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## **Standing Committee on Official Languages**

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**EVIDENCE**

**Thursday, March 27, 2014**

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**Chair**

**The Honourable Michael Chong**



## Standing Committee on Official Languages

Thursday, March 27, 2014

• (0850)

[Translation]

**The Chair (Hon. Michael Chong (Wellington—Halton Hills, CPC)):** Welcome to the 16<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Standing Committee on Official Languages on this Thursday, March 27, 2014.

Pursuant to Standing Order 108, we are studying the economic situation of Canada's minority linguistic communities.

Today we will be hearing from four groups. We will be begin with the Conseil de développement économique de l'Alberta.

**Mr. Marc S. Tremblay (President and Chief Executive Officer, Conseil de développement économique de l'Alberta):** Good morning.

Mr. Chair, members of the Standing Committee on Official Languages, thank you for inviting us to appear before you this morning. The Conseil de développement économique de l'Alberta is a member of RDÉE Canada, the Réseau de développement économique et d'employabilité du Canada. I would like to use the few minutes allotted for my presentation to review the brief that we submitted to the committee.

For the past 18 years, with the support of the Canadian government and other partners, the Conseil de développement économique de l'Alberta, or CDEA, has assisted thousands of francophone business people and entrepreneurs who have started up businesses. Those entrepreneurs have created jobs and made a positive contribution to the economies of Alberta and Canada.

We already have 238,000 Albertans who speak French. Francophones arrive in Alberta every day. Many come to enjoy economic benefits, find a job or start up a business. There is a labour shortage in certain industries, and we are therefore pleased to take in newcomers, but it would better if they came as families and settled permanently.

Despite the fact that we welcome francophones with open arms, many decide to live in Alberta only on a part-time basis, moving on to Quebec City, New Brunswick or elsewhere after working for 10, 14 or 21 days. We can only wonder why they do not settle permanently with their families. We have all the infrastructure necessary to take them in: French-language schools, reception centres, employment centres, a mentoring network for entrepreneurs starting up businesses, community centres, francophone parishes, occupational activities, family activities and festivals. It would be better for Alberta's francophone community if they came as families to stay.

Franco-Albertans and newcomers are scattered across Alberta, from Fort McMurray to Plamondon, including Grande Prairie, Beaumont, St. Albert, Morinville, Edmonton, Lacombe, Red Deer, Calgary and Medicine Hat. Although demand for our services is strong, the Conseil de développement économique de l'Alberta is unfortunately unable to provide services to francophones across the province despite its provincial mandate. Although it is difficult to serve our clientele, we thank our partners, with whom we work together to leverage our impact. CDEA has worked with Liaison Entreprise for several years now to assist francophone entrepreneurs. We have offered no fewer than 37 webinars and workshops for francophone entrepreneurs and business people since 2005.

On a different note, the tourism industry is a major economic development driver in Alberta. Another noteworthy partner is the one that helped develop a smart phone app to support the Pan-Western Francophone Tourism Corridor. That project is funded by the Economic Development Initiative under the aegis of Western Economic Diversification Canada. It is a partnership involving the Government of Canada, the private sector and four francophone economic organizations: the Société de développement économique de la Colombie-Britannique, the Conseil de la coopération de la Saskatchewan, the Conseil de développement économique des municipalités bilingues du Manitoba and us, CDEA.

The app helps francophone tourists plan their trip before they leave home. They can use it to take a virtual tour of the west and, of course, to assist them in their travels once they are here. They can locate businesses, museums, restaurants, cottages and hotels where they can be served in French. To date, the application has been used more than 25,000 times by Canadians from across the country, including francophones from western Canada and Quebeckers, but also by French, Swiss, Belgians and others.

This app, combined with the 12<sup>th</sup> annual tour guide, which we have just published, and our 10 strategies for increasing the active offer of French-language services at hotels and restaurants, shows that we are very active and involved in tourism development. Our activities in this industry support thousands of jobs, francophone and bilingual workers as well as tourism entrepreneurs and operators, all of which makes a considerable contribution to the Albertan and Canadian economy.

In conclusion, I hope that our brief, my testimony and that of the other speakers will help you form a clear picture of the reality of francophones who choose to live in the midst of the anglophone majority. For some, the decision to live in a minority setting is not an easy one. They have probably come to western Canada because they need a job. Others live in a minority setting because that choice is based on their lifestyle, perhaps their family. Still others were born in a minority community and have lived their entire lives in French. The common denominator of these thousands of francophones is that they have chosen to live their lives as francophones where they want, in Alberta, Yukon, British Columbia or elsewhere. That is their choice and their right.

It is important to recall that these francophones contribute to the economies of the provinces and of Canada. Many face linguistic challenges every day, at work, at the doctor's office or in their interactions with provincial governments.

The Government of Canada has long supported francophones through initiatives and programs such as the roadmap for linguistic duality and by implementing the Enabling Fund for Official Language Minority Communities.

Agencies such as CDEA and RDÉE Canada continue to support francophones and the Canadian government in providing services to that population. It is fundamentally important that the Government of Canada continue to do so, which will enable minority language Canadians to flourish and make a major contribution to the Canadian economy.

I have some information kits with me, in French only, in case committee members would like to have a copy.

Thank you for your attention and interest.

• (0855)

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

I now yield the floor to Mr. Therrien, who represents the Conseil de la coopération de la Saskatchewan.

**Mr. Robert Therrien (Executive Director, Conseil de la coopération de la Saskatchewan):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I would like to thank you on behalf of the Conseil de la coopération de la Saskatchewan, or CCS, for inviting me to appear before you as you begin your study on the economic situation of Canada's minority linguistic communities.

CCS, which was founded in 1947, is the organization mandated by the Fransaskois community to promote economic and cooperative development across the province. We are members of RDÉE Canada and of Co-operatives and Mutuels Canada, the former Conseil canadien de la coopération et de la mutualité. We are also one of the Francophone Economic Development Organizations in Western Canada, as my colleague just noted.

Other francophone organizations in the province offer programs and services in various activity sectors. We cooperate regularly and closely with those organizations to avoid duplicating services offered to the community and to maximize the resources put at our disposal.

A year ago, we signed a memorandum of understanding with the organization that represents us, the Assemblée communautaire

fransaskoise, which is a member of the Fédération des communautés francophones et acadienne du Canada, to provide us with the tools to help us deliver services to our communities more efficiently and to clearly define the roles and responsibilities of each of our agencies.

Today we receive funding from four federal departments to provide direct services to the community, for which I thank you very much. Those departments are Western Economic Diversification Canada; Employment and Social Development Canada—previously HRSDC—through the Enabling Fund for Official Language Minority Communities; Canadian Heritage, through the Young Canada Works in Both Official Languages program for the Prairies and far north, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Northwest Territories and Nunavut; and, lastly, Citizenship and Immigration, which provides assistance to employers and job seekers.

Since our francophone population is widely scattered, we have four service points in the province so that we can get closer to that population. We nevertheless face certain challenges despite our efforts to decentralize our staff.

As you have probably heard, our provincial economy is very strong and the forecasts are for continued growth. The provincial unemployment rate is currently the lowest in the country, on a month-to-month basis, and is competitive with that of our provincial neighbour Alberta.

The construction and production sectors are currently experiencing strong growth and generating a lot of jobs in the province. The mining sector and the oil industry are also experiencing a period of growth and development in various parts of the province. The agricultural sector, although no longer the province's main economic driver, is constantly changing and contributing to the province's economy.

We are going through a period of growth and have a promising degree of stability for the future, but where do francophones stand in this economy?

Our population is scattered across the province. According to the 2011 census, French is the mother tongue of 16,280 residents, who represent only 1.6% of the province's overall population. According to the same census, approximately 47,000 people understand French in Saskatchewan. Some 65% of francophones live in urban areas and 35% in a rural setting.

According to the data, the Fransaskois population has the highest rate of population aging of all minority francophone communities in Canada. The majority of francophones in Saskatchewan work in government and the sales and service sector. In rural areas, they are mostly in the agricultural sector.

Despite our four service delivery points in the province, we must nevertheless travel long distances to serve our rural communities. This results in a lack of ongoing and timely support and inefficient use of our staff's time and slows development in certain cases because our employees are not constantly in the communities.

We are still in a position where we cannot offer the same services as our anglophone counterparts in the Community Futures program. For more than 20 years now, every member of that anglophone network has had an investment fund to support business development. We can support future entrepreneurs to a certain degree, but we have to direct them to an anglophone provider if they need financing.

• (0900)

According to the last census, there has been an increase in Saskatchewan's francophone population. Despite that fact, we see that the immigrant and migrant populations, which often come from the larger centres in eastern Canada, have difficulty entering the labour market. Often out of despair, these people try to set up in business even though that was not their first intention.

Since we are the only francophone organization in the province that offers this service, our staff is at times engaged in a support process with these clients who are unable to start up a business.

I have a few recommendations for you.

