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## **Standing Committee on Official Languages**

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**EVIDENCE**

**Monday, February 7, 2011**

**Chair**

**Mr. Steven Blaney**



## Standing Committee on Official Languages

Monday, February 7, 2011

• (1930)

[English]

**The Chair (Mr. Steven Blaney (Lévis—Bellechasse, CPC)):** Good evening, everybody, and welcome to this 44th meeting of the Standing Committee on Official Languages.

Tonight, pursuant to Standing Order 108(3)(f), we continue our study on the development of linguistic duality in northern Canada.

[Translation]

We are very pleased this evening to be receiving an impressive group of witnesses who took the time to come out at this, I would say, late hour, as far as we from Eastern Canada are concerned. Thank you very much for being here and for accepting our invitation to appear. Members are anxious to hear your comments.

Today has been quite an amazing day. As you know, this is the first time the Standing Committee on Official Languages has visited the Far North since it was first established almost 30 years ago. The committee visited the southern half of the country several years ago, and now we are completing our tour of minority language communities.

With me today is my analyst, Lucie Lecompte, who will be drafting a fine report on the testimony we received today and will be hearing in the course of our tour. Our clerk, Mr. Simon Larouche is ultimately the person in charge of organizing this entire operation. To my left are three members of the three political parties that form the Opposition, with the arrival of Mr. Godin, who is joining his colleagues from the Bloc Québécois and the Liberal Party. To my right are my colleagues representing the government party. We really are in the minority, particularly so this evening. I should point out that one of our colleagues was delayed because of a problem with his flights and is awaiting our arrival in Yellowknife, where we will be travelling to tomorrow.

But before that, we are very anxious to hear from you. Tonight, we have three groups of witnesses. The first are people we met with this afternoon, representing the Yukon French Language School Board. It is represented by the Chairman, Mr. André Bourcier, whom I want to especially thank for being with us throughout the day. We also have with us the Executive Director, Ms. Lorraine Taillefer. Welcome. And you have supplemented your delegation this evening with the Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Garderie du petit cheval blanc, Mr. Martin Guilbeault. The day care centre is located right across from l'école Émilie-Tremblay. Welcome to the committee, Mr. Guilbeault. Ms. Isabelle St-Gelais, Director of the Garderie du petit cheval blanc, is also here. So, that is our first group of witnesses.

The second group appearing this evening is composed of individuals who came from Dawson to be with us. We are very pleased to welcome Ms. Julie Leclerc, a member of the board of directors of the Centre de la francophonie in Dawson, and Ms. Marie-Ève Owen, also a member of the Centre de la francophonie in Dawson.

Finally, we have Ms. Sylvie Geoffroy, representing Espace France-Yukon.

You will be asked, each in turn, to make your opening statement. Now, honour to whom honour is due, and I want you to know that these people have been with us throughout the day. Now we are going to give them an opportunity to address us directly. I therefore invite the representatives of the Yukon French Language School Board to make their opening statement.

**Mr. André Bourcier (President, Commission scolaire francophone du Yukon):** Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, allow me first to thank you, on behalf of the Yukon French Language School Board, for giving us this opportunity to address you this evening. With me is the Executive Director of the School Board, Ms. Lorraine Taillefer.

The Yukon French Language School Board was officially created in 1995, after several years of struggle to have the importance of school governance for the Francophones of the Yukon officially recognized. The CSFY and Émilie-Tremblay School exist thanks to the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, which recognizes the right of minority language communities to education in their language. Section 23 of the Charter also recognizes that these communities have the right to manage their education system. These rights go hand in hand and one cannot exist without the other.

On Wednesday, February 18, 2009, the Yukon French Language School Board filed a suit against the Attorney General of the Yukon before the Yukon Supreme Court. Pursuant to the Yukon Education Act, the school board has, for several years now, been asking for comprehensive school governance. This implies the management of programs, buildings, personnel, finances, as well as the right to admit non-rights holders into its education system and schools. The Partenariat communautaire en éducation, which represents a variety of Francophone community groups working in the educational sector, expressed its unanimous support for the legal action taken by the school board.

The CSFY is asking for an adequate level of funding to carry out a mandate that is not limited to the City of Whitehorse alone, but extends to all of the Yukon. The CSFY would like to have the means to provide French-language education of a quality equivalent to that of the majority. For that reason, we are also asking that a separate secondary school be built so that we may welcome our students into a facility that will appropriately respond to their needs.

The federal government, through minority language education bilateral agreements, funds the additional costs related to French-language education. The CSFY considers that this funding creates a fiduciary obligation on the part of the Yukon government towards the Franco-Yukon community. In its legal action, the CSFY highlights the fact that the Yukon government is not fulfilling that obligation. And so it is important that the Department of Canadian Heritage play a monitoring role and engage in direct consultations with French-language communities in the territory.

It is also important to support early childhood education for Francophone children, in order to ensure the sustainability of our educational system and the full development of our community. In the past, the federal government has demonstrated a will to fund the needs of minority communities in early childhood education. We believe that the federal government should make the development of the appropriate infrastructure for early childhood education services in minority communities a priority.

Community development cannot occur without the development of solid institutions, something which requires a partnership between the community and the government. Yukon's legislation establishes French as the working language of the CSFY, but it is very difficult to obtain services in French from the various ministries in the Yukon. For several years now, we have been asking for a seat on the territorial government's Consultative Committee on Services in French. The government's position is that this committee does not deal with education issues, and thus it is unnecessary to offer a seat to the CSFY. However, the CSFY is a member of the public and should, as such, have the right to services in French, as stipulated in the Yukon's language legislation. Through its personnel, it also represents students and their parents, who constitute close to half of the Francophone population.

The Yukon is the only territorial jurisdiction not to have an official languages commissioner. The Yukon Languages Act offers minimal services to the French-language community and no protection for aboriginal languages spoken in the territory. Although education and language fall within provincial jurisdiction, the powers exercised by the territorial legislature are powers that are delegated to it by the federal government. The current constitutional structure ultimately makes the federal government responsible for the enforcement of legislation in the territories. Indeed, it is impossible for the Yukon legislature to amend its Languages Act without the approval of Parliament, as stipulated in section 27 of the Yukon Act. Thus there is a need for the federal government to fulfill its responsibilities by affirming and promoting the development of Francophone communities in the North.

● (1935)

Thank you for your attention. We are now ready to take your questions.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, Mr. Bourcier.

If I'm not mistaken, the people representing the Garderie du petit cheval blanc are also here to answer questions with respect to Mr. Bourcier's presentation.

**Ms. Isabelle St-Gelais (Director, Garderie du petit cheval blanc, Commission scolaire francophone du Yukon):** Yes.

**The Chair:** Fine, thank you.

We will move now to the second group. I invite the representatives of the Centre de la francophonie in Dawson to make their presentation.

**Ms. Julie Leclerc (Board Member, Centre de la Francophonie à Dawson):** I, too, would like to thank you for this invitation to appear.

Good evening.

Just to give you an idea of the time span involved, I should point out that there has always been a Francophone community in Dawson, ever since the gold rush.

In the late 1980s and early 1990s, an effort was made to rally Francophones and have them join forces. Action was also taken to develop a profile of Francophones outside the capital. Then in 2009—not so long ago—a separate group, called the Centre de la francophonie in Dawson, was established.

Since then, we have been building on the momentum first created in the early 1990s. There are a great many sociocultural activities, something that enables us to get together and talk about our experiences. We have given classes in French for adults interested in perfecting their French, in order to preserve it, or actually learn the language. We have also have supported the Francophone community in recent months in myriad ways, as it feels the need to be represented because of specific situations.

The Centre de la francophonie in Dawson is a new group which believes its presence here today is important in order to represent its community. I think that is really what it's all about. It's also about allowing people to get together, engage in discussion and assess their circumstances. That is basically what the centre is all about.

I am curious to see how the session will unfold. This is my first time taking part in a meeting of this type, and for that reason, I will say nothing more for the time being. Mr. Bourcier made a very good presentation and provided a great deal of information.

There are a number of things occurring in Dawson at this time. I think it's important to make you aware of the situation. Even though we have been actively engaged with Francophones for more than 25 years now, there are still major challenges. That is why I feel that it is appropriate for us to be here today.

● (1940)

**The Chair:** Perfect. Excellent. In any case, committee members will have questions for you.

Ms. Geoffroy, from Espace France-Yukon, please.

**Ms. Sylvie Geoffroy (President, Espace France-Yukon):** I would like to thank you for giving us this chance to address you and be heard. Espace France-Yukon represents French nationals living or visiting the Yukon. Our mission is to promote exchanges between the Yukon and France, to promote French culture and support French nationals passing through or residing here in the Yukon.

Our association operates thanks to the work of volunteers. We have no paid employees. We pretty well rely on everyone.

Perhaps I could just pass on a few pieces of information with respect to linguistic duality and services in French that are offered here.

