



HOUSE OF COMMONS
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES
CANADA

Standing Committee on Official Languages

LANG • NUMBER 024 • 2nd SESSION • 41st PARLIAMENT

EVIDENCE

Tuesday, May 13, 2014

—
Chair

The Honourable Michael Chong

Standing Committee on Official Languages

Tuesday, May 13, 2014

•(0845)

[Translation]

The Chair (Hon. Michael Chong (Wellington—Halton Hills, CPC)): Welcome to the 24th meeting of the Standing Committee on Official Languages, on Tuesday, May 13th, 2014.

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

We have with us today Mr. Dubé, City Manager of the City of Moncton, and Mr. Caron, President of the Collège communautaire du Nouveau-Brunswick.

Welcome.

[English]

I think Mr. Colford is en route, so we'll begin with our other witnesses first, but before we do....

Madame St-Denis.

[Translation]

Ms. Lise St-Denis (Saint-Maurice—Champlain, Lib.): I would like to move a motion, Mr. Chair. Can I do that now so that it can be voted on right away? What would you like me to do?

[English]

The Chair: What is your motion?

[Translation]

Ms. Lise St-Denis: The motion reads as follows:

That the Committee undertakes a study on the impact of budget cuts on Radio-Canada's programming for rural and urban francophone communities across the country.

[...]

The Chair: You cannot move the motion now. This constitutes notice of motion.

[English]

We'll take.... Oh, she did give notice? Okay.

[Translation]

Ms. Lise St-Denis: Yes, I submitted notice last week.

[English]

The Chair: You did. Sorry.

We have a witness in front of us, so we're not going to consider it right now. I didn't set aside time on the orders of the day to consider the motion. We could set aside the last 15 minutes of today's meeting to debate your motion.

Ms. Lise St-Denis: Okay. Perfect.

The Chair: My apologies for not putting it on the orders of the day.

We'll stop our witness testimony at 10:30, and we'll go to the consideration of your motion at that time, Madame St-Denis.

I see our last witness, Mr. Colford, has appeared. Mr. Colford is the president of the New Brunswick Federation of Labour. Welcome, Mr. Colford.

Mr. Godin.

[Translation]

Mr. Yvon Godin (Acadie—Bathurst, NDP): Mr. Chair, normally, when it's not on the agenda, we do not do it, but given the major cuts imposed on Radio-Canada, I am in favour of stopping our work 15 minutes early. Indeed, I am certain that the government will want to have a study done on this situation and on the effects that it will have on minority communities in Canada.

I am in favour of the motion.

[English]

The Chair: Are there any other interventions on this? Okay.

We will begin with an opening statement from Mr. Caron.

[Translation]

Mr. Caron, you have the floor.

Mr. Armand Caron (President, Conseil des gouverneurs, Collège communautaire du Nouveau-Brunswick): To the Chair, Mr. Chong, the Vice-Chair, Mr. Godin, who is also the member of Parliament for Acadie—Bathurst, Ms. Vice-Chair St-Denis and members of the committee, good morning.

First of all, I would like to thank you for the invitation to appear today before the Standing Committee on Official Languages of the House of Commons. I am pleased to appear as President of the Board of Governors of the Collège communautaire du Nouveau-Brunswick, or the CCNB. What's more, the theme of the economic situation of official languages minority communities is of particular interest to us.

I do not have to convince you of the importance of action to support official languages in Canada on the development of minority communities. In the field of education in New Brunswick, that action supports a number of initiatives at all levels, initiatives that contribute to the vitality and economic development of our communities.

I will start by briefly describing our training institution. I will provide some figures that show our economic contribution to the province, and I will speak to the challenges that we face in fulfilling our mandate. I will finish with some possible solutions and recommendations that could help us meet these challenges with our partners.

The CCNB is a technical and professional training institution that, for the last 40 years, has contributed to the development of the Acadian and francophone population in the only officially bilingual province in the country.

Our community represents one third of the 750,000 residents of the province. However, neither the New Brunswick Official Languages Act, the Act Recognizing the Equality of the Two Official Linguistic Communities in New Brunswick, or the inclusion of the principle of the equality of the two linguistic communities in New Brunswick in the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms have provided, in actual fact, for equality and the desired level of economic development.

Recently, in 2010, the New Brunswick Community Colleges Act recognized the CCNB as an independent French-language college, replacing the bilingual structure that had previously been in place.

The CCNB's mission is to contribute to the development of individuals and of the Acadian and francophone community by offering training programs focused on skills that meet the needs of the labour market, by supporting applied research that stimulates innovation, and through active engagement in our communities. Our five campuses offer more than 92 technical and professional training programs which reflect the needs of the market.

In 2012-2013, the CCNB's regular and continuing education programs served more than 8,560 students. Of those, 86% found a job in the year following their graduation.

Economic Modeling Specialists International recently undertook a study on the impact that the CCNB has in the province. In 2012-2013, the CCNB employed over 700 people and had a budget of \$60 million. According to the study, the overall contribution of the CCNB and its students to the economy of New Brunswick was \$400.5 million, representing roughly 1.4% of the province's GDP. The payroll was \$44 million. The CCNB represented, to provincial taxpayers, a return on investment of 3.6%. Every dollar spent led to the following results: a return of \$4.50 for students in terms of lifetime income, and \$5.40 to society due to additional provincial revenues and savings to social spending.

The socioeconomic situation is troubling. In 2012, professor Maurice Beaudin, an economist at the Université de Moncton, published a study on labour market trends and the need for labour force training in northern New Brunswick. It showed that more than 70% of the Acadian and francophone population of the province lives in this largely rural area. It also showed that the economy of northern New Brunswick is currently faced with demographic decline, high levels of unemployment, and low literacy and education levels among the population. Although good jobs are available, businesses often have a hard time filling them.

With the exception of our Dieppe campus, which benefits from a better economic climate in the south-east of the province, the

CCNB's other campuses are located in northern New Brunswick, in Bathurst, Campbellton, Edmundston and on the Acadian Peninsula. This is a resource region where the economy is based on mines, forestry, peat, and fishing. Major structural changes to the economy over the last 20 years mean that the region is currently in economic transition.

● (0850)

As a result we have seen a number of troubling trends. These include an exodus of young people from northern New Brunswick to the western provinces and to urban areas in southern New Brunswick. There is also the ageing population, which is one of the main reasons for smaller cohorts of skilled workers available to the labour market. A third trend linked to education means that we have low literacy and graduation levels, as well as a high number of individuals who are unemployed and who do not have a diploma or a certificate.

Given this context, the Conseil économique du Nouveau-Brunswick has been warning for several years that regional employers are facing a shortage of skilled workers, representing one of the biggest challenges to their development. This shortage includes not only specialized knowledge, but also skills like adaptability and the ability to work as part of a team.

I will now provide some recommendations for action that could be taken.

It is clear that, as things stand right now, northern New Brunswick is not well prepared for structural changes to the economy. However, the CCNB sees a number of possibilities for training, institutional development and innovation.

Given the CCNB's major role in the New Brunswick Economic Development Action Plan and the New Brunswick Labour Force and Skills Development Strategy 2013-2016, the CCNB is well placed to offer recommendations and suggest positive actions.

It follows that it is essential for the CCNB to increase the skill level of those who are untrained or undertrained, as well as for those who are unemployed or underemployed. The CCNB is ready to play its role in collaboration with major industry stakeholders, the community, governments and other training institutions.

Meanwhile, industry stakeholders wish to see more added value in the natural resource sector. Promising projects include secondary and tertiary processing of natural resources and industrial manufacturing. This is particularly true for megaprojects and large industrial sites.

Working in cooperation with the province, the federal government can directly contribute to local economic development through investments in several sectors. First of all, there needs to be more funding for applied research and innovation at the post-secondary level, and particularly at the college level. Second, the government must invest in infrastructure projects under the Building Canada 2014 program. For the CCNB, this means investing in maintaining our current infrastructure and adding space to adequately meet our training and research needs. Third, the government must support efforts to recruit students internationally, as well as student and staff mobility. Fourth, there must be adequate funding for a system of loans and bursaries that are tailored to the needs of students. Fifth, there must be funding for business internships. Sixth, there must be funding for health care training in French. We already receive funding from the Consortium national de formation en santé, the CNFS. We also rely on funding from the Official Languages in Education Program administered by Canadian Heritage. Finally, we look forward to the establishment of federal institutions in the regions.

In conclusion, it is clear to us that higher literacy levels and lower school dropout rates in our province would allow the CCNB to make a greater contribution to the economic success of our province, as our pool of potential recruits for post-secondary education would be much larger.

Because of dropping birth rates, these recruitment challenges will become even greater in the coming years if nothing is done to keep young people in school and to allow us to reach a larger proportion of our undereducated population.

