Indeed, not all jobs are necessarily found in francophone settings. Even the vast majority of old stock Franco-Manitobans work for anglophone organizations. Consequently, language proficiency is very important, in both French and English. That's necessary as well.

Earlier we talked about credential recognition, which is also a fundamental issue. In general, francophone countries do not have the same model, compared to the anglophone countries of Africa, for example. These are not the same elements. Consequently, an enormous effort must be made in this regard.

There is also the question of adult immigrants, whom we often tend to ignore, more specifically the issue of refugees. Manitoba takes in a disproportionate number of refugees among its immigrants. Sixty percent of immigrants who settle in French-speaking Manitoba are refugees. Even with all the challenges that entails, we absolutely have to consider enabling them to earn a diploma, to finish their secondary education and to go to university or to professional schools.

We currently have the Centre d'apprentissage franco-manitobain for adult training. Two years ago, there were 30 students, and we think there will be 150 this year. They barely have premises where they can study, but it's an outstanding success. It's important to think about these people as well, who have not necessarily taken training, and to enable them to acquire skills on site so they can contribute to the development of society.

I'm going to close very quickly. We're also addressing the housing issue, employment, and so on. However, we'll now let Bintou tell you about Francophone Hospitality as such.

• (0935)

Mrs. Bintou Sacko (Francophone Hospitality Manager, Société franco-manitobaine): Good morning, everyone. Thanks to committee members for this opportunity to present Francophone Hospitality in Manitoba to you. I've been the Francophone Hospitality manager since the organization was created in December 2003. I'm just going to present the hospitality structure and services.

Francophone Hospitality, which is funded by Citizenship and Immigration Canada and the Province of Manitoba, is a Franco-Manitoban community initiative. Earlier Ibrahima mentioned that, in 2001, when immigrants began settling in the community, the community got together to decide what we were going to do. What were we going to do to integrate them into the Franco-Manitoban community?

That's where the entire issue started and it was from that moment that the structure of Francophone Hospitality was put in place. At the time, in December 2003, there was one person and the structure quietly evolved. Today, we have some 13 employees at Francophone Hospitality. When the centre opened, we took in 30 immigrants. Now the organization receives about 350 immigrants a year.

What classes of immigrants do we take in? We take in landed immigrants, including economic immigrants, those who apply through the federal and provincial programs to come and settle here. They have chosen Manitoba or Canada as their destination country. We're talking about refugees and international students who are at the Collège universitaire de Saint-Boniface who are finishing and who want to apply for permanent residence in Manitoba. So we're talking about these three clientele. There are also visitors who come from time to time to gather information on the immigration component. We give them the information and present Manitoba to them. If they so decide, they can settle there.

The Francophone Hospitality program is spread over four weeks, when an immigrant arrives in Manitoba. In the first week, there is the welcome at the airport. What makes our program special is that the approach is very much based on the clients and the assistance and support we can provide them. When immigrants arrived, we used to give them brochures and documents that we asked them to read and then we asked them to get oriented. We've realized that's not what helps immigrants. They need assistance and support, regardless of immigrant class. We took the clients and we made them our central concern. We asked ourselves what they needed on arrival so that they could appreciate the community, get to know it and know what is offered there to assist them in integrating. It was by focusing on the client that we built the Francophone Hospitality service.

First, we go and welcome them at the airport. It turns out we've already been in contact with them. Then we make a reservation for them at the hotel or find them housing, where they can stay temporarily while we go and assist them in administrative matters—everything they have to do in relation to the act, the rules of Canadian society and to know exactly what there is.

Second, we accompany them in the community and with services to establish a connection between them and the services in that community, particularly in the francophone community. All immigrants who arrive at our centres are francophone. They are unilingual. We know that being unilingual in an anglophone majority province is a challenge. They have to learn the language. It's very important for them to know what resources are available in their community and to which they have access to facilitate their integration. We try to create that connection as soon as possible. All that's done in the second week.

In the third week, we sit down with the immigrants to establish objectives. We look at what motivated them to come to Manitoba. If there is a reason, we try to define the objectives they would like to achieve. Why did they immigrate to Canada? We check that with the clients. We look at the short, medium and long terms. We try to make a plan with the immigrants.

We do all that through our follow-up program, which is developed. After one month, three months, six months and a year, we follow up with the clients to see how far they've gone in their immigration effort. We try to determine whether their integration is going well, whether it's not going well or whether they're encountering challenges.

• (0940)

How can we help them with those challenges so that things go well? That's the follow-up program we've developed.

The Chair: Ms. Sacko, perhaps you could wind up and then we'll move on to questions.

Mrs. Bintou Sacko: I'm going to conclude quickly.

Among other things, we also provide them with moral support. We have a network of volunteers consisting of members of the community. This network supports the help we provide in our efforts. We have a twinning program, which is also excellent. We also have awareness programs. Lastly, I'm going to conclude with awareness: we touch on a lot of sectors.

If there are any questions afterwards, I could elaborate on them.

The Chair: One thing is certain: this makes us want to be welcomed that way when we arrive.

Thank you very much.

We'll start with Mr. Bélanger.

Hon. Mauril Bélanger (Ottawa—Vanier, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

This is broad. First, the francophone population in Canada, outside Quebec, represents slightly more than 4% of total population—Ms. Bossé, you mentioned 4.4%. We all agree that francophone immigration, again outside Quebec, represents less than 2%, that is 1.9%.

If the Canadian act—and I believe this is the case—requires immigration to be a faithful reflection of the demographics or of the demographic weight of anglophones and francophones, we are currently violating our own laws. That said, it's not by saying so that we can solve the problem; it's by acting.

Ms. Bossé and Mr. Diallo—I'll come back to the issue of Quebec later—how do you suggest we get to 4.4%? I think we should probably go beyond that if we want to restore a certain balance. How are we going to do it?

• (0945)

Ms. Suzanne Bossé: That represents a lot; it's a big question. In fact, the Strategic Plan to Foster Immigration to Francophone Minority Communities is a plan over 15 years designed to achieve that minimum target of 4.4%. For the Roadmap, the Department of Citizenship and Immigration has identified a target of 1.8% which, in our opinion, could be higher.

What do we do? First, we determine that this is a priority. We make sure that our departments sit down, work together and coordinate. We make the necessary investment in recruitment, intake and economic and social integration of our newcomers. We've provided a few ideas. This issue alone would take up another entire session.