First of all, we would like certain programs intended for francophones to show some flexibility in meeting needs specific to the community. We are aware of the Economic Development Initiative in the roadmap, but it is defined on the basis of the departments' criteria and does not at all meet the needs of the communities.

I would also like people to take advantage of the value added by the francophone community, as indicated by the last study conducted by the Conference Board of Canada. That would help make better use of the business specialties of Quebec and the rest of Canada.

Lastly, I would like the government to ensure that all agreements between Canada and the provinces involving a devolution of power and responsibilities contain a clause requiring the provinces to contribute to the development of the Francophonie.

Thank you for listening.

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

[English]

Now we'll have Mr. Buck and Mr. Myers from the Community Economic Development and Employability Corporation.

**Mr. John Buck (Executive Director, Community Economic Development and Employability Corporation):** Good morning, Mr. Chair, vice-chairs Monsieur Godin and Ms. St-Denis, members of the committee, *mes chers collègues*, ladies and gentlemen.

Thank you for inviting CEDEC to testify at this committee on the vitally important subject of economic development in Canada's official language minority communities, OLMCs.

As a leading partner and driving force for community economic development and employability, CEDEC sparks economic innovation in building forward-looking, prosperous, and confident communities across Quebec. We do this through sharing expertise, knowledge, and building partnerships. CEDEC is Canada's only English OLMC organization with the mandate of community economic development and employability.

CEDEC's community planning processes lay a foundation for engaged citizens, entrepreneurs, and partners to identify and advance viable economic development projects. This important step provides a solid framework to leverage investments that lead to business development and job creation.

Across Quebec, CEDEC is working with a number of communities to develop community economic development plans that serve to engage partners and stakeholders and leverage investments directly for economic projects in communities.

These community economic development plans are an integral part of our overall strategic plan, which outlines measurable results that will make a positive impact in our community and our economy. This work is increasing economic prosperity, one of the priorities identified by the Quebec Community Groups Network in its strategic priorities forum.

I have a few short examples to illustrate.

In the Gaspésie, across the bay from Mr. Godin's constituency, CEDEC is brokering partnerships from within the official language minority community and the majority community towards achieving a common goal of community revitalization. Working directly with the Committee for Anglophone Social Action, various CLEs, and six municipalities as partners, more than \$2 million in investments has been leveraged for direct benefit of communities that have a significant English-speaking presence. More than 90% of those investments come from non-federal government sources.

These investments are having a direct benefit on the whole community, as we identify and address common economic opportunities, such as tourism and labour market requirements.

In the Magdalen Islands, a multi-phase tourism development plan for Grosse-Ile is mobilizing partners, such as the Council for Anglophone Magdalen Islanders and the municipality, to bolster its economy, which has been heavily dependent on the volatile fishing industry.

As we look at tourism as a means for economic diversification, this example illustrates how OLM communities are strategically placed to complement Canada's economic action plan and federal tourism plan and contribute to the more than 157,000 businesses and 608,000 jobs in Canada's tourism sector.

These examples of entrepreneurial communities equipped with community economic development plans are generating new business opportunities and meaningful jobs. These businesses require support if they are to succeed and become engines of job creation, economic growth, and innovation.

CEDEC, which has benefited from investments leveraged from the economic development initiative, is mobilizing partners, resources, and information to directly support more than 1,000 small businesses across Quebec to grow and create jobs.

We recognize the importance of this work, given that in Canada, small businesses account for 98% of companies, employ 48% of working Canadians, and contribute about 30% to the GDP.

Quebec's English-speaking community is highly entrepreneurial and bilingual and represents a competitive advantage for our economy. We have evidence of the benefits of bilingualism in a recent Conference Board of Canada study, "Canada, Bilingualism and Trade", jointly commissioned by CEDEC and RDÉE Canada with support from Industry Canada.

The first Canadian plan for economic development of official language minority communities will provide a national, evidence-based framework and supportive environment for small businesses to expand their networks and create partnerships within and among OLMCs.

This is a game changer. As one of Canada's most underutilized economic opportunities, OLMCs are connecting and mobilizing to contribute to Canada's economic prosperity in new and innovative ways. Working arm in arm with our partners at RDÉE Canada and its network across the country, we are promoting this innovative opportunity far and wide, coast to coast to coast, with the goal of engaging stakeholders from the private sector, communities, economic organizations, and all levels of government.

We hope this study will be an influential piece of information for this committee as you study and provide recommendations on how to harness fully the considerable potential for economic growth and job creation that exists in OLM communities.

We have a few recommendations.

- (0905)

First, the enabling fund for official language minority communities is a powerful lever for community economic development investments that benefit whole communities. We strongly recommend that the Government of Canada continue this important investment to ensure there is a viable and prosperous English-speaking community contributing to our Canadian economy.

Second, CEDEC asks the leadership within the federal government to ensure that it engages in efforts to seek input from all stakeholders in Quebec's OLMC in order to develop sound policy and effective programs that will enable the community to build on its considerable economic potential, rather than focus exclusively on addressing its needs and deficits.

Third, there's a lack of focused and timely information about the economic situation of OLMCs and their relation and impact on Canada's economy. This inhibits the ability of both government and the community to institute policies and programs from a sound position of knowledge. The Government of Canada should increase investments in research related to the economic situation and potential of official language minority communities.

Finally, the Government of Canada must recognize the considerable and undervalued potential of Canada's official language minority communities as engines for economic growth and job creation. Investments in economic and human resource development within Canada's OLMCs should not be recognized merely as a

legislative obligation, but as an important contribution to Canada's long-term prosperity.

Thank you very much.

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

[*Translation*]

Now we will hear from Mr. Léger, from the Réseau de développement économique et d'employabilité Canada.

**Mr. Jean Léger (Executive Director, Réseau de développement économique et d'employabilité (RDÉE) Canada):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I want to thank committee members for inviting us here this morning.

My name is Jean Léger and I am executive director of the Réseau de développement économique et d'employabilité Canada, better known as RDÉE Canada. The chairman of our board, Gilles Lanteigne, who is from New Brunswick, was to be with us this morning, but the weather was not very good in the Maritimes yesterday and he is unable to be here this morning.

I will begin with a brief history of how RDÉE came about and then tell you about the benefits reaped to date by our organization, which has become a key economic driver in Canada. Like those who preceded me, I will conclude with a series of recommendations to the committee that will give RDÉE the means to develop the full economic potential of Canada's francophone and Acadian communities.

RDÉE Canada was created in 1997 with the original objective of organizing economic development in all of Canada's francophone and Acadian communities, except Quebec.

Specifically, RDÉE Canada, which stands for Réseau de développement économique et d'employabilité Canada—Canada's francophone economic development and employability network—fosters mobilization, collaboration and coordination of efforts to support francophone and Acadian communities to contribute fully to Canada's prosperity.

RDÉE Canada derives its strength and inspiration from its extensive Canadian network. Each province and territory, except Quebec, has an RDÉE Canada member organization. This morning you had a chance to hear from two representatives of those organizations, the Conseil de développement économique de l'Alberta and the Conseil de la coopération de la Saskatchewan. RDÉE Canada members come directly from Canada's francophone and Acadian communities. Business people from a range of backgrounds come together to help create the conditions to build a solid and, of course, sustainable economy.

The members of the RDÉE Canada board are all entrepreneurs and business people active in their respective sectors from all provinces and territories, except Quebec. They are all volunteers who are involved in their communities and who have chosen to live in our Canada in French. In doing so, they help other francophones and Acadians to do the same. By creating jobs, they contribute to our country's prosperity and proudly promote our values of linguistic duality by helping French prosper and flourish.

RDÉE Canada has four priority action areas on which we are working hard.

The first action area is the Canadian economic Francophonie. The task is to ensure that this Francophonie running from east to west and including the north works together and that our francophone entrepreneurs work together. Here we also see the connections with francophones from Quebec.

We also have another action area, economic immigration. The goal here is to educate employers about hiring immigrants and, of course, to invite immigrants to settle in our communities.

The tourism area represents excellent potential for the Canadian Francophonie. We need to enhance the francophone tourism product and to extend its outreach to the national and international levels. This becomes a kind of value-added for our country.

The fourth action area is the green economy. We must ensure that our businesses and communities go green for the sake of sustainable development.

In addition to these four main action areas are the other, more sector-based initiatives. I will name only a few, in fact two key issues for the francophone communities.

The first is labour. This issue often highlights the gap between business needs and the skills businesses seek and labour availability. We must direct our young people to promising sectors in our various regions.

Another area requiring our attention, both anglophones and francophones, is entrepreneurial succession. Changes in business ownership in the OLMCs is becoming a critical issue for the sustainability of businesses and the communities. You can imagine the consequences of losing a business in a rural francophone community. It obviously undermines demographic and economic vitality.

●(0910)

RDÉE Canada and its members have achieved concrete, measurable results. RDÉE Canada commissioned Ronald Bisson and Associates Inc. to measure the influence it exercised from 2009 to 2012. Here are a few examples of our contributions.