This will only be possible if we define and better control the idea of access to education in such a way as to reduce financial barriers. It is essential that we work in cooperation with all of our partners to meet the needs of Acadian and francophone communities. It is essential that the provincial government, which is responsible for education, make a culture of learning and ongoing training an interdepartmental priority, with the support of the federal government through various programs designed to support official languages minority communities throughout the country.

Thank you for the invitation to provide our views. I wish the Standing Committee on Official Languages nothing but success with its consultations.

• (0855)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Caron.

We will now hear from Mr. Dubé, from the City of Moncton.

Mr. Jacques Dubé (City Manager, City of Moncton): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thanks to all of you.

[*English*]

Serving in elected office is one of life's highest callings, in my opinion. I want to thank all of you for your service to Canada and to Canadians from one end of the country to the other.

Also, I particularly want to say hi to my two good friends, John Williamson and Yvon Godin, who are from New Brunswick. I've

had the pleasure of working closely with both of these people in my career. I'm always glad to see them, as well as all of you.

Thank you very much.

[*Translation*]

Thank you for this opportunity.

The City of Moncton is proud to have become Canada's first officially bilingual municipality in 2002. This distinction allows us to experience outstanding economic expansion since the severe crash in the 1980s when CN, one of our largest employers, closed up shop.

• (0900)

[*English*]

Mr. Chairman, when the CN shop closed, an aggressive economic development agenda was pursued under the direction of highly motivated and committed political and community leaders. We pulled ourselves up by the bootstraps and got to work, starting with a local economic development summit that gathered these leaders and set the foundation for Moncton's future. In fact, someone involved at the time told me recently that bilingualism was the first marketable attribute identified, and upon which we could rebuild.

Over the past three decades, New Brunswick's—and Moncton's—economic successes can often be linked to an available skilled and bilingual workforce. Clearly, other factors also come into play, but what we've done rather well is create an opportunity by promoting the talents of our bilingual residents.

To sustain such growth over the years is no easy feat. While some may attribute that success to luck, for the most part it cannot happen by magic or by chance alone. Moncton, as a community, has embraced bilingualism, and there is an overarching realization that learning two languages is an advantage. It expands horizons, opens doors, and encourages collaboration and cultural exchanges.

The sheer hundreds of children registered in the French immersion programs offered by our local anglophone school district, as well as the numerous children born from exogamous families that are registered in our francophone school district, demonstrate that parental buy-in to the value of bilingualism in our region is important.

[*Translation*]

Over 50% of our population speaks both English and French. But achieving bilingualism is never a done deal; we cannot rest on our laurels.

We have a significant percentage of francophones in Moncton: approximately 35% of the population cite French as their first language and approximately 50% speak both languages. Their status as a minority linguistic group is very real. The municipality is well aware of the ongoing efforts required to nurture the development of French in Moncton.

Ever since the Congrès mondial acadien was held in Moncton in 1994, local francophones have shown their commitment. Their pride shines through. Moncton hosted the Sommet de la Francophonie with resounding success in 1999, and other renowned events such as the Frye Festival, the only international bilingual literary festival in Canada, and the largest one in Atlantic Canada, are gaining in scope.

The francophone community is therefore putting a great deal of effort into ensuring its cultural and economic vitality. But what about us, as a municipality?

Some claim that bilingualism or linguistic duality is very costly in this time of deficits and budget cuts. The real question we should be asking is: can we allow ourselves to abandon the very asset that sets us apart in an increasingly competitive world? The City of Moncton sees the so-called costs of bilingualism rather as investments.

Of course, we do have certain legislative obligations, but it is not mandatory for us to hire francophone performers for large-scale community celebrations such as Canada Day. We are pleased to aim for a cultural balance that pays tribute to our two main linguistic groups, to continue offering our residents opportunities for a wide variety of exciting experiences.

Establishing the Université de Moncton in 1963 undoubtedly contributed to the success of francophones in this minority setting. Generations of Acadians have received a high-quality post-secondary education. Thanks to the harmonious coexistence of the two linguistic groups, francophiles from other parts of Canada and around the world are drawn to Moncton to study, and to settle there permanently.

[English]

Now, Mr. Chairman, our regional economy certainly benefits from large francophone institutions or employers such as Radio-Canada, the Georges-L.-Dumont University Hospital, and the publicly traded Invescor.

Assomption Vie specializes in financial and insurance services, employs some 200 people, as well as over 7,000 brokers across Canada and in the United States, and has recently expanded, as I say, into western Canada and the U.S. even more than before. That's not to mention that they also built the city's only skyscraper. We're proud of that, only having one.

Voices: Oh, oh!

Mr. Jacques Dubé: Another exciting example is ShiftCentral, a technology- and Internet-based market intelligence agency that was founded by a francophone Acadian entrepreneur in 2000. Based in Moncton, the company has since expanded to open an office in Boston to serve the ever-growing number of U.S. clients.

The bottom line is that language is not the deciding factor regarding investment. If it's profitable and the business plan is solid, it will succeed.

Moncton is well positioned, thanks to our location and bilingual nature, to support centralized government back-office tasks in administration, for example, or finance, and to become a key player with the launch of the Canada-Europe free trade agreement, CETA. Also, of course, we are fortunate to be home to a thriving sub-industry relating to translation services as well.

In closing, as a municipality we recognize that there is always room for improvement, and our newly created Bilingualism in Moncton Committee is looking into how we can improve the overall experience for residents. For your review at your leisure, I left with

the clerk a brochure in terms of our promotion of bilingual signage in our community.

Mr. Chairman, Monctonians are generally well served in both official languages whether visiting a public or a private enterprise, as our environment can be better defined as bilingual rather than a clear-cut English-French dynamic. Some of our most successful entrepreneurs have led the cultural shift in support of bilingualism, people like Larry Nelson of Lounsbury, an anglophone who has led the charge in making sure that Moncton is bilingual and offers services in French and English.

The private sector appreciates our collaborative approach to bilingualism, for example when creating awareness with investors on the linguistic composition of our city and our region. The city's philosophy is to lead by example, which means that we encourage and value bilingualism, and by extension, the use of French in cultural and business environments.

In the end, born-in-Moncton residents and newcomers alike are not only proud of our community's bilingual nature, but they recognize its numerous economic advantages.

● (0905)

[Translation]

Thank you. I will be happy to answer your questions.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Dubé.

[English]

Now we have Mr. Colford, who is the president of New Brunswick Federation of Labour.

Mr. Patrick Colford (President, New Brunswick Federation of Labour): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

The New Brunswick Federation of Labour welcomes the opportunity to present to the Standing Committee on Official Languages and share labour's view on the economic situation of Canada's minority linguistic communities.

Since our foundation in 1913, the NBFL has been New Brunswick's largest central labour body. Today we represent 40,000 members, 18 different unions, 378 locals, and seven district labour councils located throughout the province. Virtually all industrial and public sector unions in the province have locals affiliated with the New Brunswick Federation of Labour. This wide diversity in membership obligates the NBFL to address issues and concerns impacting workers, their families, and their communities.

I'm very proud to say that the NBFL is a bilingual organization as guaranteed in our constitution. All our documents are published in both official languages and translation is provided at executive councils, conferences, and conventions. We believe it is essential in ensuring full participation from both linguistic groups so we can fully accomplish our mandate to advance the economic and social welfare of workers in New Brunswick.

I must also add that I currently sit on the Literacy Coalition of New Brunswick. Literacy is a real problem in our province, with 60% of our population over the age of 16 who do not have the literacy skills they need to function in everyday life. Of course this has a direct impact on their employability and the province's economic growth.

Figures from StatsCan shows that francophones are particularly affected with 66% who have difficulty understanding basic written material compared to 50% of anglophones. The literacy coalition was notified verbally that as of July, all our federal funding will be cut. We have yet to receive this notice in writing. This funding represents 90% of the literacy coalition's funding.

As pointed out by other witnesses before the committee, francophones in northern New Brunswick are facing particular socio-economic challenges. The NBFL fears that those challenges will only get worse with the employment insurance reforms of 2012. The seasonal nature of employment in New Brunswick, particularly in the north, is simply part of the economy. It's very important to clarify that the jobs are seasonal and not the workers.

People who work in natural resources, tourism, and some government departments are laid off by their employers every year for a period of time because there is simply no work for them. These workers would rather work all year round, but the seasonal nature of work forces them to rely on EI for part of the year. With the reforms of 2012, they are now classified as frequent claimants, making it much harder for them to qualify for EI benefits.

As previous presenters pointed out, although francophones represent 32% of New Brunswick's population, in 2011 they accounted for 40% of the labour force in primary sectors that include agriculture, forestry, and fishing. All the seasonal work is very instrumental for the province's economic growth. If people working in those industries cannot qualify for EI, they will have to go elsewhere to work.