Mr. Ibrahima Diallo: I'll simply sum up an answer by saying that we have to keep going. The various orders of government, federal, provincial and the communities, should be able to work together so these strategies can succeed. There has to be coordinated action by these various orders of government to ensure that we not only seek

out francophone immigrants, but also, when they come, that they find ways to stay in the communities.

The retention issue will also arise. I think it's extremely important: the idea is not to bring them in and have them disappear after that. The idea is to find ways so that these people can integrate into the communities in a lasting way so they can definitely reinforce this francophonie.

Based on the example we had, if the province and the federal government set objectives, work in a coordinated manner and the communities are also able to join in, I believe that can improve matters.

Hon. Mauril Bélanger: I have two more questions.

[*English*]

My first one is to the QCGN.

Mr. Donnelly, I think you mentioned that you would like to have the equivalent of the steering committee that is at the Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration. Given the Quebec-Canada agreement on immigration, does it not flow that there would be such a committee in the relevant department in Quebec?

[*Translation*]

My second question is for everyone.

In Canada, more than 80% of people, I believe, live in urban areas. Obviously, the definition of urban area may vary, but let's suppose we're talking about centres of more than 10,000 inhabitants.

Why do we expect immigrants to want to do things differently?

Mrs. Sylvia Martin-Laforge (Director General, Quebec Community Groups Network): I'd like to answer your first question, Mr. Bélanger.

With regard to what we're asking, it's obvious that the province has to be involved. Moreover, in the past two years, but especially last year, an enormous amount of progress has been made by Quebec's Immigration Department on this retention idea. They've even managed to start establishing pilot projects.

• (0950)

Hon. Mauril Bélanger: Is there an umbrella committee on which the department sits?

Mrs. Sylvia Martin-Laforge: No, not that I know of. There isn't any with the community.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We'll now go to Mr. Nadeau.

Mr. Richard Nadeau (Gatineau, BQ): Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Good morning, everyone.

Labour market integration is one of the major challenges facing newcomers. We tell them to come to Canada, to an English or French area, depending on the minority, and we show them the work that is available in the region. In Quebec, for example, 80% of immigrants wind up in Montreal. Efforts have been made for a portion of immigrants to be directed to the regions. However, immigrants sometimes return to Montreal. In my city, in Gatineau, we find 4% of immigration to Quebec. You get an idea of the picture? And yet, it's a centre, but Montreal has a very great power of attraction.

Earlier you mentioned the birth place of Louis Riel, Saint-Vital, as well as Saint-Norbert and Saint-Boniface, which are now part of Greater Winnipeg. However, Winnipeg represents roughly half of the population of Manitoba. So we're still talking about a major centre. For obvious reasons, small villages like La Broquerie, St. Jean Baptiste and all those along the Red River to the south don't benefit from this immigration, or at least not as much as the centres you referred to earlier. I'm putting my question to people who work in the field, in Manitoba and Quebec.

What options are you considering? The problem is always there, and it's no one's fault. Do we have to find a way to revitalize the communities, to ensure immigrants have jobs and to recognize their credentials, which is a provincial jurisdiction? They need jobs in the communities that are consistent with their training.

The people from Manitoba could answer first, then leave some time for our friends from Quebec.

Mr. Ibrahima Diallo: Thank you very much.

Work is indeed what determines whether immigrants will settle in a given region. It's a fundamental factor. There's also the entire matter of support from social networks. These people have to be associated with something. That's also a fundamental aspect.

Furthermore, in Manitoba, some immigrants are interested in non-francophone regions. Immigration is currently booming in some regions. These are people who come from Central European or Eastern European countries and who are extremely well organized. One of the fundamental reasons why they go to those regions is that work is guaranteed there. Some areas of rural Manitoba are rapidly expanding as a result of a flourishing labour market that enables these people to settle. Schools are there for them. In general, the language issue is resolved very easily, which may not be the case for francophones.

Now we're increasingly seeing people who want to settle in rural areas, teachers, for example. That's just starting and that trend must obviously be reinforced because if there's no employment in rural areas, people won't settle there. Perhaps it's like the chicken and the egg. You wonder which comes first, but to attract people to those areas, they definitely have to be guaranteed work and a decent life for themselves and their families.

[English]

Ms. Michelle Dupuis: Absolutely. In terms of your question, I think that capital of attraction and retention of communities and official language minority communities is exactly the reason an immigrant would necessarily choose to go away from a metropolitan region. Because you're right: that's where the opportunities exist. But its support networks are there and services are in place, and regional

associations in different regions of Quebec, in particular, are able to offer services that better support them. That would be a strategy to have immigrants in different regions—other than Montreal.

In particular, Citizenship and Immigration Canada is working with the QCGN and with a professor at the University of Sherbrooke who is looking at specifically this issue in four regions of Quebec. They're analyzing the capital of attraction and retention of immigrants that the English-speaking community has by offering its support system and its network. Soon we'll be able to present an evidence base on that issue and give you more concrete strategies based on that.

• (0955)

[Translation]

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Nadeau.

In my constituency, in Saint-Anselme and Saint-Damien, immigrants arrive from Montreal by bus and come to meet labour needs.

We're going to move on to Mr. Godin.

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

I want to welcome our guests.

First I'm going to speak to the people from the Société franco-manitobaine.

Earlier you said you went to welcome people at the airport. You talked about providing assistance and support. Is that a project? Are you receiving government assistance in order to carry it out?

Mrs. Bintou Sacko: As I mentioned, this assistance and support and hospitality program at the airport is funded by Citizenship and Immigration Canada for refugees and by the Province of Manitoba for landed immigrants and—and later as well—refugees.

Mr. Yvon Godin: It's intended more for refugees than people who already have a job and want to immigrate.

Mrs. Bintou Sacko: It's aimed at everyone.

Mr. Yvon Godin: If a newcomer wants to immigrate to Manitoba, does he contact you himself?

Mrs. Bintou Sacko: Yes. We have a website that is accessible to everyone. This one is linked to the Province of Manitoba. From that site, people can contact us, and let us know, for example, that they've been selected by the Province of Manitoba and that they have been accepted by Citizenship and Immigration Canada, that they have chosen Manitoba, Winnipeg, as their destination and that they are arriving on a given date. If a client asks whether there is a service to assist him in getting oriented, we immediately contact him. We try to prepare him even before he arrives on the ground. Most people contact us at least three or four months before they arrive.

