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**EVIDENCE**

**Thursday, March 12, 2015**

**Chair**

**The Honourable Michael Chong**



## Standing Committee on Official Languages

Thursday, March 12, 2015

• (1535)

[Translation]

**The Chair (Hon. Michael Chong (Wellington—Halton Hills, CPC)):** Welcome to the 41st meeting of the Standing Committee on Official Languages. Today is Thursday, March 12, 2015.

We are here pursuant to Standing Order 108 to study the Government of Canada programs designed to promote francophone immigration into Canada's official-language minority communities.

We have two witnesses appearing today. Gilles LeVasseur is a professor with the Telfer School of Management at the University of Ottawa. He will be joining us shortly. We will also hear from Robert Therrien, the executive director of the Conseil de la coopération de la Saskatchewan. He will take part in the meeting by teleconference from Saskatoon, Saskatchewan.

Mr. Therrien, you have the floor.

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

**The Chair:** Thank you.

**Mr. Robert Therrien:** I assume I can start my presentation.

**The Chair:** Yes, please go ahead.

**Mr. Robert Therrien:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

I am the executive director of the Conseil de la coopération de la Saskatchewan. This francophone economic organization provides economic development services to businesses and communities.

Business development means creating, maintaining and supporting businesses, as well as a new component, which is supporting the workforce because of the economic situation in Saskatchewan and the province's current labour needs.

With respect to francophones, the population in our province is aging. This is true not only of francophones, but also of everyone. It is clear that we have to meet some glaring labour needs.

We recently conducted a study on potential economic immigration to support francophone minority communities, particularly in Saskatchewan. The results of the study showed that there are needs not just in Saskatchewan, but throughout Canada. We need to be able to support these communities.

I'll give you an example. In 2012 in Saskatchewan, there were nearly 10,000 job offers for temporary foreign workers. Of these 10,000 jobs, there were barely a hundred francophones.

We think that the new express entry system and the new way of bringing immigrants to Canada is an opportunity to strengthen francophone communities by providing support to businesses in order to improve not only the situation of francophones in the province but also across the provincial economy in terms of our schools and so on.

We know that when people arrive in Saskatchewan, if we want to retain them, we need to be able to provide a framework to help them integrate, settle in and so on. There also needs to be an economic integration process. This is done two ways: through the labour market or through business or other creation.

We think it is very important for francophone communities to have the resources to help employers in this respect. I'm not talking about francophone employers, but anglophone employers who are willing to hire francophones so that they can settle here, in Canada. To do this, there are a large number of businesses in Canada, and the micro-enterprises are major employers in this regard. According to some statistics that we saw recently, close to 50% of the 10,000 job applications in 2012 that I mentioned are from micro-enterprises that were looking for temporary foreign workers.

For us, that means not only being involved in the local and provincial economy, but also providing our growing community with an opportunity to improve their French. We also believe that micro-enterprises are the ones that have the fewest resources to do all the work necessary to take care of the paperwork, guidance and so on. Small businesses have fewer human resources than many others. So we would like to contribute at that level. To increase the number of francophones in the regions, these businesses need to be supported through a preparation and selection process to bring francophones to a given region.

Our organization does this broadly. It seems fairly simple, but all the work we have to do to provide businesses with guidance and support requires resources and tools to ensure the success of our initiatives.

I could give you some detailed statistics, but it isn't easy by telephone.

I'm just in Saskatoon for a staff meeting. We had a presentation on this. Throughout the day, I was thinking about the best way to provide specialized services to businesses by transferring knowledge to them so that they can stand on their own and welcome immigrants.

You caught me a little by surprise because I didn't think I was going to be the first presenter. I thought there would be a round table first.

In short, that's what I wanted to say on the topic.

● (1540)

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Mr. LeVasseur, you have the floor.

**Mr. Gilles LeVasseur (Professor, Telfer School of Management, University of Ottawa, As an Individual):** Good afternoon, everyone.

[English]

Before I start I actually did write a paper in the French language. It was not translated, but I can answer any questions in both official languages. I know I was told we had to have it in both official languages to be distributed, so I would like to apologize for that. I will read my paper in the French language and then I can answer questions in any language.

[Translation]

My name is Gilles LeVasseur. I'm honoured to testify before the committee on francophone immigration and Canada's linguistic duality. I'm pleased to speak to you about this because I have been very much involved for over 30 years in everything relating to Canada's linguistic duality and official-language minority rights in Canada.

I have prepared a presentation that will last 10 minutes. However, if the committee would like, I would be pleased to present a supplementary text to provide more details on the points I will have presented. I have condensed all the ideas in this text by presenting principles, findings and recommendations. I went straight for the conclusions by considering stated principles and findings.

Linguistic duality is a fundamental feature of the Canadian identity. We need to do what it takes to ensure that this feature continues to define and enrich us as a society. Canada's linguistic duality is a dominant trait of our international image, and it is our duty to do what it takes so that this Canadian value can prosper across Canada.

I would now like to talk about the principles connected to linguistic duality.

Canada's linguistic duality is a fundamental characteristic of our society and is dependent on the following principles.

First, there needs to be demographic growth that allows for a balance between Canada's two main linguistic communities. This includes an immigration policy that recognizes the importance of linguistic duality as a fundamental standard in Canada and that is supported by administrative and financial measures so that

government entities, including the Government of Canada, can act effectively to maintain this typically Canadian social value.

Second, we need to promote the economic aspect of official languages to allow Canadians and newcomers to fully identify with linguistic duality and to develop positive identity reactions toward both official-language communities. Newcomers must also be made aware of official-language minority communities so that they can make language and identity choices that are in the interest of Canada's public immigration policies.

Third, there needs to be a recognition and willingness by various levels of government, starting with the Government of Canada, to promote linguistic duality. This includes protecting and promoting official-language minorities with an immigration policy built on respect for the demographic weight of official-language communities to ensure the growth and development of these communities.