An effort has been made to develop bilingual priority services at the territorial level. That's important, and we very much appreciate it, but it is disappointing to have to rely on the services of interpreters, who sometimes do not have the necessary skills in the areas where they are needed. One example would be a telephone line people can call to speak to a nurse. Anyone can call and, if you ask for a French interpreter, they go and get one so that people can understand each other. On a number of occasions, we have dealt with interpreters who did not understand what the individuals were saying about health-related issues. The symptoms were mistranslated. The nurse could not understand us. Basically, it was absolutely useless. We would like to have access to competent interpreters in certain areas, particularly health and safety.

Another important area is cultural dissemination. That is the major topic of discussion in the Yukon at this time. In our case, Internet downloading is limited. People have to pay if they exceed the volume that's allowed. Because we live in a remote area, we have no choice but to do that in order to access films, documents and other material. It's expensive for us. Also, there is a television monopoly and we do not have access to all the French-language channels that could be available. The best example is TV5. We cannot receive it on digital television, although we can on analog television. That channel was removed at one point, but because Francophone organizations protested, it was reinstated, although not on a permanent basis. So, options are limited. It is something to be considered.

Furthermore, with respect to the library and the books available to us, I know that space is reduced. However, we would like to see more funding for libraries, so that they can access more books and literature—for example, so that we could access books that have received awards, whether they are Canadian or French. We hear about them on the radio, which is great, but we don't have them here. We would like to have more access to the culture in order to preserve our French and improve it through greater access to books, films and material of all kinds.

● (1945)

**The Chair:** Perfect. Thank you very much, Ms. Geoffroy.

Without any further ado, we will begin our first round with Mr. Murphy.

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

I have several questions with respect to the legal action taken by the CSFY. The case has now been heard and we await the decision of

Justice Ouellette. I read the newspaper article on it in *L'Aurore boréale*. During cross-examination, the government lawyer, Mr. Baril, argued that it is impossible to know “whether the student retention rate at the secondary level really was low, there being nothing to compare it with”.

I would like to ask Mr. Bourcier if there are any figures or any evidence with respect to the student retention rate at that wonderful school.

**Mr. André Bourcier:** We have the only evidence we could possibly have. Because the Yukon is a very small territory and Francophones represent a minority in the territory, the figures we receive from Statistics Canada are always very imprecise. There is no way of knowing whether they have reached everyone, and it's always one in five whenever official languages are concerned. As a result, estimates produce strange numbers. For example, we were told in 2006 that there were 190 children who were rights holders in the Yukon. But we have 184 in the school. So there is something wrong with that calculation. Exactly what were good comparators, in terms of numbers, was not exactly clear.

On the other hand, I can tell you that we currently have 144 students at the primary level and 41 at the secondary level. If we had a retention rate of 80% at the secondary level, of students already registered in the system starting at the primary level, we would have approximately 230 students in our education system. If we use current registrations to assess our retention rate, we arrive at numbers that make sense, but those numbers have been challenged by our government, represented by Mr. Baril.

**Mr. Brian Murphy:** You also used the services of an expert by the name of Lee Kubica.

**Mr. André Bourcier:** Yes, that's correct.

**Mr. Brian Murphy:** Were you present when he appeared?

**Mr. André Bourcier:** Yes.

**Mr. Brian Murphy:** Does he provide a professional opinion on that?

**Mr. André Bourcier:** He used the figures that I have just given you with respect to the way it could work.

Rodrigue Landry also appeared as an expert. According to his evaluation, there are potentially 450 children who are rights holders.

**Mr. Brian Murphy:** In conclusion, according to the experts, the Yukon needs a new secondary school.

**Mr. André Bourcier:** Yes.

**Mr. Brian Murphy:** I have another question. A briefing note prepared by the Library of Parliament says that you are critical of the fact that federal government funding for the teaching of French as a first language is being used to fund the teaching of French as a whole in the Yukon. In fact, the Yukon government is not being transparent when it comes to the use of federal funds for projects such as these.

Can you comment on that information? Does the CSFY believe the Yukon government is not being transparent in terms of its use of federal funding?

**Mr. André Bourcier:** Absolutely, and that is one of the reasons why we are asking for comprehensive school management, including financial management. For the time being, the school board manages \$550,000 in federal funding which is provided to the Yukon on a yearly basis, whereas the federal government is actually giving the Yukon government \$1.1 million for French first-language education. In other words, we are managing only about half of the federal funding that is being provided.

Our position is as follows: the money from Canadian Heritage for French-language education is complementary funding, given that minority education is more expensive. We argue that our children are Yukoners, that education falls within provincial jurisdiction and that, as a result, they have to pay. They have to pay whatever it costs for our children.

Given that they are also Francophones, the federal government will make an additional contribution for additional costs. Unfortunately, we never see where the money goes; we don't even see where all of the federal money goes. So, we want to know where that money is going. Are we really receiving the share we should receive as Yukoners? We do know that we are not receiving all the federal money, because we only have half of it. That is why we want to manage our education system as a whole. We want to manage the teaching staff, the buildings, own our buildings, manage the buses and caretaking staff, and so on. We want to manage it all, so that we know exactly what our situation is.

This morning, the Deputy Minister of Education told you that there is only one school board. That's true. Francophones are the only ones to have asked for a school board. However, all Yukoners are in a position to ask for a school board. They simply haven't done that. Because the Ministry of Education acts as the school board for all the English-speaking schools, we never see where the money goes or how it is being spent. We know there is a large budget, but we don't know where the money has gone.

● (1950)

**Mr. Brian Murphy:** Mr. Chairman, if I were a member of the government, I would be asking a lot of questions of the Yukon government with respect to what happened to federal funding earmarked for this project.

**The Chair:** Indeed, Mr. Murphy; these are things we will be looking at when we write our report. Thank you.

We will move now to Ms. Guay.

**Ms. Monique Guay (Rivière-du-Nord, BQ):** We were delighted to have a chance to visit your school this afternoon. You are very well organized, and the young people there seem quite dynamic. They all speak very good French; it's great. It's not easy for a minority to try and preserve its language—French, of course.

Do you know when there will be a ruling on your court action?

**Mr. André Bourcier:** We are expecting to know the results between the end of April and early August. Obviously, one never knows when a judge will be ready to hand down his ruling. It's a very large proceeding; the trial lasted eight weeks and there were 540 pieces of evidence filed.

**Ms. Monique Guay:** In front of the Supreme Court.

**Mr. André Bourcier:** Yes, the Yukon Supreme Court.

**Ms. Monique Guay:** Could it end up in the Superior Court?

**Mr. André Bourcier:** It could end up in the Appeal Court.

**Ms. Monique Guay:** Yes.

**Mr. André Bourcier:** The Yukon Court of Appeal is the Court of British Columbia. Supposing we have a result—

**Ms. Monique Guay:** I want to know more about the process.

**Mr. André Bourcier:** Supposing that Justice Ouellette hands down his ruling in June. At that point, one or the other party has one month to appeal. At the British Columbia Court of Appeal, we can expect that it will be eight or nine months before the case is heard. At that point, the case will be heard and it will take some time before the Court of Appeal makes its ruling. When that happens, one or the other party may decide to appeal to the Supreme Court of Canada. And, for the Supreme Court of Canada, it's two years.

**Ms. Monique Guay:** That's worrisome. I know, having visited your school, that you really need more space for a high school. You obviously began with a small school, which is fine. But as time passes, more and more young people enter the school. You already have registrations for the primary level. If you want to keep these students in your system up to the secondary level, you will obviously need a high school. And yet the Yukon government's reaction does not seem particularly positive in that regard. Am I mistaken?

**Mr. André Bourcier:** No, you are not. For the time being, the case is before the court. That seems to be the approach the Yukon government is taking: it waits until the court forces it to do something. So, this could take up to three or four years.

**Ms. Monique Guay:** And how do you think you will be able to function during that period? You have to be able to keep going.

**Mr. André Bourcier:** Well, as best we can.

**Ms. Monique Guay:** You will just continue to operate with the space you currently have.

**Mr. André Bourcier:** We will continue to do something that we do very well: we will try to reinvent ourselves from the inside and put our available space to the best possible use. We are already trying out a new program which uses outside space. We live in the Yukon, so we are going to try to get our students outside as much as possible, in order to make room. Having said that, at some point, that will no longer be possible.

● (1955)

**Ms. Monique Guay:** I noted that your young people have a lot of outside activities, which is excellent from an educational standpoint. However, this is a concern. I promise to pass on that concern. In my opinion, we have to produce a very serious report that asks the Yukon government to be accountable, because this is absolutely unacceptable.

I would like to talk about the day care centre. We did not have a chance to go there.

**Ms. Isabelle St-Gelais:** We were expecting you. Ah, ah!

**Ms. Monique Guay:** We had a very busy day, Ms. St-Gelais. We have been up now for 17 hours. We tried to do all we could with the available resources.

**Mr. Yvon Godin (Acadie—Bathurst, NDP):** We'll come by tomorrow morning at 6:00 a.m.

**Ms. Isabelle St-Gelais:** It will be closed. Ah, ah!

**Ms. Monique Guay:** Is the day care centre facing similar problems?

**Ms. Isabelle St-Gelais:** Yes, we are—

**Ms. Monique Guay:** First of all, how many children do you have?

**Ms. Isabelle St-Gelais:** For the time being, there are 52 children in the after-school program. At the day care centre, there are 41.