The last census showed that New Brunswick's population grew to 751,000 in 2011 from 730,000 in 2006. However, figures released in September 2013 by Stats Canada showed that New Brunswick's population dropped back down to 750,000, while the population of Alberta grew by more than 200,000.

All these facts taken into consideration, there's certainly a very strong possibility that the new EI regulations contributed to the decline in population and that this decline will only continue. The Atlantic Premiers' Panel on Impacts of Changes to Employment Insurance is currently studying the impacts of the 2012 EI reforms, and we are impatiently waiting for this report.

● (0910)

Another area of concern for the New Brunswick Federation of Labour is the wage gap that still exists between men and women in the province. This is a human rights issue and an equality issue. The hourly wage gap between women and men is 11.7%. In other words, women in New Brunswick earn 11.7% less than men. Furthermore, 67% of the women in the New Brunswick labour force work in the private sector where there is no pay equity legislation.

Although we don't have statistics on how this affects francophone women, we do know that in New Brunswick 35% of francophone

women versus 25% of anglophone females have less than a high school education, and 23% of francophone females versus 30% of anglophone females completed high school.

In 2006, the federal government reduced Status of Women Canada's budget and changed its mandate to prevent them from funding research and advocacy work. The New Brunswick Coalition for Pay Equity was told in April 2010 that it will not be receiving project funding from Status of Women Canada.

Unfortunately, many groups that advocate for women's rights across Canada were also victims of the funding cuts by our federal government. The cuts made it that much harder for the New Brunswick Coalition for Pay Equity to do its work and lobby for legislation that would close the wage gap and give all women in New Brunswick justice in their workplaces.

In closing, I once again want to thank your committee for giving the New Brunswick Federation of Labour the opportunity to make a brief presentation, and I hope that you will take great consideration of our concerns and make the proper recommendations to government.

Thank you very much.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. Colford.

[*Translation*]

We will now move to questions and comments. We have one hour and fifteen minutes.

Mr. Godin, you have the floor.

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

I would like to welcome our friends from New Brunswick who are here with us today. My colleagues asked me earlier if I wanted to ask all of the questions, given that all of the witnesses are from New Brunswick. I replied that we work as a team, and that I wouldn't let them off the hook that easily.

It is a pleasure to have you with us today as we continue our important study. We all agreed that it should be done.

I will start with you, Mr. Caron. You have a lot of experience in the field of education. You were once the director of the Shippagan campus of the Université de Moncton. You are very familiar with northeastern New Brunswick.

My questions will be for all of you. We have an excellent group of witnesses here today. You represent many different spheres of activity: colleges, universities, municipalities, and workers.

Frankly, I have to admit that I am very jealous of the city of Moncton. People leave northern New Brunswick, emptying our rural areas, to go and work there.

For those who might not be aware, I should note that Mr. Dubé comes from the Beresford area. He once participated in an international swimming competition between Grande-Anse and Paspébiac. He is obviously an excellent swimmer. I have known him for a long time. He has represented our local municipalities.

I will now turn to the important questions. What more can the college do? How could the government help colleges train our students?

Labour force mobility is a reality in today's world. I don't like talking about this, in a way, but, even if we don't want our workers to leave, the situation is what it is. Some young people do their training and then leave to work in the West. Their schedule is to work for 14 days and then come home for 10 days. Our young people receive an education at home, but our regional economy is unable to offer them a job.

What more could the government do?

This question is also for the representative from the New Brunswick Federation of Labour. The government used to offer good training programs, through employment insurance for example. Workers could take a literacy program, for example, while they were receiving benefits. They did not pay to participate in the program.

How can the government contribute to training our youth so that they can succeed in the labour market?

I will start with you, Mr. Caron. I would then like to hear Mr. Colford's comments.

• (0915)

Mr. Armand Caron: Thank you, Mr. Godin.

In fact, a good number of young people continue their studies after graduating from high school, at both the college and university levels. As you just mentioned, our bigger challenge is that young people in rural areas often do not finish high school. They do not have a basic level of training. The CCNB would like to offer programs to help all of these people finish their education. I agree with you on that.

A study conducted by Professor Beaudin revealed that, over the last 10 years, more than 142,000 jobs created in Atlantic Canada required post-secondary training, while only 4,000 jobs were created that did not require a high school diploma. This means that we need to continue to educate and instruct our citizens.

You talked about programs to achieve this. Over the last two years, we have repeatedly asked the government of New Brunswick for funding that would allow us to reach people where they live, because we know they will not necessarily come knocking at our door. Our institution would appreciate help in guiding them. In some cases, they are undereducated and require guidance to help them identify which career to pursue or how to change careers. You know as well as I do that the economic foundations of northern New Brunswick have profoundly changed in recent years. The result is that many people need to change careers. This is where the provincial and federal governments could help institutions like ours.

That deals with the people who need an education.

It is also clear that the CCNB also needs support to help businesses that wish to innovate. We know that innovation will be key to success in the future. With that in mind, as I mentioned in my presentation, we have great hopes for funding for applied research. This is a new mission that the CCNB has taken on to help businesses.

At the end of the day, however, a large part of our population needs to go back to school.

• (0920)

[English]

Mr. Yvon Godin: I'd like to hear Mr. Colford on that.

You were talking about the employment insurance. You were talking about the 35% of francophones compared to 25% of anglophones. I mean, you said it, too, in the north most of the jobs are seasonal work. I always said that you don't get a lobster on Yonge Street in Toronto. The cod fish, you don't get on Sainte-Catherine Street in Montreal. It's in the Baie-des-Chaleurs.

The people who left school to work in those fish plants.... At that time you didn't need any education to take a herring and put it in the box, or you didn't need grade 12 to do the lobster industry and all of that.

What can they do, maybe through the EI, to help workers who are on EI to get literacy programs? Do you think it would be a good idea if the governments slacked off a little bit and said, "Here, we'll take more money from the employment insurance and instead of paying the debt with it"—as I've said many times, it's stealing the money from the workers—"we'll do something with it to put the people back to work", maybe through the college, for something like secondary and tertiary processing, stuff like that.

Do you think that would be the way the government should go?

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Godin.

Go ahead, Monsieur Colford.

Mr. Patrick Colford: I guess I would agree with that. I grew up in the north, and it's true that most people don't have a high school education. It would be smart and wise, and as I said, with regard to francophone women in particular, a vast majority don't have a high school education. So moneys need to be there for extended education. But I think moneys need to go a little further also, given the fact that we need an industrial strategy in the north. We need to have a plan, and we don't have that plan.

I went through the apprenticeship program, and I had those opportunities given to me 15 years ago. Those opportunities aren't there in the grand scheme, and I think it's because we have a north-versus-south mentality in our province, and we have an "I'm going out west" mentality.

Just last year I talked to a graduating class in Blackville, a very small community, and the question was “what are you doing after school?” The vast majority were going out west to seek employment. My question to them then was, “You’re going out west? What do you plan on doing?” Their response was, “I don’t know. There are jobs out west. There are no jobs here.” So a lot of our young people are going out there, starting their apprenticeship programs, and working their blocks, but they can’t come home until those blocks are completed and they are journeypersons. That’s a big issue.

The maritime provinces have an agreement that if you have a second block, you can go to Nova Scotia, and they’ll recognize that. At this point, all that’s doing is taking our young people and our workers out of New Brunswick once again. It’s not solving our problem.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Monsieur Gourde.

[*Translation*]

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

I would like to thank the witnesses for being here this morning.

Mr. Caron, you have spoken a great deal about education. You have said that in New Brunswick, the jobs of the future will require post-secondary education.

Do people there realize the extent to which it is important to encourage our young people to finish at least their high school studies and maybe study for three, four, or five years at the college level in order to fill those jobs? If not, who will fill the jobs? Will they be filled by people from outside the province?

Mr. Armand Caron: Thank you.

We talk a lot about training our people so that they can get a job. The strange thing is that there are actually a lot of jobs. This morning I was reading an article in *L’Acadie Nouvelle*, a francophone newspaper in New Brunswick, about an employment summit currently taking place in New Brunswick. It said that over the next 10 years it is possible that 40,000 job openings requiring certain qualifications will not be filled. This is not only because of a lack of training. We must ensure that the necessary training is provided so that jobs left open by retiring workers can be filled.

In answer to your question, I would say that people realize that the economy of New Brunswick is changing, particularly in the northern part of the province, which relies heavily on natural resources. Today, businesses are not just in competition with each other, but with businesses from around the world. They need to innovate more and acquire more skills, among other things.

There also needs to be a culture shift in the population. Let me explain. In the past, when young people finished high school, if they did well, they went to university; if they did less well, they went to college. Today, people are realizing that at the national level—and it’s the same in our region—a balanced society like ours needs as many trades people and technologists as university graduates. Even in our high schools, the culture needs to change.

