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## **Standing Committee on Official Languages**

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**EVIDENCE**

**Tuesday, April 23, 2013**

**Chair**

**The Honourable Michael Chong**



## Standing Committee on Official Languages

Tuesday, April 23, 2013

• (1600)

[Translation]

**The Chair (Hon. Michael Chong (Wellington—Halton Hills, CPC)):** Today is Tuesday, April 23, 2013, and I would like to welcome you to the 76th meeting of the Standing Committee on Official Languages. We are here pursuant to Standing Order 108 for a study on second official language immersion programs in Canada.

Today we will be hearing from two groups. Ms. Adams represents the Ottawa-Carleton District School Board. We would also like to welcome Mr. Morrow and Ms. Ellwand, from the organization Canadian Youth for French.

Welcome to all of you.

We will begin with Ms. Adams.

**Dr. Jennifer Adams (Director of Education, Ottawa-Carleton District School Board):** Good afternoon to all of you. I am happy to be here with you. I am originally from Thunder Bay. With a family name like Adams, I never thought the day would come when I would have an opportunity to be making a presentation in front of the Standing Committee on Official Languages. I am tremendously pleased to have this opportunity.

I feel that the issue you are studying is very closely aligned with what we do on a daily basis in Ottawa's public schools. We therefore decided to share our ideas with you. I have provided you with a few copies of my document.

As you can see, there are 72,000 pupils in our school board. This is a very big school board. We have nearly 150 public schools, 120 at the elementary level and nearly 30 high schools.

[English]

Our mission is to educate students for success by inspiring learning and building citizenship using the pillars of well-being, engagement, learning, and leadership. One of the major platforms upon which that success sits is the provision of highly effective programs in French as a second language. Within a local, Canadian, and international context, the importance of achieving not only a comfort but also a proficiency in both official languages is fundamental to who we are as a school district.

[Translation]

Our school board provides several French as a second language programs. The first is a core program, which starts in pre-kindergarten and continues up until 12th grade, should students decide to continue. The other program is an immersion program. We have two immersion programs, meaning two entry points. The first

program is for 5-year-old children in kindergarten, and the other entry point is a middle immersion program that begins in 4th grade. These are therefore two distinct programs.

[English]

Our immersion programs are offered at 110 of our 150 schools, so the immersion program is very popular. Approximately three out of every four of our schools have some type of an immersion program. Parents can choose between the two entry points that I mentioned.

Expansion of immersion programs in the OCDSB has continued in response to parent demand. Fifteen years ago, in 1998, the percentage of students in elementary immersion programs was 31%. Today over 47%, a total of 22,500 students, are enrolled in one of the district's two elementary immersion programs. I believe we have the largest immersion program in the country. The percentage of students enrolled in senior kindergarten early French immersion has risen to 62%. If we look at our kindergarten programs throughout the entire district, 62% of our kindergarten students are in that early immersion program. Early and middle programs in French immersion have experienced significant growth, which represents sustainability for both of these programs.

The OCDSB has experienced growth in the number of students enrolled in FSL programs, in the hours of instruction received, and in the range of subjects with French language instruction. Over the last five years, the number of elementary school students eligible for FSL funding in Ontario has risen by almost 1,500 students. Remarkably, the number of credits in French that secondary school students will earn this year is 1,700 credits higher than the number earned in the 2008-09 school year, with a total of almost 20,000 credits in French or subjects taught in French at the secondary level.

We believe our success has been predicated on some very important work that we've done in reviewing our programs. A number of years ago, the OCDSB, as the Standing Committee on Official Languages is doing now, contemplated a review of French immersion programs. In December 2006 an FSL review ad hoc committee, made up of three trustees from our organization, was established and tasked with developing a framework for a review of not only French immersion but also core French programs as well, including core French and immersion.

The objectives were to improve the effectiveness of delivery and instruction for FSL programs, to ensure that students throughout the school district have equitable access to FSL programs, to ensure that the programs are viable and sustainable, and to ensure that they're cost-effective.

There were two phases of the review. The elementary was done in 2007, and the secondary was done in 2009.

• (1605)

We did a massive review of literature. We conducted surveys with parents, secondary students, stakeholders, and administrative staff. As a result of these program reviews, I'll mention a couple of the actions or decisions that were taken.

First of all, at that time we decided to have two entry points for French immersion: early and middle. We've had a third entry point at the late, but the two later points had very small enrolments. To make sure we had programs that were close to where the children were living, we decided to go with two entry points.

We looked at core French and ensured that we had a quality core French program from junior kindergarten right through to grade 12. At this time we introduced a grade 12 French proficiency test. We began this as a pilot project, and we continue this three years later. It's a voluntary French proficiency test using the DELF, which some of you may have heard of, the *diplôme d'études en langue française*. The test is open to core French and French immersion students. In its first administration three years ago, 84 students opted to take the test. This year over 900 students have chosen to take the test. That's one-third of our grade 12 enrolment. We found from this that most of our participants in the French immersion program challenged the B2 level and were successful.

In the past three years, 1,700 students have left our system with a DELF certificate. The thing I would like to impress on you the most is that our focus has been on high-quality instructional practice and oral communication. What we've learned from these reviews and from the administration of this grade 12 proficiency test is that oral communication is a key piece. Whether they're coming from a core French background or from a French immersion background, children and students leaving our system have to be confident in their skills and willing to use these skills outside the classroom.

In summary, research shows that language learning is good for children. We are fortunate to live in a country that recognizes and celebrates the duality of our language heritage. Canada has an official languages policy that supports and encourages bilingualism. At the school district level, we see the support for that policy reflected in the context of parental demand for immersion programs.

In order to provide effective FSL programs that best meet the unique needs of each of our communities, school districts would benefit from two types of support from the federal government. The first is continued funding to the provinces to ensure that FSL programs continue to be offered throughout the country. The second is support for a national measure for proficiency in French to enhance our ability to have a national conversation about our progress toward becoming a bilingual nation. With this in mind, I respectfully offer the following three recommendations.

The first recommendation is that the federal government continue to have articulation agreements with the provinces to provide funding and support to FSL programs for school-age children. My comment on that recommendation is this. In Ontario, school districts offering FSL programs receive additional funds through FSL grants from the federal government that contribute to the feasibility of

offering immersion programs. Districts with immersion programs may incur a variety of additional costs, including but not limited to staffing due to small program streams in dual-track schools, transportation, recruitment of teachers who are proficient French speakers, professional learning, and student resources.

The second recommendation is that the federal government explore the adoption of a national measure of language proficiency. My comments on this recommendation are these. Bilingualism has been a policy stance in Canada for almost a half century. The federal government has directed funding to the provinces to ensure the provision of French as a second language instruction to school-age children. From an accountability standpoint, it is reasonable to assume that Canadians would want to know the number of students graduating from Canadian high schools who are proficient in French, and to what level of proficiency. A national measure is required to be able to speak of student outcomes at the national level.

My final recommendation to you, the standing committee, is that the committee undertake a study on official language immersion schools with regard to access, capacity, waiting lists, best practices, and efficiencies.

Thank you very much.

• (1610)

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, Madam Adams.

Now we'll have an opening statement from Mr. Morrow.

