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Chair

The Honourable Michael Chong

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• (1530)

[Translation]

The Chair (Hon. Michael Chong (Wellington—Halton Hills, CPC)): Order, please.

Welcome to the 43rd meeting of the Standing Committee on Official Languages. Today is Thursday, March 26, 2015. Pursuant to Standing Order 108, today we are studying the Government of Canada programs designed to promote francophone immigration into Canada's official language minority communities.

We will begin with Ms. Aden, from the Réseau de développement économique et d'employabilité Canada, and Mr. Sigouin, from the Réseau de développement économique et d'employabilité Ontario.

Ms. Aden, go ahead.

Ms. Roukya Abdi Aden (Administrator, National Cooperation, Réseau de développement économique et d'employabilité (RDÉE) Canada): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen.

My name is Roukya Abdi. I am the administrator responsible for national cooperation at the Réseau de développement économique et d'employabilité Canada. Thank you for receiving us today.

I will begin my presentation like everyone else, by giving you a brief overview of our network.

Created in 1997, our network works for the economic development of francophone communities. RDEE Canada includes 12 members that provide advocacy, sharing of good practices, consistent action and leadership to help communities fully contribute to Canada's economic prosperity.

In terms of immigration, I will not tell you anything new by saying that a 4.4% target was set in 2003 when the strategic framework to foster immigration to francophone minority communities was adopted. In 2012, francophone immigration was at about 1.8%. A decade later, the success rate was therefore very low. Also in 2012, Canada's immigration system was completely updated. The update was based on four principles or pillars: the economy, efficiency, certification and safety.

This system, which really took off in January 2015 when the express entry program was introduced, seeks to directly connect the labour needs of Canadian employers with the selection of skilled immigrants, be they permanent residents or temporary workers. Our Réseau de développement économique et d'employabilité is

particularly involved in that, since access to labour is part of our mandate.

The network has been working on immigration matters for a few years and is facing a number of challenges in terms of the recruitment and employability of immigrants. Those challenges include the needs of a rapidly changing labour market requiring specific and up-to-date knowledge in our case. We have to build our knowledge as we go along, while ensuring a presence across the country. Skills assessment is also a challenge that we quite often have to face.

Furthermore, we need to connect immigrants with employers who are looking for skilled candidates. Sometimes we tell the employer that we are able to find the ideal candidate, but when we start the process, we realize that the candidate, although skilled, has not yet had his or her credentials recognized. That is a major challenge for us.

Making employers and businesses aware of the potential and value of economic immigration is also part of the challenge. It is not easy to convince Canadian employers, especially anglophones, to recruit workers from the pool created by the countries of the Francophonie. They are not used to doing that. They generally choose the Philippines because they are familiar with that country and are very comfortable going back there.

In terms of the need to support small and medium-sized businesses, you know that 98% of Canadian businesses are very small businesses. As a result, they don't have human resource services and therefore do not post job vacancies.

In addition, some employers are excessively cautious regarding international recruitment, either because they find the steps time-consuming or because they have a poor understanding of how the system works. They are also afraid of abuse and backlash.

The RDEE and its members have developed a two-pronged approach. For us, immigration makes it possible, first and foremost, to address the need of Canadian employers to access labour. That is how we see things and that is the approach we take with immigration.

We need to have a good grasp of the market to: provide targeted support to employers; identify their needs; determine which employers will be facing labour shortages; work with those needing to recruit workers internationally; engage employers and make them aware of the hiring of francophone immigrants who have settled in Canada or are being recruited abroad; and provide services tailored to employers' needs.

•(1535)

Express entry may be an opportunity for us. However, we need to be proactive to be successful. I would like to present a few solutions, after which I will give the floor to Daniel Sigouin, the representative from RDEE Ontario, which is a member of RDEE Canada. Both networks have work plans on the ground. Mr. Sigouin will tell you more about what is happening on the ground in terms of economic immigration.

I will now present some short-term solutions whose results could be felt immediately. The first objective is to connect employers with francophone candidates. To address the needs for access to labour, it is important to set up a targeted support system for employers to help them recruit immigrants and integrate them into jobs.