**Ms. Monique Guay:** How many can you accommodate?

**Ms. Isabelle St-Gelais:** That is the maximum number we can accommodate for now; we have no room for additional children.

**Ms. Monique Guay:** So, you will also have to expand.

**Ms. Isabelle St-Gelais:** Yes, we would really like to expand.

**Ms. Monique Guay:** Are you working directly with the Yukon government? Is the federal government involved in any way? The agreements are not the same with the provinces; it's different.

**Mr. Martin Guilbeault (Chairman of the Board, Garderie du petit cheval blanc, Commission scolaire francophone du Yukon):** I don't really know how—

**Ms. Monique Guay:** How it's managed?

**Mr. Martin Guilbeault:** Yes.

**Ms. Isabelle St-Gelais:** For the time being, we—

**Ms. Monique Guay:** Where do your revenues come from?

**Ms. Isabelle St-Gelais:** They come from the government. Child Care Services also helps us.

You'll have to excuse me. I've only just begun to work in this area.

**Ms. Monique Guay:** I understand; I'm just trying to gather as much information as possible.

**Ms. Lorraine Taillefer (Executive Director, Commission scolaire francophone du Yukon):** If you don't mind, I have an answer with respect to construction of the day care centre.

When the Émilie-Tremblay School was built, a budget was allocated for the construction of a day care centre.

**Ms. Isabelle St-Gelais:** We do work cooperatively.

**Ms. Monique Guay:** Yes, because they're the same children.

**Ms. Isabelle St-Gelais:** These same children will be entering school as well. There are a lot of children who speak French. It's the same thing for the parents.

So, there is a need. Our facilities are full for the time being.

**Mr. Martin Guilbeault:** We are now in a position where we have to refuse rights holders.

**Ms. Monique Guay:** That's what I wanted to know. Do you refuse a lot of children?

**Ms. Isabelle St-Gelais:** We are starting to. For example, we are already full for September.

**Ms. Monique Guay:** That is also a concern, Mr. Chairman, because education starts in day care and continues at school.

In any case, I want you to know you have my support. We'll see what happens.

**The Chair:** And what does your expansion project involve? How many spaces do you hope to add to your day care centre?

**Ms. Isabelle St-Gelais:** We would like to have at least two or three... We are currently working to determine exactly what the needs will be over the next five years. From what we can tell, we would need at least three separate areas at this time.

We're also looking at what to do about the kitchen. For now, using the kitchen is out of the question; it's too small. The children bring their own lunch.

**The Chair:** How many separate spaces do you have now?

**Ms. Monique Guay:** Mr. Chairman, you are using my speaking time.

**The Chair:** Yes, but we can share it.

**Ms. Monique Guay:** No, I never decided to share with you. You will have an opportunity to speak after me; that's normal.

**Ms. Isabelle St-Gelais:** There are seven.

**Ms. Monique Guay:** You have seven. And at what age do you accept children?

**Ms. Isabelle St-Gelais:** We take them from the age of six months.

**Ms. Monique Guay:** So, you need special services. You need three additional areas.

**Ms. Isabelle St-Gelais:** Yes, that's the minimum.

**Ms. Monique Guay:** You also have to enlarge the kitchen.

**Ms. Isabelle St-Gelais:** Yes, it would be nice.

**Ms. Monique Guay:** Have you applied to the government?

**Ms. Isabelle St-Gelais:** We are working on that.

**Mr. Martin Guilbeault:** Just before Isabelle took that position, we had begun to think about expansion. There was a change in management. So we want to start the process up again.

**Ms. Monique Guay:** So you haven't had any answer. Actually, you haven't even applied yet. But you are in the process of doing so.

**Mr. Martin Guilbeault:** We haven't applied, but we do have a letter of support from the Commission scolaire francophone du Yukon. We forwarded a letter to the Yukon government, asking if it would be possible to acquire the property, and the government wrote back saying that, because this is currently the subject of a court action—

• (2000)

**Ms. Monique Guay:** But the day care centre and the school are two separate organizations.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Ms. Guay.

**Mr. Martin Guilbeault:** If you don't mind—

**Ms. Monique Guay:** I would like to know why the day care and the school—

**Mr. André Bourcier:** Is it all right if I answer?

We are asking to acquire the land because the lot on which the school is built belongs to the Ministry of Education. We built the day care centre, which is an independent non-profit organization, on the school lot. As a result, the lot does not belong to the day care centre, but the building does. We are currently in court, because we are claiming both the lot and the building. Depending on the decision, the lot will end up being the property either of the Ministry of Education or the school board. We have an agreement with the day care centre. Indeed, both parties are saying that they are not opposed to expansion of the day care centre. Both parties are saying that, whoever owns the land, they will not oppose construction. So, we have told the day care centre administration to go ahead. If they find funding to expand, then they should expand. If it's our land, we will be very happy that they're there. If it's the government's land, well, it's already said yes, so it will not be in a position to oppose this.

**Ms. Monique Guay:** Thank you for clarifying that.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

You did say you have 52 children attending the day care, correct?

**Ms. Isabelle St-Gelais:** In the after-school program.

**The Chair:** Do you know the approximate number of spots that you would like to add through your expansion project, or is it too early to know that? You talked about three areas, but—

**Ms. Isabelle St-Gelais:** Right now, we are refusing children because it also depends on the space we can use in the school. They have to have a place.

**The Chair:** Would you be doubling the day care's current capacity?

**Ms. Isabelle St-Gelais:** We will if that corresponds to the need. We are a service, so we are here to meet whatever need exists. If the parents need the service, I don't see—

**The Chair:** So, you will be reviewing that.

**Ms. Isabelle St-Gelais:** Yes, we are reviewing it. We can't—

**The Chair:** Perfect; that's great.

**Ms. Lorraine Taillefer:** In terms of the 50 children, that is for the after-school program, and not the day care per se.

**The Chair:** So, you're talking about the after-school program. You have 41 children in the day care. That's fine.

Mr. Godin, this will be your first turn as part of this tour.

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** It has been quiet, am I right?

**Ms. Monique Guay:** Ah, ah! Yes, it has been quiet.

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

Welcome to our committee. I am very pleased to be meeting with you as part of this tour. I have visited communities from Newfoundland and Labrador to Vancouver. It's interesting to see what is going on in the communities and I want to commend you on all the work you are doing, because it isn't easy.

Francophones have been in Canada for more than 400 years, but they are still fighting like the devil. Even back home in New Brunswick, we are still fighting for schools. And yet New Brunswick is the only officially bilingual province in Canada. Despite that, we still have to fight for schools because the government wants closures and cutbacks. It's not easy.

You said a little earlier that the school board agreed back in 1995. Did you have to go to court to have your rights recognized in 1995?

**Mr. André Bourcier:** There was no battle. In 1988, the new Yukon Languages Act was passed. Starting in 1984, with the new Constitution, a lot of pressure was applied in the territories.

In 1988, the Yukon Languages Act was passed. Immediately afterwards, in 1990, the government passed a new Education Act providing for the creation of school boards.

Francophones immediately said that they were interested, but implementation was extremely complex because no one really knew how it could work here. So, there was no real battle, but it did take quite some time to set up the school board. It took five years following passage of the new Education Act to secure the school board.

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** Thank you.

There is a school board here. However, even in provinces like Prince Edward Island, Ontario, Nova Scotia and British Columbia, Francophones only secured their own schools after going to court. Even the governments of those provinces did not want them to have French-language schools, when numbers warranted.

If I'm not mistaken, Part VII of the Official Languages Act—and specifically, sections 41 and 43—say that the government is responsible for promoting the two languages. Funding is connected to that obligation.

You say you don't really know what that money is going.

**Mr. André Bourcier:** That's correct. It's important to understand that there are not many of us in the Yukon. So, that means there are not many children who are rights holders either.

You may recall the Mahé Decision in 1990. In that case, there were 350 children in Edmonton and the Supreme Court ruled that there would be no separate school board. We dream of numbers like that, so that had to be rethought in the context of the Yukon.

• (2005)

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** Your schools are practically inadequate. We have to tell it like it is.

Does this mean that families decide to send their children to English school, rather than French school? Do some Francophone parents send their children to the English school because they think they will receive more services there?

**Mr. André Bourcier:** Absolutely, and they are not mistaken. There are more services available in those schools. The parents who stay with us are believers in the cause.

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** That's where the real problem is. The government should be taking its responsibilities by sending the money and ensuring that you have adequate services, compared to the other linguistic community.

**Mr. André Bourcier:** That's right.

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** It becomes a federal responsibility.

With respect to Part VII, Mr. Bélanger is well acquainted with sections 41 and 43 that deal with promotion. Are you reading them?

**Hon. Mauril Bélanger (Ottawa—Vanier, Lib.):** I have read them.

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** This is the federal government's responsibility.

**Mr. André Bourcier:** But when we talk to Canadian Heritage, they tell us that education falls within provincial jurisdiction.