[Translation]

**Mr. Justin Morrow (Founder and Executive Director, Canadian Youth for French):** Good afternoon. Thank you for this invitation to appear before you to participate in your study on immersion programs. I am very pleased to be here with you.

As you know, I am not a product of immersion, but 4 out of the 10 members of our board of directors are. I have therefore invited Ms. Calina Ellwand to help me with today's presentation. She could not unfortunately be away from work all day long, so she is with us thanks to the videoconference system.

Before going any further and giving Canadian Youth for French's opinion on the topic you are studying, I would like to turn the floor over to Calina, so she can give you her thoughts.

**Ms. Calina Ellwand (Member of the Board of Directors, Canadian Youth for French):** Thank you, Justin.

As Justin said, I am a member of the board of directors of Canadian Youth for French.

[English]

I'm also a product of Ontario's French immersion program, so I can and will be speaking from personal experience as someone who started my French immersion studies in kindergarten, continued through to high school, then on to university at the University of Ottawa. Thanks to a scholarship from Canadian Parents for French, I was able to study political science in French at U of O. I now continue to use my French on a daily basis through my work for a national non-profit that operates bilingually.

I joined the board of Canadian Youth For French in 2012 because I strongly believe in the organization's mandate to ensure that students have access to opportunities to enrich their French-language skills beyond high school. I would like to share my experience in the French immersion system because I feel very strongly about it, but I do feel there are three areas in particular where there could be improvement.

First, in terms of access, in my own experience living in Canada's largest city, growing up in Toronto, the closest French immersion school was never the most convenient option. This required considerable time spent on buses, on public transit, and of course there was the financial hardship that put on my family in order to pay for public transit to travel 45 minutes across the city.

I'm talking from my experience in Toronto. I know that across Canada it could be an even longer distance and higher costs incurred to get to the closest French immersion school. As a result, we see that most students in French immersion come from better-off families that can afford this additional cost.

Second, there are inconsistencies across Canada in terms of the quality of the teaching and the educational experience. I did some informal polling of my French immersion peers., and overall, we've all had very dedicated and supportive French immersion teachers who have contributed to our success. However, teachers' French-language skills are inconsistent across the system and in order to maintain the high calibre of French immersion programming, we need to ensure that we're training and hiring educators with strong French-language skills in order maintain high quality in the French immersion program.

Finally, in terms of students who want to work on their French beyond high school, there's a considerable loss of French. Again, from the small focus group of 11 French immersion students who are young adults who have now gone on to other things, 80% of them said their French had either become worse or stayed the same since leaving school, and only 20% said they had actually seen their French improve.

In order to not lose the energy and the resources that we're putting into French immersion, we need to put resources toward helping students who want to maintain their French beyond high school. I think that's where Canadian Youth For French can play an important role.

I will now pass it back to Justin to contribute to this commentary.

• (1615)

[Translation]

**Mr. Justin Morrow:** Thank you, Calina.

I would now like to take a few minutes to add a few things to what my colleague was saying.

[English]

First, I have to highlight the fact that although you are studying immersion schools and immersion studies, we must remember that immersion graduates, from our calculations, make up less than 5% of the total high school graduates in English Canada. Although there is a fairly large difference in their levels of French, core French graduates and those who dropped French at the earliest possible moment face many of the same challenges as immersion students do.

First, they don't truly understand the benefits of learning French as a second language. They know they can get paid more and there are more job opportunities and they can travel to French regions of the world, but they don't really understand why they get paid more. They don't understand why there are more jobs available to them, why French is an asset to their career, or what type of impact French can have on their personal development, and where French will come in handy, etc.

Second, they are very unaware of how many people around them actually speak French. For many of these young people, the only time they will ever hear French spoken before they leave high school is in the classroom. Never will they think that someone they meet in the street can also speak French, because everyone in their region simply speaks English anyway.

Next, as Calina touched on, the quality of teaching is lacking in many places around the country. It's not consistent perhaps is a better way to describe it. Sure, there are great immersion teachers, but there are also some not very good ones. The same is true in core French as well, so we're hitting all the things there.

[Translation]

The Canadian Association of Immersion Teachers

[English]

exists solely to support immersion teachers and we are sure they are well aware of this concern. Therefore, we're not going to talk more to this effect. We'll let them have the opportunity to do that for you.

I would like to say one thing, though. I was invited to participate in a round table hosted by Canadian Heritage in 2011 entitled, "Reflection on Future Actions With Respect to Official Languages in Education 2013 to 2018". Many challenges were discussed, but there is one that remains fresh in my mind because I see it as a great opportunity.

[Translation]

SPEAQ, namely the Society for the Promotion of the Teaching of English as a Second Language in Quebec,

[English]

divulged that one of their biggest problems is and will continue to be the lack of qualified English teachers to teach their students. ACPI, the other organization, also made reference to the lack of qualified French teachers to teach their students.

On one hand, we have teachers with great abilities to speak French struggling to provide quality teaching in English in Quebec, and on the other hand, we have teachers with a great ability to speak English struggling to provide quality teaching in French throughout English Canada.

Why not create a simple teacher exchange at the beginning of the career to alleviate that and to help the English people get more fluent in their French abilities and the French get more fluent in their English abilities?

[Translation]

I am a good example of what can happen to someone who is completely immersed in the second language. My accent is not so bad. If we were to do that, the quality of French immersion teachers would increase.

[English]

From what I understood, this opportunity, however good it was, was out of the hands of those within Canadian Heritage because education is a provincial matter and they couldn't make the transition.

This being said, I don't see why the federal government wouldn't be able to encourage this opportunity by offering incentives such as grants, scholarships, subsidies, or whatever to make those exchanges happen.

I have another story for you. I'm not sure if I'm going to have enough time, but I'll try anyway. This will provide a segue from the first two points into the third point.

I was approached by a student at Western University who is a researcher. He was studying a literary review on why boys don't take French after grade 9. I asked him to share his thoughts with me, and he obliged by sharing with me the social stigma, the level of maturity, the other options that are available to them. As you've come to know from me, I took a slightly different approach to his question and I asked him to look at things differently.

What happens when our immersion students, or anyone for that matter, leave high school? What are the careers that they go forth to do? Most immersion graduates, a great majority of them, will become French teachers—French immersion teachers, core teachers, one or the other. The teacher market is normally dominated by women. More women go into that category. The young girls see the value of continuing their studies through to grade 12 because they know at the end they'll be able to become immersion teachers and have great lives, whereas for the young boy who doesn't really want to become a teacher, where's that career that he has to strive for with his French? Where's he going to go afterwards?

Again, it comes down to the post-secondary opportunities in French and what's available for a young person at the post-secondary level.

This is the third point. For years we've spent millions upon millions to ensure that as many children as possible obtain the best type of immersion education possible. If we've invested so much, so many resources into the study of immersion, I have to ask, why are we studying it again? Why are we back here studying more?

Canada founded immersion studies. We're the leader in immersion studies. We want to maintain our status as a leader. There are thousands of immersion teachers. There are many researchers studying immersion. When the whole francophone community talks about French in English Canada, they refer to the immersion students. It's all about immersion.

