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The Honourable Michael Chong

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• (1530)

[Translation]

The Chair (Hon. Michael Chong (Wellington—Halton Hills, CPC)): Welcome to the 79th meeting of the Standing Committee on Official Languages on this Tuesday, May 7, 2013. Pursuant to Standing Order 108, we are studying second official language immersion programs in Canada.

We have the following witnesses with us today: Mr. Leclair, from the Canadian Association of Second Language Teachers, whom I welcome, and Ms. Kenny and Mr. Quinty, from the Fédération des communautés francophones et acadienne du Canada.

[English]

We'll begin with an opening statement from Monsieur Leclair.

[Translation]

Mr. Guy Leclair (Executive Director, Canadian Association of Second Language Teachers): Thank you.

Mr. Chair and committee members, thank you very much for your invitation. The President and Vice-President of the Canadian Association of Second Language Teachers, or CASLT, cannot be here today and send their regrets.

CASLT is a non-profit organization whose mission is to promote excellence in second-language instruction in Canada. Its organizational structure, through which it represents every province and territory, supports its 3,000 members and the second language communities in the following fields: professional development, teaching material, professional information, research and information distribution as well as the promotion and advocacy of its members' interests.

The demand for access to immersion programs exceeds supply. This situation creates many challenges. The first observation I would like to make is that there is a need to increase the number of immersion programs as part of the introduction of compulsory English and French as a second language programs in Canada. CASLT invites the federal, provincial and territorial governments to work toward that end with the appropriate authorities, such as the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada.

We also invite the government to establish a second language learning promotion campaign that would emphasize the benefits of learning Canada's two official languages and would aim to inform parents, students, the general public, newcomers to Canada, school principals, administrators and decision-makers about access to second language programs. I am thinking, for example, of the

inclusion of allophone students and students with learning disabilities in those programs.

We believe that, by showing in this way that second languages are important for Canadian society, the federal government would support demand for access to and the creation of second language programs.

In addition to an increase in the number of second language programs and teachers, including guidance counsellors, teachers' assistants and other related staff, there is a concern for program quality. Research projects must be carried out in the faculties of education in co-operation with teachers to compare the various methods and identify best practices. For example, although immersion students manage to develop a degree of ease in communicating in their second language, they lack precision in their oral delivery. Errors are often not corrected in class.

We can also look at the effectiveness of the various entry points or the effectiveness of intensive French. Research in those fields would prove useful. That work must then be used to enlighten and inform young teachers graduating from the faculties of education. Teacher training programs must be kept up to date. Teaching how to use the Canadian Language Portfolio for Teachers, which is produced by CASLT, plus courses on new technologies, inclusion, interculturalism and so on would improve second language programs.

Teacher training issues include the language skills of teaching staff, knowledge of living language teaching methods, professional development and professional status. Language teachers are marginalized relative to teachers of other subjects. To address these issues, the second language teaching profession must be promoted and programs must be introduced to meet the needs of the profession.

There is also a shortage of teaching resources and educational material. Resources that are more relevant to students and based on new technologies, social media and the labour market would also help teachers, particularly the youngest ones.

Professional training is at the top of the list of teachers' priority needs. Organizations such as the Canadian Association of Immersion Teachers, or CAIT, and our organization, CASLT, offer various types of professional development: workshops, presentations, videos, podcasts and so on. However, if we do not reach several hundreds of teachers every year, getting to all 35,000 second language teachers in Canada will become a difficult task, particularly considering the number of themes that must be addressed, such as inclusion, the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages, social media and so on.

The school boards and divisions must be made aware of these issues and be supported in maintaining high quality second language programs. CASLT has prepared a publication entitled *Leadership for Successful FSL Programs* as a guide for stakeholders.

● (1535)

Improving second language programs goes hand in hand with student performance and retention.

Student surveys confirm that students often feel uncertain about their language skills. Adopting a common framework of reference for languages, like the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages, would address that situation in part. This kind of framework puts more emphasis on independence and self-learning, using a language portfolio and passport and so on, and less on test-taking so that students feel better equipped to continue learning the language beyond high school.

For students, the benefit of having an accurate idea of their level of bilingualism based on an internationally recognized scale would help them gauge their learning in the real world, become more interested in learning their second language, develop confidence in their skills and promote themselves more effectively to potential employers in Canada and internationally.

According to a 2005 student survey conducted by Canadian Parents for French on ongoing learning of French as a second language at university, 44% of immersion students and 18% of students in core French programs decided to continue taking French courses at university after high school.

For example, initiatives such as the University of Ottawa's French immersion studies program demonstrate the postsecondary potential of second language learners. More opportunities of this kind would be welcome. Incidentally, 30% of students registered in the University of Ottawa's French immersion studies program come from core French programs. Consequently, no one should underestimate the potential of that program or of the intensive French program in second language instruction in Canada. The core program needs some improvements, of course, but it is a good program that needs to be reanalyzed, revised, improved and redeployed.

In closing, our recommendations are as follows.

First, promote coordination and leadership in order to establish a common framework of reference for languages or to promote the adoption of such a framework. The Canadian Association of Second Language Teachers is prepared to take on that role. However, the co-operation of Canadian Heritage and the Council of Ministers of

Education, Canada, or CMEC, is essential, as is the co-operation of several other stakeholders in the second language instruction field.

Second, promote and show political and government support through a national strategy to introduce second language programs, including the provision of incentives to the provinces and territories making second language programs compulsory.

Third, introduce a promotion and information strategy targeting parents, students, the general public and newcomers as well as school boards, management and decision-makers to inform those stakeholders about access to second language programs.

Fourth, fund linguistic and cultural exchange, enrichment and training programs for teachers.

Fifth, mandate the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council to encourage research and the dissemination of research findings on the acquisition, teaching and evaluation of second languages and on teacher training by offering research grants in those fields.

Sixth, promote research popularization projects to encourage the distribution of research findings and practical classroom-based material through new technologies, such as the creation of a virtual professional learning community.

Seventh, encourage faculties of education to enrich their second language teacher training programs by adding elements set out in the skills profile developed by CASLT, encouraging teacher trainers to use the Canadian Language Portfolio for Teachers as a professional growth tool and by collaborating with each other using new technologies.

Eighth, encourage the universities to raise the profile of the second language teaching profession and to offer exchange programs and university internships and organize recruitment campaigns.

Thank you.

● (1540)

The Chair: Thank you for your recommendations, Mr. Leclair.

I now hand the floor over to Ms. Kenny.

Ms. Marie-France Kenny (President, Fédération des communautés francophones et acadienne du Canada): Good afternoon and thank you, Mr. Chair.

Ladies and gentlemen, it is always a pleasure to be here. I feel as though I have been given a free pass to come and meet with you, like on Guy A. Lepage's program. Our organization appreciates that very much.

First of all, I want to thank you for inviting us to testify before you today about French immersion programs. From the outset, I will admit quite candidly that immersion is not one of the federation's areas of activity. Consequently, our expertise in the field is quite limited.

However, the advancement of French and linguistic duality is one of our fields of activity and part of our expertise. That is why we are interested in issues related to French immersion. We also maintain contact with organizations such as Canadian Parents for French, Canadian Youth for French and the Canadian Association of Immersion Teachers, and rightly so: I am fond of saying that a francophone is a person who has chosen to live part of his or her life in French. That obviously includes immersion students.

The issue for us at the FCFA is not just protecting French, but also sharing it with as many Canadians as possible. In my remarks, I would like to discuss some aspects of your study such as the relevance, added value and accessibility of immersion programs.

With regard to added value, first let us talk about the validity of learning French as a second language. In the excellent open letter that the Commissioner of Official Languages, Graham Fraser, issued to the media on April 8, he named all the people in the federal government who are fluently bilingual: the Prime Minister of Canada, the majority of provincial premiers, the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, the Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages, the Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism, the chair of this committee, most members of this committee, and others.