We have a few tools right now, such as the Skills International website, which makes it possible to have virtual forums, online interviews and job offers matched with the candidates' profiles.

We also recommend introducing incentives to assist employers interested in international recruitment. Incentives include waiving the labour market impact assessment fee or relaxing the rules of the assessment. We need to ensure that immigrants come from all categories of immigrants and connect with countries that are sources of francophone immigration.

As I said earlier, if an employer wants a skilled candidate, we need to be able to look for that candidate in all the countries of the Francophonie, where skilled candidates are, not just in France or Belgium.

It is also important to have pre-departure services to ensure that immigrants are prepared before they arrive.

Lastly, we would like to tackle the entrepreneurial challenges through francophone immigration. Immigration might address the problem of the next generation of entrepreneurs, which is a problem for the francophonie.

I now invite my colleague Daniel to continue.

Mr. Daniel Sigouin (Director General, Réseau de développement économique et d'employabilité (RDÉE) Ontario): Thank you, Roukya.

My name is Daniel Sigouin and I am the director general of Réseau de développement économique et d'employabilité Ontario. Clearly, our network is a member of RDEE Canada.

RDEE Ontario promotes economic development and employability in order to ensure the vitality and sustainability of all francophone communities in Ontario.

Since 2001, RDEE Ontario has developed expertise in several niche markets, such as the expansion of small and medium-sized businesses, research and analysis, financing, consultation, economic immigration, business alliances, the development of organizational capacity, the organization of trade missions and the establishment of communication strategies and partnerships in our official language communities.

In 2010, we launched a program called "La Bonne affaire", a program geared toward economic immigration. La Bonne affaire is a

provincial awareness and economic-integration program funded by Citizenship and Immigration Canada. La Bonne affaire works to make Ontario employers aware of the benefits of hiring newcomers, and supports employers in identifying talent and recruiting and integrating newcomers in the workplace.

La Bonne affaire also informs, trains and prepares newcomers for the realities of the Ontario labour market, so that they can meet employers' requirements. It is important to know what employers want to be able to train newcomers and prepare them for the labour market.

We share most of the challenges faced by RDEE Canada and its members. We also feel that the reform of Canada's immigration system will have an overall positive effect on Canada's francophone communities, as long as we can make the system work properly. The system has shifted from proposing Canada as a destination for immigrants to inviting immigrants to come to Canada to contribute to Canada's economy.

We would like to stress that temporary foreign workers represent a significant pool for Ontario's economy. Two-thirds of economic immigrants are already in Canada, representing an important and significant pool of workers.

In Ontario, 49,770 positions were subject to labour market impact assessments (LMIA) for temporary foreign workers in 2012. Of these positions, 42% were in Toronto and the rest were scattered across the province. Of the total number of positions subject to LMIA's, 58% were in businesses with one to 50 employees, so most of our clients. It is therefore important to properly identify those employers and educate them.

As I said earlier, RDEE Ontario also faces the challenges described by RDEE Canada with regard to the recruitment and employability of francophone immigrants. We would like to place particular emphasis on the following points.

We need to promote employer and business awareness of the potential of francophone immigration. It is important to talk to employers, to think and act like them and to have a solid understanding of their needs. We also need to support them in the recruitment process.

We need to mitigate the myths surrounding the recruitment of immigrant workers. Those myths relate to costs, commitment, the tedious process, and so on. Roukya talked about that earlier.

•(1540)

We must obtain the necessary support so that our network succeeds in developing the tools needed to help the government meet its targets—a win-win partnership with the government. It is important to bring together local and regional economic stakeholders to identify the needs of employers, especially in the targeted sectors. In order to convince entrepreneurs, we must act like them and think like them. We feel that the social approach alone is no longer a winning option and we need to adopt an economic development approach.

Our recommendations are complementary to those made by RDEE Canada. By 2020, Ontario will be facing a significant labour shortage. It is important to educate employers now about the possibility of hiring immigrant workers. The federal and provincial governments have set targets to increase the number of francophone immigrants. Now they must implement ways to achieve this goal by hiring employability, immigration and economic development experts. If RDEE Ontario is to improve and increase the pool of employers to whom it provides individualized support services, it will need additional resources to achieve its goals.