The fourth and last principle is that there needs to be cooperation between the different levels of government so that newcomers can be integrated in a way that respects linguistic duality in Canada and avoids linguistic polarization in regions across Canada.

Those were the four basic principles.

Let's move on now to the findings relating to immigration and linguistic duality.

We are certainly disappointed to see that immigration in Canada has not helped to maintain, or even increase, the demographic weight of official-language minority communities. This situation stems from the following findings.

There aren't enough resources to properly select newcomers with an adequate knowledge of both official languages, particularly those speaking French. This lack also means that the federal government is slow to act on respecting the demographic weight of official-language minority communities.

The second finding concerned the lack of integration of newcomers into official-language minority communities, including a lack of infrastructures and mechanisms that would allow them to participate fully in the minority group.

● (1545)

The third finding is that there is a lack of promotion of these official-language minority communities among newcomers, which develops their desire to join the majority group, mainly for economic reasons. Initially, newcomers are looking for a better quality of life in Canada, which includes better economic conditions. However, if we don't promote knowledge of both official languages, newcomers will tend to join the majority group, thus limiting their capacity to become interested in the minority group.

The fourth finding is that there is a lack of support from the official-language minority communities for government approaches to properly support and integrate newcomers.

The last finding is that a stronger government approach would require selecting newcomers for official-language minority communities so that the outcome of immigrant selection would maintain the demographic weight of these communities.

Now, what solutions and recommendations can we present based on these principles and findings?

I will present four main recommendations that fall under the Government of Canada's jurisdiction.

First, the different levels of government need to integrate immigration policies and methods to better support and integrate newcomers in official-language minority communities. Once newcomers have been selected, the Government of Canada must work with the provinces so that newcomers can be integrated into official-language communities as soon as they arrive in Canada. Too often, newcomers are left on their own and have to make choices without understanding the Canadian issues and the importance of Canada's duality. The Government of Canada must help newcomers in their steps toward integrating into Canadian society.

Second, we need to look favourably on the ability of newcomers, as they work toward obtaining permanent resident status and Canadian citizenship, to enrol in an educational institution in an official-language community and to learn an official language in a minority environment. The education system is an excellent way to get newcomers to appreciate the official-language minority communities and to learn both official languages quickly. Willingness to enrol in an educational institution in a minority community would be worth additional points for newcomers in the newcomer selection process.

Here's an example. A newcomer arriving in Ottawa will receive a more favourable assessment if officials consider his registration at Cité collégiale because he wants to be able to operate in a francophone setting and obtain his resident status or citizenship. In addition, if immigrants send their children to French school or French immersion, that must also be considered. The goal is explain linguistic duality properly and to maintain knowledge among immigrants of Canada's commitment to both official language communities. Immigrants need to be able to understand what makes up Canadian society. If a foreigner who comes to Canada for economic reasons and wants a better life is not aware of the issues, that individual cannot develop this relationship.

Third, we need to establish selection objectives for newcomers where 10% of them would have an immediate capacity to communicate effectively and efficiently, considering the requirement that they settle in official-language minority communities. We need to increase the percentage of newcomers who can speak French so that the demographic weight of francophones outside Quebec is maintained and so that linguistic duality continues to be a vibrant value for all Canadians.

Fourth, we need to create intervention areas in large urban cities to support newcomers and direct them to services for official-language minorities. Often, urban centres do not have a concentration of individuals who speak the minority language, so that the newcomer is automatically immersed in the majority group and loses contact with the linguistic minority group. The intervention must include information about learning official languages in the intervention area, including cultural and economic services.

Take the most classic example of the number of francophones who settle in Toronto.

•(1550)

I was born in Toronto. I'm from North York. We are spread out in my neighbourhood. Since the city has over five million residents, francophones are spread out and choose places where there are economic advantages. Out of necessity, they develop the reflex to operate in the majority group's language, which is totally legitimate. However, people aren't exposed to francophone groups.

Francophones send their children to English school because it's what they know. It isn't because they don't want to speak French, but rather because we don't guide, integrate and support them in that. It's in this context that we are giving priority to certain intervention areas. We cannot possibly cover all of Canada, but we can decide to cover certain regions and, gradually, ensure that the percentage of the demographic weight is based on what we are seeking as francophones outside Quebec.

To conclude, I will say that we have a duty to act. Immigration is an essential tool for developing Canada's special identity, which includes the vibrant presence of official-language minority communities.

Thank you.

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

We'll begin with Mr. Nicholls.

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

I would also like to thank the witnesses for being here today. Their presentations were very interesting, and they provided us with a lot of information.

Unfortunately, the public will never know about the criticisms of the government and the good suggestions it disagrees with. In all likelihood, the solutions suggested that go against the government's policies will be deleted at the report stage. Still, I would like to thank you for your comments.

Today, for instance, we are going to try again to table a report on immigration. It was tabled previously. It's a unanimous report that was drafted with taxpayer money, and it was never made public. We are hoping that the government will not decide to go in-camera to hide the report from the public. But that's how things go with the Conservatives, here at the Standing Committee on Official Languages.

My first question concerns the Destination Canada program and is for Mr. Therrien.

Was your organization invited to the Destination Canada fair this year?

**Mr. Robert Therrien:** We received an invitation by email, but it was limited. We had to cover our own expenses. We don't necessarily have the resources, since we are a non-profit services organization. Given the funding we receive, we don't have the right to provide services like international trips. The cost for one day for Destination Canada, which is about \$6,000 or \$7,000 a person, isn't covered. So we didn't have the resources to take part in this event.

**Mr. Jamie Nicholls:** That's unfortunate.

The Destination Canada website indicates that Air Canada is one of the partners. According to the Commissioner of Official Languages, Air Canada is one of the worst delinquents when it comes to official languages. Perhaps Air Canada could show some good will and fund your trip to Destination Canada, but that's another story.