In other words, if we are looking for a tangible example of the added value of second language learning, the proof of the pudding is in the eating, as it were. Furthermore, as Mr. Fraser says, French in Canada is the language of ambition. It is a good bet that the future will feature a steadily growing cohort of bilingual young professionals prepared to take on key positions in the government, in our major businesses and in other organizations in Canadian society. I hope it does in any case.

The added value of immersion and second language learning programs does not stop there. You know as well as I do that we are living in an increasingly diverse and multicultural country. In the circumstances, our two official languages are becoming a tool that suits us, that enables us to understand more clearly what it is to be Canadian, because they are central to the Canadian experience. Many new Canadians know this, judging from the popularity of second language courses offered by the Alliance française in Vancouver, particularly to young Asian Canadians.

When the FCFA appeared before this committee as part of its study on the 150th anniversary of Confederation, I emphasized that we often feel that Canadian society consists of groups that, owing to distance or different backgrounds, do not have a chance to talk to each other and understand each other. Ensuring that all Canadians who wish to learn their second official language can have the opportunity to do so is an investment in the Canadian collective "we".

That leads me to talk to you about the accessibility of immersion and second language learning programs. Others will do a better job than I of telling you in detail about the issues and challenges involved. However, I would like to bring two points to your attention.

First of all, the capacity of immersion schools to meet ever-increasing demand remains limited. Allow me to cite a report by

Canadian Parents for French of British Columbia and Yukon that was published last month:

[English]

Demand for French immersion programs continues to outstrip capacity in many communities. School districts continue to mitigate FSL program capping in a variety of ways including: enrolment lotteries and early morning registration that has forced some parents to camp overnight.

● (1545)

[Translation]

If my memory serves me, Minister Moore himself said he had camped out all night so that he could register his nephews and nieces at an immersion school.

In the Toronto area, waiting lines for available places often form up two days in advance. In February, *The StarPhoenix* of Saskatoon reported that two more schools would be offering immersion programs to relieve the pressure on other schools that, in some cases, were at 120% of capacity.

One of the solutions to this problem is greater accountability for federal government transfer payments to the provinces and territories for education. Currently, it is virtually impossible to determine with any precision how those funds are used. However, if we consider the example of Yukon, which invested in French immersion funding that was supposed to go to instruction in French as a first language, it is questionable whether the federal government contribution is universally being used for its intended purpose.

For that reason, we would like the committee to recommend in its report that the government include accountability mechanisms in the language clauses of those transfer agreements. After all, taxpayers' money is at stake.

Second, those who manage to secure a space often wind up at the end of their French immersion journey with few opportunities for postsecondary education in both official languages. By ensuring that there is a continuum, across the country, enabling young English Canadians to study in both languages at college and at university, we will guarantee our country a generation of bilingual young professionals capable of picking up the political, economic and social reins of our society.

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

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Kenny.

[English]

I understand that Monsieur Quinty has to leave at 4:30, which is all right, but if you have questions for Mr. Quinty in particular, make sure you get them to him before he departs at 4:30.

Without further ado, we'll begin with Monsieur Godin.

[Translation]

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

I should have asked this at the start of the meeting, Mr. Chair, but will the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration be appearing before the committee? Have you spoken with him?

The Chair: We have not yet received a response from Mr. Kenney.

Mr. Yvon Godin: All right, thank you.

I would like to welcome Ms. Kenny, Mr. Quinty and Mr. Leclair, who are appearing here today.

There are immersion schools everywhere across the country. What we hear, and what I think you yourselves are saying, is that, first, there are not enough schools and not enough institutions. There is also a shortage of professors and teachers, but it goes beyond that. Their skills are at issue. That is what we hear. What could the federal government do about that? We know that education is a provincial jurisdiction, and that is always a delicate matter. At the same time, we are all part of the same country, but this is a jurisdiction that belongs to the provinces. At the federal level, part VII of the Official Languages Act does not provide for the introduction of programs or state what should be done about immersion, but government representatives are at least able to promote it and to invest money. That is what is important. Money can accomplish a lot of things in a situation like this.

More specifically, what could the federal government do to help the provinces or even to help promote these programs? Some provinces are not completely involved. What could it do to emphasize the importance of this issue?

Mr. Leclair, I would like to hear what you have to say on the subject.

Mr. Guy Leclair: I believe the federal government could do a number of things. The first is to promote a common framework. CASLT promotes a common framework for teachers. At the political level, however, the idea would be to have a national policy on targets, to adopt the same language concerning language skills, the same tools based on the same research and on the same concepts, which would make it possible to speak a common language with regard to teacher training and language evaluation. This will require a joint effort by the federal government and each province. That is the first thing. The point is to ensure that a student who finishes high school in Yukon understands what he or she knows and is able to identify it as being at the same level as that of someone from Nova Scotia or New Brunswick.

• (1550)

Mr. Yvon Godin: All right, but I began my question by saying that this is a provincial jurisdiction. How can we do that?

Mr. Guy Leclair: Yes, that is it.

Mr. Yvon Godin: I cannot impose it.

Mr. Guy Leclair: No. That is why we are talking about a—

Mr. Yvon Godin: But when we talk about working, are we talking about working together with the ministries of education across the country? Is the idea to sit down together and identify needs? For example, the federal government is the biggest employer in Canada that needs bilingual people. Promote that fact, of course, but in the universities. You do not stop at grade 12. The university should continue as well. We hear a lot of people say: "We finished grade 12; we get to university and there is no more immersion; there is nothing. We take the course, we graduate and we do not speak the other language enough."

Mr. Guy Leclair: Precisely. That is somewhat what I am saying in the recommendations. We need an awareness campaign. A lot of people talk about that.

There are myths that must be debunked. For example, there is the myth that, if you learn a second language, you will lose your first. That is completely false. A lot of myths have to be debunked. We need an information and promotion campaign stating that it is good to learn two languages, to learn three or four. It would also state that the more languages you learn, the easier it is to learn another.

It is messages like these that we have to convey. That obviously has to be done across Canada. This is really a cross-Canada undertaking.

Mr. Yvon Godin: Ms. Kenny, what do you think?

Ms. Marie-France Kenny: I think it is obvious. The federal government transfers major funding to the provinces and territories for immersion, French-language education and first-language education. We want to ensure that the money transferred for immersion goes to immersion and that the money transferred for French-language education goes to French-language education.

I pay for that. We all pay for it. I want to know where my money goes.

Mr. Yvon Godin: You say the federal government transfers a lot of money, large amounts. Do you think it is transferring enough? That is not what the communities tell us.

Ms. Marie-France Kenny: We have heard that here. I think it was the Commissioner of Official Languages who put a question to a minister of education. I do not know which one it was. He asked him what he did when he received his cheque for French-language education. The minister answered that he allocated it in accordance with his priorities.

So it does not necessarily go where it should go. We have seen that in Yukon. The money does not necessarily go to French-language education.

Mr. Yvon Godin: So that means that part VII of the Official Languages Act requires no transparency regarding the way the money is used for roadmap activities. It is the federal government's responsibility to know where the money it transfers goes.

Ms. Marie-France Kenny: What I am saying is that, first, the provinces must be accountable. That is currently not required. People tend to say this is a provincial jurisdiction. I agree, except that the money is transferred from the federal government. It is my money.

If you are asking for my opinion, I would say that, if you give me that share of my taxes, I will invest it in the school system I want.

Mr. Yvon Godin: As you may know, Ms. Kenny, I personally filed a complaint with the Commissioner of Official Languages. I wanted to know where the money transferred under part VII of the Official Languages Act goes.

Ms. Marie-France Kenny: I completely agree with you.

With regard to education, if we ask that funding be transferred to French-language education, we have to ask the province or territory to be accountable. We saw this in the case of Yukon. The money was to be invested in French-language education, but it wound up in immersion. What happened to the money earmarked for immersion? Did it go to English-language education? We do not know.

That is the first thing in our minds. First of all, if we made sure that the money went to the right place, I believe we would solve a large part of the infrastructure and accessibility problem.

Mr. Yvon Godin: Do we know how much money is invested in it or not?

Ms. Marie-France Kenny: I personally do not know. I could not tell you. I imagine we would get the information if we requested it. I believe the committee can very well file a request.