In 2014, with a team of fewer than 10 people—the equivalent of three and a half full-time employees—we were able to educate approximately 350 employers who hired francophone immigrants in Ontario. Additional resources would make it possible to expand the team, broaden our scope and cover the entire province.

The other recommendation has to do with temporary workers. A pool of skilled temporary workers is currently available. Streamlining the administrative procedures for obtaining their permanent residency would make it possible to keep them in Canada. Since the cancellation of the francophone significant benefit program and the introduction of the express entry program, many immigrants have had to leave the country. We have seen this on the ground. Unfortunately, few employers are taking the necessary steps because they are unsure about the LMIA application process and are afraid they will be turned down.

• (1545)

The Chair: Thank you.

We will now move to Ms. Ouellet and Ms. Martel from the Association of French Speaking Jurists of Ontario.

Ms. Sonia Ouellet (Secretary, Association des juristes d'expression française de l'Ontario): Chair Chong, Vice-Chair Nicholls, Vice-Chair St-Denis and members of the committee, good afternoon.

I'm Sonia Ouellet, and I'm the secretary of the Association of French Speaking Jurists of Ontario, or the AJEFO. With me today is Ms. Martel who will be able to provide you with more details on AJEFO's projects.

I will start by introducing the AJEFO, which is a non-profit organization that has been operating in Ontario for more than 30 years. We promote access to justice in French in Ontario to ensure equal access to justice in both official languages. The AJEFO network is made up of more than 820 lawyers, judges, translators, law professors and students, and members of the public interested in access to justice.

The AJEFO provides services directly to the community through legal education and information programs. Our objective is to improve the understanding of law as a life skill for every individual. Ms. Martel will tell you about the various sites that seek to promote legal information. It is a strategy we have taken to make the information available to the public at large.

The AJEFO's programs target the general public, including youth and teachers, high school teachers. The website is available across Canada. Programs vary according to each provincial jurisdiction. We provide working tools for teachers to use in the classroom. Some of

our programs are for seniors, but we also have programs for francophone immigrants.

Since AJEFO is a legal organization, we also provide services to justice sector professionals, such as continuing professional development and legal tools.

I will now hand things over to Ms. Martel, who will present five projects having a direct or indirect impact on francophone immigrant communities.

Ms. Andrée-Anne Martel (Executive Director, Association des juristes d'expression française de l'Ontario): Thank you, Ms. Ouellet.

Mr. Chair, members of the committee, good afternoon.

As we have seen earlier today, Ontario has a number of programs to support newcomers with settlement, housing assistance, employment services or language training, including information and legal training.

The Department of Justice provides the AJEFO with financial support through the Access to Justice in Both Official Languages Support Fund under the Roadmap for Canada's Official Languages 2013-2018.

Today I will present five AJEFO programs for francophone newcomers based on the roadmap's two pillars: information and training.

The information pillar consists of providing direct legal services and information to the public. The AJEFO has three programs that fall under this pillar.

First, the Canadian CliquezJustice.ca portal offers simplified legal information in plain language to the general public on how the justice system works, careers in justice and various themes in several legal areas such as family law, employment law, immigration and citizenship law.

Recent reports on access to justice in both official languages estimate that roughly 12 million Canadians will experience at least one legal problem in any given three-year period. Few will have the resources to solve them. It is difficult if not impossible for a newcomer to be familiar with every Canadian law and the complex workings of the Canadian legal system.

CliquezJustice.ca aims to help francophone newcomers to Canada. With a better understanding of the Canadian legal system, these newcomers will have the legal skills and tools to deal with various legal issues. Since it went live in February 2012, CliquezJustice.ca has had more than 130,000 visits, with roughly 368,000 page views.

Second, the AJEFO now offers service directly to the public in Ontario. On January 15, 2015, the AJEFO opened Ontario's first legal information centre in downtown Ottawa. The Ottawa Legal Information Centre is a four-year pilot project providing confidential, bilingual services to the public free of charge, regardless of a person's income or type of legal problem. The centre serves as a one-stop shop where clients can receive legal information and a referral to the appropriate resource.