I want to speak about your organization's funding in general. You said that you needed resources to provide services. Do you currently have enough funding to meet your needs?

**Mr. Robert Therrien:** No. We currently receive funding from Citizenship and Immigration Canada, which is used to pay the salary of a single person. That person covers the entire province, specifically in the area of immigration. This involves providing recruiting support to businesses as well as guidance to help businesses recruit employees.

We receive funding from other departments. For instance, Western Economic Diversification Canada enables us to provide certain services related to creating businesses, but the problem is that three people have to cover the entire province. This involves more than just supporting business development; it involves supporting community economic development, too. We receive funding from that department for all projects from communities.

Lastly, Employment and Social Development Canada provides funding for the economic development of our communities. We have only one person who deals specifically with immigration.

• (1555)

**Mr. Jamie Nicholls:** Do you think the service provided is equal in quality to what is offered to the majority group?

**Mr. Robert Therrien:** Absolutely not. When I look at the resources awarded to the province's majority group, I see that it has 100 times more resources that we can have.

**Mr. Jamie Nicholls:** Thank you.

Mr. LeVasseur, you spoke about the demographic weight of francophone groups. Given that there have been changes since the 2011 census, do you think that the data is fairly reliable to be able to identify this demographic weight?

**Mr. Gilles LeVasseur:** I think you're asking me if we can trust the statistics that were collected in the last census to determine our demographic weight. The question is whether the right questions were asked. That's the first thing. Very often, a few much more specific questions should be added for official-language minorities.

Often the problem that we see when we look at the statistical data is that it doesn't necessarily reflect the entire demographic reality with respect to the changes that occur in an official-language minority community. On the one hand, the population does a lot of

moving and shifting and, on the other, we see that there is a lot of exogamy. This means that the answer will often change depending on how it is expressed in a survey.

A few questions should be reviewed in order to obtain more specific information about the relationship between immigration, the demographic weight and the use of the language in the community once someone has integrated into Canadian society.

**Mr. Jamie Nicholls:** Right.

Would you recommend that the government again include questions about the language of work in the census?

**Mr. Gilles LeVasseur:** Questions about the language of work promote the language in an economic perspective. It is important to fully understand that a language develops and grows over the long term if it thrives economically. If this economic growth can't occur, the language becomes an object of communication, ethnicity and culture, but it does not have this weight because it isn't economically profitable. That's why the concept of the language of work becomes a tool in this context to give a more formal value to speaking a given language in a minority environment.

**Mr. Jamie Nicholls:** Thank you.

Mr. Therrien, I have another question for you.

Do you have any recommendations for the federal government in order to improve its consultations?

**Mr. Robert Therrien:** I can say honestly that I took part in consultations this week with the Department of Citizenship and Immigration on how to better work with the department to improve francophone economic immigration. I can say that there has been a change. I firmly believe that this change has been happening for a few months, if not a year and a half. The department is connecting with the community.

Are there enough consultations? The consultations have indeed taken place, but it's in the action, the policies and the programs that we can see what kind of influence these consultations have had. In the coming years, we'll see just how seriously we were taken during these consultations. We will see what kind of impact we will have to improve the services provided to our fellow Canadians and to our businesses to increase the number of francophone immigrants to the country.

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

Mr. Gourde, you're next.

• (1600)

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

I would like to thank our two witnesses for being here today.

My first question has to do with francophone immigration.

The last witnesses who appeared this week mentioned that interprovincial immigration seemed to be more successful. Francophones from Quebec, New Brunswick and Nova Scotia go and work in the west. However, we seem to have more difficulty with immigrants from other countries when it comes to going directly to official-language minority communities in the western provinces.

This most certainly involves economic immigration. People go to a region to work and have a good job. Do these people have difficulty integrating into official-language minority communities because they live in remote regions and are too spread out? Do these communities have the leadership they need to promote what they are, how they live and the services they offer? Perhaps it would enable them to reach out to people who are immigrating and move closer to their community to create this community life.

I could start with Mr. LeVasseur and then move on to Mr. Therrien.

**Mr. Gilles LeVasseur:** Your question has four aspects, and I'd like to touch on them.

First, someone who immigrates to Canada does not always understand Canada's complex identity and, therefore, doesn't fully understand this idea of official-language communities.

For instance, if someone speaks Russian or German and immigrates to Germany, that person does not necessarily understand all the complexities of that country. Immigrants want to go to a foreign country to have a better quality of life. It isn't the immigrant's fault for not understanding that reality. Immigrants are doing what anyone would do, which is to improve their situation. That's why people come to Canada, a country that offers a quality of life that is available in very few countries. Our system is extraordinary and works well.

Second, quite often newcomers will work in urban settings. They will go and work where there is the largest demographic weight of their own community. They identify with their group. If their groups speak the common language—English for example—they won't seek out French, a language they don't identify with. Francophones outside Quebec have progressed mainly because of two things: Quebec francophone immigration to certain regions of New Brunswick and French immersion. These were the two main gains for francophones. They helped maintain this idea of communicating in French.

Third, there isn't a guidance system that helps immigrants function and get services. There is nothing that directs them to what is called the community of the other official language. If newcomers integrate into the francophone setting outside Quebec, it's because they really are francophones and can't speak another language. This may be the case for Africans from Congo, the Central African Republic, Burkina Faso or Mali. They don't speak English, so they immediately go to where there are French speakers since it is the only language they understand. However, if individuals are linguistically mobile, they can go elsewhere. That's where the problem lies. They don't choose the official-language minority community because they don't know it exists, not because they don't like it.

Fourth, let's talk about the community associations that Canadian Heritage funds through its various programs. The agreements

between the communities and the federal government also need to develop a component so that the official-language communities and the associations can create institutions, organizations and components that support these aspects. Too often, we expect the government to do all the work. That doesn't mean that the government can't help, but it needs to support the development of other systems that could work in parallel and that would do excellent work.