However, I can tell you that, in a number of cases, the money does not go to the right place. That applies to most of the transfer agreements with the provinces in health and other areas. In short, greater accountability by the provinces would be appropriate.

Like the gentleman here, I feel like saying we have to increase awareness of access to immersion, access to French-language schools for rights holders and access to immersion for anglophones and allophones. However, before we do all that, we have to focus on infrastructure, as we just said. We do not have any. We lack access; we lack space. I would even go further; I would say we are missing a step. A lot of students drop out of both French-language schools and immersion schools. A lot of students drop out of high schools because they do not offer all the programs that are available in the majority language schools.

• (1555)

The Chair: All right, thank you.

Mr. Gourde, you have the floor.

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

Thanks to the witnesses for being with us here today.

My questions will be along the same lines. Ms. Kenny and Mr. Leclair, I would ask you to answer them.

We transfer money for immersion. Would it be preferable for that money to be paid to students as scholarships? Students could register in programs, and the institutions would then have an interest in going after the money available through the students.

If 10,000 students had scholarships to go to those institutions, we would be sure that the money is distributed directly to Canadians who want to enter immersion programs. That would also be an indirect way of funding the institutions. They would offer immersion courses and would thus indirectly get the scholarships. We are mainly talking about the postsecondary level, CEGEPs and universities.

Ms. Marie-France Kenny: Look, I am not an expert on the subject. However, if you say you need a scholarship to study in immersion, in French as a first language or in English, we are no longer talking about free schools or about fair access for all Canadians, anglophone or francophone. We have an education

system that is free of charge for all Canadians up to the secondary level. I think that is important.

I do not know the cost per student. However, if I am given a scholarship, it would have to be a good scholarship to pay for infrastructure and everything. That is what we are talking about. The money transferred to the provinces for infrastructure and teaching is also used for teacher training. It serves many purposes.

We have to ask ourselves the following question: does the money get to where it is supposed to go? Once we have answered that, we will really be in a position to see how our school systems are doing with regard to education in French as a first language, immersion, core French and at the intensive level.

Mr. Jacques Gourde: Mr. Leclair, do you have anything to add on that point?

Mr. Guy Leclair: First of all, I think that is a promising idea, but we would have to think about it a bit. The first thing that comes to mind is that this is an optional program. I do not know whether the idea that English as a second language and French as a second language are important values is strong enough to take root. That requires a little more than an optional approach.

I would like to make a suggestion about accountability. The memorandum of understanding between Canadian Heritage and the Council of Ministers of Education has expired. Negotiations will resume shortly. This would be an appropriate time to try to add an accountability mechanism to ensure that funding allocated to certain programs, such as programs for French as a first language, French as a second language or English as a second language, is properly used, or at least properly reported.

Mr. Jacques Gourde: Immersion programs are obviously very popular. The schools are full; they cannot meet the demand. However, other witnesses told us that it was hard to find teachers to provide high-quality instruction in those immersion schools.

How many teachers do you think should be added? Is a schedule possible? If we need teachers tomorrow morning, we may not find any. If we inform the educational institutions that we need second language teachers across Canada, it will nevertheless take four or five years before new teachers are available on the market. We must therefore have a long-term strategy so that we can meet the demand. We have to proceed gradually.

Mr. Guy Leclair: Yes. I do not have the exact figures, but I can say that there are four million students in the majority schools. I am not sure about Quebec. Two million anglophone students are currently taking core French, intensive French or other French courses in the majority schools. There are one million students in Quebec and approximately 300,000 immersion students. So we are already talking about virtually twice the number of students in the programs. This is no small task. I agree with you. It could not be done in short order.

•(1600)

Mr. Jacques Gourde: We are talking about partnerships with the provinces here, since this is their jurisdiction. If we force the issue too much, do we not risk irritating them by sending the message that we want all Canadians to have access to immersion courses so that more and more people in future generations will speak French? There also has to be a signal from the provinces.

Mr. Guy Leclair: There has to be a collective will. I agree. That is why we suggest in our recommendations that financial incentives should be offered to provinces wishing to adopt compulsory second language programs.

Mr. Jacques Gourde: Thank you.

The Chair: Mr. Dion, you have the floor.

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

Thanks to our three guests.

Mr. Quinty, do not hesitate to speak. We have not yet heard from you. That is why I have no questions to ask you.

Mr. Leclair, I would like to ask you to repeat your figures so that we have them clear in our minds. You said there were 300,000—

Mr. Guy Leclair: Approximately 300,000 people are studying French in immersion programs. There are one million second-language students in Quebec.

Hon. Stéphane Dion: Just in Quebec?

Mr. Guy Leclair: Yes, and there are two million in Canada.

Hon. Stéphane Dion: One million Quebecers are studying a second language?

Mr. Guy Leclair: In Quebec, and that is English and French as a second language.

Hon. Stéphane Dion: Of course, because there are not a million anglophone students in Quebec.

And there are two million second-language students outside Quebec. Is that correct?

Mr. Guy Leclair: Yes, in French as a second language.

Hon. Stéphane Dion: You said that the demand for immersion schools exceeded supply. Do you have any figures to pass on to us on that subject?

Mr. Guy Leclair: That information is unfortunately unavailable. We have already asked the question. A study should be conducted. We cannot quantify the demand. Some school divisions set the limit. All the programs have quotas. No figures are kept on people who file an application that is denied.

Hon. Stéphane Dion: We are talking about 35,000 second language teachers here, but that is not just in French, is it?

Mr. Guy Leclair: No. Our organization covers English and French as second languages.

Hon. Stéphane Dion: All right.

That does not include Spanish or other languages?

Mr. Guy Leclair: No. That is more at the university and private levels. We focus more on the primary and secondary levels.

Hon. Stéphane Dion: Are you saying that those 35,000 teachers are not up to the task and that there should be more of them?

Mr. Guy Leclair: Yes.

Hon. Stéphane Dion: Can you quantify that or not?

Mr. Guy Leclair: As I said, we see the potential by taking the figures I have in hand and doing some calculations. If all primary and secondary students took a second language program, we would need at least 50% to 70% more teachers. It is a matter of arithmetic. There is some overlap. Some classes should be added.

Hon. Stéphane Dion: Without looking at your notes or your speech—

Mr. Guy Leclair: I do not have any notes.

Hon. Stéphane Dion: —tell us what you want us to put in our report about the federal government's role. What can the federal government do? The federal government cannot do everything. There are jurisdictional, budget and other issues. What is most urgent? What are the priorities for a good immersion plan? In fact, it is not just immersion in your case; it is also teaching.

Mr. Guy Leclair: Yes, it is basic teaching.

Hon. Stéphane Dion: We know from the Statistics Canada figures that, if the number of immersion schools increases, French instruction in the core classes declines. That is very disturbing.

Mr. Guy Leclair: Yes, it must not be done to the detriment of other things. Immersion programs must not be increased to the detriment of core language schools.

Hon. Stéphane Dion: But that is what is happening, according to Statistics Canada. The percentage of anglophone students outside Quebec who are exposed to French-language learning is declining.

Mr. Guy Leclair: Yes.

Hon. Stéphane Dion: We are not talking about the success of immersion. Apart from immersion, there is a very disturbing decline in French-language instruction in the regular schools.

Mr. Guy Leclair: I am not sure about that. The figures we have show that immersion is growing 2% or 3% a year and that core French is declining or plateauing in most provinces.

Hon. Stéphane Dion: You will be sending us the figures.

Mr. Guy Leclair: All right.

Hon. Stéphane Dion: One is not enough to cancel out the other.

Mr. Leclair, Ms. Kenny, Mr. Quinty, I am going to ask you the following question. Do not look at your notes and tell me what you want to see at all costs in the report that this committee will be submitting to the government. You know that the government really listens to you. So don't miss your opportunity.

Mr. Guy Leclair: We would like to see two things. First, a national second language education policy.

Hon. Stéphane Dion: That is vague.

Mr. Guy Leclair: Through the implementation of the framework such as—

Hon. Stéphane Dion: Try to be specific. You have an opportunity to request specific things. Do not speak in slogans; say very specific things.