Currently, close to 50% of people decide to represent themselves in legal matters, a situation that puts additional pressure on the justice system. By informing and guiding members of the public, including newcomers, the centre seeks to reduce the wait times and penalties associated with the justice system, and promote the active offer of services in French. Let me repeat, the services are provided both in French and in English.

Since it opened on January 15, 2015, the centre has served 177 clients. Of this number, 51 clients, or 28%, were francophone and 35 clients, or about 20%, identified themselves as being a member of a visible minority or an Aboriginal community.

I will now talk about the third project under the information component.

Since 2011, the AJEFO has offered a series of law camps to more than 1,350 Grade 5 students in Ottawa. The camps include a component related to the Ontario Ministry of Education's Programme d'appui aux nouveaux arrivants, a support program for newcomers. The law camps teach young francophones about the foundations of Canadian society, such as the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms and the language rights established under the charter, thereby strengthening their sense of identity and belonging.

I will now turn to the second pillar: training, which includes training to legal professionals.

While the two projects I will present primarily benefit francophone legal professionals, they indirectly serve all francophone newcomers who require legal services.

• (1550)

First, the AJEFO has been managing the portal Jurisource.ca since 2013. This national French-language portal features the tools and resources used by legal professionals in their work in French.

The portal is a single window providing access to a wide range of practical resources such as model documents, which are often unavailable or difficult to find, unlike similar English-language resources.

Jurisource.ca is intended to improve the language skills of legal professionals. By reducing the time a legal professional spends on research and by improving that person's ability to write in French, Jurisource.ca benefits clients in terms of cost and quality. Since it was launched in March 2013, Jurisource.ca has had 23,700 visits, with close to 72,000 page views.

Second, since 2011, the AJEFO has developed and held two family mediation training sessions in French for 98 professionals from the justice sector. The AJEFO will deliver a third such session in 2016, focusing on mediation strategies in an ethnocultural context.

Since Ontario is home to close to 70% of the francophone immigrants who settle outside Quebec, the AJEFO believes that it is vital for all mediators, whether they are legal professionals or stakeholders, to recognize and understand ethnocultural differences as they apply in the context of mediation. The goal is to have competent legal professionals who are sensitive to ethnocultural issues and able to serve the immigrant population.

This concludes our comments. Ms. Ouellet and I would be happy to answer your questions.

• (1555)

The Chair: Thank you, madam.

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

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

And thank you to all members of the committee for this opportunity to meet with you today.

The City of Moncton is proud to be the first officially bilingual city in Canada, through a declaration by council made in 2002. Over the past three decades, 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 opportunity by promoting the talents of our bilingual residents.

[English]

Moncton has embraced bilingualism, realizing long ago that learning two or more languages is an advantage. This bilingualism has certainly been a contributing factor in our economic and population growth over the years.

The Moncton CMA has one of the most bilingual workforces outside of Quebec. According to the 2011 census, 46% of the city of Moncton's population speaks English and French. This presents great opportunity in terms of the attraction of both French- and English-speaking immigrants to our city.

[Translation]

For more than two decades, Moncton has been the economic growth engine for New Brunswick. Between 1987 and 2012, the region added approximately 40,000 people to the population. Although a large portion of this population growth has been from other parts of the province, Moncton has also seen an enormous increase in the number of immigrants that it has attracted.

The importance placed on both official languages has been a contributing factor in the increase of immigration in our city. The number of newcomers who have settled in Greater Moncton has increased significantly in recent years, rising from around 100 per year in the 1990s to approximately 850 a year in 2014. Economic immigrants represent the bulk of all new immigrants, accounting for 81% in 2010, compared with family class immigrants, 10%, and refugees, 7%.

Greater Moncton has also witnessed an increase in the number of francophone immigrants. Before 2006, the percentage of all immigrants to the community with French as their mother tongue was only 9%. Between 2006 and 2011, francophone immigrants increased to 18% of the total population of immigrants. One should note that, according to the most recent figures, 36% of Moncton's total population has French as a mother tongue.