Earlier, Mr. Godin asked how we could help those who do not have enough training to get ahead. I think that they will need additional support. We cannot simply tell them to go and get educated and something will come along. They need someone to help guide them. This is where community colleges can offer guidance throughout the training process. Today people, especially young people, are realizing that they will not have a livelihood or a career if they do not continue their education after high school.

• (0925)

Mr. Jacques Gourde: You said that 40,000 jobs will have to be filled over the next 10 years. Is the fact that your province is officially bilingual an advantage for young people? Will almost all of these jobs be bilingual? If not, how many of them will be bilingual?

Mr. Armand Caron: I do not have any figures for that. Obviously, it can vary from region to region within the province. At the very least, I do not believe that bilingual job-seekers will be at a disadvantage. In my opinion, language is less of an issue than skills.

Mr. Jacques Gourde: In your region, is bilingualism a stepping stone in certain fields? If so, in which ones?

Mr. Armand Caron: The evidence suggests that our bilingual population helps the province attract businesses.

Mr. Jacques Gourde: My next question is for Mr. Colford.

I would like to know if the labour movement also supports young people by sending the message that it is in their best interest to invest three or four years of their lives, particularly when they are between 16 and 22 years old, to acquire the skills that they will need to have a better quality of life and, what’s more, to stay in their province. When those jobs become available, the province will need a skilled labour force. Sooner or later, employers will require these skills.

[*English*]

Mr. Patrick Colford: I guess the quick answer is that there are certain avenues there, but as we all know in this room, post-secondary education isn’t for everybody. I think that’s where we lack. The government has a real focus on getting people to university and getting them trained in those fields, but it goes back to what I was saying before with the industrial strategy. Some people are made to work with their hands and they need those apprenticeship programs. They need that boost, that education, even if it’s just a GED, something very basic, something very simple.

There are some programs there, but they do not go far enough by any means.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jacques Gourde: When it comes to training programs for manual workers, whether they be construction workers, plumbers or from other trades, you are right to say that the work requires tremendous manual dexterity. However, today’s tools are so high tech that these two worlds need to come together.

Do 10th graders in New Brunswick have access to trades training or must they exile themselves to other provinces in order to get it? Is it a matter of critical mass that explains why such training is not offered in the province?

• (0930)

[*English*]

Mr. Patrick Colford: I think we have the critical mass by all means, but I don't think that it's happening. That being said, take a mechanic, for example. To be a mechanic today takes a higher level of skill in computer knowledge and technological knowledge than maybe 30 years ago.

So, yes, I think the community colleges are doing a wonderful job, but some people just don't have that option available to them for any or some unforeseen reason. I do know that the Province of New Brunswick has started a program they call NBTAP, which is the New Brunswick Teen Apprenticeship Program. It's focused in Saint John at this point. They hope to expand it.

The programs are in place to a certain extent, but again they do not go far enough. There's so much more that needs to be done, especially for people in the north. We have people who leave the north for their education and they don't go back. The reason they don't go back goes back again to the industrial strategy. There's nothing there for them anymore and that's where the real problem lies.

The running joke that we hear a lot in Canada is sometimes the government forgets that there are things east of Montreal. Sometimes in the province of New Brunswick the government forgets there's anything north of Fredericton. So it's going to take a change, it really is.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Madame St-Denis.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Lise St-Denis: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Issues such as the dropout rate, literacy, the situation of women in the labour market and the lack of knowledge are certainly serious, but in my view, they are issues of provincial jurisdiction. We must turn to the provinces if we want to see programs that will improve the situation. Consequently, my questions will not deal with that topic, even though the state of affairs seems a little alarming.

Mr. Caron, I would like to know if your college participates in the trades modernization effort in traditional sectors, such as forestry and fisheries. Is the college devoting any effort to modernizing the skills of future workers in these sectors, their computer skills for example?

Mr. Armand Caron: Ms. St-Denis, the mission of the Collège communautaire du Nouveau-Brunswick, in essence, is to meet training needs. If those needs evolve, we must adjust as a result.

The Collège communautaire du Nouveau-Brunswick works in partnership with the industry to fully understand what the changing needs of the market are. Ours is a resources heavy region, whether we are talking about mines, the forests or fisheries. That world is always evolving and we must adapt our training to meet both current and future needs.

I must tell you that we do not claim to be going it alone. We must work in partnership with other institutions. In the field of research, knowledge transfer must be updated, but we must also increase knowledge. That's where applied research has a major role to play. As such, the Collège communautaire du Nouveau-Brunswick works in partnership with the Université de Moncton and the University of New Brunswick, along with universities outside of the province, for example Saint Mary's University, in Nova Scotia, and l'Université Laval.

Ms. Lise St-Denis: Just how much does the federal government work with French-language institutions in order to develop Acadians' business acumen? Are there specific federal government programs that are likely to help those institutions as you described?

Mr. Armand Caron: Currently, we get funding from Heritage Canada.

Ms. Lise St-Denis: You are talking about the roadmap.

Mr. Armand Caron: As a training institute, we get funding through the Official Languages in Education Program.

I know that education is a provincial jurisdiction, but sometimes help may arrive from departments other than Heritage Canada, both at the federal and provincial levels. We have been talking about northern New Brunswick, which is rural. Other departments could perhaps help our region and our province by putting in place, for example, a rural policy that would be much broader than one specific training program. We talk a lot about the economy, but we cannot forget the social dimension.

• (0935)

Ms. Lise St-Denis: Do you think distance training can stimulate francophones' success in school?

Mr. Armand Caron: Yes. New Brunswick has a small population that is spread out over a fairly large territory. It is scattered. We can reach a lot of people using distance education. There are not enough teachers to give training everywhere. Given the situation, distance education is very important.

Ms. Lise St-Denis: I will now turn to Mr. Dubé.

I apologize for rushing along, but my speaking time is limited.

In the communication between francophones and anglophones in Moncton today, do you still experience the stigma of the institutional racism that you lived through under mayor Jones? Has communication been re-established or is it still difficult? People say Moncton is a bilingual city and that sounds good, but what is everyday reality like?

Mr. Jacques Dubé: Things are going well in Moncton still. That mentality is now long gone. The Greater Moncton Chamber of Commerce is a bilingual organization. It includes both anglophone and francophone entrepreneurs, who work together very well. The current city council comprises 11 members, 6 of whom are francophones. In mayor Jones' time, I think that was 1 out of 11.

The situation has changed a lot and it's mainly due to the economy. Things are going well in Moncton from an economic standpoint. The economy is diversified. In Moncton, there are as many francophone business people as there are anglophone ones. I mentioned one just now, Larry Nelson, who is the owner of the Lounsbury Group. It's a big company with a lot of employees, both anglophone and francophone. There are also the Irvings. Robert Irving is another anglophone who hires as many francophones as anglophones. He has as many operations in Dieppe, which is officially francophone, as in Moncton.

Currently, I see no communication problems between anglophones and francophones.

Ms. Lise St-Denis: You say that six members of the city council are francophones.

Mr. Jacques Dubé: Yes.

Ms. Lise St-Denis: What is the percentage of francophones in the city administration? Is it the same percentage?

Mr. Jacques Dubé: No, I would say that the ratio is more like 70-30.

Ms. Lise St-Denis: I assume you mean 70 anglophones for 30 francophones.

Mr. Jacques Dubé: That's right.

Ms. Lise St-Denis: Is bilingualism promoted with anglophones as well?

Mr. Jacques Dubé: Yes. We encourage the business community to use bilingual signage. The group is led by Larry Nelson. We promote bilingualism with both linguistic groups. Organizations such as Enterprise Greater Moncton, the Greater Moncton Chamber of Commerce and Downtown Moncton Centre-ville inc. also do promotion in both official languages.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. St-Denis.

Ms. Bateman, the floor is yours.

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

I would like to sincerely thank all our witnesses.

My questions are specifically for Mr. Dubé.

In your presentation, you spoke of the knowledge economy being a way of the future for our young people. You said you invest in your employees. You also spoke of the Assomption Vie company and the ShiftCentral agency, that specializes in technologies and commercial information on the Internet.

As you perhaps know, our government is...

● (0940)

Mr. Jacques Dubé: I am sorry to interrupt you, but we are having trouble hearing you on this end of the table.

Ms. Joyce Bateman: You said the knowledge economy was very important for our youth. You probably know, Mr. Dubé, that our government is trying to create jobs, encourage economic growth and particularly a long-term prosperity for generations to come. It is very important for us, as Canadians, everywhere across the country.

Our research tells us that the city of Moncton is known for its dynamic economy. According to your website, Moncton has the highest average salary in all of New Brunswick. The percentage of people with a post-secondary diploma and the employment rate are higher than the national average there. KPMG has indicated that you have a great economy as it pertains to labour. As for the competitiveness of costs, Moncton is at the head of the pack.