Mr. Guy Leclair: The government should provide money to coordinate the implementation of a common frame of reference for languages. That is very specific.

Hon. Stéphane Dion: All right.

Mr. Guy Leclair: We are ready to do that. We only need the money to do it.

Hon. Stéphane Dion: What is a common framework? Put something in the framework for me.

• (1605)

[English]

The Chair: Perhaps I could help. One of our previous witnesses suggested that we put in place a national or common standard to measure French language outcomes, because apparently there's no standard tool.

Mr. Guy Leclair: There should be one for English as well.

The Chair: The type of thing you're looking for would be something like le Cadre.

Mr. Guy Leclair: It's basically a common language for identifying language levels so that when people come out of high school, they know exactly what their level is, so that when they go to university or college, or enter the job market, all of the participants in this process will understand what is a B-1, B-2, or A-1.

[Translation]

Hon. Stéphane Dion: That is one example.

Mr. Guy Leclair: Yes, that is it. If we had a standard across Canada, that would be very useful for all the provinces and obviously for the territories as well.

The second thing is really to invest more money, obviously, in creating second language programs, including French immersion.

Hon. Stéphane Dion: All right.

Ms. Kenny, do you want to say something on the subject?

Ms. Marie-France Kenny: Two things would be very important. There is the entire accountability issue that I discussed and that I would add here.

We often receive documents from the Fraser Institute on the cost of linguistic duality and bilingualism. It would be a good idea for the government to prepare a report on the added value and economic value of having a bilingual country and to promote it extensively to the provinces. They would then understand the valid reasons for having French schools, immersion schools, core and intensive French schools and English schools. That would enable the provinces to gain a clearer understanding of the impact of all that and to ensure they have the necessary infrastructure.

Hon. Stéphane Dion: Ms. Kenny, according to the roadmap, the government intends to spend more than \$100 million on economic immigrants. From the way it is written, one might fear that this money could go to English-language instruction for newcomers at English-language schools. I understand that this is a need for the country, but do you think that is something that should appear in the

roadmap, which concerns the official language communities and the cause of official bilingualism?

Ms. Marie-France Kenny: Thank you for the question.

There has been little response to the \$120 million that Citizenship and Immigration Canada proposes to invest. This is obviously a question that we have raised, but we have not yet received a response. I will be meeting Minister Kenney next week, and this issue is definitely among the priority topics we would like to address with him. We could very definitely get back to you on that later on.

Hon. Stéphane Dion: Thank you. If you can get a response from the minister, you will be more effective than I.

The Chair: All right.

Thank you, Mr. Dion.

[English]

I thought I would read this into the record. You had asked about enrolment in French immersion programs and what the stats are. There was an article in *The Globe and Mail* last September about the Peel region, which has been one of the heaviest immigration regions in Canada in the last 20 years. The Peel region includes Brampton and Mississauga.

French immersion enrolment in grade 1 went from 9.4% in 2001 to 25.4% this year, 2012-13. The board had to cap enrolment at 25.4% because it did not have enough French teachers to teach the children.

That's one example that I wanted to read into the record for the analysts. That was reported in September 2012 in *The Globe and Mail*.

Hon. Stéphane Dion: We'll have StatsCan coming—

The Chair: Yes, but I thought that was a stat that would be useful for the committee to have.

We'll continue with Monsieur Trottier.

[Translation]

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

Thanks to the witnesses for being here with us today.

Mr. Leclair, I really appreciated your presentation because you provided quite specific recommendations on certain programs. These are quite independent federal programs with which we can avoid this accountability problem; that is to say that we can transfer funding to the provinces and ensure that it is included in total funding for education. However, this funding often gets lost, although, when independent programs are managed at the federal level, I think it is possible to trace the funds.

You spoke, for example, about exchange programs and university internships. A lot of your ideas concerned older students, not that young, and I believe that relates somewhat to the problem I have often seen, the problem of students who drop out. Some students start out in immersion programs but become somewhat rebellious teenagers and sometimes drop out.

What can we do to encourage those students? What incentives could we offer them to make them stay in immersion or French programs?

Ms. Kenny, I believe you have noticed that French is often the language of ambition in regions such as Toronto and other regions of the country. However, there is this problem of students dropping out. How can we really encourage teenagers to stay in immersion programs?

• (1610)

Mr. Guy Leclair: There again, to work at the primary and secondary level, we would have to improve not only the quality of teaching, but also the approaches used. Young people today are very connected through social media and on the Internet. I therefore believe that the transition is happening in second language teaching resources, but it is not complete. So learning has to be interesting to students. We therefore have to be aware of that fact. That is also why we are working at the postsecondary level. We want to create postsecondary models for second-language learning because we believe that, if we promote opportunities in the labour market, universities and colleges, students attending bilingual or franco-phone institutions will think that is possible. That will create openings that we consider promising. However, I believe that a lot of work has to be done on educational resources, educational material and teacher training. That has to be modernized and we also have to invest in that area. Young people say that all they learn when they opt for an education in French is verbs. That is not really interesting. It is an old approach. The new approaches are communicative, interactive and much more dynamic than the old methods, and we have to work on that.

Mr. Bernard Trottier: Immersion in fact does not stop at the secondary level, although we normally talk about the primary and secondary levels. There are also university programs, and students can make choices.

I can give you an example. I recently spent an afternoon with master's-level students at the Glendon Campus of York University. There is an international and government affairs program there. Those students, who are future leaders, diplomats, public servants and business people, truly value the fact that they can get an education in both languages. The program is bilingual on an approximately 50-50 basis.

Can the federal government promote this idea and encourage teenagers in high school to pursue postsecondary studies in French? I am not necessarily talking about an immersion program, but that can be part of it.

Mr. Guy Leclair: Yes, absolutely. The federal government could offer incentives to universities to provide French courses to students wishing to continue learning that language. A course or two would be ideal. That would be absolutely feasible and desirable.

Mr. Bernard Trottier: Ms. Kenny or Mr. Quinty, I would like to hear your comments on that.

Ms. Marie-France Kenny: Like many of our French-language schools, our immersion schools do not have the necessary infrastructure to deal with the issue of students dropping out.

Let us suppose that a student wants to become an electrician. Not all French-language schools or immersion schools offer secondary

level courses that would enable that student to pursue studies in that field. That is one of the reasons why students preparing for trade school, CEGEP or university drop out to enter majority schools where they have access to more programs.

As for incentives, I believe we have to consider the parents who register their children in French-language schools. First we must ensure that we have the necessary infrastructure and that we do not simply lengthen the waiting list. Immersion schools are managed by the English-language school districts. Is there not a way to get incentives directly from them so that anglophone students can take immersion programs and we can promote them?

There are bilingual leaders around this table, in this government and across the country who are, to my mind, models who should be followed. These people could also serve as models for parents and children, who could then see the contribution that bilingualism actually makes to leaders of this country. That, for me, is a very important message. I will not conceal the fact that the best possible model for French-language learning is an anglophone. When I talk about linguistic duality, I seem to be preaching to the converted. However, an anglophone who talks about the benefits of speaking French has a lot more impact on anglophones.

• (1615)

The Chair: All right.

Mr. Quinty?

Mr. Serge Quinty (Director of Communications, Fédération des communautés francophones et acadienne du Canada): I would like to go back to what Ms. Kenny said about parents. Earlier we told you about accessibility and the fact that we are probably at maximum capacity in a number of places right now. We must ensure that it is not a frustrating experience for parents to register their children in immersion. I think that would help a lot.

The Chair: All right, thank you.

Mr. Galipeau, you have the floor.

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

As I have done in previous meetings, I would first like to congratulate Mr. Dion for the quality of his questions. They are very penetrating. That is probably as a result of his institutional knowledge of this matter.

I have also listened to the answers and I am not satisfied with them. You are asking the federal government to provide significant funding, but that matter is governed by section 93 of the Constitution Act, 1867.