[English]

Mr. Yvon Godin: Do you have that program in Quebec? I saw that when she was talking about that program you were shaking your head as if to say it's a good program. I'd like to hear from you on that.

Mrs. Sylvia Martin-Laforge: I think any welcoming society should have this kind of program. Whether it be anglophones, francophones—whatever “phone” you want—I think that is a way to begin to welcome—

Mr. Yvon Godin: You were talking about people coming into Montreal or to Quebec and then leaving again. Maybe that's the link that is missing. They're getting there and saying, “I'm just on my own”.

Mrs. Sylvia Martin-Laforge: I think what we're trying to do in Quebec is work with the province to get an understanding that this is not a zero-sum game. In fact, that's what we presented to the levels of immigration: it's not a zero-sum game. They come in, they contribute, they speak French, and they attach to a community. They attach in the first generations. They might make switches in the second generation or in a third generation. We all know that happens. It's the social engineering of our lives.

I think this is a wonderful program and I think everybody should pay attention. I know that they do this in Israel. Countries that have a need for immigrants have to develop these kinds of *stratégies d'accompagnement*. It's the only way it will work. It's not for me to ask the questions, but I would be interested in hearing about the results. What are the outcomes? What are the results? I bet you they're high; I bet you they want to stay.

For the English-speaking community, for Quebec society in general, I think that in Quebec, anyway, we need to figure out how to deal with Quebec, and not in a zero-sum game, where one is a loss and one is a gain. Because we're all living in Quebec and we all want to speak French: *on veut parler français, on veut s'intégrer au Québec*. And there is sometimes a natural alignment to another community, but that's not a loss for somebody else. I think it's wonderful.

● (1000)

[Translation]

Mr. Robert Donnelly: A number of communities offer newcomers programs subsidized by Canadian Heritage. One of them is very successful in the Quebec region and is also subsidized by the municipal government of Quebec City. It's exactly the same program as the one your colleague from Manitoba was talking about. The program is offered in the first two years to assist immigrants in getting used to a new climate. However, as two people have already mentioned, if the jobs aren't there—

Mr. Yvon Godin: If there are no jobs, that's the problem. In New Brunswick, it's no longer an immigration issue; we're losing people back home. We can't attract immigrants when we're losing our own workers as a result of the economy that's going poorly.

Ms. Bossé—

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. Godin. Your allocated time is up.

We'll continue with Mr. Weston.

Mr. John Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. There's lots to say and hear on this subject.

First I want to thank our guests. The discussion we're having today is very interesting. Everyone here shares the same goal of ensuring the vitality of the minority language, whether it's French outside Quebec or English in Quebec.

There are a number of aspects to immigration, such as, for example, economic success and safety. Even though we politicians want to encourage hope, we must also admit that there are limits and constraints. However, it's marvellous to see this kind of success, despite the constraints. In Manitoba, for example, the number of immigrants who speak French has sharply increased in recent years.

I would like to ask a question. Are you prepared to say that the success of the minority language outside Quebec will encourage the vitality of French in Quebec? If we don't have

[English]

the encouragement of French outside Quebec, or if, as Professor Castonguay said to us last week, we should send all the francophones to Quebec and then there would be no French fact in B.C. or Manitoba, to me that would be ultimately the doom of French, even in Quebec. Because we need French to be spoken outside Quebec in order for us to achieve this goal of having a truly bilingual country and a strengthening of French.

Could you comment on that?

Let's start with you, Mr. Diallo.

[Translation]

Mr. Ibrahima Diallo: That's provocation when I hear that.

The francophonie and francophones are part of this country, whether they are concentrated in Quebec or elsewhere. That's what makes Canada. If you polarize by saying that all francophones are in Quebec and that the ROC—the rest of Canada—is English, that's no longer the Canada we know.

The francophonie and francophones are part of what this country is. In that context, everything has to be done so that the official language minorities, anglophone and francophone, can grow and develop in our country. It has to be said that anglophones are increasingly learning French. That's an extremely important fact. We've just celebrated the 40th anniversary of the Official Languages Act. At the time, it was even said that French would become the language of ambition in the public service.

French is no longer a hidden language in Manitoba. We're normalizing French. A lot of events take place in both languages, which is new. That wasn't the case barely 20 years ago.

For me, French is part of Canada. We have to ensure that people can also take advantage of that language, wherever they are—and not only francophones, but people who want to learn our language as well. It's important to encourage that.

● (1005)

Mr. John Weston: Ms. Bossé, do you want to add a comment?

Ms. Suzanne Bossé: Manitoba is also an excellent example of the governments' vision of what Canada is. They perceive the two official languages as adding value to our identity and sense of belonging. The provincial government of Manitoba has, among other things, recognized and mandated the Société franco-manitobaine, the provincial francophone mouthpiece, as a partner in the development of its community. If every provincial government did the same thing in its planning, that would make our communities much more dynamic.

My colleague has something to add on that subject.

Ms. Sylvie Moreau (Acting Assistant Director to Immigration, Fédération des communautés francophones et acadienne du Canada): Since the strategic plan was first implemented, a lot of great collaborative initiatives have been introduced in the francophone community across the country. For example, Nova Scotia includes the francophone community in the process of identifying immigrants outside Canada. One class of immigrants is referred by the community under the provincial nominee program.

To go back to ways of increasing the minimum 4.4% of total immigrant population, some great Destination Canada initiatives are organized by the embassy in Paris in which the communities take part with job offers in hand. People have settled in the regions, not just in urban areas. In Newfoundland and Labrador, someone, a health director, is at the Fédération des francophones thanks to Destination Canada. People settle in the Yukon. Whitehorse is a very small place. They are contributing to the development of the tourism industry. Some great things are happening.

It isn't always easy to prepare for and enter the labour market. That's why it's really necessary to prepare, before leaving, particularly for professionals. We have some great partnerships on the ground. We now have networks. The FCFA supports joint efforts by the various coordinators across the country, including Ms. Sacko. Some great partnerships are being established to generate support in the employment field, training to assist occupational integration.