[English]

That gives you the context in which we are operating in Moncton. In terms of the actual situation, in order to maintain our recent population growth trajectory of 1.9% per year, the greater Moncton area will need to welcome more than 1,000 new immigrants per year by 2017 to sustain our current population growth rate. New Brunswick needs its urban centres to continue to drive economic and population growth.

Yesterday, New Brunswick's official languages commissioner said that every bilingual job creates two unilingual jobs. That statement is proven by solid research by two of Moncton's most highly respected economists. The bottom line is that we need more bilingual, more unilingual, and more multilingual immigrants, and we need them now.

Although we've seen great progress, we firmly believe that immigration will contribute significantly to government's fiscal capacity to provide public services, as well as enhance the social and cultural elements of our society.

In response to this growing need, in May 2013, the City of Moncton organized its first ever immigration summit. Over 200 people were in attendance, representing a wide array of private, government, and immigrant-serving agencies, as well as newcomers. During this summit, our community agreed that a strategic and coordinated approach to immigration was needed if we wanted to ensure our future prosperity.

The result was the greater Moncton immigration strategy, which features four main pillars: attraction, integration, retention, and business entrepreneurship.

- (1600)

One of the key objectives is an increased emphasis on francophone immigration. At the community's request, Moncton is taking the lead on the strategy and has hired an immigration strategy officer to help ensure its implementation. We actually have two and a half people who wake up every morning and think about how we can attract more immigrants to Moncton. Linguistic balance and expertise remain high priorities for the City of Moncton, the community, and the region.

[Translation]

The investment by the Department of Citizenship and Immigration through the roadmap for Canada's official languages has been a successful tool to ensure that we continue to attract, integrate and retain francophone immigrants, therefore maintaining the linguistic balance in our province and, more specifically, in our city. We commend the Department of Citizenship and Immigration for its work and investments in international recruitment events such as Destination Canada and Destination Nouveau-Brunswick; and funding to francophone points of service such as Centre d'accueil et d'accompagnement francophone des immigrants du sud-est du Nouveau-Brunswick and the Multicultural Association of Greater Moncton Area. These organizations provide direct assistance to newcomers, from language training to employment services, which is essential to francophone immigrants' success.

I'd therefore like to take this opportunity to suggest some ideas that, with your support, will enable us to achieve some key objectives.

Municipalities play a key role in immigration. We are seeing this more and more across Canada, including in our own region. Municipalities are a neutral body that can best advocate on behalf of their own community. Municipalities would like the opportunity to collaborate with Canada and the provinces, and to be at the table when planning immigration policies and programming.

[English]

In December 2014, the City of Moncton submitted an application for funding to the Department of Citizenship and Immigration for a local immigration partnership, the LIP program, which would allow us to develop a coordinated and community-based plan around the needs of newcomers. This partnership would be led by the City of Moncton and would be used to help implement the greater Moncton immigration strategy.

Of course, within the application, the City of Moncton also requested funding for an immigration website. This website would help provide information on immigration services that exist for pre- and post-arrival. These two initiatives would both help strengthen and contribute to francophone immigration.

The City of Moncton would also like to see the re-establishment of a citizenship and immigration satellite office in Moncton. The CIC Moncton office could service a much broader economic region. There are more than 600,000 people living within a 90- to 100-minute driving commute from Moncton. A Moncton CIC office would be able to easily recruit qualified bilingual staff and offer bilingual services to new arrivals.

[Translation]

International students represent a potential opportunity for our region and should be seen as a conduit for immigration. In the greater Moncton area, we have over 1,000 francophone international students within our French post-secondary institutions. These students graduate with a Canadian degree and are often well-integrated within the Canadian culture.

What they are missing, however, is services to be able to access the labour market. Providing international students with access to language classes, employer matching and better integration and retention services for international students would be a direct benefit to our economic and population growth. Currently, they are provided with no formal language classes and have limited access to the labour market.

In regard to the Express Entry system, it would be advantageous if additional points were given to francophone immigrants who wish to immigrate to minority language communities in Canada. This would help facilitate an increase in the francophone population moving to Moncton and other regions outside Quebec.