Unless I have fallen asleep, I do not believe these matters fall under federal jurisdiction. So I imagine that federal involvement in the field, as noble as it might be, would meet with all kinds of resistance among some, if not all, provinces. The question I therefore have for you is this: have you discussed the matter with the Council of Ministers of Education?

Mr. Guy Leclair: What exactly?

We are in contact with the French-language services division and, on certain matters, with the councils of ministers. However, taking the matter of second-language instruction to the Council of Ministers of Education requires a collective will, as I said earlier. Every minister must be in favour of discussing the matter. It takes a quite monumental amount of work for an association to put an issue concerning a second language or anything else on the agenda.

Mr. Royal Galipeau: As you can imagine, a government would have liked to ensure everything was in order before blithely handing out \$100 million.

You just emphasized the scope of the problem by saying that every minister of education in every province is master in his or her jurisdiction.

However, the Council of Ministers of Education is a national organization, and the ministers can come to an agreement at the same table. Do you not think it would be easier to sell your story to that council before coming and asking the federal government for \$100 million?

• (1620)

Mr. Guy Leclair: Yes, that is a task that falls to several stakeholders. The Canadian Association of Second Language Teachers has worked and co-operated with the Council of Ministers of Education for many years. However, if we want a national consensus, the Department of Canadian Heritage, the Council of Ministers of Education and associations such as CASLT have to meet and discuss the issue.

However, we do not have the upper hand in those discussions. We can encourage the various parties to try to achieve that, but we will really need the federal government's money and the co-operation of the councils of ministers in order to put the issue of second languages on the agenda.

Mr. Royal Galipeau: That is such a noble objective that it takes on national scope. However, its implementation is limited by section 93.

All kinds of things would be better for the government and the entire country's social conscience if we could set national standards, but we always come up against section 93. I think the Council of Ministers of Education is the right instrument for calming the waves.

Mr. Guy Leclair: Yes, we have made some good attempts—

Mr. Royal Galipeau: And it is easy for them because you are not asking them for money. Instead you are asking for federal money. So all those ministers have to do is set the table.

The Chair: All right.

Thank you, Mr. Galipeau.

Mr. Royal Galipeau: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

[English]

The Chair: Mr. Benskin.

[Translation]

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

Thanks to our witnesses for being here and for spending a little time with us.

Ms. Kenny, I believe this is the fourth or fifth time, perhaps even more, that you have appeared before this committee.

Mr. Royal Galipeau: She seems to be a regular with us.

Ms. Marie-France Kenny: Yes, I have my free pass.

Mr. Tyrone Benskin: It is always a pleasure to see you again.

With regard to Mr. Galipeau's remarks, our first task on the Standing Committee on Official Languages and for the minister is to promote the two official languages.

I would like to talk a bit about your comment on the situation of newcomers.

When they arrive in Quebec, whether from Canada or elsewhere, there are provincial provisions requiring that newcomers must ensure their children are educated in French. There is not really any such provision in the rest of Canada.

So, first, how can we promote French in the rest of Canada? Newcomers will probably learn English first because that is the language of the majority in the rest of Canada. How will we promote the benefits of learning French as a second language or even as a third language in their community?

• (1625)

Mr. Serge Quinty: I will give the first part of the answer for the FCFA.

To some degree, the work gets done by itself. For years we have heard, for example, that the French courses given at the Alliance française in Vancouver are enormously popular with the Asian community.

If you go to the site of the Vancouver Alliance française, you will see that it appears in three languages. Mandarin appears first and French second. It is really very popular. What we hear is that parents who are Asian newcomers send their children to take French courses. In their minds, being proficient in both official languages is part of what it means to be Canadian. Consequently, to a certain degree, we are already doing part of the work by promoting the connection between linguistic duality and what it means to be Canadian.

Ms. Marie-France Kenny: There are also a lot of opportunities to learn English in the schools for newcomers who do not speak French. They are not promoted enough. You say that the tendency is to send children to study in English because it is the majority language. Back home in Saskatchewan, we do not need to learn English. We catch it in the street. That is the language we speak at the convenience store, the bank and everywhere. Children will learn it whether they want to or not.

What we have to promote is French, as in immersion for those who do not already speak it. You say you have to learn French in Quebec. In our provinces, if you are not a francophone rights holder, you need an exemption in order to be able to send your child to French school. So you have to get authorization from the anglophone school district. That problem is not unique to Quebec. It also arises in the other provinces. It is not provided for in the same way, but there are also challenges in that regard.

We have a lot of African and Moroccan newcomers who come to Saskatchewan and who speak French. We definitely want to have them in the French-language schools. Here too, exemptions are nevertheless necessary in order to enable them to study in French. However, immersion is obviously a choice for newcomers who speak neither of the two languages, since, as I said, they will learn English in any case.

Mr. Guy Leclair: To wrap it up on this subject, I believe that many newcomers arrive in Canada with the idea that Canada is bilingual and that it goes without saying that they should learn English and French. We have no statistics on the subject, and it is quite difficult to monitor, but we see this as one of the Canadian values and that Canada's very identity is to be bilingual.

What we see is that the school divisions and school boards do not offer newcomers the choice of entering French immersion because they are told they have to learn English immediately and that is what is important. That is a myth. Immigrants are ready and able to learn English and French simultaneously without any problem at school. We also note that their language skills are often superior in many respects.

The Chair: All right.

Thank you, Mr. Leclair.

Mr. Galipeau, you have the floor.

Mr. Royal Galipeau: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

With regard to instruction in French as a second language, we often talk about education. It is something formal. However, as Ms. Kenny jokingly said, you hear English in the street, at the convenience store, in the bank and at the arena.

Anglophones tell me they want to learn French. "I'm taking French courses," they tell me. I ask them what radio station they tune in when they are in the kitchen, in the bathroom, in their car or elsewhere, and I simply encourage them to listen Radio-Canada, wherever they are in Canada, since they will hear good diction.

Sometimes I jokingly add that they will know they have understood from the moment they start being frustrated by what they hear. In the meantime, however, I invite them to tune in that network simply because to hear good diction. I tell them that will round out their learning, in addition to all the other methods they use. It is not enough to study French in class. They have to go to concerts, to theatre plays. They have to read books. A library card costs nothing. I was going to say that listening to Radio-Canada costs nothing either. It is already paid for; it costs them nothing and it is good. I am finished.

Are you going to do that? Will you encourage people to listen to Radio-Canada?

• (1630)

Mr. Guy Leclair: Yes, because learning a language means learning a culture. Yes, it is entirely integrated into second-language learning.

Mr. Royal Galipeau: I yield to my colleague, who knows much more about the subject than I do.

[English]

Mr. Corneliu Chisu (Pickering—Scarborough East, CPC): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Thank you to all the witnesses for coming and for your great presentations.

[Translation]

I prefer to speak English and to ask my questions in English, even though I speak at least six foreign languages.

[English]

I would like to talk to Mr. Leclair. The Canadian Association of Second Language Teachers is not a regulatory body, but rather an association that encompasses every organization in the provinces, right?

Mr. Guy Leclair: That's correct.

Mr. Corneliu Chisu: You mentioned in your presentation that there are differences in the levels of French teachers and so on. How can you improve this situation and how can we as a federal government help? This question is for you.

I also have a question for Madame Kenny and Mr. Quinty. You are the Fédération des communautés francophones et acadienne du Canada. You mentioned the importance of having French language and culture on university campuses. Do you have any presence on university campuses?

The Chair: I'll let Mr. Quinty answer first, because I know he has to leave.

Go ahead, Mr. Quinty.

[Translation]

Mr. Serge Quinty: Thank you very much.

Mr. Chisu, you wanted to know whether the FCFA had any presence on campuses?

[English]

Mr. Corneliu Chisu: Do you have an office or a presence on the campus so that students who are interested in French could go there?

[Translation]

Mr. Serge Quinty: No, the FCFA does not have that presence because that is not its mandate. However, we promote it to partner organizations by working, for example, with the Association des universités de la francophonie canadienne.

As we mentioned earlier, we also work with organizations such as Canadian Youth for French and Canadian Parents for French to promote the importance of this issue, the fact that French should have a greater presence on campuses.