Lastly, to go back to Mr. Weston's question, the communities across the country are working to increase awareness at home. In Nova Scotia, officials have toured all the regions since January of this year. They are making the communities aware of regionalization; people are talking about it, asking how we can work together to match strategies, including the integration issue. A lot of things are really happening, and I want to share them with you.

The Chair: Feel free to take part in the conversation.

The time period allocated to Mr. Weston is really up. We're starting the second round with Ms. Zarac.

Mrs. Lise Zarac (LaSalle—Énard, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Good morning to all our guests. As you see, this is a subject that we're passionately interested in and would like to discuss for a long time.

First I'd like to talk about the table you presented to us, Ms. Martin-Laforge.

Mr. Donnelly, you said that table was very revealing. It's a table that describes retention. I'm surprised to see that education is one of

the reasons why immigrants are not retained in Quebec, since it costs less to study in Quebec.

I'm interested to know whether you prepared the same table by identifying the language spoken by immigrants, indicating whether the individual is a unilingual francophone?

You didn't do it. That could also be interesting. I can readily understand the economic aspect. Immigrants definitely come to Canada to have a better quality of life. You have to start by finding work; I understand that. With regard to education, I'm surprised. Can you briefly explain that result to me?

[English]

Ms. Michelle Dupuis: The poll was conducted with mother-tongue anglophones versus immigrants who spoke English as their first official language. That was the sample size taken. There was no francophone component to the poll.

• (1010)

Mrs. Lise Zarac: Or non-English-speaking either? No? Okay.

I think that would have been interesting.

Mrs. Sylvia Martin-Laforge: The research is needed.

A voice: Absolutely.

Mrs. Sylvia Martin-Laforge: I guess this is a demonstration here for us, and when we talk about the brief. There is not a lot of research being done in English-speaking communities around why they go and what it's all about. By asking that question, I think you demonstrate how important research would be to give us a better idea of what's happening and why.

[Translation]

Mrs. Lise Zarac: Indeed. Matters being what they are, it's very important. We have a plan spread over 15 years, which Ms. Bossé mentioned. However, we know that the next five years will be decisive. We're going to lack the skilled labour we'll be needing in Canada. I think we have to act strategically in immigration. Studies have to be conducted because we have to answer those questions. If we want to retain immigrants, we have to meet needs. Ms. Sacko mentioned what you're doing. It's a strategy to provide assistance and support. That's very important.

Ms. Bossé, you mentioned that one of the challenges will be to support the organizations in place that are offering this assistance and support on the ground. You even talked about creating new ones.

Do you think it would be possible to fund all those organizations? Would the new organizations have new mandates or would they be the same ones?

Ms. Suzanne Bossé: I'm going to talk about funding in general, and Sylvie will be able to tell you about the hospitality structures.

With regard to funding, the FCFA coordinates, together with the Department of Citizenship and Immigration, the steering committee and the strategic plan implementation committee, and it's definitely at that level that we're talking about funding. As for investments under the Roadmap, there appears to be a \$10 million increase, but we know very well that amount was allocated to the Province of New Brunswick exclusively. Those government investments, from the Department of Citizenship and Immigration, should definitely be increased.

Sylvie can tell you about the hospitality structures.

Ms. Sylvie Moreau: Last year, in 2008-2009, the steering committee's priority was to strengthen the networks, including strengthening hospitality structures. We've seen great progress in recent years, particularly last year. And we can see a lot of variety across the country, but assistance and support and support for integration are definitely central to that. Not everyone goes to the airport.

Initiatives are also being created, which is very good, but not everyone has been able to do that. We were talking about the regions earlier. In Alberta, for example, there are two structures for the moment: one in Edmonton and the other in Calgary. We sense a need in the communities of Fort McMurray and Grand Prairie. No new structure has been created in those places, but the people from Edmonton ensure the liaison. A post is in place at both locations. A little of everything is being done on a smaller scale, but we're nevertheless managing to provide liaison.

There is a way to be flexible and innovative in our method of delivering services. CIC very definitely plays a central role. Funding has gone to settlement in British Columbia and Manitoba. For the other places, it's mainly CIC. The governments of those two provinces play a major role, but the other provinces are also involved in services. Alberta plays a role, in part. So it is possible to involve various players at various levels.

The Chair: Thank you very much. Your time is up, Ms. Zarac.

We'll continue with Ms. Guay.

Ms. Monique Guay (Rivière-du-Nord, BQ): I'm going to try to go quickly in order to leave you as much speaking time as possible, since there are a lot of you. Thank you for being here today.

I'm having a bit of trouble with the comparison between Quebec and the rest of Canada, because the reality is completely different. Mr. Donnelly, as you very well know, we have structures for anglophones in Quebec that do not exist for francophones outside Quebec. Anglophones in Quebec can really do everything they want in their language, be served, work, go to the hospital or pray. It's different in the francophone communities outside Quebec. I've seen places where there was only a small community centre where people could meet, and it was pathetically sad. They really envied us in Quebec. They have no schools or structures as a result of prevailing assimilation. I'd like to know your opinion on the subject. How can we put a brake on assimilation?

Work is being done at the regional level, and you talked about that. That's the case in my region, through Le Coffret, which welcomes immigrants and refugees. They are being integrated in a 99% francophone region. They are completely taken care of. These

people adapt and learn the language much faster because they are immediately put in touch with a francophone population. In particular, their children go to French schools. Integration happens very quickly.

So I'd like to hear what you have to say on the assimilation question in particular.

• (1015)

Ms. Suzanne Bossé: In fact, it starts very early, in early childhood, in our education system, our schools, our school infrastructure, which are deficient in our provinces and territories.

The Tripartite Education Committee, which brings together the francophone school boards, the directors general of the school boards and the departments of education of every province and the communities, held a meeting last week. For two days, we surveyed the progress of the education summit, and that's what emerged. Everything starts from there. We need dynamic, living and vibrant communities that can take in children from birth. We need junior kindergartens in our schools that can also serve as community centres. It's the domino effect, of course. That's how our newcomers manage to become part of this community and to contribute to it fully.

Ms. Monique Guay: Did you sense that there were cuts at the provincial level? In fact, every province has its immigration budget. I'd like to hear what you have to say on that subject; it's important.