Our network invested \$100 million in the Canadian economy over those three years through the Enabling Fund for Official Language Minority Communities, which serves as a lever and encourages the private sector and federal and provincial departments to participate in a real way. It thus helped create 3,700 direct and indirect jobs.

For example, every year RDÉE Canada members support 20,000 entrepreneurs through various activities. We want to do even more and further maximize the impact of our actions. We would like to establish a Canadian economic development plan for the official language minority communities.

As you can see, as a result of the enabling fund, we have taken various actions that have had a major impact.

Further to these achievements and the confirmation of the economic importance of French for all Canadians, RDÉE Canada undertook an inclusive, nation-wide consultation in cooperation with

its Quebec anglophone colleagues from CEDEC to involve both economic and community players in the plan and thus to encourage cooperation on specific projects.

We are not necessarily trying to stick with the strategies, but rather to engage in actual projects. I can tell you that 1,200 people responded to an on-line survey, which gave us a good overview of the economic concerns of our communities across the country, including in Quebec.

I will close with a few recommendations.

You may have noticed that limited research is being done on economic development or on the economy of official language minority communities. We recommend that more studies be conducted on the economic development of OLMCs under Industry Canada's Economic Development Initiative.

We also recommend consulting and engaging in open dialogue with the communities for improved efficiency of federal government investment for the amounts identified under the roadmap for official languages, supported by the Canadian Plan for Economic Development of OLMC, which we are developing.

Lastly, we recommend that the federal government continue and enhance Employment and Social Development Canada's enabling fund to allow the francophone and Acadian communities to continue contributing to the economy of our country, to create ties with other federal government departments and agencies, the provinces and the private sector and to exercise an influence over them.

That concludes my presentation, Mr. Chair.

●(0915)

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Now we have an hour and a half for questions and comments since Mr. Godin will introduce his motion next Tuesday.

Mr. Godin, you have the floor.

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

I want to welcome everyone to the Standing Committee on Official Languages. The study we are conducting is important for the official language minority communities in Canada. The subject of this study has been submitted to us by the government.

In my travels across Canada, I have had the opportunity to meet minority official language groups that said they needed assistance. Let us hope our study will help improve their situation.

Our group has divided up the various questions. Please be assured that, if I do not ask you a particular question, someone else will. I appreciate the fact that 15 minutes has been added to the question period. It is important to gather your comments.

Mr. Léger, from RDÉE Canada, you said in your presentation that several official language stakeholders had told you there was limited research on the economic situation of official language minority communities. How could a Canadian economic development plan for official language minority communities remedy that situation? I would like you to give me as brief an answer as possible since I have other questions for you.

**Mr. Jean Léger:** Of course, Mr. Godin.

As I said earlier, 1,200 people responded to the cross-Canada consultation that we held. The answers helped us target key sectors where efforts must be focused in particular. However, there is not necessarily any research specific to official language minority communities in those sectors.

I have worked at RDÉE Canada for two years, and I can confirm that there is very little research. Virtually everything has to be done. RDÉE Canada has conducted a few studies, including the one appearing in your document.

As I said earlier, it would be good if Industry Canada's Economic Development Initiative, which is part of Canada's Roadmap for Official Languages 2013-2018, helped put greater emphasis on economic development research.

• (0920)

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** I would like to discuss another point. Some studies have been conducted, and it appears there are several economic development plans concerning minority francophone communities, including the overall development plan developed in every community, the community strategic plan and the integrated action plan that emerged from the 2012 Pan-Canadian Forum on Economic Development in Canadian Francophonie. That important study was conducted and a plan was put forward.

RDÉE Canada and CEDEC recently began consultations that will lead to another economic development plan.

Why are you not focusing your efforts on implementing the existing plans that were developed by the communities? To be frank with you, I would say that something is not right here. Why not work together?

**Mr. Jean Léger:** One of the plans you refer to, the community strategic plan, goes back to 2008 and is therefore somewhat dated now. The integrated plan, which was developed in Gatineau in 2012, put specific emphasis on public policies and included Quebec francophones. It focused to a great extent on the impact of public policies.

The plan we would like to design focuses more on promising projects and projects that meet the needs of entrepreneurs and the private sector. When we developed our plan's methodology, we mainly wanted to gather the comments of business people. The Gatineau plan focused more on the government and institutional sector and the private sector to a lesser degree. It did not go far enough in determining the actual needs of businesses and business people.

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** Mr. Léger, did you consult the FCFA and QCGN?

**Mr. Jean Léger:** Yes, I could not speak for the QCGN, since it is more on the anglophone side—

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** But you said you had spoken with the people from Quebec. I thought that was the QCGN.

**Mr. Jean Léger:** No, it was the FCFA. We belong to the Leaders' Forum. The FCFA was indeed consulted. I even met with the people from its executive office concerning this process. By the end of April, we will also be specifically consulting the FCFA and its members.

A situation arose in which the FCFA was not involved, and that may be what caused a kind of uncomfortable situation with that organization. That was when we established an advisory committee to determine the plan's parameters. We wanted to focus on economic organizations and stakeholders. However, the FCFA is more a community stakeholder, and a very important one at that, than an economic stakeholder.

We also wanted to bring together government representatives, that is to say people from the public service, to ensure that our plan was consistent with Canada's economic action plan in particular, which is an extremely important government plan, and with the official language action plan.

That committee's mandate was really to align all that with the plan we were designing.

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

Now I have to move on to my friend from Alberta.

You say that francophones go to Alberta and then stay there. I ask you please not to drain Acadie.

Some people back home would like to go and work in Alberta. Women phone and tell me they would like to go and work on job sites there cleaning rooms or doing other, similar work. However, the people there bring in temporary foreign workers who do not even speak English or French, neither of our country's languages, to do that kind of work.

It is possible for people to stay in Alberta once they have worked there. Many foreign workers go there, but our people do not have that opportunity. I am building a file on this because I think this even violates our country's laws.

• (0925)

**Mr. Marc S. Tremblay:** What is your question?

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** Do you work with groups that try to bring in francophones from Quebec, New Brunswick or Acadie who otherwise would not have the opportunity to work in Alberta?

**Mr. Marc S. Tremblay:** Absolutely. The Conseil de développement économique de l'Alberta is a major player in that area. Every day we receive requests for information on available jobs from Canadians and immigrants wishing to settle in Canada.

We work closely with francophone employment centres such as Accès Emploi in Edmonton and Connexion Carrière in Calgary. There is even an employment centre in Grande Prairie that is managed by the regional ACFA office in Grande Prairie. We direct people who call us there.

This is quite a big challenge. Some foreign workers can take the place of Canadians by occupying certain jobs. However, Canadians who speak English and French often have a place. It is true that there are foreign workers, but, in most cases, you have to speak English in order to get a job in Alberta.

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** I frankly do not agree with you and I am going to prove it.

**Mr. Marc S. Tremblay:** In many cases, you have to speak English in order to settle down and live in Alberta. Francophones who come to Alberta go for long periods of time without a job. Their low level of proficiency in English makes it hard for them to find a job. We can help them by offering them English courses.

Yes, some foreign workers come to work in Alberta, but that is something we cannot influence directly. One member of our association hires Filipinos because it is easy for him to recruit them.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Mr. Gourde, you have the floor.

**Mr. Jacques Gourde (Lotbinière—Chutes-de-la-Chaudière, CPC):** Do Filipinos speak more English than the francophones who arrive in Alberta?

**Mr. Marc S. Tremblay:** They work in restaurants and offer a service to the clientele. So they speak English.

**Mr. Jacques Gourde:** We can check that, Mr. Godin.

There must be examples that we can draw on for inspiration. You are on the ground and you may have seen good exchanges. These kinds of stories can give us a lot. The same ingredients often lead to success. What do you think they are?

**Mr. Marc S. Tremblay:** Are you putting the question to me?

**Mr. Jacques Gourde:** I'm putting it to the four of you.

**Mr. Marc S. Tremblay:** There are many success stories. People come and settle in Alberta to start up a business. We have 200 members who are either Franco-Albertans or people from elsewhere. There are also companies that come from elsewhere. Some Quebec businesses come and settle in Alberta.

For example, Groupe Cossette, an electrical company, has signed major contracts worth hundreds of thousands of dollars with Cenovus Energy in the Bonnyville and Fort McMurray regions. Large companies come and settle in Alberta and hire anglophones and francophones, thus contributing to the Albertan economy.

**Mr. Robert Therrien:** In Saskatchewan, when you work with francophone communities, that is to say where there is a francophone majority or at least a francophone presence, you sometimes forget that this benefits the entire community, both francophones and anglophones. I can give you some examples.

In a small community of 500 inhabitants, we helped set up a seniors centre providing primary, secondary and tertiary health care in the province. That created eight permanent jobs in addition to the jobs generated during the construction period.

In another community, we are setting up a similar centre, which will create roughly 10 jobs and approximately 70 more during the construction period. That will benefit the entire community.

We also helped a community in the southwestern part of the province create an emergency centre that serves a region. Our employee helped establish the centre, which provides both an ambulance service and a firefighting service. Those five jobs were generated in a community of approximately 400 inhabitants.