[English]

Ms. Marie-France Kenny: He answered the question that was posed. We work for the same organization.

Mr. Guy Leclair: The Canadian Association of Second Language Teachers began in the early 1970s, so we're over 40 years old. It was created out of a grassroots movement of teachers trying to work in French, teach in French, without any educational material or professional development. This is how it began. Today we're still doing it. We try to provide our new teachers with professional development, professional training, professional information, dissemination of research so that they can apply it in their school rooms, and educational and pedagogical materials.

That's basically our first mandate, to help teachers do and improve their job. Our mission is to promote excellence in teaching a second language. We do this for French and English, but we do it for other languages as well. We had a conference at the end of April in Winnipeg where, of the nine streams that we have for our conference, one was totally dedicated to aboriginal languages. We try to promote aboriginal languages as well. We try to exchange best practices in education at that level. We also have multi...Japanese, Spanish, and German as well, but our main focus is French and English.

• (1635)

The Chair: Thank you very much.

[Translation]

Ms. Michaud, you have the floor.

Ms. Éline Michaud (Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier, NDP): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

First of all, I want to thank you for being here, Ms. Kenny. I have not previously had the time to say hello to you, but it is always a pleasure to see you again. That is also the case for you, Mr. Leclair, of course.

I am going to make a brief comment before moving on to my questions.

I very much appreciated Mr. Galipeau's impassioned tirade in favour of Radio-Canada, and I find it somewhat unfortunate that this passionate defence comes so late now that we have seen all the budget cuts being made at Radio-Canada. I find it is too little too late.

Mr. Royal Galipeau: The budget is \$1 billion a year.

The Chair: Ms. Michaud has the floor.

Ms. Éline Michaud: Mr. Chair, I did not think I was causing a commotion. Pardon me.

So to come back to the subject of the study, Mr. Leclair, we have

Mr. Yvon Godin: Pardon me, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Mr. Godin, you have the floor.

Mr. Yvon Godin: Mr. Galipeau raised his voice against Ms. Michaud. She is entitled to make her comments. There have been budget cuts at Radio-Canada.

The Chair: All right. Is that a point of order?

Mr. Yvon Godin: It is merely to clarify the facts.

The Chair: Yes, but Ms. Michaud has the floor. We must respect that.

Ms. Michaud, you have the floor.

Ms. Éline Michaud: I hope all that does not reduce my speaking time. Thank you very much.

So, Mr. Leclair, I was coming to one of my questions.

In recent meetings, we have heard from a lot of people who have told us a little about the situation and about the challenges experienced by second-language and immersion teachers in the rural and more remote regions. I imagine you have an overview of the country. We have snapshots of small regions, but I would like to hear your views on those challenges that immersion teachers might be facing in remote regions and how the federal government could assist them.

Mr. Guy Leclair: As I said, the association reacts to the needs of its members, and teachers in the remote regions are obviously facing quite significant challenges.

First, we often encounter the situation in which a teacher is teaching mathematics, for example. Since he speaks French, however, he winds up teaching French without having the pedagogical knowledge to teach second languages. In many cases, these are teachers who live entirely in an anglophone environment, in an anglophone administration in which staff are also anglophone. This person is thus the only individual who is bilingual or who speaks French. He or she has very little immersion contact and, as we know, you really have to be in contact with the language in order to be able to maintain it. So there are challenges of that kind, such as the challenge of access to educational resources related to professional training.

Ms. Éline Michaud: When you talked a little earlier about an additional professional training need for second-language teachers, were you referring to those teachers?

Mr. Guy Leclair: Yes, indeed.

Ms. Éline Michaud: I imagine there are generally other needs for people in urban centres. Could you clarify your thinking on that point?

Mr. Guy Leclair: Needs do vary across the regions.

In urban centres, good knowledge of the language and teaching methods are also fundamentally important. However, training in interculturalism and cultural or multicultural knowledge is important. We often suggest that teachers stimulate students' curiosity about other languages. If someone speaks Arabic or Japanese, why not make presentations on the subject and talk about those languages. Languages are not big ferocious monsters. The idea is really to talk about that and play with it. There are a lot of inclusion and diversity problems that are part of the broader issue in the major urban centres.

Ms. Éline Michaud: Thank you very much.

My question is for both Mr. Leclair and Ms. Kenny.

I want to go back to a point that seems to cause some confusion, or that at least requires more of an explanation.

You talked a little earlier about the need to adopt a common framework of reference. However, if I rely on the information I have here, you are basing your remarks mainly on the Common European Framework of Reference. From what I understand, you would like a similar framework to be adopted here in Canada.

What are the benefits of that framework? How does it work and how could we adapt it here?

Ms. Kenny may also want to comment on the subject afterward.

● (1640)

Mr. Guy Leclair: The first thing that a common framework does is standardize the terminology of second-language teaching, learning and evaluation. In other words, everyone is talking about the same thing. That is the first benefit.

Currently, the French language outcomes of a British Columbia high school graduate cannot be compared to those of a student from Newfoundland and Labrador. They are completely different. What we want is to establish a standard so that the level is virtually the same for all high school graduates.

Ms. Éline Michaud: The provinces and territories would nevertheless be free to adapt teaching methods and content?

Mr. Guy Leclair: Yes, you have to be flexible, based on the needs and realities of each.

Ms. Éline Michaud: There would be basic objectives.

You want a mark of 75% on an exam to mean the same thing in all provinces and territories. Is that in fact what you are trying to accomplish?

Mr. Guy Leclair: Yes, but that is just a very small part of it. The second benefit is that this framework assists in teaching, the production of education material and teacher training. All teachers in Canada would be on the same page. They would teach in virtually the same way, but they would teach different things, depending on their provincial or territorial situation. That would enable everyone to be at the same level, within a single framework. That is part of learning.

In Europe, they view the framework as a tool that promotes independence; that is to say that students take charge of their own learning. It is based on self-training. Students learn to manage their learning and to learn by themselves. This is based on statements such as, "I can." So it is very positive. We often hear young people say, "I don't speak French," but the evaluation using this approach is based on "I can." I can describe my family, I can talk about a TV program, and so on. It is very positive. There are portfolios and passports. The child keeps everything that represents the levels of his or her progress. We try to ensure that learners retain this way of viewing the matter for the rest of their lives.

This is a comprehensive approach. It is really based on learning a language, not on a test at the end of grade 10 indicating that the individual is bilingual.

The Chair: Thank you.

Ms. Bateman, you have the floor.

Ms. Joyce Bateman (Winnipeg South Centre, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thanks to the witnesses for being with us here today and for giving us their comments. This is a very important subject for me and for many people living in my riding.

You talked about added value. I agree with you, madam.

Sir, you mentioned the shortage of teachers. I find this situation somewhat disturbing as a parent. You talked about necessary measures to improve teachers' skills. I am very much interested in that.

Could you go back to that, please?

Mr. Guy Leclair: With regard to teacher training, it would be a good idea for teachers to be involved in cultural and linguistic exchanges at the federal level. Francophone teachers from Quebec could go and teach outside their province. Conversely, anglophone teachers could come and teach in Quebec. There is indeed a shortage of second-language teachers in Quebec. These kinds of exchanges would help expand the cultural component, which is very important in learning a language. Teachers need to maintain a lot more contact in their second language.

● (1645)

Ms. Joyce Bateman: Yes, I agree.

Mr. Guy Leclair: The techniques addressed in teacher training in the universities must be more adapted to the needs of the profession.

Our organization has created a portfolio based on the common framework of reference for languages which enables teachers who are learning French, but who will also be teaching it, to follow the framework themselves and have a portfolio with passports, a biography and so on. They therefore learn to manage all that so that they can then put it into practice in the classroom. We therefore have to develop these kinds of tools so that we can make self-evaluation, self-instruction and self-learning possible.

Researchers in the university faculties of education must be able to work with professors to determine what works and what does not. Then teaching resources and training must be established based on those best practices and applied in class. That has not been done in Canada for a long time, particularly in core French instruction, where it goes back a few years. Core French instruction practices must be reviewed and improved. Once again, these measures will benefit teachers. However, all the support for infrastructure, teaching resources and classes is necessary.