I'll give you a simple example. I was the chair of the Conseil de la coopération de l'Ontario for five years. The conseil has run the youth Canada works program for several years. It administers a program and is subjected to audits. The agreement is renewed every three years because the numbers are good and the data is there. It funds the creation of summer jobs in both official languages. Isn't that something to consider? In some regions, these communities and these organizations could work on integrating immigrants, grouping them together, supporting them, helping them and enrolling them in college and university. We would then have a mechanism where the government would give its support, but would not be required to run the whole thing. There would be the responsibility of the communities themselves through a system for exchanges between the government, the immigration system and the associations. That option exists.

● (1605)

**Mr. Jacques Gourde:** Mr. Therrien, your comments?

**Mr. Robert Therrien:** There has been a clear decrease in the number of people from different provinces who have gone to western Canada. I don't have all the numbers with me, but it seems to me that 700 people arrived in Saskatchewan in 2012. However, I would be surprised if we met with 50 of them.

Again, this comes back to the capacity of a francophone organization in a minority situation to provide services to all citizens. We also need to meet with these people who are in our communities. We don't know them, and vice versa. For the community associations in Regina and Saskatoon, which are the two largest cities in the province, only two individuals have been hired to take care of overall development. By this I mean cultural development and assistance related to health and education services.

As for the research capacity, it is clear that we don't have the means to do the same thing as the other stakeholders. As in any network, we help each other but, at the same time, we have to meet certain requirements of our funders. Often, we cannot get out of this context to provide certain services. As for whether we can reach people who come to our province, I would say that we lack the opportunities to do so.

For a few years, we went to Quebec to recruit with representatives from Saskatchewan. We were there to act as a liaison because they couldn't provide the service in French. We weren't the ones who paid for it; it was officials in Saskatchewan who wanted help. This was the first time that they went. It was a little different for them. Often, provinces like Saskatchewan, with the exception of Quebec, don't have the capacity and don't have the immediate reflex to invite us as stakeholders into the region to participate in meetings like this.

When it comes to recruitment, there are costs associated with it, such as air travel and accommodation. We didn't have the capacity to do these things. If we are there from the beginning to pair employees and employers, there would be a better chance for us to be able to integrate them into the community. If we aren't with them from the start, we risk having them arrive here and be completely outside the community. Too often, we hear people say that they have been in Regina for 10 years and didn't know that there was a francophone community there.

They come to Saskatchewan to work and they integrate. Sometimes they wonder if there really are francophones in the region. I'm surprised every time I visit Quebec City, Montreal or other regions—and I'm there often—and people ask me if I'm francophone. When I tell them I am, they ask me how long I've been in Saskatchewan. I tell them that I was born in Saskatchewan, and people are astonished that I speak French.

People who come mainly from east of Quebec and certain other regions of Canada don't know that there's a francophone minority in the other communities. Because of that, they will not have the normal reflex to learn about whether there are francophones.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Ms. St-Denis, you may go ahead.

**Ms. Lise St-Denis (Saint-Maurice—Champlain, Lib.):** Mr. LeVasseur, one of your principles rather surprised me, the one calling for a greater number of francophones in Ontario in order to achieve a balance between the francophone and anglophone communities.

You met with CIC officials this week. Is the department—the government, actually—willing to increase the number of French speakers in the country?

**Mr. Gilles LeVasseur:** The department does seem to have that desire. I recommended a target of 10%, but the department's target is 5%.

The problem is that the 5% target hasn't been reached. If you take into account integration, assimilation and language abandonment, the figure drops to below 2%. We have to increase the percentage, but it will take a genuine commitment on the department's part. That is the necessary direction, but also necessary is the political will to make it happen and to explore the way of going about it.

It can't be done in the space of a year. The public service is a machine, a system. It has to be a step-by-step process, and it will take time. If, however, it is among the objectives set out in part III of the budget, we can get there, but it has to be clearly stated.

• (1610)

**Ms. Lise St-Denis:** You also said that an integration model was necessary.

**Mr. Gilles LeVasseur:** Yes.

**Ms. Lise St-Denis:** I'd like to know where municipalities stand on the problems affecting francophones. Do they consider the needs of francophones or completely disregard them?

**Mr. Gilles LeVasseur:** From what we've observed in Ontario, and a number of regions across the country, I would say that it isn't a priority for municipalities. The development of official language

minority communities doesn't enter into their mandate unless the French-speaking minority in the municipality has a significant demographic weight. That's when it becomes part of city council's mandate.

Take the City of Ottawa, for example. It doesn't have the political will or intention to address that issue. The city's position is that its focus is on services, not the integration of immigrants or newcomers.

**Ms. Lise St-Denis:** You said newcomers have a very hard time identifying with Canadian culture. Would it be worthwhile to create programs promoting the value of French, for instance, programs showcasing Métis and francophone history prior to Confederation, history that newcomers would learn about?

As everyone knows, the Supreme Court is considering yet another matter involving the rights of minority communities, in relation to Saskatchewan's failure to respect the rights of francophones before Confederation. It was even a century before school boards were established.

Could this kind of situation help promote French culture and give newcomers a better understanding of Canadians' dual francophone-anglophone identity?

That question is for Mr. Therrien, as well.

**Mr. Robert Therrien:** I would say that, in order for someone to integrate into one of Canada's official language minority communities, a considerable amount of effort is needed when it comes to the history component.

In response to your first question, I would say that, because of our democratic system, some communities are more interested than others in the French fact. But it's a very small number. It isn't municipalities' first concern.

What's more, Canada's immigration situation is still evolving. According to projections for the next few years, the number of immigrants needed to replenish the workforce and offset the effects of the aging population is only going to increase.