Mr. Robert Donnelly: In Quebec, we agree: there are institutions, schools, hospitals, etc. Of course, there are; we're lucky in that regard. However, if no one uses the services or requests them, they will continue to decline. That's the problem. A hospital that offers services in English and in French is very important for a community, particularly an aging unilingual community. If numbers continue to decline, that endangers the institutions. It isn't the same challenge.

Ms. Monique Guay: I don't think McGill University, Concordia University or the Jewish General Hospital will shut down tomorrow morning as a result of a shortage of anglophones.

Mr. Robert Donnelly: Institutions of all sizes are important for a community. You could choose a large institution like that, but other, smaller ones are so important, whether it be a small school or a service at a residence for seniors or a hospital that provides services in English in small anglophone communities.

Ms. Monique Guay: All right.

Go ahead, Mr. Diallo.

Mr. Ibrahima Diallo: I think assimilation could be a concern across the country. It's important to provide the francophone populations with opportunities to carry on activities in French, and to do so from early childhood. I think it starts there.

Francophone families have to be proud of their language—even in the case of so-called endogamous, francophone-francophone couples. We have to find programs that enable them to express that pride and to speak French to their children. It's often said that, outside Quebec, you have to learn French, but English goes in through your pores.

So it's very important that this nucleus be proud at the outset and that it be able to open up to others in order to enable newcomers, bilingual or unilingual couples to contribute to the community's vitality. That requires a whole range of activities, services and so on.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We'll now continue with our parliamentary secretary, Ms. Glover.

Mrs. Shelly Glover (Saint Boniface, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and welcome to all our witnesses. I'm attending this meeting with so much pride as the member for Saint-Boniface, since we have some witnesses who come from there.

I know that a number of steps have been taken in Saint-Boniface to advance our immigration efforts. However, I would like to correct one point that was made. Someone talked about New Brunswick and the \$10 million under the Roadmap. There is also a sum of \$20 million for immigrant recruitment and integration from which the money comes for the Refugee Resettlement Assistance Program. So there's a little more money in the Roadmap than what was said earlier.

As regards employability, I'm really pleased to hear what you say, Mr. Diallo. We in Manitoba have taken steps on this matter to encourage francophones to stay in the rural areas. I'd like to hear what you have to say on that question. For example, there are wind farms in Saint-Léon, and there will be another one soon in Saint-Joseph. How can that help maintain the francophone community in those rural regions?

•(1020)

Mr. Ibrahima Diallo: In my presentation, I talked about the 40 francophone villages located in the far south and even a little to the west in Manitoba. In fact, the dynamic should come from those communities. They are very deeply rooted in the francophonie and have to find ways for people to put down roots in their region. With the rural exodus, people are leaving farms, leaving all kinds of things. These are initiatives by communities that have gone looking for expertise to determine what they can build in their areas.

The case of Saint-Léon is exemplary in this regard. There are extremely dynamic people who can go looking for investors in order to anchor populations in the regions.

Mrs. Shelly Glover: Thank you for repeating that because it's really the community that sought to develop employability. The people secured assistance from governments and so on.

You also talked about the cultural and linguistic harmony between francophones and francophiles. That's what we have in Saint-Boniface and what's lacking in other regions. CDEM, REDI and the others work with francophones and francophiles to ensure there are consumers in our francophone economy.

For example, we have young artists from Manitoba who include francophiles and francophones in a theatre, let's say.

Mr. Ibrahima Diallo: The Festival Théâtre jeunesse.

Mrs. Shelly Glover: The Festival Théâtre jeunesse is another example. How could we encourage the other communities to include francophiles and to make them more useful in our fight against assimilation?

Mr. Ibrahima Diallo: I think the thing is to find opportunities to work together; that's fundamental. For example, the Centraalia project will take place in October 2010 and will attract people from all countries in the world to Winnipeg. The project is being carried out jointly by ANIM, which is the Agence nationale et internationale du Manitoba, and the Winnipeg Chamber of Commerce. I have attended their meetings, which are bilingual: they're conducted in English and in French. Lastly, the idea is to manage somehow to normalize French in those regions. I think that's how we can manage to really position ourselves.

And we should not forget the issue of the value added by the francophone community, which we often talk about, because it's important. We can open the markets of all of Manitoba to francophone markets and francophone markets in Manitoba, and that transcends languages. Everybody can benefit from that.

Mrs. Shelly Glover: You've travelled in Tunisia, Senegal, the Ivory Coast, and I believe five or six francophone countries. How was that paid for and what kind of impact do you think we'll have from those trips?

Mr. Ibrahima Diallo: As we've often said, we went to plant a seed. Obviously, it takes time to grow. The first thing we did before that was with regard to postsecondary education. In the 2000s, I went to Senegal, and I think that, currently, if we look at what is going on at the Collège universitaire de Saint-Boniface alone, we see that approximately 20% of the students were born outside Canada—I think that's the highest percentage in Canada. Thirty percent of students come from immersion schools, which is a lot. Lastly, the Collège universitaire is a microcosm of what could be happening on the outside. So the face of this francophone community we were talking about is changing as well, through education.

•(1025)

Mrs. Shelly Glover: Did the government help you go to those regions to do recruitment?

Mr. Ibrahima Diallo: Yes, there were some government initiatives. We went there with the assistant deputy minister for immigration, Mr. Gerry Clément, at one point. I also think initiatives are being introduced because all the universities also want to have international access, in view of the fact that our local recruitment is starting to reach a ceiling.

The Chair: Thanks very much to our people from Saint-Boniface.

We're going to finish the second round with Mr. Godin, from New Brunswick.

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

We're talking about immigration. Mr. Diallo, I want to congratulate the francophones of Saint-Boniface or Winnipeg who are now not afraid to speak their language. You say they are proud of their language and request services in their language.

Mr. Ibrahima Diallo: More and more so.

Mr. Yvon Godin: More and more so. So you mustn't be proud of the government, which is still reluctant to require that Supreme Court judges be bilingual in order to understand both languages in a bilingual country?

Is the government still embarrassed to engage in a debate such as this one we're holding here today? This is a debate in which it is still dividing Canadians far more than bringing them together. We see it in the press across Canada—in 10 newspapers yesterday and in five papers today. We also see the extent to which francophone MPs and senators are reluctant to speak out and request services in their language.

Mr. Ibrahima Diallo: Thank you, Mr. Godin. I know it was you who introduced the bill. We spoke out as representatives of the Société franco-manitobaine on the question.