Obviously, you're going to hear that we need to improve immersion studies when all of these voices collectively are telling you that immersion is the way to go. We have to increase the amount of immersion, but I think it's pretty common knowledge that with all the research that has been performed, the level, the amount we can increase on the studies is only going to be marginal. We're not going to see a substantial increase in the number of bilingual Canadians or the capacity of English Canadians to speak French if we concentrate solely on immersion.

I've run out of time, but I strongly suggest that this committee and/or others, or researchers throughout the country begin to look at the post-secondary environment for anglophones wishing to learn French. What are the challenges? What are the opportunities available? What are the roadblocks? I think if we look at this question, we'll start to see that we can drastically increase our success.

Thank you very much.

• (1620)

[Translation]

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Morrow.

We now have 70 minutes for questions and comments.

Mr. Godin, the floor is yours.

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

I would like to welcome you, Ms. Adams, Mr. Morrow and Ms. Ellwand.

The committee has decided to do a study on immersion. As we had already talked about second language teaching at the post-secondary level, such as, for example, in universities, I liked to hear Mr. Morrow talk about it.

We have a lot of questions to ask you, but I would like to know how you feel about one thing, in particular, with respect to universities. Perhaps you have already answered this question.

I will not hide the fact from you that I'm one of the people behind the bill to ensure that justices of the Supreme Court of Canada are bilingual, and the bill designed to ensure that parliamentary officers are bilingual. Even the universities supported us on this legislation. For example, the universities in Toronto and Vancouver told us that if the bill were adopted, they would then have the authority to tell their students that they need to learn the other official language if they have any desire to work at the Supreme Court of Canada, no matter where they happen to be.

In this fashion, students would have a goal to reach. Otherwise, they simply elect to take immersion courses without knowing too much about what is expected from them, and as you said, once the immersion course is over, they no longer are fluent in the second official language and lose their ability.

Do you not think that it is time that the government demonstrate leadership in certain areas, particularly with respect to public services?

Moreover, although the government is one of the largest employers in Canada, we see that it is not promoting both official languages in the universities. As an employer, the government should specify the type of employees that it is looking for, which would in turn help the universities make decisions.

In this respect, I must congratulate our chair, Mr. Michael Chong. Indeed, he really emphasized the need for universities to provide instruction in the second official language, because our country is supposed to provide services in both official languages.

Mr. Morrow, I would like to hear your comments on this issue.

**Mr. Justin Morrow:** Mr. Godin, I believe that there are two aspects to your question. Could I ask you to please repeat it?

• (1625)

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** The question is too broad.

Indeed, from what you were saying, or perhaps it was Calina who said this, once grade 12 is over, many students are no longer fluent in the second official language, because they have not had an opportunity to speak it. Indeed, only 20% of them go on to speak the second official language. The others lose their ability to speak French.

Do you not feel that the government also has a role to play in promoting both official languages in the country? When I talk about promotion, I'm not saying that it should do this blindly. In my opinion, we need to create positions where bilingualism is essential. We must also do some promotion in the universities. Teaching the second language should not come to a halt in grade 12, but should be continued at the university level as well.

**Mr. Justin Morrow:** I fully agree with you. Your bill was great. I really liked it. Ideally, all positions in Canada should be bilingual, but that is impossible. However, it is a step in the right direction. That is putting greater pressure on universities so that they start preparing students to become bilingual.

[English]

But I want to make sure that we don't start imposing it too much. I've talked to a couple of my friends who are unilingual anglophones, and they see the advancement...because when the government comes in and they say that you have to do this and you have to do that, they get kind of scared and worried that they're going to lose their positions and stuff, and it's going to create conflict between the French and English communities again. It could be a little bit more difficult.

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** Don't they have the responsibility to advise the people that certain jobs are bilingual, and if they want them, then they should get into them? It doesn't matter if they're French or English. It doesn't matter who they are. It's the same thing for the

francophones. If they want certain jobs, and if we're going to serve the people in both languages, then promote that. They are the biggest employer in the country so they should promote that. That's what I was looking at.

**Mr. Justin Morrow:** I think Calina has something to say.

[Translation]

**Dr. Jennifer Adams:** Actually, I would like to answer that question.

According to what our program reviews and assessments indicate, even before knowing what students will do after high school, they have to be motivated to continue studying French until the end of their studies. In addition, we have to ensure that the quality of the teaching is high enough so that, when the students graduate from high school, they can enter the workplace or universities and colleges with a level that is advanced enough to allow them to access these programs and positions. If all the positions are already officially designated as bilingual and there is a significant gap between the skills in the people applying for these jobs, things will be even more complicated.

I should highlight two things from our program assessments.

First, we assess what is done in the classrooms to motivate students to stick with their studies. We discovered that it was linked to oral communication. You brought up a point about boys and girls. Since we started taking into consideration teaching in the classroom, namely teaching methods, many more boys are taking these classes in grades 11 and 12. That's the first thing.

We also discovered something else. When we decided to implement the exam at the end of grade 12, all the students saw that they had an objective: they wanted to obtain the certificate based on their oral and written skills, among others.

With these results, we can see what we will prioritize. We will know how many more students could be motivated to continue learning French. All of this is in combination with what is done at the university level and in the workplace. You have to have these two elements.

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** When it comes to education, it's a bit of a delicate situation because this is a provincial jurisdiction. When you say that teachers should be better trained and so on, do you think this falls under federal jurisdiction? Otherwise, would you say that you need the federal government to assist the provinces in providing more funding for education?

**Dr. Jennifer Adams:** That's why I included my first two recommendations, knowing that the provinces and the federal government both have a role to play.

The immersion and core language programs in the provinces would be impossible without the funding provided by the federal government to the provinces. For example, our school board, which is located in Ontario, receives additional funding for all students in immersion and core language programs. We would not be able to provide these programs if the funding was not available. My recommendation states that it is essential that the federal government continue to provide this money to the provinces.

Regarding the second missing element, that is, measurement criteria, I believe you could play a role. We began looking at that through a pilot project in our school board. Today, our tool is used in a number of provinces.

I know that

• (1630)

[English]

the Council of Ministers of Education

[Translation]

had talked about

[English]

Common European Framework of Reference for Languages.

[Translation]

The idea here is to have standards so that we can define the level of proficiency. Having common standards would, in my opinion, help the federal bilingualism policy.

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

Mr. Galipeau, you have the floor.

**Mr. Royal Galipeau (Ottawa—Orléans, CPC):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I would like to welcome you both.

Ms. Adams, I am quite impressed by the quality of your French.

[English]

So where did you go to French immersion? You learned on your mother's knee?

**Dr. Jennifer Adams:** No, my mother is anglophone as well. I have no French background. My family name is Adams, and I come from Thunder Bay. I began core French in grade 5, twice a week, I think.

**Mr. Royal Galipeau:** Wow. So you just put a lot of will into it. Congratulations.

Mr. Morrow made reference earlier to—I don't know what word you use in English and I heard it in French—*décrochage*. What's the word in English?

**A voice:** The dropout rate.

**Mr. Royal Galipeau:** It was the dropout rate in the French immersion area, and I suppose that statistic made sense generally.

In Ottawa, what's the statistic here?