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** It is within provincial jurisdiction all across Canada, but the federal government has a responsibility when parents go to court and win their case under the Constitution and Official Languages Act. That is how we won in Prince Edward Island, Nova Scotia and British Columbia. Even here, you won without having to fight. They gave you what you were asking because legislation was passed. In fact, that does not do away with the federal government's responsibility. At least, I don't think it does.

**Mr. André Bourcier:** I agree with you. We won without really winning. We won on paper, but we still don't know where the money went. We are not responsible for management. It is written that we have a school board, but we don't manage it. That's the reason why we went back to court.

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** That's the reason why you went back to court.

And the business about day care centres in schools is the same thing. That's what you were telling us. If Francophone day care centres are in the schools, there is a good chance that the children who attend the Francophone day care will decide to remain in French school. If they're sent to an English-language day care or are looked after by an Anglophone, the language will be lost as a result of assimilation.

Are you experiencing the same thing here?

**Ms. Isabelle St-Gelais:** Yes, of course. That is the danger if we start refusing Francophone children. The fact is we're helping them, because the more—

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** You may recall that the federal government gives parents \$100 a month for every child under the age of six. Do you think it would be a better idea to allocate that money to the day care centres themselves so that they can do some collective promotion, rather than only giving out the \$100?

**Ms. Isabelle St-Gelais:** Yes, that would be a good idea.

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** Would it be better? Would you be more in favour of that?

**Ms. Isabelle St-Gelais:** I don't know. I only took up my position on January 11.

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** The people representing the school, who have experience, can answer that question.

**Mr. André Bourcier:** Mr. Godin, the plan prepared by former Minister Dryden was major. When it disappeared, it was a big disappointment, because what was laid out in that plan was very beneficial to small communities like our own. It's up to politicians to decide whether it would be better than giving parents \$100.

As a Franco-Yukoner, I can tell you that, under that plan, there were items that would have been very beneficial for early childhood education in small communities such as our own.

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** Does the Centre de la francophonie in Dawson apply to the federal government to secure funding for projects or anything else—for example, in November or December?

**Ms. Julie Leclerc:** At the Centre de la francophonie, it's a group of volunteers that is in charge of that. Just to give you an idea, in my community, there are about 1,400 of us. There are 78 non-profit organizations in my village. The majority of people wear five different hats.

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** Do you apply to the federal government for funding?

**Ms. Julie Leclerc:** In answer to your question, I should say that we are getting used to managing the organization, which is new in our village. We haven't yet submitted an application, but that will have to happen because we cannot do that work as simple volunteers. It's too much to handle. We need someone who can fulfill those needs and organize that kind of thing. For the time being, it's difficult for us to make a 360-degree turn in order to cover all the bases. We have no one who can take responsibility for all of that.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much. We'll come back to that.

Mr. Galipeau, please.

**Mr. Royal Galipeau (Ottawa—Orléans, CPC):** Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

Ms. St-Gelais, do you know Marie-Dimanche Gagné? Please tell her that, of everyone in the newspaper, she has the most beautiful smile.

• (2010)

**Ms. Isabelle St-Gelais:** Thank you, that's nice of you to say that.

**Mr. Royal Galipeau:** Today we have been hearing your demands and learning a lot, but I would like to take this opportunity to get to know a little more about you.

Marie-Ève, where did you go to high school?

**Ms. Marie-Ève Owen (Member, Centre de la Francophonie à Dawson):** I am from Quebec. I went to high school in Rosemère, as well as in Estrie.

**Mr. Royal Galipeau:** And you, Julie?

**Ms. Julie Leclerc:** I am a Montrealer. I studied at the convent and at Saint-Lambert Secondary School.

**Mr. Royal Galipeau:** And you, Martin?

**Mr. Martin Guilbeault:** I am a Franco-Ontarian. I studied in Sudbury.

**Mr. Royal Galipeau:** Where did you go to high school?

**Mr. Martin Guilbeault:** I went to Rayside-Balfour High School, which no longer exists, I believe.

**Mr. Royal Galipeau:** And what about the lovely lady from *L'Aurore boréale*?

**Ms. Isabelle St-Gelais:** Thank you. My name is Isabelle St-Gelais and I went to Mont-de-La-Salle school, in Laval.

**Mr. Royal Galipeau:** And you, Ms. Taillefer?

**Ms. Lorraine Taillefer:** I went to a private school, Saint-Jacques de Montcalm for two years and then spent two years at the Deux-Montagnes Composite School.

**Mr. Royal Galipeau:** Mr. Bourcier?

**Mr. André Bourcier:** I completed my secondary studies at the Saint-François Seminary, in Cap-Rouge.

**Mr. Royal Galipeau:** There is a street by the name of Bourcier in Orleans.

**Mr. André Bourcier:** That's quite possible.

**Mr. Royal Galipeau:** The Bourcier and Taillefer families are very well thought of in Orleans.

Ms. Geoffroy, are you French?

**Ms. Sylvie Geoffroy:** I was in France at the time, but my children were born here.

**Mr. Royal Galipeau:** What region of France are you from?

**Ms. Sylvie Geoffroy:** Ardèche.

**Mr. Royal Galipeau:** Thank you very much.

Mr. Bourcier, do you know whether there is an access to information act in the Yukon?

**Mr. André Bourcier:** Yes.

**Mr. Royal Galipeau:** And despite that, you are unable to track the money.

**Mr. André Bourcier:** No.

**Mr. Royal Galipeau:** The problem you outlined is not a recent one. I remember back when the 15th Prime Minister of Canada was complaining about the fact that the federal government gave money to the provinces to teach French as a second language, but that the money was being invested in roads. That was a long time ago. That individual has not been on the job since 1984, but the problem still exists.

We have been talking about the fact that education falls within the jurisdiction of the provinces. That's easy. That power is enshrined in section 93 of the Constitution Act, 1867. On the other hand, territories are not provinces. The relationship between the Parliament of Canada and the territorial governments is not the same as the one that exists between the Parliament of Canada and the provincial legislatures. Indeed, pursuant to section 92, the latter have full sovereignty in a good number of areas. I believe the federal government should have full powers to demand that they be accountable when it writes a cheque to a territory with a special goal in mind. Indeed, the current government has a tendency to want to do that.

When did you find out about Mr. Lussier's letter to Mr. Kubica, dated January 18, 2006?

**Mr. André Bourcier:** When I wrote my next letter to Mr. Thorne, in April of 2008.

**Mr. Royal Galipeau:** So, you were not made aware of the letter for two and a half years?

**Mr. André Bourcier:** That's correct.

**Mr. Royal Galipeau:** Wow!

Just for—

**Hon. Mauril Bélanger:** That had quite an effect on you.

**Mr. Royal Galipeau:** Yes.

Just for the information of Opposition members, who claim they would do a better job if they were in office, I would like to point out that they formed the government on January 18, 2006.

• (2015)

**Ms. Monique Guay:** Not us.

**Mr. Royal Galipeau:** No, but there is one who made a comment earlier. They formed the government then, and we all know what the results were.

Mr. Bourcier, I want you to know that I very much appreciated hearing what you had to say to us today.

**Mr. André Bourcier:** Thank you very much.

**Mr. Royal Galipeau:** Are you a trainer?

**Mr. André Bourcier:** An informer?

**Mr. Royal Galipeau:** No, a trainer?

**Voices:** Ah, ah!

**Mr. André Bourcier:** In fact, I am an informer, and I'm also a trainer.

**Mr. Royal Galipeau:** That was not really an attempt at a play on words, but it turned out that way all the same.

The...

Do you have any questions, Mr. Lauzon?

**Mr. Guy Lauzon (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry, CPC):** How much time is left?

**The Chair:** There is one minute left, but you will have a chance to ask questions during the next round.

**Mr. Guy Lauzon:** That's fine; I'll come back.

**The Chair:** You will have a chance the next time.

Thank you very much, Mr. Galipeau.

We will now begin our second round, which will be five minutes. I would like to remind our witnesses that we are still suffering the effects of jet lag and that time seems to be catching up with us. We will try to keep it altogether, but I ask for your indulgence.

Mr. Bélanger, please.

**Hon. Mauril Bélanger:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I would like to ask a series of questions and gather some facts, simply to complete the picture we are attempting to put together today.

My question is addressed to Ms. St-Gelais or Mr. Guilbeault. With respect to the day care centres, how many names are there on your waiting lists?

**Ms. Isabelle St-Gelais:** At this point, I believe there are about ten.

**Hon. Mauril Bélanger:** What is the highest number of names that you have ever had?

**Ms. Isabelle St-Gelais:** In the past, I couldn't say. However, I want to tell you something that I neglected to mention earlier. There are a lot of exogamous families and when we refuse to take their children, they immediately turn to the Anglophone community. We manage the only French-language day care centre in town, with the exception of a family day care. Once we run out of spots, families are not prepared to wait and immediately turn to an Anglophone day care.

**Hon. Mauril Bélanger:** That was my next question. Do the Anglophone day cares also have waiting lists? You say there aren't any.