Mr. Yvon Godin: Were you in favour of it?

Mr. Ibrahima Diallo: We're in favour of having bilingual judges on the Supreme Court. We said so and we said it in all the forums offered to us.

Mr. Yvon Godin: Wouldn't that be sending a signal? Ms. Bossé said earlier that the problem is directly related to services at the grassroots level. Wouldn't that be sending a message from the top? It might also be good for Quebec anglophones who say they can also stay home and be served in both languages as well as anywhere in the country.

I wasn't here last week and I missed a meeting—it seems it was the best meeting—during which the committee talked about immigration. Some people on the government side even said they were sorry I wasn't here.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Yvon Godin: It was said that the francophonie or immigration—I think it's that—started in Moncton and ended in Sault Ste. Marie. So I wondered what the situation was in Saint-Boniface, Winnipeg, Vancouver, Edmonton, in Alberta, and all those regions—we can name them; there's a francophone community everywhere. And someone thinks it stops in Sault Ste. Marie.

I'd like to hear your opinion on that subject. How do you feel in Manitoba and in Saint-Boniface?

Mr. Ibrahima Diallo: Talking about that, I believe I partly answered John Weston's question. In our minds, the francophonie is here to stay.

Mr. Yvon Godin: I agree with you.

Mr. Ibrahima Diallo: The francophone communities and their local allies have to... There are also anglophones who speak French. They are allies. I believe that a symbol as powerful as the Supreme Court should reflect that linguistic duality.

Anglophones are increasingly learning French. There is a law school at the University of Manitoba, for example. Those people came to see us, at the Collège universitaire, so we could agree that law courses would be given in French at the University of Manitoba. So that means that, there too, people see the importance of speaking both languages. That was unthinkable two or three years ago. It's starting to be done.

They say that unilingual individuals would be excluded from the Supreme Court. That might be the case in the immediate future, but you have to consider that more and more people will eventually learn French. In that perspective, we can say that, in the long term, that could make a real difference. People could speak both languages.

Mr. Yvon Godin: I think Ms. Bossé also wants to say something.

• (1030)

Ms. Suzanne Bossé: We talked about concerns over assimilation and the way to bring francophones and francophiles closer together. On that point, I don't know when the last campaign was conducted to promote linguistic duality or to increase people's awareness of pride in our language. I didn't see any, but it would definitely be very important. The fact remains that that's part of the mandate of some of our institutions.

I might not have been clear enough, Ms. Glover, when I mentioned the \$10 million. It was an increase in investments at CIC. The \$20 million was indeed a recurring item under the action plan, and there was an additional \$10 million, but it was for New Brunswick.

Mr. Yvon Godin: Mr. Chairman, to be fair, perhaps we could give one minute to Ms. Martin-Laforge, who wants to make some comments.

[*English*]

Mrs. Sylvia Martin-Laforge: I think it's important to say this here; we've said it before at this committee and we will continue to say it from every rooftop. We are not afraid of losing English in Quebec. It's not a question of language. It's a question of community, and so, the institutions to support the community.

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Thank you for that clarification.

We have time to do a third round.

We'll start with Mr. Bélanger.

Hon. Mauril Bélanger: As I've previously said in this committee, in view of its dominant presence in North America, English is not threatened in Quebec: it's the anglophone community.

Having visited some small anglophone villages in Quebec, in Gaspé, among other places, I know that's not always obvious. Those communities do not have access to all the services, which is not the case in Montreal. I know it's at times awkward to compare the anglophone community in Quebec with the francophone communities in the other provinces, but a certain comparison is valid. In eastern Ontario, where I live, you can live in French. We have all our institutions. It took time to get them, I agree. Quebec's anglophone community did not have to spend as much time fighting to get its own. However, we now have our own. In the villages in northern Ontario, however, and across the country, the francophone community does not have access to those basic services. The issue of school boards across the country is a recent one. There are day care and early childhood centres everywhere. They are essential to the vitality of our communities. I wanted to make that little correction.

Going back to the fact that we want a target of 4.4% rather than 2%, I believe that's fundamental. The francophone population is currently declining relative to total population. There is less francophone immigration than francophone population. That was my first question, and I'm coming back to it. What I'm hearing is wishful thinking. These aren't concrete actions that would make it possible to double that figure and even more in order to reach equality. If it takes 15 years to achieve 4.4%, that means that, in the meantime, we'll have lagged. We'll have fallen back, lost ground. Pardon me, but I don't think that's good enough. It's not enough. That's why I would implore the communities to review this 15-year strategic plan. I would really like to see it, incidentally. Is it available?

Ms. Lucie Lecomte (Committee Researcher): Yes, it was distributed in the last mailing.

Hon. Mauril Bélanger: Thank you. I'll make sure I go over it with a fine tooth comb.

The Chair: I note that it was distributed in the last mailing, Mr. Bélanger.

Hon. Mauril Bélanger: All right.

How are we going to go about increasing the number of immigrants—I'm not talking about refugees—by more than twice the current number over the next five years? This is a population that we can target, and we can make arrangements to provide a suitable welcome and integrate them into our communities.

What would it take in terms of financial resources from the federal government to do that? That's the question.

• (1035)

[*English*]

In Quebec, I'm very cognizant of what Madame Martin-Laforge said: it's not the language that's threatened, but the communities.

What is needed to protect the communities there in terms of numbers or in terms of investments as well? That's the purpose of our ongoing study: to recommend to the government that they make available to the communities the necessary tools to do what is needed.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Suzanne Bossé: To answer your question, I don't have any figures on the investments that would be necessary. However, I would be very pleased for us to work with the committee to establish those figures.

First, there will definitely have to be increased investment in promotion. We mentioned that in our presentation earlier. There is not even a francophone office to prepare immigrants for departure and arrival in Canada, apart from that of Canada's embassy in Paris. There aren't any for francophone countries. We mentioned that earlier. I think that would be a good starting point.

In addition, the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade could definitely be more active. Some Canadian embassies took part in the last round of Destination Canada. We now hope that will produce results. We're working very closely with the Canadian embassy in Paris. Destination Canada is a good program. However, we have to go further.

Hon. Mauril Bélanger: When you mention the Canadian embassy in Paris, do you mean that everyone has access there or just the French? There are francophones everywhere else, not just in France.