**Dr. Jennifer Adams:** It's a good question.

What I will do is leave copies of the three studies we've done with the committee. They're very comprehensive studies. I would argue that they're probably the most conclusive studies that—

**Mr. Royal Galipeau:** You're telling me it's a good question, and if I look at these three thick books there, I'll find the answer?

**Dr. Jennifer Adams:** No, I'm going to give you the answer.

We have a certain attrition rate at the end of each of the years. When we look at the overall numbers.... Because we have it starting right from kindergarten, there's a certain percentage that do move into different programs, whether it's an English program or one of our alternative or special education programs.

I don't have the statistic off the top of my head, but that information is here.

**Mr. Royal Galipeau:** I want to tell you something. If you want to motivate your students to keep at it, let them know that this committee has made a recommendation to the House of Commons that from this day forward and forever there will be 10 leadership positions that answer to Parliament, where it is mandatory that they be bilingual. Never again are we going to have an auditor general who is not bilingual the day he starts work. So make sure that dropout rate goes down.

In the city of Ottawa there are about 120,000 residents who, like me, were born in a French-speaking milieu and who by the force of events came to speak and understand both languages, and so are bilingual. There are 120,000 of us, but did you know that in Ottawa there are 180,000 of you anglophones who also understand and speak both languages? That, to a great measure, is to the credit of your school board. Your school board has been in this business from day one. I think that Le Phare Elementary School was probably the first one. I remember the leaders of the day.

In the way you use language, French and English, not one of us is French or English. We're all Canadians. We are French speaking or English speaking, or in the end bilingual, but we're not French and English.

• (1635)

[Translation]

I said what I wanted to say.

Mr. Morrow, I found your experience rather interesting. You said you did not go to a French immersion school—you know, in France they do not use the word immersion; they use the word "*plongée*"—dive. So, where did you learn to speak French?

**Mr. Justin Morrow:** At 24 years old, I was recruited to play football at Université Laval.

**Mr. Royal Galipeau:** Really?

**Mr. Justin Morrow:** And so I started to learn French.

**Mr. Royal Galipeau:** So you were good at football and at French too.

**Mr. Justin Morrow:** I wasn't bad at football and I was terrible at French.

**Mr. Royal Galipeau:** Is that so?

**Mr. Justin Morrow:** When I started, yes, but three years later—

**Mr. Royal Galipeau:** But the young women in Quebec must have taught you French, didn't they?

**Voices:** Oh, oh!

**Mr. Justin Morrow:** Let's just say that Mr. Gourde knows what I think about that.

**Mr. Royal Galipeau:** In any case...



Now you are a leader in Toronto to advocate for—

**Mr. Justin Morrow:** Now I live in Winnipeg. I am from southern Ontario, just outside of London. However, the organization is based in Winnipeg.

**Mr. Royal Galipeau:** Is there a bookstore in Winnipeg that sells French books?

**Mr. Justin Morrow:** I think there are two.

**Ms. Joyce Bateman (Winnipeg South Centre, CPC):** Yes, there are two of them.

**Mr. Royal Galipeau:** I should have asked my colleague that question.

Thank you very much, Mr. Morrow.

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

Mr. Dion, you have the floor.

**Hon. Stéphane Dion (Saint-Laurent—Cartierville, Lib.):** Thank you Mr. Chair.

Ms. Adams, Mr. Morrow and Ms. Ellwand, I would like each of you to put aside your notes, look us in the eye and repeat for us each of your recommendations as you would like them to appear in our report. I told the government team that recommendations were made to us and that we must listen to them.

Go ahead please.

**Dr. Jennifer Adams:** My first recommendation is that it is absolutely essential that the federal government continue to provide official languages funding to the provinces to ensure that they can offer quality immersion programs and core programs throughout the country.

**Hon. Stéphane Dion:** For the core programs?

**Dr. Jennifer Adams:** For the core programs and for the immersion programs.

My second recommendation, and I don't know if you heard about this before, is that there needs to be some kind of measure in order to evaluate language proficiency. If we want to be able to say how many students are bilingual after completing our programs and what level they're at, we need a common method of measurement to do so.

**Hon. Stéphane Dion:** That means students' language proficiency needs to be evaluated at the end of high school.

**Dr. Jennifer Adams:** That's right.

I want to clearly distinguish between the role of the provinces and that of the federal government. The federal government could initiate the dialogue to determine an action plan that could be used throughout the country. Following that, the provinces could decide if they want to implement it at the end of grade 12 or not.

**Hon. Stéphane Dion:** Excellent.

**Dr. Jennifer Adams:** My third recommendation is that we must go forward with the process with the help of a study. I understand what my colleague was saying when questioning the usefulness of doing one study after another. However, I think it would be a positive thing to open up a national dialogue with the participants from all provinces to discuss what we want the programs to accomplish.

**Hon. Stéphane Dion:** Your third recommendation then consists of carrying out a study on the programs and identifying which ones work well and which ones work less well.

**Dr. Jennifer Adams:** Exactly; a national dialogue.

• (1640)

**Hon. Stéphane Dion:** We intend to do such a study, and we will keep you informed. We will see what the results of that are.

Ms. Ellwand, look us in the eye and tell us your recommendations.

**Ms. Calina Ellwand:** My first recommendation consists of improving access to education in immersion programs. To be specific, this would mean reducing the distance that families and students have to travel to get to the nearest immersion school.

For example, in my case I used to live in Toronto and the immersion school was located fairly far away from my home.

**Hon. Stéphane Dion:** Then this would mean having more immersion schools in order to reduce these distances.

**Ms. Calina Ellwand:** Exactly.

**Hon. Stéphane Dion:** Or, more buses would be needed.

**Ms. Calina Ellwand:** Indeed, this would mean having more subsidized transportation to allow people to access schools with immersion programs.

**Hon. Stéphane Dion:** All right.

What is your second recommendation?

**Ms. Calina Ellwand:** Secondly, the level of French proficiency among teachers needs to be more consistent throughout Canada.

Thirdly, there needs to be more support offered to students who wish to continue improving their French after they leave high school. Therefore, there must be more programs such as cultural exchanges, promoting bilingual universities, grants to encourage students to go to bilingual universities, things like that.

**Hon. Stéphane Dion:** Thank you very much.

Mr. Morrow, do you have any recommendations to add to those?

**Mr. Justin Morrow:** In fact, I would like to add a slight clarification to the first recommendation. We need to ensure access to immersion programs and to francophone events on all levels.

Secondly, we have to ensure that the teaching is of high quality.

[English]

Third, we recommend that you study post-secondary environments in French, not just universities but also colleges, employment, forums, and exchanges in communities across the country, to really find out what the roadblocks are, where students are going, where they want to go, why they don't do things, what their—

[Translation]

**Hon. Stéphane Dion:** Then we have to look outside of the teaching circles and look into the labour market.

**Mr. Justin Morrow:** We have to look at the labour market and the rest of it. I do not think that a single study has been done on that to date.

**Hon. Stéphane Dion:** Do I still have some time?

**The Chair:** Yes.

**Hon. Stéphane Dion:** In that case, we shall revisit all of this.

Ms. Adams, do you feel that we are missing something here? Do you have any other recommendations?