As for your question on history, I don't think the only thing we need to do is teach immigrants about our history. We would also benefit from learning about their history in order to better understand them. The integration and culture of these newcomers needs to be addressed, be it from a work or daily life standpoint. We, as communities, should be aware of those needs. Furthermore, it's a way for us to get to know each other better and it improves how we interact.

It's a bit like marriage. Two people meet and think they know each other really well, but after a few years, they realize they don't know each other quite as well as they had thought. The process hinges on mutual respect.

As for the importance of francophones' history, I hail from southern Saskatchewan. Only a few years before I was born, the Ku Klux Klan had a very strong hold in our area. I think it's important for francophones to know those kinds of things and for newcomers to know about our history.



That said, I think it's important for us to know one another's history so that we can live together as a people who share a language and the French fact, thus contributing to the country's development.

• (1615)

**Ms. Lise St-Denis:** We've been told that oil companies in your province bring in significant numbers of French-speaking workers.

Do they contribute at all to the development of francophone communities?

**Mr. Robert Therrien:** Their involvement is really quite limited. The workers I mentioned, who work in the oil industry, are, in some cases, temporary workers, but they are also workers who come from other parts of the country. We don't see them.

When someone working in the oil industry doesn't live in a large urban centre or work in administration, for instance, they are out in the field in rural communities, which are often quite small.

No doubt, you know that Saskatchewan's population has risen over the past few years. But that population is very spread out across the province. The community clearly doesn't have the resources to reach out to those people and show them that a francophone community exists and welcomes their involvement.

In the bigger cities, some people are involved in the community, and that involvement is on the rise. In rural communities, however, that involvement is significantly lacking.

**The Chair:** Very good. Thank you.

**Ms. Lise St-Denis:** The government says it doesn't have money, but the oil companies have a lot of money. The communities could approach them for help.

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

Mr. Chisu, you may go ahead.

[English]

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

[Translation]

I'm going to ask my questions in English, Canada's other official language.

[English]

I am an immigrant to this country. I note that you mentioned, Professor LeVasseur, that the language survives and develops because it is economically viable. As soon as a language is no longer economically viable, people will move to another language.

Are you observing that provinces in Canada with stronger economies are receiving more francophone immigrants?

**Mr. Gilles LeVasseur:** What we have noticed in the past years is that the more the population is able to communicate in both official languages, the more the economic performance has been increased because of mobility, interactions, and an increase in exchange. We have noticed that.

But also, those who do have the capacity to express themselves in both official languages also have more levels of education and are performing at a higher level in different organizations. They have the

chance to aspire to more national bodies or associations because of the mobility they have in terms of linguistic capacity.

**Mr. Corneliu Chisu:** I am an immigrant from Europe, and in Europe usually we speak three or four languages. Many countries in Europe are members of la Francophonie, including countries that don't have anything to do with the French language, such as Bulgaria or those that are not of Latin origin.

But let's say that they are coming to Canada, and I think their integration in Canada is not that difficult because we are a very diverse and a very accommodating country. I am speaking from my own experience, but basically I think that the government—and it doesn't matter which colour it is and so on—performs quite well in advising the immigrants and trying to integrate them into our society. If you look just at Toronto, there are 170 languages spoken and they are living in the best harmony that you could imagine in the world, if you look at how the world is today.

I have a question for you. You mentioned that francophone immigrants do not necessarily share the identity of the community they move to, despite their speaking French. What do you mean by that?

• (1620)

**Mr. Gilles LeVasseur:** I'm from Toronto. I was born in North York and grew up in Ontario. Fifty years ago it was very difficult to find your way to get basic services from private or public institutions in Ontario. There was this ethics of language that existed at the time, which has totally transformed itself over the last 50 years.

We are in a battle of survival, a battle of identity, and a battle to define ourselves. That accentuated itself when the Quebecers no longer were French Canadians, but only became Quebecers. I had to redefine myself as a Franco-Ontarian, as a Franco-Albertan, as a Fransaskois. We had to redefine ourselves. It is always a struggle to reinvent yourself in a new environment.

The challenge we faced was one of fighting to have equality. That does not mean that we wanted everything in both official languages on every front, but to be able to perform in the society and with public institutions in the choice we wished to have in terms of language.

When you're an immigrant your battle is your own personal survival. It's your own identity. It's your own need to make a better life and to make sure your kids have a better life. You do not necessarily participate in the same struggle to progress in terms of a battle of the language versus a battle of a good life, a more enjoyable life, and a quality of life for your kids. They may share the same fundamental linguistic capacity to communicate, but they don't have that history and that struggle to get where we are today.

**Mr. Corneliu Chisu:** I want to mention that in my riding, which is east Toronto, in recent years I found two French schools. One is a Catholic French school, not French immersion, and another is a French public school up to grade 12. It is a collegiate. I see that there is an interest.

In the Pickering and Scarborough areas they are mostly immigrants, but there is a great interest in the French language. I can tell you that the fact that we are bilingual and that we have two official languages is an advantage and not a deterrence. People understand this, at least in my area.

**Mr. Robert Therrien:** I would like to comment on one of the questions you posed about the provincial government and the number of francophones coming in.

We have seen the numbers increase, but we have not seen them increase at the same pace as the whole. We're still below the percentage of francophones that there are in the province. Our net demographic situation is still worsening because there are not enough coming in.

One of the things I'd like to point out is in terms of the economy. We are part of the RDÉE Canada network. There was a study done in partnership with the Conference Board of Canada that was released about a year and a half ago. It demonstrated the added value in terms of economic output of having the French language, and we talked about all the different countries in the world where French is a first language. The study demonstrated the net value and the net economic advantage of having French as an additional language.

I think that on a Canadian front we are a bilingual country, but we haven't put enough emphasis on that in the past and looked at the economic benefit of the francophone community in that way.

• (1625)

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

[Translation]

It is now over to Mr. Daniel.