•(1605)

Immigration is essential in preserving and enhancing the vitality of our official language minority communities. We commend the Department of Citizenship and Immigration and the Department of Canadian Heritage for working collaboratively with its many provincial, territorial, municipal and community partners to help our region thrive.

Moncton believes in the economic, social and cultural benefits of immigration and in helping to support our francophone immigrants, in particular. Clearly, with the death rate exceeding the birth rate in New Brunswick, more needs to be done.

[English]

It is important to recognize the work of Canadian Heritage in this discussion and its positive impact on our ability to attract and retain French-speaking immigrants via investments in our multicultural infrastructure and events.

Furthermore, we would like to thank you, the Standing Committee on Official Languages, for reaching out to the City of Moncton, and for this wonderful opportunity to share our past, our current situation, and future, as well as taking the time to consider some of our ideas that we have put forth.

The opportunity to have presented to the Standing Committee on Official Languages for two consecutive years attests to your commitment to New Brunswick and to Canada, and Moncton's place within it.

We look forward to working in partnership with all stakeholders involved in immigration and in the promotion of Canada's official languages. It is by working in cooperation that we can improve the lives of all Canadians and all future Canadians.

Thank you.

[Translation]

The Chair: Thank you.

I will now turn the floor over to Ms. Kenney and Ms. Bossé, of the Fédération des communautés francophones et acadienne du Canada.

Ms. Marie-France Kenny (President, Fédération des communautés francophones et acadiennes du Canada): Mr. Chair and members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to speak to you today.

I won't spend a lot of time explaining who the Fédération des communautés francophones et acadienne du Canada, or FCFA, is. Given how many times we've appeared before the committee, I think you're beginning to get a sense of who we are and what we do.

Today, the FCFA is here wearing two different hats. We are the main organization representing 2.6 million French-speaking citizens living in nine provinces and three territories. Furthermore, for the last 15 years, we have also been the national coordinator for programs related to immigration into francophone and Acadian communities.

This is the third time in five years that a parliamentary committee on official languages has studied the question of francophone immigration. I have brought with me today our address to this

committee during its last study on the subject in 2010, the report on that study, our address and our brief to the Senate committee on official languages regarding its study on the subject in 2014, as well as that committee's report. I would request that these documents be formally tabled so that they may be taken into consideration during your study. They are here and they are translated in both official languages. The information they contain, especially the FCFA's previous testimony, remains relevant.

I could talk to you about the numerous challenges related to francophone immigration. I could talk about the utter lack of a strategy to promote our communities abroad to potential immigrants. I could talk about targets set jointly by governments and communities that are still not met. I could talk about glaring gaps that remain in terms of French-language settlement services. I could talk about the fact that Express Entry currently has no way of establishing whether an immigrant is a francophone or not, after close to three years of having that system sold to us as the answer to all the problems in terms of francophone immigration. But I really want to avoid sounding like a broken record, so if you will allow me to change the tune, I will deliver a more fundamental message.

While, year after year, study after study is prepared on the challenges facing francophone immigration, more than 98% of the immigrants that Canada welcomes outside Quebec are anglophones, compared with francophone immigration rates of less than 2%. What that means is that, of the 250,000 immigrants coming to Canada every year, 3,358 francophone immigrants joined our communities in 2013. At least, that is according to the figures released by Citizenship and Immigration Canada. In spite of the targets, in spite of the commitments, in spite of the multiple recommendations made by parliamentary committees, these figures have remained stable for the last 20 years. Some 98% of immigrants are anglophone and only 2% are francophone. That's very little, and we learned that, in 2014, between the months of January and March, if I'm not mistaken, that percentage had dropped to 1.35%. We're not talking about just under 2%, we're talking about 1.35%. This is scandalous.

Canada's francophone population may have increased in absolute numbers, but with 3,358 immigrants in 2013, our communities didn't grow all that much. With the share of immigrants we receive, our relative demographic weight continues to decline. In many places, it is only a matter of time before our communities fall below the minimum threshold for receiving services and communications from federal agencies in French. As you know, the threshold is 5% in order to receive French-language services from federal institutions. At that rate, it won't be long before they drop below the threshold. And when our relative weight falls even more, what will be put on the table then? Our francophone schools?