**Dr. Jennifer Adams:** The quality of the teaching is a job for the boards of education, the school boards and the provinces. Access to programs is also the responsibility of the school boards, the boards of education and the provinces. It would be very difficult for the federal government to intervene in these areas.

However, you give funding to the provinces and this allows the school boards to study and evaluate the programs, just as we have done here. This also allows the implementation of programs in places where that has never been done before.

Ensuring linguistically competent professors costs money. It is very expensive. Skills development programs are very costly because they develop teachers' skills in the education field in addition to improving their language skills.

Transportation is also the responsibility of the school board.

To do all of this, funds are needed. If the federal government does not provide funding through the provinces, these things will not improve.

**Hon. Stéphane Dion:** Thank you very much.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Ms. Bateman, you have the floor.

**Ms. Joyce Bateman:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I would like to thank all of our witnesses. I am sincerely impressed by your bilingualism.

Ms. Adams, Mr. Galipeau started to ask you some questions on this topic. You managed to learn this country's second official language without going through immersion. How did you do that?

• (1645)

**Dr. Jennifer Adams:** I will talk a little bit about myself, but first of all, I will talk about what we do with regard to program evaluation.

As Justin already mentioned, the vast majority of the country's students are enrolled in core French programs. We are entirely capable of producing competent students, and in this regard, I would point to myself as an example. However, a very good education is required, teachers whose language skills are up to par are needed, and one must motivate students to continue studying until the end of the 12th grade.

Thanks to the changes made to our programs, we have finally started to see more students continue on until the 11th grade. Up until two or three years ago, it was lower. Many students stop immediately after grade 9 or 10.

We have therefore created situations. We have created classroom education that maintains children's interest. They are interested in communicating in that language. They do not want to conjugate the verbs "to be" and "to have". That is useless, they are not interested in doing it.

**Ms. Joyce Bateman:** I agree with you.

**Dr. Jennifer Adams:** Now I'll talk a little bit more about myself.

I have to admit that languages interested me, and so I continued to study them in high school. Afterwards, I went to Carleton University, and then I did a one-year exchange at the University of Quebec at Trois-Rivières. Mr. Dion, part of the program offered the opportunity to request a bursary to go and study in Trois-Rivières, and I took advantage of it.

Finally, I have to admit that I am now married to a Frenchman, so that helps.

**Voices:** Oh, oh!

**Mr. Royal Galipeau:** So, the truth comes out.

**Ms. Joyce Bateman:** What you say seems to indicate that we have perhaps enough resources for core programs in the country. We talked about a certain number, but perhaps that was not you. Did you mention 62%?

**Dr. Jennifer Adams:** Indeed, 62% of our kindergarten students are in early immersion.

**Ms. Joyce Bateman:** And, finally, what is the number?

**Dr. Jennifer Adams:** You want to know how many continue on until the end of grade 12?

**Ms. Joyce Bateman:** That's it.

**Dr. Jennifer Adams:** I will have to check. It's in the program.

**Ms. Joyce Bateman:** It's in the text, fine.

**Dr. Jennifer Adams:** One thing about immersion programs must be emphasized. At the high school level, sometimes students will decide not to continue with the immersion program because they must take certain classes in order to be admitted to certain university programs, and those classes are not always offered in immersion programs.

However, we have demonstrated that over the last two years, the number of people who pursue the immersion programs has increased substantially. We have seen a growth of 1,700 credits, both for French classes and other courses taught in French.

**Ms. Joyce Bateman:** However, as Mr. Morrow said, in Canada, 5% of people enrolled in immersion programs remain in them until the end of their education.

**Dr. Jennifer Adams:** Yes, but our school board is not at all typical for the country, that's for sure.

**Ms. Joyce Bateman:** No, you are not typical.

Nevertheless, your comment suggests that we should perhaps target core French programs throughout Canada.

**Dr. Jennifer Adams:** I don't believe that we have to choose between the two. Instead, we should ask ourselves how we could improve both programs.

If we concentrate only on immersion programs, it would be very difficult for all locations to offer them. We must seek to improve both programs. That way, it will create what you wish to see in the end; you will have students who, once they leave high school, after having followed the core program, or the immersion program, will have a level of French that is acceptable.

According to the results of our evaluation, at the end of the 12th grade, most students in immersion programs are able to meet the challenge of obtaining a B2 level. I don't know if you know the levels.

• (1650)

**Ms. Joyce Bateman:** Are those the same levels as those used in the public service?

**Dr. Jennifer Adams:** No, that's another framework. It's the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages. All European languages are based on the same level.

According to our results up until now, immersion programs allow students to reach a B2 level, whereas for basic programs, B1 is the level that is aimed for. Both are levels at which students are very competent. However, with the core program, students must be motivated to pursue their studies until the end of grade 12, instead of moving on at the end of grade 9, as is so often the case, unfortunately.

**Ms. Joyce Bateman:** Thank you very much.

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

Mr. Trottier, you have the floor.

**Mr. Bernard Trottier (Etobicoke—Lakeshore, CPC):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Ms. Adams, you said that 62% of students in your school board were in immersion programs. I would imagine that that's similar to other boards in the Ottawa region, for example the Catholic board. Moreover, students in the French language system are in a 100% francophone environment. So, it could be said that between 70% and 80% of students in the Ottawa region are in francophone environments.

**Dr. Jennifer Adams:** Not exactly. As a matter of fact, that's the statistic for kindergarten. For 62% of 5-year-old children, parents choose the early immersion program.

From a global perspective, many other children choose a point of entry in the 4th grade. Others choose to continue on with regular programs in English. If we consider everything, the percentage of children in immersion programs at the elementary level is approximately 41%.

**Mr. Bernard Trottier:** Okay. I think that in Ottawa, it's very unique compared to the rest of Canada.

**Dr. Jennifer Adams:** Oh yes, it's unique.

**Mr. Bernard Trottier:** There really is a critical mass of students who study in a francophone environment. In other regions of the country, even elsewhere in Ontario, that same critical mass does not exist.

In its intervention, the federal government recognizes that that same critical mass does not exist everywhere, and that can create certain challenges for education. That's often linked to the distance that must be covered, but also to extracurricular activities and programs, since there are sometimes not enough volunteers to support them.

Is that the case in Ottawa? Is support needed? You spoke of the necessity of obtaining federal government support, but I would

imagine that there is no lack of will on the part of the provincial government to adequately fund French-language education.

**Dr. Jennifer Adams:** No, no, there is no lack of will. There really is a willingness to support these programs.

Our school board is responsible for a pilot project which, in the beginning, grouped 13 of 72 school boards, and it now extends to all English-language school boards; there are 60 of them. The project aims to determine how to improve education, with the point of view of taking action. There is no problem, we are very well supported by the province, but the federal government gives us the funds earmarked for teaching official languages. Without this financial support, we would not be able to do what we do now at the provincial level, let alone at the school board level.

**Mr. Bernard Trottier:** But is it the responsibility of the Ontario government, especially given this critical mass that you have in Ottawa, to ensure that education programs are well funded?