[English]

**Mr. Joe Daniel (Don Valley East, CPC):** I think it was Mr. Leung.

[Translation]

**The Chair:** Mr. Leung, you may go ahead.

[English]

**Mr. Chungsen Leung (Willowdale, CPC):** Thank you, Joe, for letting me speak.

Let me ask a question. I'm also an immigrant to this country, and prior to coming to Canada, I had to deal with three other foreign languages in the places where I lived and studied. What I noticed in my prior experience is that learning a language is driven mainly by economic, cultural, and social necessity. To politically force a language onto a learner is perhaps not the most successful model. However, I realize that in a bilingual country, it is out of national heritage or national prestige that we need to do this.

I definitely agree that a multiple language capability is a step towards better job prospects or even a better clarity of mind in terms of how one deals with the world. But in our increasingly internationalized and smaller world, where our trading partners are also in Latin America, Asia, the Middle East, and other parts of the world that are not English or French speaking, what is your opinion of adding third languages to improve Canada's ability to be a trading nation internationally?

I'd like to hear your comments on that.

**Mr. Robert Therrien:** I'll see if I can respond fairly quickly.

I don't think, in terms of the other languages.... The government is better equipped than I am in terms of statistics. The individual who spoke recently said that there are 170 languages in the Toronto area, if I'm not mistaken. To me, there are economic advantages to having more than one language.

That being said, we are first and foremost a bilingual country, and I believe in the importance of putting the emphasis on that. Once we have that right, and once we've promoted that component of our identity and our economic way of life to the fullest, I think there are opportunities to be had that we certainly have not exploited or developed to their fullest potential, far from it.

More and more—and I see it in Saskatchewan—I see people coming to Canada who don't know either official language. Maybe 10 to 15 years ago that was rare, but today it is certainly more dominant. We have people from all over the world coming to Canada who don't know English or French. I look at that as an opportunity to say, "Okay, we're in a bilingual country. Why not recruit francophone people who have an understanding of at least one of the official languages?" If we have the opportunity to help make progress and to help some of the founding members of this country continue to operate and work in a way that helps portray that reality, we can bring added value and we can go a small step further. That's where I'm coming from as a francophone.

I completely agree that having more languages provides opportunities for more things. I've always said that to friends, neighbours, colleagues, and so on. We shouldn't just limit ourselves to two languages. It would be better to add more, but I think we first need to get the first two right.

**Mr. Chungsen Leung:** Professor LeVasseur.

**Mr. Gilles LeVasseur:** I am of the view that languages are the door to success and prosperity.

This term, sir, I teach a class called international business in English. We have 127 students in the class. I teach the same class in the French language. We had a discussion about language two weeks ago in the course. I asked the students, "How come you guys can only speak English? You're here at Ottawa U, and I teach in French every single class that you guys have in English in this faculty. Why are you guys not taking the class in French? You're entitled to write your exams and your papers in the language of your choice."

It's a matter of first creating that notion that language is a positive thing and that people have to make that necessary effort to get there. When you are from a foreign society, it's already part of your society, your environment, but for a lot of people here, unless it's part of their curriculum, they're not going to make the effort to learn the other official language.

I can see it because I teach, for example, business law this term in English and French. I say, "Guys, do your paper in French even though you're in an English class. Try to understand, you want to work for the federal government, you want to work on national institutions, you want to travel, you want to represent business." I never get more than one or two papers out of a hundred that will be in the other language.

The problem is not that I don't value...it's that individuals need to be brought to believe that language is an asset that complements them and that completes them. Because we're in a North American anglophone-majority society, people don't see the necessity. That's why they don't get that notion of learning the other language.

What we also notice is that those who go for a third language also improve in the two official languages. Why? Because if you're going to speak a third language, Spanish or German for example, or whatever other language depending on where you're looking at, you want to make sure that you can still be proud to say I speak French and English, because it complements you. An employer who can see you speak three or four languages will give you priority in the hiring because it demonstrates talent, capacity, initiative, and also something that they don't have. It's a plus value to have more languages because it's also an economic benefit. When you teach that to students they all say, "Yes, well done", but they're not going to move.

• (1630)

**Le président:** Thank you very much.

[Translation]

Ms. Day, you may go ahead.

**Mrs. Anne-Marie Day (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, NDP):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Welcome to our witnesses. Unfortunately, I'm pretty sure my five minutes won't be enough time to ask everything I want to.

I'd like to point something out and shift the focus back to where it should be. We aren't here to discuss official languages. Our purpose isn't to check whether everyone in the country speaks English or French. That isn't the issue. What we are talking about is linguistic duality.

The Immigration and Refugee Protection Act was amended in 2002, and the following provision was added:

The objectives of this Act with respect to immigration are

. . . to support and assist the development of minority official languages communities in Canada;

Canada's official languages are English and French, not Italian or Chinese. We don't have to know both languages, but we do have to protect official language minority communities.

And that brings me to the much talked-about, Express Entry system. I'd like to hear what both of you have to say on the subject.

Earlier, we talked about temporary foreign workers. Someone said that of 10,000 applications, 100 have been made by francophones. An immigrant who comes to the country under this system has a passport or train ticket, so to speak, to speed up the immigration process. Eligible applicants have to meet requirements with respect to language—which language isn't specified—education, work experience in Canada and other factors that contribute to success in Canada.

French is the fifth most spoken language in the world. Africa and OIF member states have the biggest pool of French speakers. We know, however, that the recognition rate when it comes to African credentials isn't very high.

Is the government really making an effort to integrate francophones into communities and raise the number of immigrants? Will this program hurt linguistic duality?

**Mr. Gilles LeVasseur:** This is what's happening.

The official language minority community trying to reach immigrants, oftentimes, isn't aware they're out there because it doesn't know where to look. The temporary foreign worker program brought in a whole other population of workers who weren't able to function in French. That hurt us because our demographic weight didn't go up. We don't have a way to provide guidance and support to these people so that they can function in our society.