More than 98% versus less than 2%, figures that have remained constant for years. If the goal were to kill off Canada's francophone and Acadian communities bit by bit, to make them disappear through attrition, it would be difficult to come up with a better strategy. For years, there have been calls for the realities and specific needs of francophone and Acadian communities to be taken into account by government when it develops policies and programs related to immigration.

In light of the obligations imposed not only by the Official Languages Act, but also by the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act, regarding the support and development of our communities, one might expect that to be normal procedure. Yet the complete opposite has happened. Anything that might have made a real difference to French-language immigration into our communities has been eliminated. Now, we're being asked to rely on the Express Entry program, even though it does not offer even the smallest incentive for employers to recruit francophone candidates or promote our communities.

• (1610)

For years now, we have not received our fair share of the country's annual immigration, and this has caused major damage to our communities. The time has come for repairs. Something major needs to be done. The government must develop a coherent plan for recruiting francophone immigrants outside Quebec. This plan must include robust measures and detailed timelines for achieving our common targets for francophone immigration. This plan must be released immediately, not in 10 years. In terms of francophone immigration, time was already running out last fall when the francophone significant benefit program was cancelled. And now that time has essentially run out, nothing has changed. That is the only recommendation we will make to your committee regarding this study on francophone immigration. And, in our opinion, it is the only one of any importance.

Mr. Chair and members of the committee, this will no doubt be the last time I appear before you representing the FCFA. After six years as president, my term will come to an end in June. So I'd like to take a moment, if I may, to address you as the francophone citizen that I am, will soon be again and have always been.

Over the past 15 years, I've had numerous opportunities to appear before the committee in some capacity. Yours is only one of two parliamentary committees whose existence is mandated by the Official Languages Act. And yet, whenever I have appeared before you during those 15 years, I have gotten the impression that the committee is more about partisan wrangling and political agendas than a shared commitment to ensure respect for the Official Languages Act and the language rights of all Canadians.

The Official Languages Act is meant to safeguard the French language in Canada. But it is the most poorly enforced legislation in the country and has been for 45 years. What's more, when violations are committed under the act—and they are listed in the report of the official languages commissioner every year—no consequences follow. As a French-speaking Canadian, I take that as a lack of respect, when all I am asking is not to be treated like a second-class citizen.

Mr. Chair and members of the committee, I'm an idealist and, I hope, an optimist as well. As a Canadian, I am calling on parliamentarians of all stripes to champion my rights, to stand up for the Official Languages Act and the language rights of Canadians, once and for all. Our future and our ability to live in French also depend on you.

Since we are here today to discuss francophone immigration, I would ask you to take decisive action so that, at the end of the day, we can stop telling ourselves, year after year, that we still have not

met our targets and that our communities are slowly dying as a result. What is at stake is the vitality of French in Canada, our survival and Canada's linguistic duality.

Thank you for your time and attention.

• (1615)

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Kenney.

On behalf of the committee, I'd like to thank you for your six years of service and all the input you have contributed to our studies. We wish you all the best in your future endeavours.

We have an hour and 10 minutes for questions and answers.

Mr. Nicholls, the floor is yours.

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

Ms. Kenny, thank you, as well, for your dedication to the rights of francophones in minority language communities and your efforts to stand up for those rights.

More and more, French-speaking Canadians in minority language communities are being threatened by a policy of assimilation through attrition. Year after year, the government's support of the Official Languages Act declines. Take, for example, institutions that benefit and support francophones in minority language communities, institutions like Radio-Canada. We're seeing a disturbing trend: minority language rights are under attack. In Radio-Canada's case, that attack didn't just start today. Regardless of whether the Liberals or the Conservatives were in power, it has been going on for years, if not decades, and it's still happening.

We introduced a motion on the issue. Committee decisions, however, are made in camera. Important testimony on the effects of budget cuts is generally censored in committee reports. And I don't mean just cuts at Radio-Canada. The francophone significant benefit program, the co-operative development initiative and other programs have also been the target of budget cuts. When relevant content is omitted from committee reports, how can we possibly advance the rights of francophones in minority language communities? It's a sad state of affairs, and we hope to, one day, get out of the mire.