Ms. Joyce Bateman: More has to be done.

Mr. Guy Leclair: More classes, more material and so on.

Ms. Joyce Bateman: Yes.

Thank you, Mr. Leclair.

Ms. Kenny, do you also want to give us your opinion on this matter?

Ms. Marie-France Kenny: I think there is an opportunity for cultural exchanges in our communities.

We have strong, vibrant communities, but we do not very often see immersion teachers taking part in activities. And yet activities take place.

Earlier we were asked about what the federal government could do in that regard. Few extracurricular, cultural or athletic activities are offered to immersion students in French outside their schools. Perhaps we should promote the idea that students should not just learn French at school, but that they can also get out and live, taking part in activities in which they can speak. I think we must create tools, a fund or a scholarship to enable students and teachers to have access to that.

I think it is fantastic that we are talking about the evaluation framework, but it is important to have a Canadian framework and for us not limit ourselves to the European models alone.

Without generalizing, because I do not know all the children who are in immersion, I would say that students who take an immersion program often know about Charles Aznavour and Francis Cabrel, but not Daniel Lavoie or Marie-Jo Thériot. There are francophone artists here in Canada. So—

Mr. Royal Galipeau: We have Suzanne Pinel.

Ms. Marie-France Kenny: Precisely, and Ms. DiCaire, who is also Franco-Ontarian, and whom you certainly know.

Mr. Royal Galipeau: Véronic.

Ms. Marie-France Kenny: Véronic DiCaire, exactly.

So they do not necessarily know about our artists. We absolutely have to have exchanges with Quebec, but also exchanges in our communities to promote sharing.

I have to tell you that the mandate of our communities is to respond to all these beautiful people, although we do not necessarily have all the resources to reach all those people.

The Chair: All right, thank you.

Mr. Dionne Labelle, you have the floor.

Mr. Pierre Dionne Labelle (Rivière-du-Nord, NDP): Welcome to our witnesses.

At the outset, I would like to get some technical information from the Executive Director of the Canadian Association of Second Language Teachers.

You said that there are 35,000 second-language teachers. Are those immersion teachers or second-language teachers?

Mr. Guy Leclair: They are second-language teachers. There are three programs for teaching French as a second language: the core program, the intensive program and the immersion program.

Mr. Pierre Dionne Labelle: All right, thank you.

Ms. Kenny, I believe you mentioned that people were waiting in line to get a chance to register their children for immersion programs. We know that education is subject to provincial legislation.

Why are the provinces not more dynamic in responding to that demand? What is the situation in that regard?

• (1650)

Ms. Marie-France Kenny: I think that may be due to people's ignorance of the value that bilingualism adds.

Our communities do a lot of work with the provinces, which increasingly recognize the contribution of francophones and

linguistic duality. However, not all provinces have reached the same point. The investment by the provinces varies with the state of their relationships with the community.

It also has to be said that the message we hear, particularly in the English-speaking provinces is that linguistic duality and bilingualism are expensive. As a francophone, I apparently cost the government a lot of money, whereas it has never been determined how much an anglophone costs the government. I do not cost the government any more than my neighbour. However, I believe that I pay as much as my neighbour and, in some instances, perhaps more because I am bilingual. In short, no one has ever measured the socioeconomic contribution of linguistic duality.

However, the Fraser Institute has prepared reports, based on incomplete data, telling us it cost a certain amount of money to translate such and such a document. Those reports do harm and do not paint a rosy picture of linguistic duality, whereas linguistic duality is worth a lot. We are recognized outside the country. We are able to do business internationally because we are a bilingual country.

Let us say that a completely bilingual company will probably do better better business than a company equivalent to mine that is unilingual English or French.

Mr. Pierre Dionne Labelle: I am going to ask you to continue elaborating on your argument on this point.

Let us say that I am at the British Columbia Ministry of Education. I would look at the make-up of the population and see that 4.5% of the population speaks Punjabi, 3.2% speaks Cantonese, 2.9% speaks Mandarin and 1.3% speaks French.

I monitor the economic development of China and the Asian countries in general. I figure that, if I chose to offer immersion courses, why would I not offer them in Cantonese?

Ms. Marie-France Kenny: To my knowledge, Punjabi and Mandarin are not the country's official languages. However, they are very definitely valued for the purposes of international exchange.

As Canadian citizens, we must educate our children in both official languages. I speak four languages. I learned English before learning Spanish and Italian. I thought it was simply logical because I live in Canada. That enables me to do more business internationally in French than in Spanish and Italian at this point in my career.

Mr. Pierre Dionne Labelle: Since Canada's economic situation and make-up have changed considerably, does the federal government need leadership on this linguistic project concerning linguistic duality? If there is no leadership in this area, where are we headed?

Ms. Marie-France Kenny: Successive governments have told us about the importance of linguistic duality since the Official Languages Act was implemented.

I am going to be very frank with you, as I usually am, by the way. I think it is time to walk the walk. We have to do what we need to do as a society to ensure that people across the country acknowledge linguistic duality.

One message has to be understood: linguistic duality does not mean that everybody has to be bilingual. The more bilingual people there are, the better it will be. However, we must nevertheless be realistic. Linguistic duality makes it possible for me to live in French at home in Saskatchewan, while enabling my neighbour across the street not to speak a word of French if that is his choice. However, he has to respect my choice to raise and educate my children in French.

That is linguistic duality. It is not necessary for everyone everywhere to be bilingual. In an ideal world, yes, we would all speak seven languages, like Mr. Chisu.

The Chair: All right, thank you.

Mr. O'Toole, you have the floor.

Mr. Erin O'Toole (Durham, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair. I am going to ask my questions in English.

[English]

My daughter, who is in grade 1, is in the fortunate position to be completing her first year in French immersion. She's well served by an exceptional teacher who actually remains a resident of Quebec and travels to Ontario, and has done that for over 25 years, to teach in a board in my community. She's an exceptional teacher. I'll send her this transcript.

Monsieur Leclair, I've heard a few times about the shortage, and I certainly see it in my own community. I see that at your previous appearance your organization, as one of its five recommendations, suggested a national campaign to promote second language teaching. Before the federal government engages in something like that, is there anything being done at the provincial level in provinces where the shortage exists?

I'm also wondering if your organization is involved in any of those existing provincial initiatives.

• (1655)

Mr. Guy Leclair: That's a very interesting question, and it's a very important point.

Actually, no, we don't. We usually try to work at a national level or a pan-Canadian level. There are provincial and territorial associations of second language or modern languages teachers across the country, and we work with them. I am not sure there have been that many attempts to do that. It's an interesting endeavour. I will take that consideration back with me and try to promote that as a way to do promotional activities in a strategy aimed at individual provinces. That might be an interesting way to approach the issue.

Mr. Erin O'Toole: Thank you.

I'll also endeavour to get my office to look into what Ontario may be doing on the shortage. I always want to explore those options first because, as we've seen this week, even mention of the word "education" in federal Parliament causes some people to shiver, but I think it's important for all levels to be conscious and also to respect jurisdictions.

On my final question, if I may, Mr. Chair, there's also been a lot of talk about the benefits of a second language, which I certainly agree with, and I think we all do. Madame Kenny, you mentioned that in your previous response to a question.

What suggestions would you have for the federal government to do this in any meaningful way? I do think, as the official languages commissioner describes it, that a second language is the language of ambition and people. Certainly there are Canadians who do see that already. How do we reach beyond that group to other Canadians who may not have seen that? Would it be by advertising? Would it be through discussions in schools? Do you have any thoughts on that?

Ms. Marie-France Kenny: My first thought is to remove all myths that linguistic duality is very costly and bring forward the economic value, the social value of linguistic duality.

On advertising, as I said, there are so many role models within our country of what is linguistic duality. I can think of role models like Sidney Crosby, to appeal to the younger crowd, or Damien Robitaille, whoever, to promote it and say, "This is why I learned French and this is what it has brought me."