That does not seem like a lot, but you have to bear in mind that we work with micro-businesses. In Saskatchewan, the big businesses with French names like Bourgault Industries can have some 2,000 employees. However, since we rely on five or six employees to provide services to businesses, those big businesses do not really need our help. On the other hand, we can help them find labour, for example.

That varies for entrepreneurs. I can cite you some examples. There is a crisis in the child care service sector in our region. There is a shortage of spaces in the early childhood centres. We have helped set up day care centres.

We offer a variety of services. We helped one entrepreneur start up a motel, a hotel-restaurant project, which made it possible to create some 15 jobs.

• (0930)

**Mr. Jacques Gourde:** Entrepreneurship is ultimately the common denominator.

**Mr. Robert Therrien:** Yes.

**Mr. Jacques Gourde:** I am going to give the other witnesses a chance to respond.

[English]

**Mr. John Buck:** Absolutely.

Thank you for the question. It's a good question. I've had the pleasant challenge of trying to pick from among many, so if I could, I'll speak to two of them which I think are particularly relevant, and also two for which there are case studies that might be helpful for the committee in the future as you look to the success stories in your recommendations.

One I choose is close at heart and close geographically, and that's Campbell's Bay. It's just down the road from here in the Outaouais region. If you ever have the opportunity, it's about an hour's drive to the west, right along the river. It's a beautiful place to visit.

In the 2000s, due to a number of circumstances in our economy, they went through terrific challenges with respect to primary industries. That's very common within OLMCs across the country. We saw devastation in the lumber industry. We saw the disappearance of literally hundreds of jobs. Campbell's Bay at that point in time when things were working well was a community of upwards of 1,200 people. When several facilities closed in the area, they found themselves ultimately in a situation where there were simply no ways in which to work there. The people who stayed either remained unemployed or had to seek other jobs which in many cases caused them to leave the area or be displaced significantly in order to work.

We became involved with the area of Campbell's Bay in about 2004. I use this success story because I think it demonstrates that sometimes these things do take time. We engaged in the community through community economic development practices to look at assets, to look at what was possible, to look at what they had and how to leverage that not only to inspire but also to create a sustainable environment where people could live and thrive.

Over time we've seen a number of successes. Perhaps one that is very practical to speak to is an annual event called Bikes in the Bay. A number of citizens in the area, as an asset, were fans of motorcycles, and decided to create a festival. It brings individuals from not only the area but quite literally from all over North America into their area on an annual basis, into a small community that now has 600 people, if you can imagine this. The festival brings thousands of motorcycles into the Outaouais area down the road.

Now, that alone is not sufficient to create a sustainable economy. However, at this point in time, and I believe this will be the sixth or seventh annual festival of Bikes in the Bay, it generates as a festival upwards of \$50,000 on an annual basis now, which the municipality reinvests directly into the community, into playground equipment, into technology, into different facilities.

As a consequence, this is serving as inspiration. We are seeing individuals who are there recognizing that they can be entrepreneurial. They are taking advantage of this and becoming involved in industries that are sustainable.

Along with this, to get to Campbell's Bay, of course, in many instances one drives through Ottawa. It's 100 kilometres to the west to get there. We're working with the Pontiac region, an area that has experienced some economic challenges as well, to develop a regional profile. It will be based around tourism. It will be based on attracting people and generating a sustainable economy.

Mr. Gourde, I like that example, because I think not only is it an economic opportunity, but it also has dramatically altered the way of life for the individuals who are there. When we started to work with them, they were devastated, in many cases unemployed, and lacking a lot of hope. I think now we see an inspired community that is thinking about its future and planning very strategically for its future.

• (0935)

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

[*Translation*]

Please be brief, Mr. Léger.

**Mr. Jean Léger:** I will be.

Thank you for your question, Mr. Gourde.

About a year and a half ago, I attended the Montreal Conference, a major international economic forum that was extremely important for our country. It was attended by the presidents of major banks and representatives of organizations such as the International Monetary Fund and the OECD. I checked the information provided by the exhibitors there and saw that every participating country offered economic benefits.

As ambassador of the economies of the francophone and Acadian communities, I felt there had to be a tool to present the economies of

those communities across the country. We prepared a document entitled "Invest, Do Business, Succeed—An overview of the economic benefits of the Francophone and Acadian communities", which presents our provinces and territories and the promising economic sectors and financing programs that could assist with business start-ups.

I used that tool at one point in my involvement in an activity called Destination Canada in Paris and Brussels. At the request of Canada's ambassador to Paris, I made a presentation to people interested in investing or starting up a business in Canada. I presented my document to them, and some 600 people were interested in starting up a business and investing in Canada. We designed a database to which the people interested in investing and starting up a business in our communities added their information. People were interested in buying restaurants in Manitoba, for example, or investing \$300,000 or \$400,000 in our communities.

There is an extremely significant amount of potential there, and we would like to take these initiatives to another level. This is a success story that could apply to our francophone and Acadian communities and provide them with money.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Ms. St-Denis, you have the floor.

**Ms. Lise St-Denis (Saint-Maurice—Champlain, Lib.):** First of all, Mr. Therrien and Mr. Tremblay, I would like to go back to the francophone communities. You have great plans; you explained all that to us. That seems positive from an economic standpoint. However, I would like to know how the communities are experiencing this in real terms, in real life.

For example, the population Alberta is 2% francophone. You said it was virtually impossible to reach francophones living in rural areas given the long distances.

Are people in the francophone communities in the provinces able to live their lives in French, or is that just a theory?

You said the same thing, Mr. Therrien. It is very difficult.

What percentage of francophones living in rural areas are able to live their lives in French despite the fact that we cannot reach them, compared to the percentage of francophones settled in the cities, in larger communities?

**Mr. Robert Therrien:** There are associations in the francophone communities offering a variety of services, cultural, educational and other types of services. For example, Fransaskois schools are established in the regions. People can live their everyday lives in French in the rural communities where there is a certain educational presence and a community association that chooses to carry out activities in French. People thus continue to live their lives in French.

Of course, the populations of the rural communities are declining to a certain degree. That is attributable in a way to the aging population. Will it still be possible to live in French in one or two generations? That is hard to say. It depends on the contribution made by immigrants who settle in our province.

Francophones in the major cities also lead very active lives in French. There is a variety of activities in the communities themselves.

**Mr. Marc S. Tremblay:** Even though the population of Alberta is 2% francophone, there are very strong, vibrant communities living in French in villages and towns like Beaumont, south of Edmonton, St. Albert, Legal and St. Isidore. You hear French virtually everywhere as you walk around St. Isidore, the population of which is about 55% francophone.

The communities have rallied around and joined forces in the Concerto project, an initiative that we launched and that is based partly on the Manitoba model. It is built on four economic development pillars specific to those municipalities. The communities involved in it are easy to reach.

The village of St. Isidore is located four or five hours by road from Edmonton. That is quite far. However, the community is quite concentrated.

Other villages such as Donnelly, Guy and Girouxville are very small and it is difficult to reach the communities there, although we manage to do it. Those people are able to live in French.

• (0940)

**Ms. Lise St-Denis:** You must give us your card. We may be going to a caucus meeting near your home this summer and therefore may go and visit you.

How are francophones perceived by anglophones in your communities? Are they ignored, despised, valued? You mentioned the importance of the value that the francophone community adds. Do people consider the francophone communities as an asset to the province, or is that something completely foreign to the concerns of anglophones in your provinces?

**Mr. Marc S. Tremblay:** Anglophones increasingly recognize the francophone communities as a value-added. And we see that during the Rendez-vous de la francophonie and the Lever du drapeau franco-albertain, which take place in 27 communities in the province. The mayors of the cities and the municipal councillors hold a ceremony to recognize Alberta's francophone community. It is celebrated.

A very small minority of people are somewhat opposed to the francophone community. They are called "rednecks" in English. However, we do not see them often.

**Mr. Jean Léger:** I was executive director of the Fédération acadienne de la Nouvelle-Écosse for 10 years and acted as representative of the Acadian and francophone community of that province. I can tell you that the private sector is a factor in the vitality of the francophone community in those provinces. You need an economy and business people who will finance francophone activities in the community. For example, if you want to have art clubs or shows, you need business people to support those francophone activities.

It is like the Government of Canada: you need a strong economic sector to generate taxes in order to—

**Ms. Lise St-Denis:** That is why the federal government is granting you only 54% of your budget this year.

Mr. Léger, how many current projects are not being extended because ad hoc funding from the federal government has not been renewed? On Tuesday we heard from representatives of the cooperatives who told us they had lost a great deal.

**Mr. Jean Léger:** We have lost less since the Enabling Fund for Official Language Minority Communities, which finances our network, was extended under the roadmap. So no programs have met with that fate for the moment.

However, we are waiting to hear what will happen to certain programs. For example, we are not too sure about how things will go for Industry Canada's Economic Development Initiative.