Ms. Suzanne Bossé: I agree with you.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Bélanger.

We'll continue with Mr. Généreux, if he is in agreement.

Mr. Bernard Généreux (Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, CPC): It's my turn? Mr. Chairman, based on my document, I was sure we had only three rounds.

The Chair: All right. Go ahead, if you wish.

Mr. Bernard Généreux: It will be a pleasure, Mr. Chairman.

Welcome, everyone.

This morning, I'm particularly interested in the people from Manitoba. You discussed integration. Ms. Glover talked about employability. In my constituency—I suppose the situation is the same in the constituencies of many members—when immigrants arrive, they face employability problems. If no jobs are available, it's very hard for them to integrate into the community.

Earlier you cited some examples. At the start of your presentation, you also talked about the number of immigrants. You're now taking in 350, including students. Is there any relationship between the fields of study of those students and employability in your region? Is there a causal relationship, if I may use that term, between available jobs and the studies young people take up? Do you combine those factors?

Mr. Ibrahima Diallo: The students who come to Manitoba have student visas. After earning their degrees, they are virtually ready to be hired. It is easier to go looking for immigrants and to increase the rate if those people have been trained at Canadian schools and have Canadian diplomas. We don't need adjustment programs; they have already adjusted. They know what snow is and so on.

Once that's the way it is, most of the students who come to Manitoba, I believe, opt for professional training such as business administration, for example. Many students study business administration and, increasingly, nursing, because that immediately leads to jobs. Some sectors are very productive and their job market is expanding. These people have no trouble finding work.

I'd like to talk about another aspect that I touched on very briefly. We should also have programs for immigrants, not just refugees, but also for those who have gone through camps, who have been away from school for a very long time and have never been able to complete secondary school. They should be granted support to complete secondary school and to attend professional schools or university.

The learning centre I just talked about started with 13 or 14 students. It now has nearly 150 students. We no longer know where to put all these people and we need support. We are using classrooms at a secondary college. When there are parent-teacher meetings, classes are suspended until they're over. They need space. This program is working very well. It is taken not only by immigrants, but also by Canadians who haven't completed high school.

I think that's how we can prepare people. We shouldn't think that everyone has to have a bachelor's degree or a master's degree. There are also trades, plumbers and carpenters that aren't trained. These are fields that could be of interest to quite a lot of people because a lot of people are manually inclined. This is a component we should not neglect in integration, having regard to the expansion in these regions.

● (1040)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Généreux.

If you're generous enough with your time, I could supplement with a question for Ms. Sacko.

Ms. Sacko, in your introduction, you mentioned that you take in approximately 300 immigrants a year. You talked about reception at the airport, the assistance and support of volunteers and moral support. You also said they are taught a second language. If I understand correctly, you teach them English.

Is it important for francophone immigrants to learn English? Does that enable them to be functional? Can you comment on that?

Mrs. Bintou Sacko: Yes, it's very important.

As we said, the main reason why a person immigrates is to be able to work and to integrate economically into his or her new country. However, in an anglophone majority province, it will be very hard to take advantage of all opportunities on the ground if a person is not bilingual.

Consequently, we encourage them, long before they arrive, while they are going through the procedures in their country, to start learning English already, if only to acquire the basics. Once they're in Manitoba, they'll be entitled to a language training program put in place by the Province of Manitoba, which is extraordinary. That program is continuously provided, from Monday to Sunday, mornings, evenings, afternoons and weekends. It's flexible and it enables immigrants to really learn the language so they can seize all available opportunities.

However, that does not prevent us from also encouraging them to get involved in the francophone community. How do we do that? We do it with the children. We make sure that all the francophones who arrive register their children at French-language schools in Manitoba. We don't force them, but we simply make them understand that

being in an anglophone environment means that the children will learn English because they learn very quickly, but that they will have to fight to enable their children to retain their French.

If one day they want to communicate with the parents who are in the country, that's important. If they become unilingual, that's a loss for the family. So they're immediately convinced when we come along with this approach. We do it with the parents so they can resort to French-language schools.

Mr. Ibrahima Diallo: With your permission, I would just like to add a brief point concerning training. In nursing and social work at the Collège universitaire de Saint-Boniface, it's absolutely essential that students be able to speak English when they do their internships because that increases their chance of being able to do internships in various environments.

The Chair: Perfect. Thank you very much.

Mr. Nadeau, would you like to add something?

Mr. Richard Nadeau: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

There are some documents on the table behind our witnesses. Perhaps the clerk could have them translated, if that's not already done. We need to have translated copies of those documents.

Earlier Mr. Weston talked about Mr. Castonguay, who we heard from last week. Mr. Castonguay's comments concerned the bilingual belt, not just Quebec, as a place where immigration should be directed, according to his theory or thesis. I simply wanted to clarify that.

There's a fundamental problem. Immigration means there are people who arrive from other countries. As a member of Parliament, for whom one-third of the files of citizens in my constituency concern immigration in various ways, I know that there are Canadian embassies abroad with which we have to fight every time. We have to send a complaint to the Commissioner of Official Languages because we can't get services in French. I can imagine what that represents in relation to promotion of the fact that there are two official languages in Canada, that embassies—particularly in Africa, because that's where a lot of the files come from—aren't even able to answer us in French. We have to insist to such a degree that at some point we have to use English, or else it's the citizen who suffers, for a principle that isn't recognized at a Canadian institution. This is a serious problem.

In addition, when you go to the websites of certain foreign embassies in Canada, you see that everything is in English only and in the language of the country the embassy represents. Nothing is in French.

I'm thinking of the person who wants to immigrate to Canada or at least inquire about the matter... The French fact is poorly represented. I understand the work you're doing, but if efforts aren't made here and there, imagine the result. I really deplore the situation. We come back to this from time to time—it's previously been discussed in committee—but Canada itself is impoverishing the French fact. It's deplorable.

Ms. Bossé, in your presentation, you made four recommendations. I know that five minutes go very quickly and that nearly a minute and a half may have elapsed, but could you discuss those four elements?

•(1045)

Ms. Monique Guay: It would be excellent if they could be forwarded to the committee.

The Chair: I believe she clearly described them in her address, Mr. Nadeau.

Mr. Richard Nadeau: I know, but I'd like her to explain them further.