**Ms. Lorraine Taillefer:** There are several Francophone day cares—

**Hon. Mauril Bélanger:** No, I meant Anglophone.

**Ms. Lorraine Taillefer:** Pardon me; I meant to say there are several Anglophone day cares.

**Hon. Mauril Bélanger:** Are they public or private?

**Ms. Lorraine Taillefer:** They are both.

**Hon. Mauril Bélanger:** And there is room in them. Are they subsidized?

**Ms. Isabelle St-Gelais:** Some are, but it doesn't work the same way as in Quebec. Some do receive subsidies, yes. That is our case.

**Hon. Mauril Bélanger:** Let's talk about Dawson now. These questions are addressed to Ms. Leclerc or Ms. Owen. What is the size of the French-speaking population?

**Ms. Julie Leclerc:** About 1,380—very close to 1,400.

**Hon. Mauril Bélanger:** Francophones or Francophiles?

**Ms. Julie Leclerc:** In my opinion, Statistics Canada is not producing accurate figures. The centre has about 125 people on its list, which represents almost 10% of the population.

**Hon. Mauril Bélanger:** Are there French-language education services?

**Ms. Julie Leclerc:** There is a...

I will let the education expert answer that question.

**Ms. Marie-Ève Owen:** I was hired by the Ministry of Education three years ago to develop an enriched French program at the only school in Dawson, which provides both primary and secondary level education.

**Hon. Mauril Bélanger:** Is it an Anglophone school?

**Ms. Marie-Ève Owen:** It is an Anglophone school, but Francophone parents have been fighting for five years for an enriched program for their children. So, I developed an enriched program specifically for them. The first year, it was supported by the French-language school board, as it was in the second year as well. However, in the second year, we secured significant resources for our class, an attractive schedule and enough administrative support to allow for a major increase in the number of students. We began with seven students and ended up with 24. We had to start a waiting list. Then we were asked to cut back the program—

**Hon. Mauril Bélanger:** So, when the Yukon French Language School Board has full control over budgets and everything else, will you have your school?

**Ms. Marie-Ève Owen:** No, because it's managed by the Ministry of Education.

**Hon. Mauril Bélanger:** No. Well, perhaps I will direct the question to Mr. Bourcier: when the Yukon French Language School Board has full powers and full control over its budgets, will Dawson have its school?

**Mr. André Bourcier:** We discussed this several years ago, just before the program began in Dawson. We went to talk to the parents in Dawson. We asked them how many of them there were because, under section 23, we need names. We told them that if they were interested, we would start a program immediately. We could do that. But we couldn't promise them a school immediately.

At the time, there were 15 or so children who were prepared to look at that. So, we asked the parents to think about it. We told them that if they made the request, we would do it, because this was something that fell within our jurisdiction. We were going to establish a French first language program there.

Since then, we have continued to talk to the parents in Dawson and it's still the same thing. The day when there are enough of them, we will obviously open a school in Dawson.

• (2020)

**Hon. Mauril Bélanger:** I'm picking up the pace now because I have very little time left.

Are health care services available in French in Dawson?

**Ms. Julie Leclerc:** There are resources on paper.

**Hon. Mauril Bélanger:** Only on paper.

**Ms. Julie Leclerc:** There may be a number you can call, but very rarely. Those are the kinds of situations that arise.

**Hon. Mauril Bélanger:** You say there is a number you can call. So, if people have a health issue, they can call a 1-800 number somewhere. Is there someone available who can answer in French? Do they have to use an interpreter?

**Ms. Sylvie Geoffroy:** As a general rule, the person who takes the call will call an interpreter, particularly if it's a night call for an emergency. It's to cut back on emergency services. So people can call and explain their symptoms. After that, they decide.

**Hon. Mauril Bélanger:** Yes, we're familiar with that.

**Ms. Sylvie Geoffroy:** Generally speaking, you talk to an interpreter. The times that we have used that service, the interpreter didn't understand what was being said. So they mistranslated everything. Because we're bilingual, we were aware of it. So we had to pass them.

**Hon. Mauril Bélanger:** I have one last question. Perhaps I could receive your answers at a later date, on paper, if necessary.

Has any consideration been given to an agreement with another territory or another province which provides such a service and could offer it in French when the call comes in? Yes or no?

Has there ever been a Caisse populaire here in Whitehorse that provided service in French? Have you ever considered a plan of that kind? Yes or no?

And this is a comment, rather than a question, about the Dryden plan. Actually, we had taken steps to include—

**The Chair:** That's all the time we have, Mr. Bélanger.

**Hon. Mauril Bélanger:** — clauses for the linguistic communities.

**The Chair:** We will move on to Ms. Guay.

**Ms. Monique Guay:** I'd like to come back to Dawson, since my colleague was unable to complete his comments.

You said you had 15 students the first year, and after that, you had 40.

**Ms. Marie-Ève Owen:** The first year, we had seven students, and then 24 after that. Thanks to all the resources and administrative support we received, we really had an opportunity to expand. Since then, the program has been cut back.

**Ms. Monique Guay:** Was it the school board that decided that?

**Ms. Marie-Ève Owen:** No, it was the Ministry of Education. No, actually, it was the school administration.

**Ms. Monique Guay:** For what reason?

**Ms. Marie-Ève Owen:** I couldn't say. It was an administrative decision.

So, the program was cut back and continues to be cut. However, there is now a new process underway to see whether parents and the community would be interested in a new intensive French program, something which currently exists in New Brunswick. So, we are going through a process to see whether the community would be interested in a different type of enriched program.

And if that doesn't work, we will do something else, because there really is a need.

**Ms. Monique Guay:** You have to continue to fight.

**Ms. Marie-Ève Owen:** The major demand is for early childhood education centres. Everyone wants them, even Francophiles.

**Ms. Monique Guay:** You don't have any Francophone day care centres?

**Ms. Marie-Ève Owen:** No.

**Ms. Julie Leclerc:** A day care that shows an interest and—

**Ms. Monique Guay:** Not even a family day care?

**Ms. Julie Leclerc:** No, not even. One is trying to open, but it's quite a challenge because there is a lack of resources in the community. People order resources, but they aren't really well suited to our reality.

There is a lot of groundwork to be done. That's why the Centre de la francophonie simply can't do everything at this point. We are waiting until we know each other better and are stronger to secure the resources we need, so that what we do will be relevant.

**Ms. Monique Guay:** You need an organization to be in charge of all that, with people working full time on it.

**Ms. Julie Leclerc:** Well, we continue to work with the Association franco-yukonnaise because it is a source of inspiration for communities like ours. We are seeing the results that have been achieved after 26 years. French is cool now in Whitehorse.

Our school would like to organize a trip to Whitehorse with young students, to show them that French is cool. But we are not at that stage. There is still some conflict, particularly since it's a small village. It causes a lot of friction.

We mustn't forget the First Nations. That is one reality. In our area, Anglophones and Francophones form a minority, compared to the First Nations. So, management of the primary school is done jointly with that cultural group.

**Ms. Monique Guay:** Are the Inuit interested in French-language education?

**Ms. Marie-Ève Owen:** As a general rule, I would say they are not. Actually, though, they are not Inuit; they are First Nations.

**Ms. Monique Guay:** I see.

**Ms. Marie-Ève Owen:** And that actually results in an interesting kind of friction.

• (2025)

**Ms. Monique Guay:** That really suggests that you face quite a challenge in your region.

**Ms. Julie Leclerc:** People often say that if we receive something, they will get less, but when you look at where the resources are coming from, it's clear that they really are two completely different and separate channels.

**Ms. Monique Guay:** In Dawson, you don't have a community centre. You have nothing in French—

**Ms. Julie Leclerc:** There is the Centre de la francophonie, which is located in the building which houses l'école Émilie-Tremblay. We now have our own space. It is consistent with everything else. There is an interesting place in Dawson, which bears the name of Joseph Ladue—

**Ms. Marie-Ève Owen:** Lorraine would like to add something.

**Ms. Lorraine Taillefer:** I'd like to talk about the program that Marie-Ève taught and which has since been cut back, in spite of her determination and the compromises that some families were prepared to make. This year, a family in Dawson came and registered their children at l'école Émilie-Tremblay. They were two boys, one in grade 7 and the other in grade 9. The mother, who is a rights holder, had decided to re-immersion her two sons in Francophone culture, since they did not speak a word of French. Now they attend l'école Émilie-Tremblay and are really being francized. The father lives in Dawson and the mother comes to Whitehorse with her children so that they can benefit from French first-language education. That is the kind of compromise that some families are prepared to make.

**Ms. Marie-Ève Owen:** We often see that.

**Ms. Monique Guay:** Was your program a success? There were seven students initially, but after that the number rose quite significantly.

**Ms. Marie-Ève Owen:** There was an official evaluation at the end of the second year. The parents were very satisfied, despite the lack of resources. In the evaluation, they said that certain things needed to be improved but that, ultimately, given the cuts made to program resources—

**The Chair:** Thank you, Ms. Guay.

Mr. Lauzon, please.

**Mr. Guy Lauzon:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Ms. Leclerc, I believe Mr. Bélanger asked you what the population of Dawson was, but I didn't hear your answer.

**Ms. Julie Leclerc:** It's about 1,380 in the winter and almost 5,000 in summer.

**Mr. Guy Lauzon:** How many are Francophones?

**Ms. Julie Leclerc:** According to Statistics Canada, there are no Francophones in Dawson; however, according to the statistics gathered by the Centre de la francophonie, there are now 125 of us.