However, there have been smaller losses for the other programs, Ms. St-Denis.

**Ms. Lise St-Denis:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** Go ahead, Mr. Tremblay.

**Mr. Marc S. Tremblay:** To answer your question, I must say that two major programs in Alberta were not extended.

The first was the Small Business Internship program, which provided us with government funding, from Industry Canada in this instance, which was redistributed to businesses, SMEs, so that they could hire people to train in e-commerce. That very important program provided jobs for young people, for new graduates. As far as I know, the program was cancelled without being evaluated.

The same is true of the Co-operative Development Initiative. Our council in Alberta was a member of the Conseil canadien de la coopération et de la mutualité. Now we will be a member of CMC. This program was cancelled and the consequences have been quite significant.

This funding previously helped us create cooperatives. For example, thanks to us, a theatre cooperative was established in Calgary. Two weeks ago, it had a major success when it presented a theatre play to nearly full houses for an entire weekend. Unfortunately, we cannot continue helping people who want to start up cooperatives.

• (0945)

**The Chair:** All right, thank you.

Mr. Therrien, you have the floor to answer.

**Mr. Robert Therrien:** I have a comment on that subject.

Although I very much appreciate the fact that funding has been renewed for years, I emphasize that it has plateaued. It has not been indexed to the cost of living. Consequently, since 1997, we have had to cut staff by some 20%, despite our stable funding, which has reduced our ability to provide services directly in the communities.

The cost of living is rising. If you have steady employees, you have to recognize their services. Since we serve the population as a whole, a 20% staff cut has the effect of reducing our ability to offer all programs and services.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Mr. Chisu now has the floor.

[English]

**Mr. Corneliu Chisu (Pickering—Scarborough East, CPC):** Thank you very much to our witnesses for their great presentations. I'm commending you for the good work that you are doing in your respective communities. Based on your presentations, I have a couple of questions.

First of all, what are your priorities? In the official language minority communities, when it comes to economic development, based on how you are setting up your priorities, have you initiated any market research or a vision of what will be happening in the next five years?

Why I'm asking you this question is that the world is evolving around us. We negotiated that the government develop a series of free trade agreements. One of the significant free trade agreements is with the European Union, which gives our businesses access to more than 500 million people.

This agreement will come into place in a maximum of two years. Businesses need to be prepared to capitalize on this market, including also the official language minority communities. You are able now to capitalize on a huge market, which is the European market. We are a trading nation.

Mr. Buck, you mentioned about the success that you had with establishing a motorcycle festival, but that's related only to North America. How can we attract people to invest in Canada and also capitalize on the skills that you have in the respective minority language communities?

**Mr. John Buck:** Mr. Chisu, that's a very good question, and I think my response will demonstrate that these strategic considerations are very, very much at the forefront of what we're considering as we move forward.

You spoke at the beginning of your question about some of our priorities, and I can address that. I can also speak to some of the specific things we will be doing to leverage the opportunity that lies before us. You're right, in that although there remain elements of it to be confirmed, now is the time for us to get ready for what will emerge as an enormous economic opportunity.

First, I will discuss some strategic priorities we consider that help us to address an opportunity of this magnitude. The creation and sustainability of entrepreneurial communities is a fundamentally important aspect of what we do to encourage innovation. There's business development support to small and medium enterprises, and this, perhaps, addresses some of the questions of preparedness and being able to be agile and nimble in an economy that requires this kind of ability. There's connecting people to jobs, addressing employability barriers, and promoting labour force opportunities. These would be some of our key priorities as we look forward strategically.

Some of those things we are doing as we speak. I say so with great pride, recognizing that there's a representative from the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, Mrs. Suzanne Tannouri, behind me, who I saw walk into the room earlier, and we're grateful to have her here. The Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade does a phenomenal job on an annual basis of meeting with official language minority communities. Just before the

new year, in late December, my colleague Jean Léger, representatives from FCFA, representatives from Quebec Community Groups Network, and representatives from some universities had an opportunity to sit down with deputy ministers and others in a dialogue consultation. This was a key aspect of what we wanted to talk about: what can we do now to work with entrepreneurs to help us get there? The Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade has already opened up its capacity to talk with us about what we need to be working on.

With the resources we have—and this talks to the operations and the value of everyone who has a presence across the country, and we work directly with more than 1,000 small and medium businesses, as I mentioned in my testimony—we will be offering things like webinars to talk with people about what's emerging in terms of opportunity. We'll be offering consultation services that will enable people to figure out what some of the regulatory considerations are that they might need to consider to export, and all of these types of things, and to attract human resources to be able to do what they do.

I do respect everyone's time, and I don't want to go on too long. Something I mentioned in my testimony a little bit earlier, and it's a game changer and I encourage the committee to look at it, is the report in which we talked about bilingualism, trade, and Canada. This talks to the economic impact of our nation being able to work in a bilingual capacity when it comes to other economies. For example, I will use a reference that economists sometimes use, and Mr. Williamson might be able to help us understand it more clearly. It's called a gravity model. The Conference Board of Canada prepared this report for both RDÉE Canada and for CEDEC, and it speaks to our economic opportunity. I say it's a game changer because I really do think that in the global economy we are working in now, we need to look at the official language minority communities as engines for economic opportunity. The report I've referred to conveys it very clearly.

● (0950)

**Mr. Corneliu Chisu:** I have a very quick question for you.

How do you think you will get market intelligence from, let's say, the European Union for the small and medium-sized businesses? For this one, you need to have a structure. You were speaking about Foreign Affairs and International Trade. It needs to retool, in my opinion, to be able to provide the small and medium-sized businesses with marketing intelligence. The small and medium-sized businesses are not able to gather intelligence in the foreign markets. They don't have the money for that. What is your opinion on that?

**Mr. John Buck:** We're at the preliminary stages with respect to Europe. I think we've done a terrific job from the Quebec perspective, looking interprovincially across the country. We have our own networks that enable us to understand very clearly the economies we want to engage in. It's the same with the U.S. market. I think we have a clear understanding of that. We're at the very early stages of the economic opportunity in Europe. I think the fact that we're discussing it today points to some opportunities for us to look to in the future. Looking to the organizations here, I would suggest we are ideally placed to offer that intelligence to the small and medium enterprises that we already work with. I think we have an important role to play in that, as do other players, and we need to plan together how we're going to do that.

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

**Mr. Corneliu Chisu:** Could we have some answers from other people?

**The Chair:** Okay, very briefly.

Monsieur Tremblay.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Marc S. Tremblay:** I will be brief.

There were two parts to your question.

First, you wanted to know how we set priorities. Every year, we survey our members to ask them what they need. We also hold consultations and organize round tables across the province to determine needs.

The European market is already on our radar screen. We are working with the Canadian embassy in France to identify opportunities. People have come to visit us. We are also working with the Union des Français de l'étranger, an organization of French entrepreneurs, and are already forging ties with them. We have determined that we need to bring in a speaker, an expert on international trade between Canada and France, and we have begun to discuss an economic mission to France to develop that market for Albertans.

• (0955)

**The Chair:** Thank you.

[*English*]

I'm going to go to Madam Bateman because I have to fit all members in.

Madam Bateman, go ahead.

[*Translation*]

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

Thanks to all the witnesses. I very much appreciated their comments.

I have a few questions. I hope we will be able to learn the views of all of you here today. It seems to me your world is somewhat complicated. I say that because—

[*English*]

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** I agree.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Joyce Bateman:** Yes, we agree.

You receive funding from a lot of different sources. For example, I read that you were funded by Western Economic Diversification Canada, Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development Canada, Industry Canada, Employment and Social Development Canada and the Business Development Bank of Canada. Some organizations are also funded by RDÉE.

I am a chartered accountant, and it seems to me your office must need a lot of resources to meet all the obligations involved in managing this funding.

How do each of you think the federal government can improve matters and meet needs? You must be able to help your clients penetrate new markets, as my colleague said. You are currently experiencing an accounting nightmare with all these minor funding sources.

I agree with Mr. Buck that you are all involved in the job creation, economic growth and long-term prosperity of Canada as a whole for generations to come.

[*English*]

How can we make this more efficient and effective?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Léger, perhaps you can respond since you contribute a little money.

**Mr. Jean Léger:** No, we do not provide any money at all.

**Ms. Joyce Bateman:** It says in—

**Mr. Jean Léger:** No that comes directly from the government.

**Ms. Joyce Bateman:** And yet the Conseil de développement économique de l'Alberta is part of RDÉE.

**Mr. Jean Léger:** Yes, it belongs to it, but we do not provide funding to that organization.

**Ms. Joyce Bateman:** So it is even more complicated.

**Mr. Jean Léger:** Yes. The money comes directly from the government or governments for accountability reasons. It is the government that invests money, not us. We do not transfer any money at all to our member organizations.

**Ms. Joyce Bateman:** How could we make matters more efficient for your clients?

**Mr. Jean Léger:** That is what has to be done.

I would like to provide a little more clarification on the Canadian Plan for Economic Development of OLMC, which we are in the process of developing. In fact, the 1,200 respondents from the private sector, business community and the communities will provide you with specific investment directions.