Could you give me a few more details? This interests me very much.

Mr. Jacques Dubé: If I understand correctly, you want me to give you more details on why Moncton has succeeded as a municipality.

As I said in my presentation, Moncton had to face some challenges, among them the closing of Eaton's and of the CN shops. In the end, entrepreneurs in the region had to pull themselves up by their bootstraps and establish a plan. Mr. Colford has just said that an industrial strategy is needed in the northern part of the province. I come from northern New Brunswick myself. I was born in Bathurst and I know a bit about the situation in those regions. First of all, you need a plan.

[English]

Without a plan, any road will do, right? At the end of the day, you need to have a plan. You need to know where you're going.

[Translation]

Moncton has succeeded through the spirit of entrepreneurship. The private sector took charge and laid out strategies. It took the lead and guided the economy at a time when it was weak. There were a lot of job losses; almost all the businesses on Main Street in Moncton were closed.

We quickly realized that one of our assets was bilingualism, meaning there was a huge pool of bilingual labour in the Greater Moncton area, which includes not only Moncton but also the neighbouring community of Dieppe and all of Kent county. The whole south-east of New Brunswick had a bilingual workforce.

Ms. Joyce Bateman: You described your commitment to bilingualism as an investment, not an expense. That distinction is very important for all of Canada.

● (0945)

Mr. Jacques Dubé: Yes, absolutely. At the City of Moncton, we provide free French classes for our employees. Many employers, from both private and public sectors, encourage their employees to become bilingual.

We are doing more in our offer of service. Everyone must be served in the language of their choice.

Investments have been made, both by the municipality and the English-language school board, to put in place French immersion programs. The French-language school board has actively encouraged anglophones to be educated in French. The provincial government has played a major role with the school boards in this regard.

That explains in part why Moncton has succeeded on all fronts—economic, social and cultural. That is what led KPMG, as you said, to conclude that Moncton is the best place in Canada to do business.

Ms. Joyce Bateman: That is incredible.

Mr. Jacques Dubé: It is because we are very diversified. We can offer services in both languages. We are going beyond that, in that we are trying to promote multiculturalism as well. Moncton's multicultural aspect is very important. For example, the Université de Moncton welcomes people from Africa who speak French. People from the African francophonie come to study at the Université de Moncton. We have to keep these people. They are all great people we absolutely need to keep with us.

But there is still a challenge for Moncton. Even if we are the best place in Canada to do business, even if we are the economic engine of New Brunswick, according to our numbers there will be 3,000 jobs to fill in Moncton by 2015. In other words, even though we emptied out the northern part of the province—all its inhabitants really are in Moncton now, myself included—we will still require 3,000 people to fill the jobs in Moncton. Why? The reality is that the economy is growing faster than the workforce. The baby boom bubble is bursting and the generations coming behind do not have the same numbers.

So, even though we are highly successful, we face great challenges. We must maintain this rhythm, maintain the economy. It is quite the challenge.

Earlier, Mr. Colford spoke of the Fort McMurray phenomenon out West. People are told that they need to go there. In my career, I was deputy minister of Economic Development in New Brunswick for six years. I went out West to see. I invited 50 people originally from New Brunswick who had settled in Calgary. I did the same thing in Toronto, in Ottawa, in Montreal and in Vancouver. I discovered that once people had moved there, if they did not return within five years, that was it; they were not coming back. If they have been there for five years, there is a good chance they have fallen in love, bought a house and made friends. It's not complicated. Their friends are no longer in Shippagan or in Moncton, but in Calgary and Fort McMurray. So, they don't return.

If we want to bring back people from New Brunswick, we have to do it quickly. Otherwise, if they are given the opportunity to stay there, they will, for the rest of their lives.

That is the challenge we face in Moncton.

On the other hand, the great success of Moncton is entrepreneurship. The private sector makes the economy thrive.

The Chair: All right, thank you.

Mr. Chisu, you have the floor.

[English]

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

Thank you very much to the witnesses for their presentations.

I was looking especially at Mr. Colford's presentation. The 60% illiteracy issue is a huge problem, and is disturbing me in a country that is in the G-7 group. Mr. Caron is telling me that the Collège communautaire du Nouveau-Brunswick offers technical training in French, including training for specialized trades.

You are recruiting for post-secondary education. You are recruiting people from the province only from the 40% who are qualified by literacy to go into post-secondary education. What can you do to increase literacy? If you are looking at the trades you need to have a basic understanding of mathematics, not only language, to be able to do something in the province.

Mr. Caron, what are you doing? What kinds of trades are you specializing in on your five campuses? How are you working with Mr. Colford to gather the needs of the province?

It's unacceptable for a rich province like New Brunswick, which has the statue of the lobster I think—I visited there—that it is in that situation, that you cannot work together and establish an economic plan and an industrial plan. You also have technologists in the province. You have a nuclear power plant, which needs a lot of skilled, qualified employees.

How are you developing the trades? What trades are you offering in both languages, French and English? How are you cooperating with Mr. Colford? I am also bringing the three levels of government into this area: federal, provincial, and municipal. How can they work together to get out of this situation in the province?

● (0950)

[Translation]

Mr. Armand Caron: Thank you.

Your question has two parts.

First of all, in regards to skilled trades, your question echoes Ms. St-Denis' earlier question. We work with the industry in particular to determine the needs in skilled trades. Certain trades no longer exist or have greatly changed. So we must adapt. I believe we are meet the needs of the market in that regard.

You also asked what we could do about the fact that 60% of the population has literacy problems. For our part, we would like the Collège communautaire du Nouveau-Brunswick to have the mandate to train both students with their high school diploma and those without it. At one point, the government thought it could ask the Fédération d'alphabétisation du Nouveau-Brunswick to find all the people who had not finished high school. In my view, I think we must go further. The program must be institutionalized and the mandate must be given to the Collège communautaire du Nouveau-Brunswick. It would be geared to those who don't have the necessary skills in mathematics or in French, or those who haven't finished high school. In New Brunswick, in public schools, when we say high school, we mean grade 12.

We spoke of the low literacy levels in New Brunswick, particularly in the northern part of the province. We have a lot of work to do in that regard. There is no doubt about that.

[English]

Mr. Corneliu Chisu: When you speak about education and you speak about the trades, to build something—I'm a professional engineer—you need the engineering team. You need the technologists. You need the workers who understand the project, because the engineers alone cannot accomplish the project.

My question was whether you are working in this context with labour and also with the technological field and the engineering field. I think that New Brunswick has a lot of talent and a lot of opportunities; much can be accomplished in the province. I see countries that have the same territory and the same population, and they can accomplish a lot. We have opportunities here.

I think it is important that you ask yourselves what you can do for the province, not what the province or the government can do for you. If you are not coming up with proposals that you would like to develop in the province, the north and the south and so on—

● (0955)

The Chair: Okay. Thank you very much, Mr. Chisu.

Go ahead, Mr. Caron.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Armand Caron: The Collège communautaire du Nouveau-Brunswick already offers a number of courses in engineering technology. It is important for us to have students in the two-year building engineering technology program, for example, continue their studies after the program is over. We are currently working with the Université de Moncton to ensure that those students can use their two-year program to their advantage and go on to obtain an engineering degree, for example, without having to retake some of the courses. Unfortunately, institutions do not recognize all of the credits students have earned elsewhere. In fact, they are sometimes asked to retake some courses or to complete at least one of the two years.

We are trying to meet the needs of the labour market in terms of technology, but also to give young people the opportunity to continue their studies and build a career.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Nicholls, you have the floor.

[*English*]

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

My question is for Mr. Dubé.

I know that in terms of immigration in Moncton from 1997 to 2001 there were 8.8 immigrants per 10,000 people, and for the period of 2007 to 2011 there were 37.5 immigrants per 10,000 people. That represents a 324% increase, yet the federal government's response—and I'd like to ask more generally about the federal government's role in infrastructure and culture and the effects of the cuts on Moncton—in 2012 was to close the regional immigration office, the CIC office in Moncton. Enterprise Greater Moncton's economic strategy and the comments you just made show that one of the priorities for promoting Moncton's economy is immigration, repatriation, and retention. Certainly the federal office could have had a role to play in that. Unfortunately, now it's closed.

Could I ask you more generally about the budget cuts and their effect on Moncton's economic development? Other than immigration, have you seen a loss of funding for culture, heritage, infrastructure, or other areas, and can you speak to the immigration issue?

Mr. Jacques Dubé: Thanks very much for the question.

Firstly, on the immigration question, one of the realities of Canada is that regions such as Moncton or other regions outside of the major centres in Canada do not benefit from immigration the way we'd like to. I would argue that Montreal has a refugee problem, not an immigration problem. Moncton, New Brunswick, has an immigration challenge. The closure of the immigration office in Moncton—they moved it to Fredericton—certainly was disappointing. It certainly didn't help. However, we continue to put a lot of emphasis on immigration.