**Mr. Guy Lauzon:** Does the Centre de la francophonie operate with volunteers alone?

**Ms. Julie Leclerc:** Yes. A volunteer will be arriving in February. She is only there six months of the year. Her child goes to school; so, she can be there in the summer.

Earlier, I wanted to take the time to tell you more about our circumstances. There are a lot of volunteers, and burnout is frequent, but there are also a lot of great things happening.

**Mr. Guy Lauzon:** What types of services does the centre offer?

**Ms. Julie Leclerc:** For the time being, the centre is a place where people get together. We could give you an average; let's just say that every time we open the centre in the evening, between 5:00 p.m. and 8:00 p.m., there are five to seven visitors. I think it's important to be there.

**Ms. Marie-Ève Owen:** We organize funding campaigns for Francophone programs, exchanges with Quebec, film festivals and cultural events, such as the Carnaval, and so on.

**Mr. Guy Lauzon:** What proportion of the 125 Francophones is involved in the centre? Is it 50% or—

**Ms. Julie Leclerc:** For a major event where people want to get together, such as Christmas or Saint-Jean-Baptiste Day, I would say it's 300%.

**Mr. Guy Lauzon:** So, the Francophone community is very vibrant in Dawson.

**Ms. Julie Leclerc:** Yes, but at this point, everyone does not have the energy to get involved. Personally, I am in the process of building up my energy so that I can get to know our community better. I arrived only three years ago. Before writing anything, I want to know what is going on. I will prepare an application, and I really have the sense that Dawson could be a second stepping stone for Francophones in the Yukon, simply because it isn't the capital. We are different, and that can still be of benefit to the Yukon.

• (2030)

**Mr. Guy Lauzon:** Thank you.

Ms. St-Gelais, with respect to child care, how much do parents pay for day care services?

**Ms. Isabelle St-Gelais:** The cost is \$50 a day. For children under the age of three, it's \$750 a month, and for children 3 years of age and over, it's \$700 a month.

**Mr. Guy Lauzon:** Is the cost about the same in Anglophone day care centres?

**Ms. Isabelle St-Gelais:** I don't know.

**Ms. Marie-Ève Owen:** It's the same thing. Well, not necessarily in Dawson, but elsewhere, such as Whitehorse, it's \$50 a day.

**Ms. Isabelle St-Gelais:** It may be a little more expensive at our day care centre. But we have already lowered the prices. I think it's

important to mention that it's not easy to find qualified people who speak French in the territory. The current members of our team are all Francophone with level 3 qualifications. We only speak French at the day care centre, and the people who work there have to be qualified.

**Mr. Guy Lauzon:** Are they people from outside?

**Ms. Isabelle St-Gelais:** Yes, there are a lot of people from Quebec.

**Mr. Guy Lauzon:** Is that more expensive?

**Ms. Isabelle St-Gelais:** Yes, it's more expensive to bring them here.

**Ms. Lorraine Taillefer:** There is also value-added at our day care centre—for example, we offer music programs.

**Ms. Isabelle St-Gelais:** *Cultiver l'avenir* is a program that—

**Mr. Guy Lauzon:** Have you applied to the Yukon government for assistance?

**Ms. Isabelle St-Gelais:** We work closely with the AFY and the SOFA. We submit a lot of applications for grants for our programs, such as *Cultiver l'avenir*, for which we have submitted an application. That application has been accepted, meaning that once every two weeks, someone comes to help us with the cooking.

**Mr. Guy Lauzon:** I have a question for Mr. Bourcier. There are 5,000 students in the Yukon, 2,500 of whom speak French. Is the funding equally distributed between the two linguistic groups?

**Mr. André Bourcier:** I have no idea.

**Mr. Guy Lauzon:** You don't know?

**Mr. André Bourcier:** The Ministry of Education does not have separate accounting.

**Mr. Guy Lauzon:** I'm not certain, but in Ontario, I believe all schools receive a certain amount per student. Is it the same thing in the Yukon?

**Mr. André Bourcier:** No, the Ministry of Education provides services to the school directly. So, everything is calculated by the Ministry of Education and the services are provided directly to the schools.

**Mr. Guy Lauzon:** So, there is really no incentive to recruit more students. In our schools, the principals want more students, because they receive more money per capita.

**Mr. André Bourcier:** There is no financial incentive, but we believe in this. We have many different reasons to want to increase our numbers.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Lauzon. You're right: it does work on a per capita basis. The more students a school has, the more money it receives. That is not the case here?

**Ms. Lorraine Taillefer:** It's a proportional calculation, meaning that the more students there are, the more staff we have.

**The Chair:** So, it does have an effect on the staff numbers.

**Mr. André Bourcier:** In small schools like ours, it's complicated. At the high school level, for example, it works on the basis of groups of 20 students. Therefore, if that number is not achieved at certain levels, it gets complicated.

**The Chair:** I've heard the acronym SOFA mentioned several times today. Could you tell me what organization it refers to, please?

**Mr. André Bourcier:** It's the Service d'orientation et de formation des adultes.

**The Chair:** Is that a service under the Yukon government?

**Ms. Sylvie Geoffroy:** No, not the Yukon; it's through the Centre de la francophonie.

**Mr. André Bourcier:** And the AFY.

**The Chair:** Perfect; thank you.

I would just like to mention to everyone here that Mr. Yann Herry of Espace France-Yukon has just joined us. Welcome.

We will finish off our fourth round with Mr. Godin.

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** Thank you.

You say there are 125 Francophones in Dawson?

**Ms. Julie Leclerc:** Yes.

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** But according to the statistics, there aren't any?

**Ms. Julie Leclerc:** No, there aren't any.

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** So how then did the school board... Is it the Yukon government saying that or the federal government?

**Mr. André Bourcier:** As I said earlier, it's the Government of Canada.

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** It looks like the long-form census may not have been mandatory for quite some time now.

**Mr. André Bourcier:** It's one in five. In Dawson, if there are 125 Francophones, we need to be able to identify 25. If we identify 10, that changes the result.

● (2035)

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** Yes, but when there is a census, it's clear that there are Francophones.

**Mr. André Bourcier:** Not when the rule is one in five.

**Ms. Marie-Ève Owen:** Not necessarily, because when you don't have access to services in French in health care centres, at the post office, and so on, they say the language of communication is English. So, that is the way Statistics Canada assesses them.

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** That's why I am once again talking about your school board. It only serves the population of Whitehorse, not all of the Yukon. Do you challenge those numbers?

**Mr. André Bourcier:** We base ourselves on the census information that we have. In Dawson, people at the Centre tell us that there are 125 Francophones, and we believe them. We cannot rely on Statistics Canada or—

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** Someone who gets in the car and goes from house to house.

**Mr. André Bourcier:** That's exactly the way they did it in Northern Ontario and New Brunswick, and we do the same thing. We get into the car and ask how many of them there are and how many women are pregnant.

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** And does the federal government challenge that?

**Mr. André Bourcier:** No, it's not challenged by the federal government, but it is challenged in the courts by the Yukon government. According to them, Statistics Canada holds the truth: there are no Francophones in Dawson and there are 190 rights holders in Whitehorse; no more than that. The total for the Yukon is 190.

**Ms. Lorraine Taillefer:** But we have 184 in our school.

**Mr. André Bourcier:** And there are 125 people in Dawson.

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** I really don't care whether it's one in five; that is the reality. I think that should be part of our report. That is no way to count people. That is what happens when numbers are low. It's not like in a big city in New Brunswick or something like that.

In my opinion, it's a fact: you need that assistance. I'm thinking of the money paid out by the federal government. Again, I am referring back to Part VII of the Official Languages Act, which deals with the federal government's responsibility. That has to count. Everything counts for you.

**Ms. Marie-Ève Owen:** In December, the population constantly fluctuates in the North. The population censuses are—

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** That means that if they do the census in the winter, you're finished.

**Ms. Marie-Ève Owen:** That's right.

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** I am going to recommend that the government do the census in the summer.

**Mr. Guy Lauzon:** But the kids are not in school in summer.

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** We are going to go with that. They are not in school in summer, but you have 1,380 in winter. What is the number of students in winter?

**Ms. Marie-Ève Owen:** A lot of people leave and go to Mexico for several months and then come back; or they go to Quebec or to Whitehorse to speak French. There is a lot of fluctuation.

**Ms. Julie Leclerc:** This year, just recently, one family went to Whitehorse and another family went to Quebec to receive educational services in French. That makes us mad because we are trying to retain our population in Dawson with our services. That is one factor. Everyone wonders what we are doing for families and in terms of education. Those things are constantly under discussion.

**Mr. André Bourcier:** If you don't mind, Mr. Godin, I would like to make the point that Dawson was founded by a Francophone. During the gold rush, there were a lot of Francophones. By 1950, there weren't any left; the rate of assimilation in the Yukon was 100%. Since 1984, we have started counting them again. The situation here is precisely that. The assimilation rate is 100% and it's important to understand that. In the territories, the rate of assimilation is 100%, but we are in the process of rebuilding our communities.