**Dr. Jennifer Adams:** Yes, of course, and it really is very well supported. I would imagine that each province works differently, but in the case of what our school board receives for education, there is a per-student basis. There is another sort of fund that is dedicated to French as a second language. That money comes from the federal government, and it is granted to the provinces. I want to emphasize above all that without this support, I believe that you would see an enormous reduction in immersion and French as a second language programs. This support is therefore absolutely critical, particularly in the provinces.

Naturally, in a city such as Ottawa, it is quite evident that parents are especially willing, but in other provinces, even in other parts of Ontario, it would be very difficult to maintain these programs if those supplementary funds were not available.

• (1655)

**Mr. Bernard Trottier:** I know that you are the director of education, but I would like you to talk to us a bit about extracurricular activities. In my opinion, they are really quite important. I think that half of one's learning is done during such activities.

What needs to be done to reinforce learning French through extracurricular activities?

That can sometimes present challenges.

**Dr. Jennifer Adams:** At the school board level, we definitely saw the importance of extracurricular activities for parents, and for children in particular. This year has been a very good example. Naturally, it is very important.

We are lucky to have a great deal of staff available to support these activities, outside of classroom hours and in French. We are also lucky to be in contact with the community as well as with parents capable of expressing themselves in French. All of that is very good and very important. Naturally, the possibility to take advantage of activities here, in the city, or outside of it, is also very significant.

There is now a reality which was not as evident before in our classrooms: that is the importance of the international community. We now have all sorts of technology available to us. At the end of our evaluation of high school level programs, we equipped every high school with computer labs. Indeed, to improve students' language skills, they need access to more than just professors who speak well.

Twenty-five years ago, when I started to teach, the teacher's quality was at the heart of everything. If they spoke badly, we were out of luck, there was nothing else. Now, there is access to technology. It is the children who should speak, and not the teacher. It is the children who should ask, speak, communicate, access resources. It is technology that has allowed us to reach this point.

On that topic, we are launching a partnership with a region in France. In a few of our classrooms, our students will use technology to conduct study projects together. As Calina emphasized earlier, if some teachers' language skills are not perfect, we can develop those skills through other means.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Mr. Dionne Labelle, you have the floor.

**Mr. Pierre Dionne Labelle (Rivière-du-Nord, NDP):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Congratulations to all of you for your involvement and for the values that you defend.

This is our first meeting on this theme. Obviously, it will help us to form an opinion on what we wish to study, which could be quite far-ranging.

I listened attentively to your presentations. A few times, you spoke of the requirement for funds. At the same time, I was looking at the funds that are currently invested by the federal government to support both official languages in Canada.

Recently, this committee welcomed representatives from Statistics Canada, who came and gave us a rather gloomy picture of bilingualism, particularly among youth. I will therefore approach the topic in a general way.

In Quebec, New Brunswick and Ontario, bilingualism is doing well enough. As for the rest of Canada, it has been observed that as soon as young people leave school, they either become part of the labour force, or they go to a school where there is no immersion program. They define themselves less and less as bilingual people.

Consequently, there are two situations existing in parallel: we have never invested so much into second languages, but there have never been so few young people who define themselves as being bilingual. Therefore, there is a problem with this machine. The dream of a bilingual Canadian nation is struggling somewhat. We will attempt to understand why. How can immersion schools play a role in the situation?

Moreover, is there something else hiding behind this? Indeed, it seems to me that the field of education is really quite stable. I looked at the number of people who took second language classes in the 1970s and concluded there have been giant steps taken since then.

The number of people enrolled in immersion has also grown by leaps and bounds. And yet, bilingualism is stagnating, or even receding.

Could you give me your analysis of the situation?

● (1700)

**Dr. Jennifer Adams:** That is part of the reason why we evaluated our school board programs: we were asking ourselves what we were producing. I think that is the question that you are asking as well. What are we producing as a country? That is exactly why a national vision of what it means to be competent in both languages must be established.

To have a national vision, it would be necessary to set agreed-upon levels of competence and to have tools to measure them. So, we could talk about that. Not only would that give us a common language, it would give the students a vision, which would be very significant.

I remember that when I put forward the idea of having an evaluation at the end of the 12th grade, one of the counsellors told me that it would not be possible. This person believed that it would not be possible to motivate the kids to study French by telling them that there would be an evaluation at the end of their student career, because kids hate evaluations. The counsellor and I laughed a bit about that. However, it was not simply a matter of performing an evaluation. In reality, it showed us what we were missing in our programs: communication and interaction.

Previously, our students were capable of giving an oral presentation as long as they could take notes and read them. However, Mr. Dion now refuses to let students read their notes. They must be able to express themselves freely.

The first year that we started performing these evaluations, students told us that the part that was the hardest for them was when they were asked questions for which they had no opportunity to prepare. Consequently, we are changing the way we do things in our classrooms. We are encouraging the kids to talk amongst themselves, as well as to contact francophones throughout the world. We also encourage them to listen to programs from Africa and francophone countries.

That is why I say that it is important.

**Mr. Pierre Dionne Labelle:** Mr. Morrow, do you want to add something?

**Mr. Justin Morrow:** I think Calina has something to add.

**Mr. Pierre Dionne Labelle:** Ms. Ellwand, you have the floor.

**Ms. Calina Ellwand:** I would like to say that bilingualism is not something that ends after high school.

[English]

It's lifelong work. It's something you have to continue to work at throughout your entire life. Reaching the end of high school and receiving that certificate of bilingualism is great and receiving a certain grade is great, but if you don't have opportunities beyond high school to keep honing and using your French, and seeing the value of having that French, then you lose it and the certificate means nothing and the grade means nothing. You're not going to have access to the kinds of economic benefits such as employment opportunities, which we talk about as being one of the reasons that people should maintain their French or stay in French immersion.

That being said, as Jennifer was saying, there need to be more reasons given to students and adults to keep up with their French, opportunities to interact within Canada with other French communities or—

I think my time is being cut off. No?

• (1705)

[Translation]

**Mr. Pierre Dionne Labelle:** I apologize, Ms. Ellwand, but I must interrupt you.

In his presentation, Mr. Morrow said that we have to get French outside of the classroom. I would like to hear your view on that. What does it mean to take French outside of the classroom?

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Dionne Labelle.

[English]

Monsieur Morrow et Madame Ellwand, do you want to respond to that?

**Mr. Justin Morrow:** What does it mean to get French outside of the classroom? It's to get people using French in their jobs and in their careers, and in their clubs, or on the streets, or making it more visible. It's about allowing or enabling young people who get out of immersion schools or core French schools to have the confidence to speak in French and to proudly say that they speak French. It's great. I think Mr. Trottier mentioned it too, but extracurricular activities are very important and they play a big role in getting us to be more bilingual.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much.

Monsieur Gourde.

[Translation]

**Mr. Jacques Gourde (Lotbinière—Chutes-de-la-Chaudière, CPC):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I want to thank our witnesses for being here today.

My first question is for Ms. Adams.

As parents, we often wonder if it is better for our children to start core second language classes early, like the ones you offer in French, for example, or if it is better to start a little later, say in grade 4, with either core or immersion programs.

In Quebec, there is currently a big debate on that issue. Should young people start learning English in kindergarten, or should they wait until later, until grade 6?

In your view, what is more beneficial for the children?