We just went through an immigration summit with the support of the federal government. The federal government gave us money, along with the province, to put on an immigration summit and come up with an immigration strategy for greater Moncton. That strategy is going to be espoused by the greater Moncton municipalities. In fact, the City of Moncton has two full-time dedicated staffers who are focused solely on attracting immigrants. When they get up in the morning their job is to make sure that immigrants coming to Moncton, who are coming through various consulates or through the programs of the Province of New Brunswick, are welcomed. We give them sales pitches. We guide them to different places.

We have organizations like MAGMA, which is a multicultural organization, and CAFi, which is a francophone version of that. Those agencies are well funded by the federal government. We haven't seen any challenges in that area.

Where we have challenges in immigration, frankly, is that I don't think there's a culture out there in the embassies worldwide that is necessarily conducive to having immigrants land in rural Canada. New Brunswick is a rural province, and Moncton, even though it's a city, is still 130,000 people. It's a small city in Canada. We need more help from the embassies in helping immigrants choose areas other than Vancouver, Toronto, and Montreal.

Part of our immigration strategy now is to go to Toronto and meet with immigrants who have already landed in Canada, and encourage them to come to Moncton. That's working. We're doing trade shows and job fairs, going to Toronto and Montreal and other places with our own staff and partners, and saying, "We have real jobs for real people, here in Moncton."

The other area that's challenging in immigration is the cultural reality of immigration. We still have employers that are reticent to get involved in a process that takes nine months for the immigrant who happens to be in Ireland to come to Canada and land in a real job. The reality, as I mentioned earlier, is that we have 3,000 jobs to fill in Moncton. It's hard to fill the funnel when you have to wait nine months for that little grain of sand to fall into the funnel and come out the other end. It doesn't work very well. If there's something that can be done to fast-track.... I know the Government of Canada is working on that. Minister Kenney is trying to fast-track the processes and all that, but there's a lot of red tape to be cut in that area.

Another area that could be helpful is to educate the embassies more in terms of what's available, and to work more closely with the entrepreneurs to try to change that cultural mindset that says immigrants are bad or it's going to take too long and cost too much money. There has to be a better mousetrap than we have now, in my opinion.

I think I've touched on immigration, the CIC office closure. There was one other point you made and I forgot to note it.

•(1000)

Mr. Jamie Nicholls: More specifically, you said that the responsibilities for immigrants have been passed on to other organizations. Would you recommend stable and perhaps increased federal funding to those organizations in light of the disaster that the closure of the CIC office was for Moncton?

Mr. Jacques Dubé: I can't speak to that issue, because what I know is that MAGMA and CAFi are well funded. Certainly, as a municipality we would welcome any federal support in terms of our efforts.

Why did the municipality get involved in immigration? Because we feel that there's a void there. We're not getting the results we need.

Mr. Jamie Nicholls: But it was obviously a void left by the federal government when they pulled out.

Mr. Jacques Dubé: In part, and that's part of the issue, but really, that CIC office was there to take applications and manage relationships. Now people have to drive to Fredericton, which is an hour and a half away. It's not that helpful. We're trying to fill the void ourselves now.

Mr. Jamie Nicholls: But in terms of retention, as well, you don't want Moncton to be a springboard for other cities. If they can't get the services they need inside Moncton—

Mr. Jacques Dubé: Correct.

Mr. Jamie Nicholls: —to stay there, then they'll go to another city. Really, that's one of the challenges that you've mentioned, but thank you.

Mr. Jacques Dubé: Yes.

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

Thank you, Mr. Dubé.

Mr. Daniel.

Mr. Joe Daniel (Don Valley East, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'd like to thank the witnesses for being here.

Along the same sort of line, I'm guessing that the unemployment rate in New Brunswick is pretty low, because you're recruiting lots of immigrants, etc. Is that true or false?

Mr. Jacques Dubé: That would be false, just because it's hovering around 10% province-wide. There is a north-south divide. It's more—

Mr. Patrick Colford: It's 21% in the north.

Mr. Jacques Dubé: Yes, 21% in the north. In Moncton, you're looking at 7%, in that area.

Mr. Joe Daniel: I'd like to just pursue this question of literacy. I really don't understand how anybody can exist these days in a country like Canada without being literate. There must be a reason for this high level of illiteracy. The reason why I say that is, people would have learned how to read. It's not a high school thing. It's something that's done in primary school, where they learn literacy, at least start to learn literacy, right?

So the question is, you know, there must be sufficient jobs in the province for people who are illiterate to be able to get those jobs and stay there. Is that true or false?

•(1005)

Mr. Patrick Colford: I believe that was true at one time. As I've had someone tell me who used to work in the logging industry, you didn't need grade 12 to go into the woods and cut a cord of pulp and sell. But these days, with technology coming in, you do need grade 12 and beyond to run a harvester in the woods. People got by being illiterate. I have family members who, to this day, are illiterate. I'm not proud to say it by any means, but this is just the way it is. There's a lack of opportunity sometimes.

Also, we try to fast-track so much now that some people do get left behind—I hate to say it but it is very true—and those are the ones who get left behind. At the end of the day, they just don't have the skills. It's been kind of on a back burner, you know, “You'll catch up. You'll catch up.” But you get so frustrated—and I think that kind of speaks to the dropout rates also—and once you get frustrated, you just say, “Okay, listen. That's it. I'm not going any further.”

Mr. Joe Daniel: Would you like to comment on that?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Armand Caron: In terms of the New Brunswick economy, particularly in the northern part of the province, the other challenge we have is seasonal employment. Over 25% of New Brunswickers work seasonal jobs. I agree with what Mr. Godin said at the very beginning. People would have a lot of time outside of their periods of work to continue their training and fix the problems you mentioned.

It is unfortunate that 60% of our population do not have Level 3 literacy, and something must be done to fix that. It is sad to be mentioning that number, but I think we need to find ways to solve the problem. We do not want to simply provide numbers; we have to find solutions. To do that, we need training programs, and the Collège communautaire du Nouveau-Brunswick would be very pleased to be able to contribute to that effort.

[*English*]

Mr. Joe Daniel: Based on all of that, what do you think the priorities of the francophone and Acadian communities are in the area of economic development? If they are different from those in the rest of Canada, why do you think this is the case? Do you actually have a plan?

Perhaps, Mr. Dubé, you could start with a comment on that.

Mr. Jacques Dubé: Sorry, could you repeat the question?

Mr. Joe Daniel: The question was: what are the priorities for the francophone and Acadian communities in the area of economic development? In other words, you've talked about strategy. You've talked about all sorts of occasions where you've had meetings from international bodies, etc., in your province—and city, I guess. But what is there that's been set up that you are thinking strategically, specifically for the minority community there, to develop economically?

Mr. Jacques Dubé: I think, at the end of the day, the question of economic development is not about language. It's really about economic opportunity and a sound business plan. We have, in greater Moncton, a number of organizations like the Conseil économique du Nouveau-Brunswick, which has its head office in Moncton, and the Chambre de commerce Française au Canada. We are members of both of those organizations. There's a lot of networking that goes on amongst the French-speaking entrepreneurs, generally speaking.

When we look at economic development strategies, we're not really looking at it from that perspective. We're looking at it more from the perspective of what's our financial services sector? We have the largest financial services sector in Atlantic Canada. We're the largest financial services sector east of Montreal, in Moncton. That's a growth area. That financial services sector doesn't grow because, necessarily, it's run by francophones or anglophones. It grows because they get export contracts. Blue Cross or Assumption Mutual Life go out and get business, whether it's from anglophone clients or francophone clients. The strategy is really sector-driven. We have a lot of strength in the area, as I mentioned, of financial services but we also have a lot of strengths in the area of logistics. The largest trucking companies in Canada are located in Moncton. We have a great health care industry and a great education industry, whether it's publicly or privately funded. We're really driving it from a sectoral perspective and not really from a linguistic perspective.

• (1010)

Mr. Joe Daniel: Mr. Colford, from your experience as a workers' representative, what are you and your organization doing to transition to some of these jobs we've heard about, the IT businesses that were set up, etc? For these jobs you have to have literacy, have to have a level of education, and those are high-paying jobs that can stay in your region.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. Daniel.

Mr. Patrick Colford: Personally, from the New Brunswick Federation of Labour's point of view, we sit on numerous committees and coalitions helping to build the province and trying to come up with solutions. These coalitions or groups, if you will, committees, are made up of educational institutions, labour, of course, business, and in this job, as Mr. Caron mentioned, we as the Federation of Labour were a big contributor to that in having labour's voice.