I'll give you a mundane example. Newcomers from Africa are very fond of co-operatives because the movement is part of their reality. Through those co-operatives comes the transition to business corporations and other entities.

The Government of Canada did away with the co-operative development initiative administered by Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada. Support for the development of co-operatives no longer exists, and that support often served as a means to integrate newcomers, encouraging them to take ownership of their future and so forth. We don't have enough systems in place to guide and empower these people, and so, we lose them.

As far as temporary foreign workers are concerned, we don't know how to find them or who they are. Since they aren't necessarily able to speak both official languages, they are part of the immigration statistics, but we are lacking the demographic weight to support our communities. French speakers outside Quebec aren't winners in this equation, and that is our main struggle.

Take, for example, the bill that was introduced in Ontario before its legislative assembly wrapped up. The provincial government introduced a bill that recognized the importance of Franco-Ontarian communities in the province. The bill established a model under which associations could come together and, thanks to government support, use organizations to recruit immigrants, themselves.

Consider this. As a result, francophone associations would have the ability to seek out newcomers, with the province's support, in order to maintain the community's demographic weight and then ensure that these people were properly integrated into society.

Let's look at Toronto, which is where most of Ontario's francophones will be in the next 20 years. The problem is that we're losing those French speakers. Toronto is such a massive city that these people are really scattered. And support structures are lacking. Employment is another consideration. People move wherever the economic need exists. The structure to help them function together is lacking. That is where we have failed.

• (1635)

**Mr. Robert Therrien:** I would like to add a comment about the Express Entry system. I am far from being an expert on that, because it was created quite recently. There is a learning curve.

I am a member of the Réseau de développement économique et d'employabilité Canada, the network for economic development and employability. Everywhere in Canada, the members of the network have begun to look at the system.

In our opinion, the key element regarding Express Entry is the fact that we lost the Francophone Significant Benefit program about a year ago. We lost ground because this reduced the advantage we had in recruiting francophones.

We feel it is clear that employers must be at the heart of this new Express Entry system. We have to be in a position to support the employers, to raise their awareness and convince them of the value added of having francophones come to the communities. We have to help them choose francophones and invite them to come and work in Canada. The system as such does not favour francophones. They are at the same level as anyone else. Even when they provide information, they may omit indicating that French is their second or third language and that they do not speak English. Will they put that down? I don't know.

In that sense, we have some rather big challenges to meet. Perhaps there should be something directly linked to francophones in the Express Entry system.

We know that points are awarded for knowing a second official language. We could see how many people will mention it. If I remember correctly, for the second language—French in this case—about 20 points are awarded out of a possible 1,200 points. It is not significant and does not constitute an effective strategy to recruit francophones.

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

[English]

Mr. Daniel, you have the floor.

**Mr. Joe Daniel:** Thank you, Chair, and thank you, witnesses, for being here.

It's an interesting question and an interesting issue, and I think you both already have the answer. The answer is that you must make it economically viable for immigrants in the francophone communities to stay there. We're finding this already. We've had numerous witnesses, for example, who have come here and told us about the young people who are leaving many of the francophone or minority communities for education or for jobs, but are not returning to their communities. Therein lies the problem.

One thing I would ask is this. Anticipating what this government is doing with respect to free trade with Europe, what are your communities doing, what are you doing to promote the economic aspects of this in such a way that you can attract people here who will do business with Europe?

This question is for both of you.

• (1640)

**Mr. Gilles LeVasseur:** If we look at the Ontario proportion, for example, Ontario has been developing a very strong, robust francophone school system. My two daughters go to a school called Sainte-Geneviève. It's the largest francophone primary school in Canada outside Quebec.

What you will notice is that at least a third of the parents do not speak French, but they send their kids there because they know that this is the path to the future, the path to more mobility, the path to

openness to the European Union, the path to more interactions. They understand that.

The sad part is that we need to enhance the approach whereby immersion becomes not just for a certain knowledgeable, elite society but is also for the commoners, whereby it is open to many people. This is what we need to emphasize. It is why, for example, the francophone school boards in Ontario advertise in both official languages, to integrate the most people as possible into our school system. That's one way.

The other way—and this is where we need to show the economic viability.... The thing is that it takes time to get there, but, if I may speak beyond the immigration aspect, this is something I have always personally expressed: francophone Quebec corporations also have to play their part outside Quebec in promoting both official languages. I know some of you will probably hate me for what I'm saying, but there is also a duty to step up to the plate and showcase that we also have solidarity with the francophones outside Quebec.

You'll say, "Give an example". Metro is a very profitable grocery chain; we have been asking for years why they can't put an accent on "Metro". Banque Nationale—National Bank—where are your bilingual signs in Toronto? Desjardins....

We are together. We need that solidarity. We need to be together. They have to take the leadership with us, because if they showcase in their own institutions, when they go outside Quebec, that there is value to being bilingual, economically everybody is going to get on the bandwagon. But if they don't take the step, how can we minorities, when we don't have strong control of our own financial institutions, make the difference?

**Mr. Robert Therrien:** Let me add to that in terms of what we are doing. As a francophone network in Saskatchewan, we try to regroup because, first, we have a duty. We want to work with employers to recruit the immigrants here. There is integration—first they have to become settled and so on—but when they're at a job and starting to work, you have the whole issue about school, the whole issue about social life and everything that goes with it, including health and all that sort of thing.

It takes a whole network of people to offer those services. This is one thing we want to emphasize, that in working with employers we have a community that is ready and would like to support the integration of immigrants into the community. The employer doesn't have to worry about what goes on after those hours of work. Lifestyle at home is difficult after the hours of work—you have kids, you have spouses, and that sort of thing. They have to be integrated into society, and we as a community would like to be structured in such a way that we can offer all of those services to the immigrants coming in.

Again I speak of capacity, because the resources we have now are not conducive to being able to offer the whole spectrum of services to make sure that as a whole the immigrants are looked after and will integrate. The question of retention remains as to how well they integrate into society and your community. If they feel they don't belong, at some point they're going to want to get up and leave.