**Dr. Jennifer Adams:** That is a big question that we often ask ourselves.

We conducted a major study to see what research said about that. As for entering immersion programs, the study showed that at the end of these early programs, oral results were normally somewhat higher than results in other programs. However with writing, we noted that immersion courses starting later yielded the same results.

Demographically speaking, we also discovered differences between children registered in early immersion and those registered in late immersion. For children entering early immersion, we noted more varied demographics, a more equal number of boys and girls, more socio-economic equality, and so on. With the late immersion programs, however, we noted that many more girls than boys participated.

As regards the number of children who went on to obtain a French-language diploma, we saw very little difference between children who completed the intermediary program and those who completed the early immersion program. The question is this: do the same type of students take the two programs? I think that the early immersion program contingent is somewhat more varied than the intermediate immersion program one.

We also discovered that many parents of children who participate in our programs are English-language learners, in other words, people who are learning English. We asked these parents what they prefer. We discovered that many parents who speak a language other than French and English at home prefer to register their children in the intermediate program, in order to give those children an opportunity to acquire a good grounding in English up until grade 3.

That is one of the reasons why our school board decided to create two points of entry. We wanted to give parents the choice. Some anglophone parents prefer that their children learn to read in English first, so that they have a very strong base. So parents are completely free to choose.

**Mr. Jacques Gourde:** Would you say that parents who decide to send their children to early immersion already speak both official languages, but with perhaps a weaker level of French?

**Dr. Jennifer Adams:** No. In most cases, parents who register their children in our immersion programs do not speak French. Sometimes, they speak a bit of French at work, but most of them are anglophones or allophones.

I must point out that we have two other school boards here in Ottawa, for francophones.

Certainly there are some francophone parents, but most children are children of anglophones or people who speak neither English nor French at home.

• (1710)

**Mr. Jacques Gourde:** So good core programs that start early, at age 5 or 6, and that continue year after year, enable children to achieve a highly satisfactory level by grade 11.

**Dr. Jennifer Adams:** Yes. We found that children who were assessed normally obtained a B2 level, which means they are quite competent.

**Mr. Jacques Gourde:** Clearly, some students have more aptitude than others.

Having said that, tell me if I am on the right track; I think that the amount of time children are exposed to French is a factor, be it in the company of a teacher or through follow-up provided by parents. In addition, today's technology makes it possible to increase the amount of exposure to French. Overall, being exposed to another language for 1,200 hours makes it possible to achieve very interesting results.

**Dr. Jennifer Adams:** Of course we should be able to produce a rather high skill level among our students. Unfortunately, to date, the only thing that was counted in immersion programs was the number of credits earned. I do not know if it works the same way in other provinces, but the number of credits does not mean anything in terms of the linguistic competency that we produce in our students, at the end of the day. That is what the programs lack.

For example, for children in grades 9, 10, 11, and 12, we knew how many credits had been earned in geography. We knew that if a student had 10 credits, he obtained an immersion certificate in Ontario. However, that says nothing about the students linguistic competency.

That is the other measure we are proposing. We should have a national conversation for that.

**Mr. Jacques Gourde:** At the end of the day, is it better to start at age 5 or 6 or at age 12?

**Dr. Jennifer Adams:** I believe that it is very beneficial to start young regardless of the area, not just for immersion programs.

We have surveyed parents, both parents of children in immersion and parents of children in core programming in Ottawa. The findings indicated that it was very important for children to begin in preschool.

Our school board therefore decided that here it would start at age 4 for both streams.

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

[English]

Mr. Benskin.

[Translation]

**Mr. Tyrone Benskin (Jeanne-Le Ber, NDP):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

[English]

Thank you, all three of you, for being here.

I'd like to touch on what Mr. Morrow was talking about, as well as Ms. Adams and Ms. Ellwand, on two areas. We were talking earlier about the drop-out rate between grade 9 and grade 12. You were talking about the fact that there isn't enough happening in the post-secondary level. For me, I'm hearing that if people are dropping out between grade 9 and grade 12, who is going to go into the post-secondary?

The question I have is how do we encourage students to stay in the immersion program, to follow it through? How do we create an environment that's less of an academic point scoring and create an environment that's more a part of life?

I have a quick story. When I came here from England I spoke a little French because we had to speak French. I went to Kensington Elementary School in NDG in Montreal. We had our French classes; this is grade 5. If we were really good in French at that level you got to go to Mr. Levy's class. Mr. Levy's class was basically everybody sitting around reading Lucky Luke, the cowboy, and Asterix stories. The only rule was we were not allowed to speak a word in English, not a word. If you did, you went back to the regular French class—*je m'appelle, tu t'appelles*, and so on. Even if we had to translate, we had to put our hand up and ask how to translate something. I remember that class because it was such a goal to be there.

Does that tie into what you're talking about—that's a third question—as well as taking the French out of the classroom and making it a part of people's lives? How can we do that?

•(1715)

**Mr. Justin Morrow:** We'll let Calina go first this time.

**Ms. Calina Ellwand:** Thank you.

I remember an opportunity that I had when I was 16. It was through the summer work student exchange program, which is a federal government program. I'm not sure if it still exists; I know that its funding was on the line. When I was 16, it allowed me to go to a very small community in New Brunswick for six weeks and work in a summer camp. It was a community that was entirely French speaking. I did not know until that point that communities like that existed in Canada.

Having that six-week opportunity where they took me out of my comfort zone, out of my downtown Toronto life, my anglophone life, and threw me into a minority community, a French community, really changed my perspective on where French was used and how French was used in Canada, and how French could benefit me in the future. I think more opportunities like that.... They did the reverse for my cohort. They took her out of her small village and brought her to Toronto. She was working on her English. More opportunities like this within Canada, where we're exchanging languages with other communities and seeing different realities, can really make an impression on someone at a young age.

**A voice:** [Inaudible—Editor]

**Ms. Calina Ellwand:** Jobs? Telling kids that they're going to get access to jobs, that they're going to get access to more employment opportunities.... When you're in grade 8, you're still a little too young to realize the full potential of this. That's a more powerful argument for grade 11 and grade 12 students.

There's my two cents.

[Translation]

**Mr. Tyrone Benskin:** Thank you.

[English]

**Mr. Justin Morrow:** Also, one of the major problems we have to face is that students who drop out of French, or students who don't become bilingual by grade 12, don't think that they will ever again have the chance to become bilingual. For most 19- and 20-year-olds, a lot of them that I talk to say, "I wish I would have learned French. I wish I would have...". Post-secondary, they're all looking back and saying that they wish they would have done it. They all think it's too late, but it's never too late to learn a second language. You can always do it. They just have to know that the possibility is there, that it exists, and that there are opportunities to do it.

**The Chair:** Okay.

Madam Adams, go ahead.

**Dr. Jennifer Adams:** I'm conscious of the fact that you're into a federal jurisdiction and a provincial jurisdiction. We've talked a little bit about the kinds of things.... Getting better instruction is really what's going to make a difference. We have 72,000 students. I love what Calina is saying about the different activities. We're never going to have enough dollars to send all 72,000 of them on exchange, but I do think that an important piece of it is to have some of those possibilities available, and certainly at the post-secondary level as well.

How do we influence what that instruction looks like? The experience you had, that shouldn't just be for the students who are highly academic: it should be for every student.