That is a partial response to the question by your colleague who asked earlier how we were going to set our economic action priorities over the next few years. The Canadian plan will provide us with a large share of that information. The goal of the Canadian plan is to make federal and provincial government programs achieve more efficient and effective economic impact.

•(1000)

**Ms. Joyce Bateman:** How can you coordinate all the mandates of the various organizations that fund you? I ask myself that question. It seems to me those mandates may be a little different. Do you need something different from each federal government organization? Perhaps we are better at meeting your needs. We need you to be able to help your clients.

**Mr. Jean Léger:** That is correct. We have to ask our clients the questions to determine what they need. We have to be an intermediary. We are going to gather a great deal of information, but we need

[English]

boil it down to a few strategic actions.

[Translation]

We need a maximum of three or four strategic actions.

I would also like to add that the economic concerns of business people are different in the west, in Acadie or in another province. We will have to weigh that.

We would like to sit down with the federal government and see how we could work more efficiently together so that the Canadian government's investment achieves actual results, which means an increase, an economic dynamic or strengthening the private sector and business people.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Mr. Therrien, you have the floor to respond.

**Mr. Robert Therrien:** I would like to add something. This is indeed complicated and it becomes even more so when you need to deal with four or five different departments. We need to do that because one department cannot fund a service that we offer when another one is doing it. It is for those kinds of reasons.

As for the way we operate, 14 of our employees serve the entire province. So they have to do a lot of travelling. We also have to serve somewhat remote communities.

What could we do to be more efficient? If I had a magic wand, I would like there to be one fund and for us to have a single report to submit to a group of departments. The economic committee that has been created around RDÉE Canada, on which several departments sit—

**Ms. Joyce Bateman:** I would like clarification on one point. Are you required to prepare a lot of reports on federal government funding?

**Mr. Robert Therrien:** Yes, we have to file separate applications for different and complementary services. Several members of my staff and I spend a great deal of time performing administrative and managerial duties. We have to prepare reports to measure results and to ensure we achieve desired results, for example. A lot of administrative work has to be done. The fact that we have to deal with several departments results in a degree of inefficiency.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Mr. Nicholls, you have the floor.

**Mr. Jamie Nicholls (Vaudreuil-Soulanges, NDP):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

[English]

I'd like to talk with you, Mr. Buck, about the relevance of the enabling fund.

[Translation]

I am going to address the topic of research with Mr. Léger and Mr. Buck.

[English]

I'm glad that in your report you made the recommendation about continuing the investment of the enabling fund. It's important for leveraging, as you know, matching funds with other partners. Still, there are organizations in Quebec that need to depend on private fundraising, and they use a lot of their resources to do so. I believe the annual budget for the enabling fund right now stands at around \$14 million.

**Mr. John Buck:** It's \$12.9 million.

**Mr. Jamie Nicholls:** It's \$12.9 million.

I will ask the question quite bluntly. Is that really sufficient to meet our needs as a francophone community? Do you think it's enough? We've been asking in the House about \$10 billion unaccounted for in cuts in last year's budget. Doubling the enabling fund would represent 0.0028% of that \$10 billion.

Wouldn't doubling the enabling fund in recognition of the economic importance of our communities help quite a bit?

•(1005)

**Mr. John Buck:** The obvious answer is yes. I would come here and I would say that we need a lot of money, and we need it for a long time to do what we want to do, but I'm sure I'm not the only person who comes to testify before a committee who says that.

That being said, Mr. Nicholls, the \$2.7 million that we see in Quebec, if we specify in Quebec; it's \$12.9 million across the country, we've leveraged that across the country at a ratio of between three and four.... For every dollar that gets invested, we see \$3 to \$4 of economic impact, which represents a pretty impressive result and speaks to that economic engine piece I discussed before.

I want to tie your question to Ms. Bateman's because I think it speaks to a question of efficiency. Obviously, if we could double that, it would be wonderful, but continuity is important in enabling us as communities to be more efficient. As organizations, one of the ways we are able to achieve such tremendous results across the country, very impressive results I think you'll agree, is that we have developed and worked on our expertise as organizations. We can leverage resources, whether they be from a provincial government, a municipality, or the private sector, to complete activities and projects that are going to have meaningful results for citizens in our communities.

I think that the maintenance of it, the fact that it enables our organizations to build that essential core expertise, gives us the capacity to be very efficient. In the absence of that, if we had to work in a project environment, it would be very difficult to have that expertise and to build relationships. In our instance, this year in Quebec we've built over 250 partnerships. Those partnerships in many cases enable us to invest in projects directly. In many cases, and I gave an example in the Gaspésie, only 10% of the project is coming through federal government funding. The rest of it is from a number of different stakeholders.

Investing for a long time with as many resources as possible in the enabling fund is a terrifically successful strategy, and I think a very efficient one at the same time.

**Mr. Jamie Nicholls:** Obviously, your organizations have done their homework in increasing efficiency, and I think it's time to reward those successes by increasing those funds. When you mentioned "continue investments", that might be read as just keeping the status quo, which would be great. But from what you've said, I think that increasing those funds would expand your economic potential.

My second question touches on

[*Translation*]

research. You mentioned a number of times that more research on the communities would be a benefit and would help you achieve your objectives more effectively. What kind of tools are you thinking of using to gather information?

**Mr. Jean Léger:** I think we could definitely involve researchers such as the people from the Conference Board of Canada. They have already prepared a study demonstrating the value added of linguistic duality in Canada. I think we should try to rely on that kind of study to prove, as Mr. Buck said a little earlier, the value that this linguistic duality adds for the country.

The idea would also be to see how we might target the issue more accurately and find solutions to specific economic development issues. I mentioned two in my brief. For example, are there any specific characteristics of the francophone and Acadian communities that relate to the challenge that entrepreneurial succession represents? Our goal in a way is to analyze that and to come up with recommendations and solutions. Then we can go see the government people to put in place the tools that will assist in entrepreneurial succession or in business development.

The whole employability component is also extremely important in some communities. How can we do better to help people enter the labour market? How can we connect workers with available jobs?

A lot of cooperative and collaborative work remains to be done on these issues, but specific data has to be obtained before the players are brought together. What are the promising sectors? Are our youth in the right programs?

In short, I think a lot of this kind of very targeted research could help further stimulate the economies of the regions.

• (1010)

[*English*]

**Mr. Jamie Nicholls:** What I'm asking is who is going to do the research and what kind of research? Is it going to be Statistics Canada? Is it going to be the Conference Board? Who are you envisioning in terms of research gathering on the communities? Will it be the federal government?

**Mr. John Buck:** I think that depends, really. In terms of some of the larger socio-economic information, it makes sense for us to be working with institutions that have a good scope, a good understanding, and have the credibility, like the organizations that you've mentioned. In other instances, it may be someone who is simply engaged so that we can learn for a very specific purpose, a very specific project or activity that we need just-in-time information about. It will depend, I think.

**Mr. Jamie Nicholls:** Do you think a more robust census would be beneficial?

**Mr. John Buck:** The census information is always useful. Yesterday there was a release of some information specifically for official language minority communities that's extremely useful. It is useful. We need it in a timely way as well. That's another aspect of this that's important.

We talked earlier about a global economy that moves very rapidly. We have to be looking at information today. We have to be forecasting 10 to 20 years from now. I think the nimbleness of the information is as important as anything else. I think that absolutely anyone who can bring good relevant information to the table should be brought to the table.

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

Mr. Daniel.

**Mr. Joe Daniel (Don Valley East, CPC):** Thank you, witnesses, for being here.

I'm left with the impression that a lot of the francophone businesses, the minority community businesses, are still struggling to find their place in Canada, and as such, what is a francophone or an Acadian business? Is it something that is part of the mainstream or is it separate from that?

Let's start with Mr. Tremblay.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Marc S. Tremblay:** In Alberta's francophone community, francophone entrepreneurs also have to provide services to the anglophone majority. Very few francophone entrepreneurs can earn a living solely from their francophone clientele. However, some, such as Web developers and consultants, focus on the francophone community.

We are part of the majority and therefore cannot work in isolation. We are connected to the anglophone majority.

These entrepreneurs nevertheless retain their francophone identity. Being able to provide French-language services is a value added, a competitive advantage for them.

**Mr. Robert Therrien:** There definitely are francophone businesses in our case. Earlier I cited the example of Bourgault Industries in the community of St. Brieux, Saskatchewan. It is a manufacturer that does business internationally. There are others in the community. However, they are not players that deal with us since they have far more resources than we do. In some cases, these businesses have 1,200 to 1,500 employees, and some operate on a large scale in international markets.

The clientele we mostly serve in our rural communities consists of micro-businesses that operate on a local and regional scale.

**Mr. Jean Léger:** The definition of a francophone business varies with the people we talk to. However, four important parameters should be considered.

The first parameter is territory. A business located in Caraquet, on the Acadian Peninsula in New Brunswick, will obviously be a francophone business in most cases.