So beyond the employer, it's a question of what we do as a community. It's about the whole structure that we put in place to make sure that we can respond to the needs of the immigrants by making sure those other services are available.

• (1645)

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

Lastly, go ahead, Monsieur Gravelle.

**Mr. Claude Gravelle (Nickel Belt, NDP):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.  
[Translation]

I thank the witnesses very much for being here with us today.

I would like to quote a paragraph from an article that was published in *Le Voyageur*, a francophone newspaper in my region of northern Ontario. The article says in substance that the last Statistics Canada census indicates that more than a million immigrants chose Canada as their new home during this five-year period, and that half of them opted for Ontario as the location to start their new life in North America. However, less than one percent of these newcomers settled north of the 46th parallel.

In this case, I am talking about northern Ontario, but I am sure the situation is about the same in all the provinces. Can you tell me how this could affect the other provinces, especially Saskatchewan and northern Ontario? Would you have any comments to make in this regard?

**Mr. Gilles LeVasseur:** Very often, economic prosperity is the big draw that leads immigrants to northern Ontario, whether it be Hearst or Timmins. I don't know if you consider North Bay a part of northern Ontario, but for Franco-Ontarians, it is not a part of the north, which we normally consider begins in Sudbury.

People have to be able to find jobs. Newcomers don't know what northern Ontario is. So they are going to go where there is an urban concentration and where their demographic group can be found, as this will be their first attachment and point of contact.

That is where we have to go and get the newcomers to settle in northern Ontario, i.e. people who can communicate in both official languages, because there is already an exodus of francophones from the north to the south. That is a problem we also have in eastern Ontario.

The problem is that there is no reception framework. When the selection is made, it is often according to criteria that do not always take duality and linguistic needs into account. So we get qualified people, but no percentages or quotas are specified. That is why I am asking that 10% of the people selected be able to communicate in both official languages, so as to insure that we can maintain demographic weight if there is mobility in the different regions.

Linguistic duality is essential for francophones and I will explain why. When a community sees its demographic weight declining, it becomes insecure. The insecurity leads to a behavioural inferiority. People withdraw and keep to themselves. That is the fundamental reaction and this has to be avoided. However, when you see that your population is growing and you see more members arriving, this gives you the confidence to keep going.

**Mr. Robert Therrien:** I don't really know the answer to that question. In Saskatchewan, the rural communities are very small. We have a total population of about 1.5 million people. Those are the last figures I have in mind. As for our rural communities, it is obvious that immigrants will go where the majority of the population resides. In the past, the immigration system allowed for this.

Today, with the new Express Entry system, things are going to change. In spite of everything, there is a concentration. There are associations of people from Burundi, the Congo, Ivory Coast and so on in our regions and communities. This is how people find each other in the communities.

I know an employee who works in the small community of Ponteix, in Saskatchewan. He was telling me that this morning a plumber who works in his region is looking for another qualified plumber because he does not want to have to continually check his work. Since he is having trouble finding someone, we are trying to see how we can help him.

In this small village of 500 people, a restaurant has just hired a Brazilian because it could not find anyone else to fill the position. Certain immigrants may be more adventurous and willing to settle in a small community.

How can we change a situation? By working with the community. The community has to be welcoming, and it is our responsibility to work with the employers and the community in this regard. It isn't just the responsibility of the employer who can offer a job. It is also the responsibility of the community to welcome and guide the individuals who are going to go to the smaller regions where there are no associations of Burundians, Ivorians or Congolese. To my mind, the important thing is to have a reception and settlement structure when newcomers arrive.

• (1650)

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

We are going to stop here since we have to discuss Ms. St-Denis' motion.

Mr. Therrien et Mr. LeVasseur, thank you for having come to testify before the committee. You can stay here if you wish, or you may leave the room. It is up to you.

Ms. St-Denis, you may present your motion.

[English]

But first, Mr. Nicholls has a point of order.

Go ahead.

[Translation]

**Mr. Jamie Nicholls:** Mr. Chair, I see that Mr. Gourde is signalling you with his pen.

I hope the committee will not continue its work in camera. Ms. St-Denis' motion is very important since it concerns a report that contains a great deal of information. It was prepared with taxpayers' money and must be released for the general public. The opposition intends to support tabling this report. We are going to vote in favour of it and I hope the government will support us.

Thank you.

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

Since Ms. St-Denis has not yet tabled her motion, we cannot debate it.

Mr. Gourde, did you have a point of order?

**Mr. Jacques Gourde:** Yes, I would like us to end the meeting in camera.

[*English*]

**The Chair:** That's not a point of order. You moved a motion.

I actually had given the floor to Madame St-Denis to present her motion, so I'm going to allow her to do that. Once she has presented her motion and it's live in front of us, I will pass the floor to you and you can then move your motion.

[*Translation*]

Ms. St-Denis, can you table your motion?

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

When I proposed that we do a study on immigration, I did not know that a report had been prepared and completed in 2010. It was tabled in the House. However, since there were elections subsequently, it was completely forgotten.

My motion reads as follows:

That the report entitled *Recruitment, Intake and Integration: What Does the Future Hold for Immigration to Official Language Minority Communities?* be tabled and analyzed as part of the current study on immigration. The above report by the House of Commons Standing Committee on Official Languages was adopted by the committee on November 16, 2010, and presented to the House on November 29, 2010.

However, we never obtained any response to the report.

**The Chair:** The motion is now before the committee.

Mr. Gourde, you have the floor.

**Mr. Jacques Gourde:** Can we continue the meeting in camera, Mr. Chair?

[*English*]

**The Chair:** All those in favour of going in camera?

(Motion agreed to)

**The Chair:** We'll suspend for a minute to allow the clerk to put the committee in camera.

[*Proceedings continue in camera*]

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