We're working on those things but at the end of the day I guess the biggest challenge is those people who don't have the skills and they just.... The easiest way to put it is that there are two types of people in a lot of communities in New Brunswick. There are the people who can't wait to get out and the people who don't want to get out. We

need to focus on those people who don't want to get out and on making sure that they can make a livelihood and stay in their communities.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. Colford.

Mr. Godin.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Yvon Godin: I was not planning on speaking again, but I want to respond to what I have just heard.

The reality is that people have left northern New Brunswick. You said it yourself, Mr. Dubé. If things are going well in Moncton, it is because people there have taken charge of their own lives with the help of an action plan. The government was part of those efforts. However, it was nowhere to be found in northern New Brunswick. The government supported the arrival of call centres for businesses such as Xerox in Moncton, Air Canada in Saint-John, and CIBC in Fredericton. There is also the Bank of Montreal in Moncton. I can guarantee you that, if the government had had those institutions set up shop in the northern part of the province, on the Acadian Peninsula, we would not be having these problems today.

I do not accept that people from northern New Brunswick are all illiterate and that nobody knows how to read or write. The reality is that 1,300 students graduate each year, but those students go off to the Université de Moncton and do not return home. People in the northern part of the province are not all illiterate. If you went to Moncton and asked people where they came from, you would not have enough fingers to count everyone from northern New Brunswick.

Mr. Dubé, do you agree with me?

Mr. Jacques Dubé: I agree in part and I will explain why.

First, I agree that people have left northern New Brunswick and have moved to the south-eastern part of the province. This is because there are high quality jobs and Acadian educational institutions there.

However, people do often also attend the Shippagan campus of the Université de Moncton. As Mr. Colford just mentioned, the problem we face is related to available jobs once students have completed their studies.

You said that the government did not do enough in the north of the province. However, the provincial and current federal governments especially have invested considerable amounts in the north.

Mr. Yvon Godin: Mr. Dubé, you acknowledge that jobs in the call centres in the northern part of New Brunswick were minimum-wage jobs.

Mr. Jacques Dubé: Yes.

Mr. Yvon Godin: What should have changed is that minimum wage.

Mr. Jacques Dubé: I am not denying that. I simply wanted to say...

Mr. Yvon Godin: Then they closed a Canada Post call centre in Fredericton. Those jobs paid \$20 an hour. They wanted to get rid of that, so they opened a call centre in Bathurst, where people were paid \$12 an hour. Is that really what northern New Brunswick deserves?

We have to tell it like it is. Most francophones live in northern New Brunswick. This minority has been beaten down and trodden on by all New Brunswick and federal governments. With respect, the south of the province got everything and we got welfare.

The golden triangle is Fredericton, Saint John and Moncton. Irving, a major corporation, has never invested in the north. If MAJESTA had set up shop in northern New Brunswick, people could have worked there. If they had been able to transfer the Brunswick mine to the south, they would have done it. If they could have put our fish into the Petitcodiac, which everyone calls the chocolate river, they would have. That is the only thing we have.

Since we lost that, no level of government has ever been there for us. North-eastern New Brunswick has lost people, including you, Mr. Dubé.

•(1015)

Mr. Jacques Dubé: The only thing I can say is that I believe you were there when a number of federal government investments were announced for the Acadian Peninsula. It is not quite true to say that the federal government has not invested in northern New Brunswick.

Mr. Yvon Godin: Can you name any?

Mr. Jacques Dubé: I agree with you that there has been much more economic activity in the south-eastern portion of the province than in the north.

Mr. Yvon Godin: That is thanks to government initiatives.

Mr. Jacques Dubé: Yes.

Mr. Yvon Godin: That is right: there was a key player.

Now that the mines and pulp and paper plants have shut down and people have left the region, it would be a good time to make sure that those who remain and who are less educated are not left with nothing when they are unemployed. This goes back to what Mr. Caron was saying.

Mr. Daniel asked what was happening there, why people were illiterate and were not working. Need I remind you that that is where the fish is, and fishing is impossible in the winter because the Baie des Chaleurs freezes over.

What do we do with these people? Do you not think that giving these people training in secondary and tertiary processing for the products that we have left would improve the situation in northern New Brunswick?

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Godin.

Mr. Caron, you have the floor for a brief moment.

Mr. Armand Caron: I would like to add something. When I walk to the Shippagan wharf in the morning, the largest wharf in New Brunswick in terms of landings, it saddens me to think that everything is sent elsewhere for processing. A few years ago, there were seven seafood processing plants in Shippagan. Today, not a single one is left. There is no processing there.

That is one of the challenges facing the region. There are no more jobs in the region, so we should not be surprised to see young people leaving.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Williamson, you have the floor.

[*English*]

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

It's like the seventh inning stretch in a ball game. Just as we're winding down, we get a burst of activity from Monsieur Godin.

Voices: Oh, oh!

Mr. John Williamson: Thank you.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Caron, Mr. Dubé, and Mr. Colford, welcome to our committee.

Mr. Dubé, Mr. Colford talked about an invisible line that separates northern and southern New Brunswick. Where is Moncton in relation to that line?

[*English*]

Mr. Jacques Dubé: Well, I think it's clear.

[*Translation*]

Moncton is the economic driver of the province.

[*English*]

It's driven primarily by entrepreneurship. Generally speaking, I think if you look at Moncton you see that it's been a success story because of the entrepreneurial spirit of the community and a great supply of labour, both skilled and unskilled, over time. That's basically where we are.

We are, within New Brunswick, in a bit of an anomaly. Monsieur Godin spoke about the golden triangle, and it's true that Fredericton, Saint John, and Moncton are the drivers of the economy in New Brunswick at the moment, simply because the natural resource sectors have not been as successful as they have in the past. We haven't transitioned to secondary, primary, and tertiary transformation, say, in those industries the way we possibly could have, whether it's value-added wood or value-added fish or whatever.

I think Moncton has certainly been a star, a shining light of hope in New Brunswick as a result of the economy and what's happened there, primarily based on the labour force and its national geographic location in Atlantic Canada as a hub.

Mr. John Williamson: I think Monsieur Godin's point about the triangle, as he describes it, is valid but those three cities don't make up southern New Brunswick. The unemployment challenges we have in Charlotte County are almost as severe as they are in the north with the labour shortages we're seeing and the exodus as well.

•(1020)

Mr. Jacques Dubé: Yes.

Mr. John Williamson: That's what I think makes Moncton unique. It crosses that boundary. It's viewed as neither part of the north nor of the south; and in a sense, you've brought people together from both communities and built on that strength.

I'm not going to focus too much. You've gone through the strengths and the drive behind Moncton this morning, and they're well known. The city, I think, has managed to pull itself up by its bootstraps, working with government of course, but you have that initiative.

For the record, could you let us know, the...? I think you said that the unemployment rate currently is 7%.

Mr. Jacques Dubé: Yes.

Mr. John Williamson: It's about the national average, give or take.

Mr. Jacques Dubé: Yes.

Mr. John Williamson: But what's interesting is your employment rate is higher than the national average—

Mr. Jacques Dubé: Yes.

Mr. John Williamson: —so, in a sense, you're operating in a job creation environment.

Mr. Jacques Dubé: Yes. Absolutely. The participation rate is very high. We have an unemployment issue and a labour shortage at the same time. In 2015 we're looking at over 3,000 unfilled jobs in Moncton, and we have to fix that. We're trying to fix it, but it's very challenging because of the baby boomer bubble that's bursting.

Mr. John Williamson: Whatever you're doing in Moncton, just keep doing it. It is a source of pride in the province, where you have Fredericton as the government operation that will benefit, Saint John with its oil and gas, and then of course Moncton and the entrepreneurial spirit.

Mr. Colford, you've decried the lack of industrial strategy growth sectors, yet I notice your organization has come out against shale gas. I find that a bit odd. You're concerned about job creation in New Brunswick and about our young people moving to western Canada and taking jobs, yet you're not prepared to consider that your group opposes in eastern Canada the same industry they're working for in western Canada. You're happy to accept transfers from that same industry. Yet you decry—and I understand this—the exodus of francophones and anglophones, and what that does to community. You have to explain that, please.

Mr. Patrick Colford: That's not a problem.

We've called for a moratorium largely because of not enough health regulations and not knowing the health implications of unconventional fracking. One may and will make the argument that fracking has been done for a century, and yes, it has. This unconventional fracking bothers us. It's only been done for 10 to 12 years. Until it can be proven safe, we in New Brunswick don't want another DDT or asbestos problem that we're going to find out about 30 years down the road. That's the biggest reason we've opposed it.

Currently around 23 wells are operating in Penobsquis. Six people are employed there. When I spoke to the Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers, I asked how many were local; they answered that they're local now. I must say I laughed in her face, because I told

her I could move to Fort McMurray tomorrow, and in two week's time I'd be calling myself a local. The jobs aren't there at this point.

I don't know if you follow the news, but there were some protests in Elsipogtog.