There is also the French-language services aspect. Businesses in Halifax or Edmonton may also offer French-language services and are therefore receptive to high-quality services in the official language of the client's choice.

Another parameter is ownership of the business. In some cases, a business belongs entirely to a francophone, or it may be subject to co-ownership. A man and a woman or an anglophone and a francophone may own a business.

I believe that one other aspect is very important in the definition of a francophone business, and that is the business's involvement in the community. I will cite a specific example. I have lived in Halifax for 25 years and am a member of the *Chambre de commerce francophone d'Halifax*. Some board members are not necessarily francophones. They are francophiles, people like you, anglophones who speak French. They are involved in the francophone economy and in the francophone community. In some cases, these anglophone entrepreneurs who speak French contribute to a theatre play or a club at a community school centre. In those cases, I believe you can say they are francophone businesses.

This is how we try to determine what francophone businesses are. However, this is an important research issue. We find it hard to determine what constitutes a francophone business. We can put the question to Industry Canada, for example, which works with the business sector, but how do we know whether we have the right information given the way the questions are asked and the four parameters that I have presented to you? We need more research—again it comes back to research—to determine to a large extent what the francophone businesses are. Our organization wants to support the francophone economy or the francophone economic space, but we have to know what our clientele is.

We know certain aspects, but we would like to take the research further.

•(1015)

[English]

**Mr. John Buck:** Thank you for the question, Mr. Daniel.

**Mr. Joe Daniel:** A short answer, Mr. Buck.

**Mr. John Buck:** Quickly, I would agree with everything my colleagues have shared.

I think the language of business among many business owners is business, and an interesting point is that among all of us in Quebec, a lot of our English-speaking entrepreneurs sell exclusively French-speaking products and services, and conversely, a lot of our French-speaking entrepreneurs in other parts of the country sell almost exclusively in some instances products and services that are geared for an English-speaking market. I think, yes, they are present and they are successful in many cases, and in some cases not. In some cases they require special services. We can better meet their needs, and all of us do that through services that we provide.

I think the other piece, though, and a very important piece is that we are, among us, part of what I would almost call a privileged group that recognized this economic opportunity at this point. Part of our challenge is to make sure that the rest of our community, the whole community, recognizes the added value of our linguistic minority communities. The “Canada, Bilingualism and Trade” report I mentioned earlier helps us to persuade a lot of people that, yes, there's a tremendous economic benefit here, and the Canadian plan for economic development that we talked about earlier has been quite revealing for us as we've gone outside of our communities, in some cases, to consult. We found large chambers of commerce, large enterprises, governments, in some instances, that have said that they never really contemplated the official language minority community entrepreneurs and businesses before, and they'd like to learn more about that. There's some opportunity there, I think, for all of us.

**Mr. Joe Daniel:** Thank you very much.

Further to that question, I noticed that all of you have said you have sent out questionnaires to your communities and businesses to find out information. Have you actually done any work relating to that, that actually tries to identify the gap in skills needed for your community businesses? Certainly, I've visited a number of companies in the Montreal area, and they are showing growth of something like 30% a year. Yet, when we look at the education system, that is, the francophone education system for engineers, etc., there's a very limited opportunity for people to actually graduate with technical degrees in French.

Could you comment on that?

**Mr. Robert Therrien:** In terms of skills levels, certainly we work with the province. The province does a lot of research. We don't have the capacity financially or otherwise to do that kind of research. In terms of trying to identify skills gaps and stuff like that, certainly in Saskatchewan right now, that's identified on a regular basis by the provincial government.

We try to work closely with our colleagues in the provincial government to respond to some of those needs. We also work with employers and with individuals who are looking for employment, certainly the migrant population of Canada from the east who are coming toward Saskatchewan and Alberta, and also with immigrants coming in. We do identify the needs. We do work with industry, with the provincial government, to try to respond to those needs.

•(1020)

**The Chair:** I'm going to go to Madame Sellah right now because we need to give everybody a chance to ask questions and give comments.

[*Translation*]

**Mrs. Djaouida Sellah (Saint-Bruno—Saint-Hubert, NDP):** Thank you for having me, Mr. Chair. I am not a permanent member of this committee; I am replacing one of my colleagues.

Thanks to all the witnesses here today.

My question is for Mr. Tremblay.

A few official language stakeholders have told us about the trouble they have had accessing economic development services in the minority language in their region. You raised the same problem in your brief on the subject of francophone entrepreneurs in urban areas.

Could you tell me what challenges urban minority francophone entrepreneurs face and how the federal government might mitigate those difficulties?

**Mr. Marc S. Tremblay:** Thank you. That is a very good question.

The challenge for francophone entrepreneurs in urban areas is that it is hard for them to access funding for their businesses, both for start-ups and to secure working capital and liquidity.

Some specific communities have access to several programs, such as the Canadian Youth Business Foundation, programs for women entrepreneurs and those intended for aboriginal people. It is also possible to obtain funding in rural areas from Community Futures.

However, it is very hard if you are a francophone established in an urban area. You can go to a bank, but you have to do that in English. Some banks and credit cooperatives provide French-language services, but, to file a loan application, you have to complete documents in English and, as a general rule, submit a business plan in English as well. That is a challenge for some entrepreneurs who are not sufficiently proficient in English, and it is also a challenge in day-to-day communications.

The government could facilitate matters for us by requiring the chartered banks to design French-language forms that could be submitted in French outside Quebec.

I also think it would be worthwhile to work together with the Business Development Bank of Canada to facilitate francophones' access to financing.

**Mrs. Djaouida Sellah:** Thank you for your answer.

I have another question for you, one in the same vein. You say in your brief that funding from Canada's Roadmap for Official Languages 2013-2018 has not been indexed. What are the challenges associated with the offer of economic development services for francophone communities in Alberta given the increasingly limited financial resources?

**Mr. Marc S. Tremblay:** My colleagues addressed that question.

I really want to point out, however, that we are very grateful for the contributions we receive from certain departments and the

Government of Canada. However, the situation regarding funding remains unchanged.

**Mrs. Djaouida Sellah:** Yes, that is what we have been told.

**Mr. Marc S. Tremblay:** There has been little or no increase in funding since the start, 10 years ago. Given increases in the cost of living, the reality is that we are working with approximately 20% less money than at the start. Consequently, as my colleague Robert mentioned, we cannot hire as many staff as previously. Rent is also more expensive. Everything is getting tougher.

In Alberta, we have entered into partnerships with other organizations in an attempt to make up the difference. In so doing, we have developed our entrepreneurial spirit. That moreover is what we preach: we want people to become entrepreneurs. We have established services and partnerships that have generated nearly an additional \$100,000. We have managed on our own, but we nevertheless need an increase in the enabling fund and in other funding sources.

I would like to emphasize one interesting point. One of our funding agencies wanted to penalize us for doing a good job of managing the funds advanced to us. We put the funds in a bank account that paid little interest, 1% or 2%. It wanted to penalize us because we were thus able to earn about \$1,000 more in interest over a one-year period. I find that absurd. We adopted good financial practices by investing the money, making sure that we generated a little more profit on the government's advances, and they wanted to penalize us. We ultimately negotiated and they accepted it. The fact remains that the contribution agreements provide that any interest we receive on the funds advanced may be deducted from the amount granted to us. I find that a bit ridiculous.

•(1025)

**Mrs. Djaouida Sellah:** It is utterly absurd.

I see Mr. Léger would also like to respond.

Then I will have a question for Mr. Therrien.

**Mr. Jean Léger:** I would like to go back to the way the Government of Canada could provide more support for development. We essentially work with three or four federal government departments, such as ESDC—

**Mrs. Djaouida Sellah:** Heritage—

**Mr. Jean Léger:** Less so with Canadian Heritage because it operates more in the cultural field.

We also work with Industry Canada and Citizenship and Immigration Canada. However, many more departments and agencies in the federal government as a whole work in economic development. There are at least 20.

How can interdepartmental coordination be improved within the federal government when it comes to economic development of OLMCs? If you were to make a recommendation, it should be to encourage the departments that are slightly less inclined to work with the communities to do it more, in a coordinated way and by establishing good dialogue.

**Mrs. Djaouida Sellah:** Thank you for your recommendation, Mr. Léger.

My next question is for Mr. Therrien.

In 2012, the Conservative government cancelled the Co-operative Development Initiative. What do you think has been the main impact of that on the cooperative sector in Canada as a whole, on OLMCs and, especially, on the francophone community in western Canada?

**Mr. Robert Therrien:** In our case, cooperative development is not just a matter of projects. The cancellation has definitely had a major impact on rural communities. It has deprived them of a resource that was used of course for cooperative development. Consequently, nothing related to the development process is being done. The issue is not about managing an ad hoc project, but rather about being able to provide an extended service, tools for the communities to establish cooperatives, which constitute a major economic driver in Canada, more particularly in Saskatchewan.

We therefore had to abolish a number of services. As I said earlier, when funding is cut, we, like everyone, have to make choices and eliminate services.