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** You've given us numbers; you said that you went from 7 to 24 students. So, you are in the process of rebuilding.

**Mr. André Bourcier:** That's right.

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** That is what occurred in Prince Edward Island, and it also what occurred in the other provinces.

**Mr. André Bourcier:** Section 23 deals specifically with remedies. There are a lot of remedies needed here, because the assimilation rate is 100%.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, Mr. Godin.

We have been talking about assimilation, and you have made reference to remedies, rebuilding, reconstituting the core of the Francophone community, and yet Statistics Canada is saying that your Francophone community basically does not exist. Yet you have identified a certain number of community members and have succeeded in developing a program. Unfortunately, in the third year of the program, there seems to be less momentum for reasons that you yourselves say you are unable to explain tonight.

We will now begin our third round with Ms. Zarac.

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

I have a question for Mr. Bourcier that has several parts to it.

I would like you to talk about the Consultative Committee on which you are not allowed to have a seat. I would be interested in knowing more about its terms of reference and its overall goal, as well as the current membership. What difference would it make for the school board to have a seat on that committee?

• (2040)

**Mr. André Bourcier:** It's a question of services in French. The Yukon French Language School Board is an organization that operates at arm's length from the government—in other words, it is a legal entity. And, as a legal entity, it is a member of the public in Yukon and, as a member of the public, it has the right to receive services in French. I will just address the general question about services in French.

In this context, it is important to understand that there are a considerable number of agreements with the federal government, which is important. The Official Languages Act stipulates that there are two ways of counting with a view to determining the requirement for services in French: demand or the nature of the office. In the Official Languages Regulations, it specifically states that, for the Yukon, what counts is the nature of the office. If we start counting, as you saw, the numbers here are not large. So, it is the nature of the office which is considered.

When agreements providing for the devolution of powers from the federal government to the territorial government were signed, all of a sudden there were these agreements in place and the Yukon Languages Act, which I was critical of earlier, came into effect. All of a sudden, it was no longer the nature of the office that was considered; instead, it was just numbers. For example, if you look at the devolution agreement that was just entered into, it says in section 235.1—

**Hon. Mauril Bélanger:** What agreement is that?

**Mr. André Bourcier:** It is the agreement entitled “Yukon Northern Affairs Program Devolution Transfer Agreement”.

**Hon. Mauril Bélanger:** Could we have a copy of it?

**Mr. André Bourcier:** Yes, but it is only in English.

**The Chair:** Ordinarily, you can send all your documents to the Clerk, whether they're in French or English, and we will have them translated. We can then distribute copies to committee members or use them as documentation in writing a report. So, that is possible.

**Mr. Royal Galipeau:** It goes further than that. If you only have it in English and you would like a copy in French, since I demand to have it in French, you, too, will be able to receive a copy in French.

**Mr. André Bourcier:** Perfect.

Under that agreement, once again, the argument is being made that, under the Yukon Languages Regulations, there is a specific number of offices where it is the nature of the office that determines the provision of services in French. It is especially for Mines and Resources Canada and offices of that nature.

The Consultative Committee is supposed to determine what the needs are in terms of services, and what is required in relation to those services. We made it known that we have all kinds of needs. We are a school where there are children. We have communication needs with respect to health care and economic development. We have young people who complete grade 12 and enter the labour market. We have a number of specific needs which involve communication in French with us.

So, it is our view that we should be able to represent our segment of the population on that committee, in order to have an opportunity to influence the direction taken by the committee with respect to the type of services to be provided. We have been told that the committee does not deal with education. We know that, because we are the ones responsible for French-language education. So, it is perfectly natural that the committee would not deal with that; we look after our own affairs. But when it comes to services in French, we believe we should have our say.

For several years now, we have been making those demands to the government's French Services Branch, saying that structures now in place must be recognized. That is important because the Yukon French Language School Board is the only Francophone institution in the Yukon. We are regulated, we exist and we are an institution. There aren't many of them; ours is the only one. So, there should be room on that committee for a representative of the Yukon French Language School Board to make a case for the needs of the population it serves in terms of communications and services in French.

**Mrs. Lise Zarac:** Who are the current members of the committee?

**Mr. André Bourcier:** The Association franco-yukonnaise has a certain number of seats, and there are also members of the public. We asked Francophones to sit on the committee as members of the public. There are also deputy ministers. We could provide you with the list of current committee members.

**Mrs. Lise Zarac:** Fine, thank you.

Do I still have time available, Mr. Chairman?

**The Chair:** You have a good 20 seconds left.

**Mrs. Lise Zarac:** Mr. Galipeau used part of my time.

Ms. St-Gelais, unfortunately, we do not have time to visit your day care centre, but could you take us on a virtual tour, even though you haven't been there for long? Today we visited l'école Émilie-Tremblay, where they showed us all the benefits offered to students, all the extracurricular activities, and so on. Could you take us on a virtual tour and explain what your day care centre has to offer?

**Ms. Isabelle St-Gelais:** First of all, our day care workers all have diplomas and possess all the necessary qualifications. Second of all, the ratio is lower. It is 1 to 4 for infants, 1 to 6 for children 18 months of age, and 1 to 8 for children over 3. As you can see, nature has a strong presence here. Educators often take the children outside. The program includes a lot of singing and music. Someone comes in every other Wednesday to lead the children in musical activities, play musical instruments, dance and teach them songs on different themes. The children are very creative. They do lots of things that are connected to nature. Every other Wednesday, when music is not on the schedule, someone comes in to cook with them. They always prepare a health snack.

Because a lot of people from outside come to settle here, often Quebecers, they become close, establish relationships and support each other.

• (2045)

**Mrs. Lise Zarac:** We heard there is a baby boom. Mention was made of the fact that there have been more than 25 births.

**The Chair:** We'll come back later, Ms. Zarac. I've already been very generous.

Mr. Lauzon, please.

**Mr. Guy Lauzon:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Some thought that there were no Francophones in Dawson, but we now know that there are 125. Are there other small communities where there are Francophones? Can you name them?

**Ms. Julie Leclerc:** I haven't reviewed the figures. In any case, I haven't been to those villages. I know that in Watson Lake, Haines Junction—

**Mr. Guy Lauzon:** Are we talking about approximately the same number?

**Ms. Julie Leclerc:** You would have to rely on the expertise of the Association franco-yukonnaise, which may be familiar with all the figures. I know there are some in Haines Junction and Watson Lake. I also know that there was a community in Faro, but I can't give you any figures.

**Mr. Guy Lauzon:** There are 1,245 Francophones in the Yukon: that is what we were told this morning. There are 125 in Dawson. How many are there in Whitehorse?

**Mr. André Bourcier:** There again, it depends on how you count them. We're talking about an 80% rate of intermarriage. If we say that out of 1,245 Francophones who have French as their mother tongue, 80% are married to Anglophones and will have a certain number of children, that gives me a much higher number of Francophones. I don't remember the exact figure. I saw that Mr. Bélanger has the most recent FCFA study. In any case, we are talking about almost 4,000 people who use French.

**Mr. Guy Lauzon:** Thirty-five hundred people.

**Mr. André Bourcier:** These are people who regularly use French.

**Hon. Mauril Bélanger:** The number is 3,545.

**Mr. Guy Lauzon:** Yes, but there are 1,245 Francophones.

**Ms. Sylvie Geoffroy:** According to the statistics.

**Mr. André Bourcier:** These are people whose mother tongue is French.

**Mr. Guy Lauzon:** Do you think there are more than that?

**Ms. Sylvie Geoffroy:** Yes. In villages like Watson Lake and Haines Junction, for example, out of a total population of 500, approximately 5% to 7% are Francophones. In actual fact, however, they are not counted.

**Mr. Guy Lauzon:** These people speak French among themselves in their village, do they not? And yet there are no services in French.

**Ms. Julie Leclerc:** I haven't been there, but having opened the Centre de la francophonie in Dawson and spent some time there, I can tell you that a woman from Watson Lake came to see us, and was extremely happy to discover that we existed, saying that no such services were available where she lives. Right away she wanted to speak to me in French, but she was unable to finish her sentence.

No, services of this kind are not offered in all the communities. That's why I say that it could be of interest in that regard. Perhaps it could be a second stepping stone for the Francophone community in the Yukon. There are Francophones in a major urban centre, and there are also Francophones in smaller communities.

How is the Francophone community evolving there, living side by side with the First Nations and Anglophones? We hear that a small community in the Northwest Territories has set up its own French-language school. What impact has that had on the community? Can we learn something from their circumstances? That is the stage we are at now. The Francophone community in the capital has achieved a certain maturity. It has made certain gains, and it's not over yet. We continue to move forward, but what is happening in the other communities? I think we are living in very interesting times. Also, we are discovering that there are Francophones in those places.

• (2050)

**Mr. Guy Lauzon:** In closing, I would like to say that Francophones in the Yukon are very courageous. In my region, Francophones are not as courageous as you are. That's why I support you.

Do you any questions, Mr. Galipeau?