When we're being told of these jobs, I must ask how any government can dictate to a company that they only hire locals, because those people who were on the ground running the seismic testing were not New Brunswickers; they were brought in. As you said, I have friends who are out west doing seismic testing.

If this is the case and this is going to bring our people home, why hasn't it happened already?

Mr. John Williamson: I think if you take a sample size of six and at the same time oppose growth.... I'm not going to get into a debate because these are political questions now, but 50 years of natural gas exploration and development in British Columbia has been successful, and we've seen how Saskatchewan—

• (1025)

Mr. Patrick Colford: Sorry, sir, but it is not the unconventional fracking that will be done in New Brunswick. It is conventional fracking. It has been proven safe—largely.

Mr. John Williamson: On the argument about conventional or unconventional, if you took that approach.... When it comes to oil exploration in Alberta, the growth would not have happened there if entrepreneurs had said, it's new, it's untested, it's untried, and we shouldn't do it. The challenge for government is to put in place regulations to have this growth, not to sit on our laurels and wait for someone else to do it. That's effectively what you're advocating; if they could do it, they should do it elsewhere—

Mr. Patrick Colford: No. I agree with you—

Mr. John Williamson: It's—

Mr. Patrick Colford: I do agree with you, and this may not happen too often. But I will agree with you that, you know, it.... Also, DDT was safe, and asbestos was safe, and we now know that.... So why, without knowing it's safe, would we risk that and put future generations at risk?

But the other issue is that—

The Chair: Okay. We have—

Mr. John Williamson: Do you consider any development in the United States unconventional as well, like what we've seen in North Dakota? Or is New Brunswick this unique unconventional development?

Mr. Patrick Colford: The beautiful thing about this—it goes back to what you're saying—is that every group or every government always says they have the best regulations. Whoever comes along afterwards says they always have the best, so—

The Chair: Okay. Thank you very much.

Mr. Patrick Colford: —I'm wondering if we have the best regulations for it as we go forward.

The Chair: Okay. Thank you very much, Mr. Williamson and Mr. Colford. I appreciate the exchange of information there.

Voices: Oh, oh!

The Chair: We'll lastly and quickly go to Monsieur Côté.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Raymond Côté (Beauport—Limoilou, NDP): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Thank you to the witnesses for being with us.

Mr. Dubé, I found your presentation very interesting, especially when you talked about bilingualism is an economic asset and that it is not an expense, but rather a real investment. You are sending a strong message there.

Regarding investments and the economic outlook, I will not hide the fact that we have a difficult time getting the government to pay attention to the real issues. For example, the government could invest in our future by improving the Canada Pension Plan, but in its speeches, it is in the habit of portraying initiatives like that as a tax. This shows how far out in left field it is.

Coming back to your presentation, the situation in Moncton is quite interesting because it is similar to what happened in Quebec City. Our city went from being in an economic downturn in the middle of the 1990s—I had just graduated from university at that time—to being very much a remarkably vibrant city with full employment.

Given the efforts over the past 30 years, how did the federal government help you? Did it miss opportunities to help you or could it do more to support growth?

Mr. Jacques Dubé: Thank you very much.

I believe the federal government could play a much bigger role with entrepreneurs. We have economic development agencies in the regions. In ours, it is ACOA. Earlier, someone mentioned secondary and tertiary processing. There are federal organizations, particularly Export Development Canada and the Business Development Bank of Canada, but some of them could work much more closely with entrepreneurs. Jobs are created by entrepreneurs, not by governments. I think there has to be more communication with entrepreneurs individually and that it has to be targeted by sector.

ACOA already works with entrepreneurs to develop exports. Could it do more and provide more support? Yes, it could do more in Moncton than in the northern part of the province. Earlier we talked about the challenge facing the regions in New Brunswick. Entrepreneurs are not looking for bureaucracy. They do not want more interventions from the government. What they want is specific assistance to meet their immediate needs. This is the kind of thing that could help them.

There is also the issue of training for trades. Today, it is difficult to find a mechanic, a plumber or an electrician. In Moncton, we have the same problem. I just hired two plumbers for the City of Moncton. I had a very hard time finding them. We have to encourage more young people, even people who have lost their jobs, to choose the trades. We should also be giving them direct grants, specifically so

that they can get the training they need. We need to help them out a little more if we want to encourage them to do so.

Infrastructure is also important. The municipality of Moncton is no different from other Canadian municipalities; it also has infrastructure problems. Our infrastructure deficit has now reached about \$150 million. It is a small city, but it still has a high infrastructure deficit. We are pleased to see the federal government invest in infrastructure, but we would definitely like to have more support.

The problem in New Brunswick is that the provincial government is having financial problems. It has a debt of nearly \$12 billion. For small provinces with limited financial capacity, it can be a challenge to right away inject as much money as federal programs provide. We are not all as lucky as Alberta, which has its revenues from royalties and natural resources. This is why we also need support for infrastructure.

● (1030)

The Chair: Okay, thank you.

[*English*]

Thank you to everyone for your testimony.

We'll suspend just for a minute before we reconvene for the consideration of Madame St-Denis' motion.

This meeting is suspended.

●

_____ (Pause) _____

●

[*Translation*]

The Chair: We will resume this meeting of the Standing Committee on Official Languages, which is in public session. We will now deal with Ms. St-Denis's motion.

Mr. Gourde, you have the floor.

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

Could we continue in camera, since we will be dealing with future business? I move a motion to that effect.

The Chair: Okay. Mr. Gourde has moved a motion that we continue in camera.

Yes, Mr. Godin?

● (1035)

Mr. Yvon Godin: Mr. Chair, should someone who has moved a motion not speak to it?

The Chair: No, no. A motion to move in camera is not debatable.

I therefore ask the members if they agree to continue this meeting in camera.

(Motion agreed to)

[*Proceedings continue in camera*]

Published under the authority of the Speaker of
the House of Commons

SPEAKER'S PERMISSION

Reproduction of the proceedings of the House of Commons and its Committees, in whole or in part and in any medium, is hereby permitted provided that the reproduction is accurate and is not presented as official. This permission does not extend to reproduction, distribution or use for commercial purpose of financial gain. Reproduction or use outside this permission or without authorization may be treated as copyright infringement in accordance with the *Copyright Act*. Authorization may be obtained on written application to the Office of the Speaker of the House of Commons.

Reproduction in accordance with this permission does not constitute publication under the authority of the House of Commons. The absolute privilege that applies to the proceedings of the House of Commons does not extend to these permitted reproductions. Where a reproduction includes briefs to a Committee of the House of Commons, authorization for reproduction may be required from the authors in accordance with the *Copyright Act*.

Nothing in this permission abrogates or derogates from the privileges, powers, immunities and rights of the House of Commons and its Committees. For greater certainty, this permission does not affect the prohibition against impeaching or questioning the proceedings of the House of Commons in courts or otherwise. The House of Commons retains the right and privilege to find users in contempt of Parliament if a reproduction or use is not in accordance with this permission.

Also available on the Parliament of Canada Web Site at the following address: <http://www.parl.gc.ca>

Publié en conformité de l'autorité
du Président de la Chambre des communes

PERMISSION DU PRÉSIDENT

Il est permis de reproduire les délibérations de la Chambre et de ses comités, en tout ou en partie, sur n'importe quel support, pourvu que la reproduction soit exacte et qu'elle ne soit pas présentée comme version officielle. Il n'est toutefois pas permis de reproduire, de distribuer ou d'utiliser les délibérations à des fins commerciales visant la réalisation d'un profit financier. Toute reproduction ou utilisation non permise ou non formellement autorisée peut être considérée comme une violation du droit d'auteur aux termes de la *Loi sur le droit d'auteur*. Une autorisation formelle peut être obtenue sur présentation d'une demande écrite au Bureau du Président de la Chambre.

La reproduction conforme à la présente permission ne constitue pas une publication sous l'autorité de la Chambre. Le privilège absolu qui s'applique aux délibérations de la Chambre ne s'étend pas aux reproductions permises. Lorsqu'une reproduction comprend des mémoires présentés à un comité de la Chambre, il peut être nécessaire d'obtenir de leurs auteurs l'autorisation de les reproduire, conformément à la *Loi sur le droit d'auteur*.

La présente permission ne porte pas atteinte aux privilèges, pouvoirs, immunités et droits de la Chambre et de ses comités. Il est entendu que cette permission ne touche pas l'interdiction de contester ou de mettre en cause les délibérations de la Chambre devant les tribunaux ou autrement. La Chambre conserve le droit et le privilège de déclarer l'utilisateur coupable d'outrage au Parlement lorsque la reproduction ou l'utilisation n'est pas conforme à la présente permission.

Aussi disponible sur le site Web du Parlement du Canada à l'adresse suivante : <http://www.parl.gc.ca>