Even if we can offer a limited service with existing staff, that is not a development service but rather a very ad hoc service at the outset, at start-up.

**Mrs. Djaouida Sellah:** If funding is cut, you cancel services. That is logical.

**Mr. Robert Therrien:** Yes.

**Mrs. Djaouida Sellah:** Thank you very much.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

[English]

Mr. Williamson, please.

[Translation]

**Mr. John Williamson (New Brunswick Southwest, CPC):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thanks to all the witnesses appearing here today.

My questions are for Mr. Tremblay and Mr. Therrien.

You spoke at length about francophones living in your provinces, Alberta and Saskatchewan. I would like to know a little more about the economy. Why do those francophones settle in your provinces? I imagine it is so that they can work. In what kind of industries do they work? What is the economic situation of francophones in those two provinces?

Mr. Therrien, you said that the economy was very strong, and you, Mr. Tremblay, that employers needed employees. Mr. Tremblay, you also said you would like workers to move to your province with their families. I come from New Brunswick, and I would prefer to have the workers from there who go to your province to come back to us. I imagine Mr. Godin will agree with me. We could probably offer them the same job opportunities in our province.

• (1030)

**Mr. Marc S. Tremblay:** I understand the difficulty, of course. If we welcome your workers and families to our province, that may cause a problem in yours. The fact remains, however, that your workers need work. If they stay in your province and have no work, they will look for and seize job opportunities elsewhere.

I believe that Air Canada and WestJet are businesses that employ the most workers from New Brunswick and Quebec who shuttle back and forth. Some of the people who settle temporarily in Alberta, say for 5 or 10 years, will make their fortunes and may one day return to their home province with their wealth. What is important is that, if the families follow the workers, their children will attend French-language schools. That will help enrich the francophone community in Alberta and that is what we would like.

Why do people choose to settle in Alberta? As you mentioned, it is because there are jobs there, jobs that pay quite well.

What industries do these francophone workers wind up in? Many obviously find jobs in the energy industry and in related services. The hotel and construction industries also attract a lot of workers. In short, francophone workers essentially occupy jobs in the energy, construction and tourism sectors.

**Mr. John Williamson:** Thank you very much, Mr. Tremblay.

Mr. Therrien, what do you think?

**Mr. Robert Therrien:** In the case of Saskatchewan, which these days is often nicknamed "the new Alberta", the industries are similar to those in Alberta.

There is a lot of work in construction. The mining sector is also very big in the province. A lot of mining development projects are under way or should start up in the next few years, in the potash sector, for example.

Why Saskatchewan? For years, Saskatchewan witnessed an exodus of its population, more particularly its young people. Like other Canadian provinces, we want to keep our young people at home.

In the past, young people left for lack of jobs. The population of Canada is much more mobile today than it has ever been, and that includes youth and labour in general. Workers today have an opportunity to settle in other parts of Canada with their families, to discover them and to work there.

It is not out of the question that they may return one day to live in their home province. As Mr. Tremblay said, I believe that those workers are only passing through Saskatchewan or Alberta and that they may one day go back and live in their province. I believe the main objective is above all to create wealth in Canada and to provide a higher standard of living for everyone. In this way, we are creating quite a strong pan-Canadian economy. The important thing is to understand that workers go wherever jobs are available. We have to think that these workers will probably want to return to their province one day once circumstances have changed.

**Mr. John Williamson:** Absolutely. We in the east are delighted with your great success, particularly in Saskatchewan. Ten years ago, Saskatchewan was in the same situation as the Atlantic provinces. All that has changed today thanks to energy, shale gas and all that. I congratulate you on that.

**Mr. Robert Therrien:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** Mr. Godin now has the floor.

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

Mr. Tremblay, something you said struck a chord with me. Air Canada and WestJet may be making money, but grandparents like to have their grandchildren at home.

**Mr. Marc S. Tremblay:** Obviously.

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** I know about divided families. I come from a family of 11 children, of whom I am the 11<sup>th</sup>. In 1972, not one of us was still in New Brunswick apart from my mother and father. I can guarantee you there were a lot of tears. That is what happens when families are divided. I know, we experienced it and we are still experiencing it. I have nephews and nieces that I do not even know. That is the problem.

Today, people are mobile and can travel. From the human standpoint, I would like families to be able to at least stay together. People who go and work in the west work 14-day schedules then go home for 7 days or else work for 20 days and go back home for 10. My schedule is four days on and three days off. I can tell you that it is nice to go home. Acadie is beautiful and I do not want to lose it.

However, I do not want to spend all my time talking about that. I just want to send a message. If people decide to stay in your province, they will do so voluntarily. We should hope they are not forced to do so.

Coming back to the business at hand, we are conducting a study and we need your recommendations. I would like to hear from all of you briefly. What recommendations reflecting your needs would you like to see in the report?

I am not trying to criticize the Conservatives, but there have been budget cuts. And yet you say that every dollar you spend generates three. That should wake people up.

•(1035)

[English]

You spend \$1 and get \$3 back in the economy.

[Translation]

With your support, what should the government do to stimulate economic development in the official language minority communities?

On that matter, Mr. Buck,

[English]

I want to thank you for the statement you made. You said we could work together.

[Translation]

The official languages are an asset. Some countries have as many as six official languages and they do not fight over the matter. We have only two in Canada. There are two founding peoples, along with aboriginal people, and it seems that every day we look for ways to fight among ourselves rather than to be creative, to work together and to respect our cultures. All that is an asset.

On that point, I want to thank you for your comment, Mr. Buck.

Now I would like to hear you tell me what you would like to see in the report.

**The Chair:** Mr. Therrien, do you have any comments?

**Mr. Robert Therrien:** I can begin.

I made some recommendations in my presentation. I suggested that the provinces join forces in a way. A great deal of funding comes from the federal government, but not as much support comes from the provinces. For example, Saskatchewan is much more open today than it was in the past. However, that has not resulted in funding for development assistance, not to mention that the value-added of bilingualism is not used either.

Furthermore, when the provinces receive cash transfers, we must ensure that francophone communities are involved in the process, that they are part of it and that follow-up is done to support development of the communities. Transfers have been made in education and other fields.

Some economic initiatives have previously been introduced jointly by the federal and provincial governments, and it was very difficult to obtain funding. The money was allocated to anglophones. When we submitted projects based on the needs of our communities, they did not meet funding criteria.

So that is an area where the federal government could support us.

**Mr. Marc S. Tremblay:** It is hard to identify one recommendation or point in particular. Based on discussions with and surveys of entrepreneurs, if there was only one recommendation to make, I believe it would be that a loan fund should be established. That fund could help entrepreneurs in our province buy businesses, bolster their working capital or start up a new business.

According to survey results, funding is often one of the priorities of our francophone entrepreneurs. This loan fund could be established with the support of institutions or departments such as Western Economic Diversification or the Business Development Bank. Perhaps they could facilitate services to the francophone community in partnership with us.

BDC is already in Alberta and everywhere else in the country. It has several offices. We are close to it and it is involved in our activities. However, I am not sure it can offer service in French or accept business plans or financing applications in French, as I mentioned.

[English]

**Mr. John Buck:** Thank you for the question, Mr. Godin, and the kind words.

You've really teed it up for us in terms of an opportunity here to share something with you. I think there are some easy practical ones which we wouldn't want to make the key recommendation. For example, I think the enabling fund is a very clear one, very straightforward and very easy to make as a recommendation. Input from all stakeholders is very key as one of the areas. The research element as well is very key.

A more challenging one and a more fundamental one, and I think the one which members of the committee should consider, is that the Government of Canada must recognize the considerable and undervalued potential of Canada's official language minority communities as engines for economic growth and job creation.

I'll come back to the statement I made earlier that investments in economic and human resource development within Canada's OLMCs should not be recognized as merely a matter of legislative obligation.

This is an important point, but rather to the contrary, it's important to recognize it as a contribution to Canada's long-term prosperity.

It's a big recommendation, but I think as politicians and policy-makers, you're in a position to make a statement that should influence and cascade everywhere else through the government.

• (1040)

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Jean Léger:** I definitely want to add to what Mr. Buck said.

Federal government investments are currently achieving great results. We emphasized their economic impact in our communities: \$100 million, 4,000 jobs and 20,000 businesses supported. I think we have to preserve that funding for networks, people who work with our communities and our private sector.

In addition, we have to ensure that federal government support for the communities increases, that is to say that it does not just come

from three departments, but rather from the federal government as a whole.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Are there any other questions or comments?

Mr. Gourde, you have the floor.

**Mr. Jacques Gourde:** I want to thank all the witnesses who have appeared this morning. It was really very interesting and relevant.

You were very well prepared. If there is any information that you want to add, you can send it to us in writing. This study is very important to us. The more witnesses we hear from, the more we seem to increase the scope of the study. It is going really well.

**The Chair:** Thanks to everyone.

[*English*]

Thank you very much for your testimony.

We will adjourn the meeting.

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