Ms. Suzanne Bossé: In fact, the first thing, as we saw in the parliamentary immigration committee, is that we mainly handle anglophone immigration to Canada. It's important that a national immigration policy be put in place in the francophone and Acadian communities. That's the first element. Among other things, that would define intergovernmental and interdepartmental cooperation, which is absolutely essential if we want to achieve success in this file and for there to be better linkages between our communities and government actions.

Second, when we refer to interdepartmental cooperation, Citizenship and Immigration Canada, Human Resources and Skills Development Canada and Industry Canada must work together to develop a plan for the economic integration of francophone immigrants. Among other things, we're talking about recognizing credentials and relaxing the criteria of certain programs that, at times, may undermine advances in the file.

There's also the comprehensive evaluation framework. Earlier we were wondering what should be done and what investments are being made. I think that, after five or six years, the time has definitely come for a comprehensive evaluation of the actual impact of the strategy put in place by the government. Currently, we don't have an evaluation framework, and that's why we would like one.

The parliamentary committee should also include francophone immigration in all its studies and committee meetings.

Mr. Richard Nadeau: You're talking about the parliamentary committee on immigration?

Ms. Suzanne Bossé: Yes, on immigration.

Mr. Richard Nadeau: So you want that to go beyond the framework of official languages?

Ms. Suzanne Bossé: That's correct.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Nadeau.

Our witnesses' addresses are now complete.

Ms. Bossé, my analyst tells me you've published a compendium of best immigration practices. Is that the case?

Ms. Suzanne Bossé: Do you want to answer that?

Ms. Sylvie Moreau: Yes.

In fact, that's part of an initiative carried out in cooperation with Citizenship and Immigration Canada and Metropolis in the context of the Ministerial Conference of the Canadian Francophonie. That initiative was launched on March 18 in Montreal.

The Chair: Would it be possible to have a copy for members? We're going to add that.

Thanks very much to our witnesses.

Ms. Martin-Laforge, would you like to add something?

[English]

Mrs. Sylvia Martin-Laforge: I just wanted to say in answer to the questions around investments that I think it's important for our community, the English-speaking community, to say that investments are necessary.

What are the investments? To start with, it's a new way of thinking about things—not even money—a new way of examining the English-speaking community in Quebec to see how investments could be made and, down the road, something else. But I think that CIC has to consider investments in Quebec, because right now PCH is about the only department that is helping us even a bit on this.

I think investment is really important. I'm sorry to push this at the last minute, but I think that's the message we're giving: investment in Quebec.

[Translation]

The Chair: We're going to suspend the sitting for a few minutes to enable our witnesses to leave.

There remain two items of committee business. First, there is a motion. Second, there are budget appropriations, which are important for the proper operation of our committee.

So we'll suspend the sitting for a few minutes.

- _____ (Pause) _____
-
- (1050)

The Chair: Let's resume. We have a motion that has been introduced in due form. I would ask Mr. Bélanger to come and present his motion.

Mr. Bélanger, go ahead, please.

Hon. Mauril Bélanger: It's quite simple, Mr. Chairman. We're dealing with a highly complex, vast and very important matter, and I would hope the minister would join us for two hours rather than just one. That's the gist of the motion.

The Chair: The motion reads as follows:

That the meeting of May 25th, 2010, pertaining to the study of the Roadmap 2008-2013 be televised and that the Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages be invited to appear before the Committee for the full duration of the meeting.

Are there any questions or comments on that?

Ms. Glover, go ahead, please.

Mrs. Shelly Glover: The fact that the meeting is televised is not a problem for government members. It's something that's done regularly. However, the minister is not available for two hours on May 25. We should discuss that.

There is something else. The department does briefings. It is important to determine those technical means. I therefore suggest that we invite members from the department to provide a technical briefing for the first hour of the meeting on May 25, then hear from the minister during the second hour, if that suits you.

I therefore move an amendment to the motion.

The Chair: Ms. Glover, you are therefore moving an amendment. You're suggesting that we be given a briefing during the first hour and that the minister appear in the second hour. That's indeed what you are moving? You're making an amendment?

Mrs. Shelly Glover: Yes, that's correct.

The Chair: All right. So we have an amendment on the table, as introduced. I'll continue hearing speeches.

Mr. Godin, go ahead, please.

Mr. Yvon Godin: Mr. Chairman, I'm not in favour of this amendment. I think the Roadmap is important enough for the minister himself to be questioned. Deputy ministers or people from his department usually accompany him. Those people can answer questions if the minister asks them to do so. I believe that, if the minister is not available on the 25th, then he should tell us when he is available, and the committee could make itself available to him. On this committee, we are masters of our decisions and we control our schedule.

This has happened quite often in the past as a result of a minister's schedule; we requested suggestions as to when he would have two hours to devote to us. If we have to do it in the evening, that doesn't trouble me. I think the Roadmap is important, time is passing, and there are questions that have to be asked. I am opposed to the amendment, and I'm going to vote on the motion as it stands. The only amendment I would accept, perhaps, would be for the purpose of adjusting to the minister's schedule. This also has to be done quite quickly because we want to finish and prepare a report before the end of June.

• (1055)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Godin.

Mr. Bélanger.

Hon. Mauril Bélanger: Mr. Chairman, I'm opposed to the amendment. If the department wants to give us a briefing, I'm quite willing, anytime; that does not have to be done at a meeting. We've previously had briefings.

There's something else: the minister is never available for two hours; that seems to be a government policy. He will at least know the will of the committee, and if he wants to abide by it, he will be here for two hours. Schedules change and shift.

The Chair: That's excellent. Thank you for your comment.

Shall we vote on the amendment? Are you ready?

(Amendment negated [*See the Minutes of Proceedings.*])

The Chair: Now we'll proceed with the vote on the main motion.

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: Thank you. We are going to continue the proceedings in camera. We'll now suspend the sitting for two minutes to go in camera.

Mr. Yvon Godin: Just before we go in camera, I want to say again that the committee has proceeded in this manner in the past, that is to say that, if the minister says he is busy, and I doubt he is, we can adjust our schedule in order to meet him.

The Chair: Our clerk will inform the minister of the committee's wishes, and if it is possible for him to give us two hours, he will do so on Thursday.

Mr. Yvon Godin: Otherwise we can adjust our schedule.

The Chair: All right.

We will suspend the sitting to go in camera.

[*Proceedings continue in camera*]

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