At your first meeting, I was sitting at the back, and I believe you had somebody like Justin Morrow, from Canadian Youth for French, come here to talk about his experience. His is one of the most inspiring stories I've heard in terms of linguistic duality. There are a lot of people like Justin across the country. They could be poster children for linguistic duality. That's what we need to bring forward: what it is bringing to young Canadians who are bilingual, whether it's in the public service or in the private sector; what it has brought to them not just economically, but in terms of being open to other cultures and being able to travel abroad and speak French.

[Translation]

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Godin, you have the floor.

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

I had a little difficulty with Mr. Galipeau's question earlier. He began by congratulating Mr. Dion, saying that his question was good

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• (1700)

Hon. Stéphane Dion: Do you have a problem with that?

Mr. Yvon Godin: The answer was not right.

The answer seemed to suggest that it was your fault, Mr. Leclair or Ms. Kenny, that the system was not working at the federal level. I just want to recall that we have the Official Languages Act. An act is an act.

In fact, we are not the ones who requested this study, but rather the government. So if we have no business getting involved in education or immersion schools, we should stop the study immediately and vote on something else.

On this point, subsection 43.(1) reads as follows:

The Minister of Canadian Heritage shall take such measures as that Minister considers appropriate to advance the equality of status and use of English and French in Canadian society and, without restricting the generality of the foregoing, may take measures to

That is to say that he has a responsibility. It is the government that has the responsibility. Then we have the following passage:

(a) enhance the vitality of the English and French linguistic minority communities in Canada and support and assist their development;

It is his responsibility to do that. That is in the act.

It also states this: (b) encourage and support the learning of English and French in Canada;

This is not done on the moon, but rather on Earth, in Canada. It also states that the government will encourage and support the learning of English and French in Canada. The idea is not to support it solely for the purpose of saying that the work has been well done. You need institutions, teachers, schools and someone to talk about it.

It also states: (c) foster an acceptance and appreciation of both English and French by members of the public;

It is his responsibility to promote that. That is in the act.

It also states:

(d) encourage and assist provincial governments to support the development of English and French linguistic minority communities generally and, in particular, to offer provincial and municipal services in both English and French and to provide opportunities for members of English or French linguistic minority communities to be educated in their own language;

(e) encourage and assist provincial governments to provide opportunities for everyone in Canada to learn both English and French;

We are not standing in a potato field. The federal government has a responsibility under the act that I have just read.

Do you think the federal government is doing enough, yes or no? If not, what specifically could our report contain to tell the federal government that it is not discharging its responsibilities, that this matter is not moving forward and that we want something else?

We have teachers asking for something. You have a responsibility to talk to them and not just to put a little program in place to tell them how people should study.

So, under the act, money must be transferred to the provinces to assist this, and it is up to federal government representatives to promote it.

Do you share my point of view?

Mr. Guy Leclair: Yes, absolutely. I agree.

Mr. Yvon Godin: The law is the law.

In fact, not one province has defied the law. All provinces accept this act. So we are carrying out our mandate.

Go ahead, Mr. Leclair.

Mr. Guy Leclair: The demand for second-language instruction programs exceeds the supply. So there is indeed a shortage. If the provinces are unable to meet the demand, the federal government has a mandate to try to create more second-language programs.

We at least want to meet the demand. We therefore need money in order to do so.

Mr. Yvon Godin: Ms. Kenny, do you want to add something on this point?

Ms. Marie-France Kenny: Immersion, French-language education and English-language education are included in the transfer programs. If the provinces can disregard them as they wish, what is the point in talking about French immersion if we are going to let them do what they want?

I hear that negotiations may be easier with New Brunswick because there is a larger francophone population there. How can the

francophone population grow if you don't promote French-language education, immersion, core French and intensive French?

It is like the chicken and the egg. Personally, if I send my young neighbour to the grocery store with \$30 and ask him to buy me three products, I want to get my change and my receipt when he comes back. I want him to explain to me where he spent my money.

Mr. Yvon Godin: One billion dollars has gone mission.

Ms. Marie-France Kenny: So I wonder why we bother to talk about French immersion and English immersion but do not demand accountability, if only on these matters to ensure that the money allocated to immersion actually goes to immersion and that the money intended for French is actually allocated to French.

● (1705)

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Gourde, you have the floor.

Mr. Jacques Gourde: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

When I hear Mr. Godin, it seems that a cheque would solve all the immersion problems. I am not sure about that.

Mr. Leclair piqued my interest earlier when he talked about the leadership of some students who wanted to learn on their own. Today we are fortunate to have more advanced technologies than 20 or 30 years ago. Could Skype be included in courses, for example? My youngest daughter virtually learned English on her own. She had basic courses at school, but she asked me whether I had any CDs. I bought her some. She watched movies and programs in English.

Mr. Royal Galipeau: She is catching it?

Mr. Jacques Gourde: She improved her English on her own. What she did is phenomenal because she wanted to learn. She assumed leadership and became aware of the importance of learning English. She did a lot of the work by herself, spending two hours day on it. Sometimes it happens just by watching films and doing your work in English at school. Today she is in grade 11 and is almost completely bilingual.

The same thing must happen on the anglophone side: there must be anglophones who want to learn French. Once they acquire a base, do they use today's technological tools to improve?

Mr. Guy Leclair: It is quite difficult.

The idea of self-learning in languages is not entirely rooted in Quebec society. People automatically say they are going to learn English. When I was young, I moved to Ontario and I learned English in two years. It was easy.

Mr. Royal Galipeau: You caught it.

Mr. Guy Leclair: Yes. I caught it. It did not take a lot of time.

One of our recommendations is that the government put on-line language training programs in place for both French as a second language and English as a second language. We understand that this may be somewhat unrealistic on our part. I imagine it would not be entirely welcomed by all the language schools. However, we think that should be something accessible and more widespread.

That is our recommendation, but it is not in our report.

Mr. Jacques Gourde: Why do you say it is unrealistic? Perhaps it would take a certain amount of money to put it in place, but it is ultimately not much money if it can benefit millions of Canadians.

Mr. Guy Leclair: Yes, I entirely agree.

We believe it is a good idea. We are establishing a professional virtual learning community for teachers. We are developing it, and all teachers will be able to get the information and training they want to meet their needs. We want to establish a kind of virtual community where people can learn a language, such as English or French as a second language. That is entirely praiseworthy. We would like to see that put in place.

Mr. Jacques Gourde: But what would it take to put it in place?

Mr. Guy Leclair: It takes money, equipment and platforms.

Mr. Yvon Godin: A little cheque.

Mr. Guy Leclair: A little cheque.

Mr. Jacques Gourde: Those are always choices.

Ms. Marie-France Kenny: People do not always have the motivation, particularly young people. We are talking about tools you can use on your own. You also have to understand that learning a language is very complex. There is the conjugation of verbs, particularly if you are going from English to French. There are no genders in English; there is no "le" or "la". My children did part of their education in English, and their French teacher told them "la garage". That was a core French course.

Mr. Pierre Dionne Labelle: What? That is not it.

Ms. Marie-France Kenny: So you have to make sure you do not just use virtual tools to learn the language.

I would say the government uses excellent automated or virtual tools for language training. Yes, that is good, but it is not enough. I absolutely agree that you should add them to promote language learning, that they should be additional tools, but you should not use them alone. As a linguist, I must admit I am not sure we will get the desired results if we tell people to go and learn virtually without using other supports.

Mr. Guy Leclair: I am promoting my idea, but that is why the common frame of reference for languages enhances self-learning.

When children start kindergarten or grade 1 and learn to learn on their own, if they finish high school and have acquired that habit, their chances of continuing are good. However, we currently do not have that in the school system and that is what we would like to try to introduce.

● (1710)

Mr. Jacques Gourde: I am convinced that habit will also help them in other subjects.

Mr. Guy Leclair: Yes, it is a helpful addition.

The Chair: All right, thank you.

Since there are no other questions or comments from committee members, we will stop here.

Mr. Leclair and Ms. Kenny, thank you for your testimony.

[English]

Without further ado, this meeting is adjourned.

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