**Mr. Royal Galipeau:** I would like to come back to the Commissioner of Official Languages, who seems to be quite reluctant to get involved in the issues of interest to you, supposedly because this falls within territorial jurisdiction. I will speak to Mr. Fraser and explain that the territories fall within federal jurisdiction. I would like to see how we can address this situation in our discussions.

Do you have any positive arguments you would like to share with me?

**Mr. André Bourcier:** The Yukon Act is an act passed by the Parliament in Ottawa.

**Mr. Royal Galipeau:** It's the same thing as for the provinces, where the municipalities are creatures of the province?

**Mr. André Bourcier:** Exactly. From a constitutional standpoint, that's the way it works. Once again, let's be clear. In 1988, the Yukon Languages Act was established precisely because the then minister, Serge Joyal, wanted to impose federal legislation on the territories. He gave them very little time to get organized, and threatened to impose legislation on them. Unfortunately, here we have a government which has decided to do as little as possible. Other territorial governments have decided to go much further.

**Mr. Royal Galipeau:** Like Nunavut, for example.

**Mr. André Bourcier:** Yes, the Northwest Territories and Nunavut.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, Mr. Galipeau.

**Ms. Monique Guay:** Mr. Chairman, I will give my speaking time to Mr. Bélanger.

**The Chair:** Ms. Guay has agreed to share her speaking time with Ms. Zarac and Mr. Bélanger to wrap up the meeting.

**Hon. Mauril Bélanger:** I appreciate your generosity, Ms. Guay.

**Mr. Royal Galipeau:** Will you give me 30 seconds at the end?

**Ms. Monique Guay:** No, I am the one ceding my speaking time.

**Hon. Mauril Bélanger:** If you're giving them to me—

Go ahead and take your 30 seconds right away.

**Mr. Royal Galipeau:** Coming back to the idea that the territories are creatures of the federal government and that the municipalities are creatures of the province, I recall complaining to the Ontario Minister for Municipal Affairs about something silly a municipality had done. The minister had completely washed his hands of the whole affair and told us to fix the problem in the next election. And that is what we did.

**The Chair:** Informal discussions will be possible after the committee meeting. Actually, there is a place next door that would be appropriate for that.

**A voice:** Ah, ah!

**The Chair:** Mr. Bélanger, please.

**Hon. Mauril Bélanger:** Mr. Bourcier, did you get an answer to the letter you sent to Mr. Lussier on September 8, 2009?

**Mr. André Bourcier:** I did not receive a letter, but I met with Mr. Lussier in person.

**Hon. Mauril Bélanger:** And?

**Mr. André Bourcier:** Mr. Lussier told me that he had been reminded that education is an exclusive area of jurisdiction. As a result, his ability to participate in the debate was extremely limited. He also said that he would follow developments in the court case and see subsequently whether something could be done.

**Hon. Mauril Bélanger:** Did he tell you why funding had decreased by 30% compared to the previous agreement?

• (2055)

**Ms. Sylvie Geoffroy:** He told me that it was a decision made by the Yukon Ministry of Education. That is what the Yukon Territory had requested. For them, it was zero, so it was accepted.

**Hon. Mauril Bélanger:** I would like to come back to teleservices, either for health care or in other areas. When I want to check something with respect to my credit card and call customer service, I end up somewhere in India.

**A voice:** Or in Moncton.

**Hon. Mauril Bélanger:** No, not in Moncton. I recognize the Moncton accent.

**Voices:** Oh, oh!

**Hon. Mauril Bélanger:** You say that the Yukon Territory offers health care services via telephone. Have your association or community members considered whether it could be a good idea to enter into an agreement with other provinces in Canada that provide that kind of service—for instance, Ontario, New Brunswick and Quebec?

**Ms. Sylvie Geoffroy:** I believe there have been discussions with British Columbia. I don't know whether they have led anywhere, but I believe there was some progress with respect to jurisdiction—in other words, whether nurses would have the right to provide the service or not. It took the form of an exchange of views. The request was made and there was discussion, but I don't know whether it led anywhere.

**Hon. Mauril Bélanger:** With respect to television, I mentioned to Ms. Taillefer or someone from the school this afternoon that television could also be used, to have access to channels like TFO and Télé-Québec. If I'm not mistaken, the services of these distributors are now available on the Internet.

Today we were told by the Deputy Minister responsible for Economic Development that all across the Yukon territory, or almost, high-speed Internet service is available. So, people could access those television channels over the Internet. Is that being done now?

**Ms. Marie-Ève Owen:** Sometimes.

**Ms. Julie Leclerc:** We do receive the program *La ruée vers l'or*. People in Dawson are determined to watch that, but everyone ends up tearing their hair out because it takes time to see the images. And it's not as accessible as one may think. I was in touch with TVOntario's virtual services last week and we are currently looking at which of their resources we could use which would be beneficial for our community.

**Hon. Mauril Bélanger:** I strongly encourage you to talk to people at TFO, because it is educational television that focuses primarily on programming for children. They have a very good reputation.

Finally... and this comment is not aimed at our guests this evening; rather, it is directed to the people at the Yukon French Services Branch. I don't know whether they're listening, whether they will be listening at some point or whether someone will pass on the message. Personally, I'm very disappointed that they did not take the trouble to be here and listen to what we heard throughout the day. They were here this morning between 9:00 and 10:00 a.m. After that, they left. I know that when we hold committee hearings in Ottawa, the Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages makes sure that someone is there all the time. I'm very disappointed that the Yukon French Services Branch did not take the trouble to do the same.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Ms. Zarac, you are done. We are going to wrap up the meeting very soon. We have two minutes left. I would just like to ask our witnesses if anyone wishes to add something. That will complete our visit to Whitehorse.

**Ms. Isabelle St-Gelais:** I just wanted to say something about speech therapists. They are English-speaking. Sometimes they come to the day care centre, but it's all in English. There are no Francophones. We are lucky that francization measures are in place and that someone from the school comes to see us from time to time. Otherwise, the speech therapist does come to the day care centre to help us, but everything takes place in English. It's very difficult, because I have some educators who do not speak much English. As a result, they have trouble communicating.

**The Chair:** That is a concrete example.

**Ms. Isabelle St-Gelais:** I bring in Francophones so that we can speak French, but where speech therapists are concerned, it's difficult to explain to a child the difference between French and English. For the educator, it's also difficult. That's what I meant.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Ms. Taillefer, do you wish to add anything?

**Ms. Lorraine Taillefer:** There is still a problem at the school. In our case, it has to do with psychological or psychoeducational assessments of our students. There is a psychologist in Vancouver who comes to the school to do psychoeducational assessments and she is required, based on what the Ministry of Education has requested, to write her reports in English.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

**Hon. Mauril Bélanger:** I asked a question this afternoon and perhaps Mr. Bourcier or Ms. Taillefer could answer it.

Is there someone in the Yukon Francophone community—primarily Whitehorse—who could be trained by the CNFS—the Consortium national de formation en santé en français—with a view to meeting your needs? The idea behind that is to train people who come from the communities in the hope that they will go back there. I would ask you to try and get more information about this, because I'm sure there is someone in Whitehorse who would be interested in taking those courses, either in British Columbia or elsewhere—

• (2100)

**The Chair:** It is a very well structured program.

**Hon. Mauril Bélanger:** — and coming back here so that you wouldn't be facing such a ridiculous situation.

**Mr. Guy Lauzon:** As Francophones, have you tried in the past to sign petitions or that sort of thing to submit them to the Yukon government, as a means of securing more services in French?

**Mr. André Bourcier:** We took them to court, Mr. Lauzon.

**Mr. Guy Lauzon:** Petitions are for elected officials. When a lot of people are unhappy, you have political power. You should try that.

**The Chair:** Ms. Leclerc, we are finishing off in Dawson, where it all began, in a way.

**Ms. Julie Leclerc:** I like to see my community as a community that is getting organized. We have a lot of users.

My group has fought tooth and nail. I am proud to tell the committee that we won the Binet-Dugas prize for services in French this year, even though we are only volunteers.

**The Chair:** Where was that?

**Ms. Julie Leclerc:** At the Gala de la francophonie 2010. The users nominate services—

**The Chair:** Are you talking about the Canada-wide Gala de la francophonie?

**Ms. Julie Leclerc:** No, the one here in the territory. It is organized by the Association franco-yukonnaise.

I just wanted to tell you that we do have users, but we are now looking for our leaders.

**The Chair:** I will allow myself one quick comment. I want to thank you for being here.

What I take from this, and I was making this comment to our analyst a little earlier, is the comment made by Mr. Bourcier. As you may remember, he said that, statistically, Francophones form 0% of the population of the Yukon.

People often talk about assimilation, but it's exactly the opposite. Basically you are in the process of rebuilding. You are rebuilding a Francophone community.

Remember that what you are doing is creating value-added for Yukon, because proficiency in several languages is an asset. You know, all the people we saw and who have been educated at the l'école Émilie-Tremblay represent value-added not only for the Yukon, but for Canada.

I can tell you that there are opportunities in the public service. According to our report—you can read it—there are 5,000 positions that open up every year for bilingual people. What you're doing is really building the future of the Yukon.

On that note, I want to again extend my thanks and wish you the best of luck.

The meeting is adjourned.







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