That's the nature of the instruction that's going on. Ontario has made a very important policy decision. Up until now, immersion courses in secondary school were available only for what is called the academic stream. In the applied stream, immersion courses didn't exist. Ontario made a very important policy decision, such that now there are applied level immersion courses. Those are the students who are going out to the workplace. Those are the students who we need to be engaging in those kinds of programs.

Getting back to where the federal government comes in, it's the responsibility of the provinces and the school districts to make sure this good instruction is happening. The federal government plays a role in setting the stage for how that will happen.

• (1720)

**The Chair:** Thank you very much.

Mr. Lunney, do you have a question?

[Translation]

**Mr. James Lunney (Nanaimo—Alberni, CPC):** Yes.

**The Chair:** The floor is yours.

**Mr. James Lunney:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

In my opinion, languages can be used as bridges or as walls. I think that we need many more bridges between peoples to maintain the objective of speaking both official languages in Canada. This concerns students, but all of us as well. It is very important, even when we do not speak perfectly. In my opinion, pursuing this objective is very valid.

In my riding of Nanaimo-Alberni, there is an organization called the Association des francophones de Nanaimo. Every year, they hold

a maple sugar festival. For the past few years, there have been exchanges between businessmen and women in my riding and businessmen and women in Quebec, where the maple products are made. Francophone schools and students in the immersion programs have the opportunity to experience the joy of life linked to francophone culture, songs and maple products.

That is why I am asking you a simple question. Do you believe that for regions at a great distance from Ottawa, this type of program can significantly contribute to attaining the committee's objective, that is maintaining the use of both official languages?

**Dr. Jennifer Adams:** In my opinion, it is important. It encourages children and adults to continue with language learning. It is certainly useful.

Under the agreement reached between the federal government and the province of Ontario, when we receive funding, certain amounts are earmarked especially for cultural activities. It's exactly as you described. It is offered to schools to ensure that children are steeped in the francophone culture of Quebec, Canada and elsewhere in the world. It certainly is important.

**Mr. James Lunney:** I would like—

[English]

It's just a simple comment.

**The Chair:** Do you have some questions as well?

If it's a short question, go ahead, Mr. Lunney.

**Mr. James Lunney:** I was simply going to say this.

[Translation]

I grew up in Manitoba. Between grade 7 and grade 11, most students did not have enough opportunities to practise their French. However, to learn

[English]

the grammar, the basics, it was at least a foundation that you could try to build a bridge.

Throughout my career, even though I have lived in anglo communities, whenever I hear a French accent, I try to practise my six words *en français*.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Lunney.

Mr. O'Toole.

[Translation]

**Mr. Erin O'Toole (Durham, CPC):** I would like to put a question to Dr. Adams.

How many schools administer a French test in grade 12?

[English]

Are there a lot of school boards in Ontario that use that test? You've talked about the value of it. Is that something that is spreading?

**Dr. Jennifer Adams:** It's very new. We are the first English school district in Ontario to pilot that.

It is used in some locations in Alberta, as well as in B.C., and in the Atlantic provinces as well. Those provinces are quite connected to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages, and the DELF, which is actually the evaluation, is a piece of that.

The work we're doing in the province of Ontario, the piece I said our board is the lead board for all of the other school districts, is using the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages, which means that the concept of those levels of performance is embedded into our instruction in the classroom, but not necessarily with an official exit test at the end of it.

It's really not necessary to have it, actually. Those common levels of proficiency can be used right in the daily evaluations that teachers are using, but the development of a common language of what we mean by proficient is spreading throughout the province of Ontario.

• (1725)

**Mr. Erin O'Toole:** As a quick follow-up, since you've been piloting that test, has your board been able to use the results from the test to perhaps address the second point Ms. Ellwand made, which was inconsistencies in quality?

Are you able to use those metrics even within the number of schools you discussed? Do you see that as a benefit of the test?

**Dr. Jennifer Adams:** I want to be very careful with the concept of a test because what I'm really recommending to the committee is not the actual adoption of a test but the adoption of a framework for proficiency levels. Whether or not a test takes place, it is very important that that stays at the district level and the provincial level.

Have we used that information? Absolutely. What we found is, for example, and I touched on it before, that the whole concept of interaction in French was an area that we weren't doing enough of. Our students, when we looked at how they were performing on the different spoken, written, etc., it was that interacting piece that our students were struggling with most.

As a result, we have a model of instructional coaches that go out and work with our teachers in our district in all areas, K to 12, and our focus over the last couple of years has been really pushing toward more of that interactive piece. The great thing about it is that's what the kids want to be doing, so it is not just helping our outcomes; it is actually engaging the students in their learning.

[Translation]

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

So, to close, I turn the floor over to Ms. Boutin-Sweet.

**Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet (Hochelaga, NDP):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you, ladies and gentlemen.

I would like to come back to immersion and the core program. I am a francophone and my husband is an anglophone. We have two sons, and since their birth, we speak to them both in French and English equally. They thus learned to speak a little bit later, given the fact that they were learning two languages, but when they did begin to speak, they expressed themselves in both languages. That went downhill a bit when they started school.

Earlier, when you answered Mr. Gourde's questions, you talked about statistics and the parents of children who are not francophone, which is not my case, because I am a francophone and their father is an anglophone.

Don't talk to me about statistics here, but if you had been the principal of the school where I sent my children, which program would you have suggested to ensure that my children could continue to be just as bilingual as they were before they started school?

**Dr. Jennifer Adams:** That is a big question. Even if I was the director general of the French-language school board, I would have the same challenge. The different managers talk about this.

Obviously, it is very difficult to motivate the children to continue speaking French outside the classroom. In a community like Ottawa, I think that in general, English is the first language spoken, and that is why it is chosen as the basic language. What we try to do in our programs is to ensure that this continues in the classroom. Where possible, we try to encourage the students to continue their classes and to participate in other activities outside the classroom in the hopes that they will grow up in both languages.

**Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet:** Would you have suggested immersion or core French?

**Dr. Jennifer Adams:** In our school board, if they already had some French, I would certainly have suggested immersion.

**Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet:** The other situation that I want to tell you about is mine. When I went to high school, I was living in Toronto and I was attending Étienne-Brûlé School, a French-language school. I had come from Quebec, and so I spoke French well. However, in the schoolyard, no one else spoke French. I would go to parties where everyone would be speaking English and I would not understand anything.

Now, we are talking about teenagers. It is a little bit more difficult to convince teenagers to continue speaking French.

• (1730)

**Dr. Jennifer Adams:** Absolutely.

**Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet:** So, how can we convince them that it will be useful for them? What can the federal government do to help in this respect?

**Dr. Jennifer Adams:** I believe that Mr. Morrow and Ms. Ellwand are better able to answer your questions, because they see opportunities in all of these activities.

**The Chair:** Okay.

Unfortunately, we are out of time.

It is 5:30 p.m. and the bells are ringing.

[English]

I want to thank everyone for their testimony.

Madam Ellwand, who's here via video conference, Madam Adams and Mr. Morrow, here at the committee, thank you very much for your testimony. It's been very useful. Thank you to members of the committee for their participation.

Without further ado, this meeting is adjourned.









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