The 2005 decision in *Desrochers v. Canada (Industry)*, related to section 25 of the act, offers a glimmer of hope. The court established that the government had a duty to provide services of equal quality in both official languages. It's time for the government to start meeting its obligations to francophone minority communities. We hope the government will respect its obligations under the Official Languages Act.

Now, for my questions.

We were under the impression that a plan for francophone immigration existed. Listening to you, I gather that no such plan exists or that, if there is one, it's not doing what it needs to. Could you clarify whether a plan does indeed exist? And if so, where does it fall short, implementation-wise?

Ms. Marie-France Kenny: There was a plan, an immigration strategy. I don't know when it came to an end, off the top of my head.

•(1620)

Ms. Suzanne Bossé (Executive Director, Fédération des communautés francophones et acadiennes du Canada): It's a plan from 2006 that is ongoing.

Ms. Marie-France Kenny: Okay.

No new strategy has been developed. I have to tell you that things are done on a case-by-case basis, piecemeal fashion. It amounts to putting a band-aid on the problem, whenever one surfaces.

This isn't the first time the Express Entry system has been discussed. For two or three years, we've been offering to help the government incorporate a francophone-oriented component in the program. It wasn't until last fall, after the francophone significant benefit program was cancelled, that the government finally agreed to meet with us to discuss the issue. We were told that the government would test it out initially and then see how it worked.

The first test wasn't successful. In fact, we were told that the numbers would be even lower than expected, below 1.36%. We are now almost at 0%, and still, a francophone dimension has not been added. What's more, yesterday, we found out that, under the Express Entry system, there's no way to know whether an immigrant is francophone or not when they apply. Immigrants aren't asked whether they are francophone or anglophone, or what their first official language spoken is.

Forgive me for saying so, but on top of that, the government has the nerve to ask how we, the communities, are going to help promote the Express Entry program. I'd love to, except without a francophone component, the system amounts to death by a thousand cuts for our communities. And they want me to promote the program. It's too bad, but the answer is no, and it will always be no as long as the program neglects francophone immigration.

There is no strategy. Things are always done in a piecemeal fashion. I apologize—

Suzanne, did you have anything to add?

Ms. Suzanne Bossé: There is a strategic plan to promote francophone immigration to our communities. The plan was developed jointly by Citizenship and Immigration Canada and the francophone communities. The FCFA coordinated the process. Through highs and lows, in very small steps, the plan was created. Right up to the Roadmap for Canada's Official Languages 2008-2013, we felt that we were moving forward, but since the new roadmap came out, we feel that this is really piecemeal work.

We have a strategy and investments in language training of \$120 million, but we don't even know if this is of use to francophone immigrants. In several provinces and territories, in fact, we do not have access to providers of language training in French or even in English. There is no strategy to promote the communities.

Whether in Paris, Dakar, Rabat, North Africa or in any of the other 14 countries concerned, the roadmap funds are used to promote Express Entry. They are used to promote systems or categories of immigration or to teach people how to fill out the immigration forms. However, our communities are not promoted, except perhaps through a Web page created by Citizenship and Immigration Canada recently. It is excellent, but not well known.

Mr. Jamie Nicholls: From what I understand, there is no strategy, no overall vision, which is very troubling. In order to advance the rights of francophones, and to ensure the survival of francophone communities, this overall vision will be necessary. Twenty-two years ago, the Reform Party arrived in Ottawa saying that it wanted to eliminate the “pet project” of bilingualism in this country. The person at the head of that program was our Prime Minister. It is not surprising that there is no respect for official languages in this government. I find that disturbing.

Moreover, those who work in official language minority communities, and you are among them, often tell us that the federal government does not consult them about decisions on immigration policy. But those decisions hamper their capacity to work in their communities and adversely affect the communities themselves.

Does the government consult your organizations on the development of these programs and policies on francophone immigration? My question is addressed to all of you.

The Chair: You must answer briefly because there is not much time left.

Ms. Aden, you have the floor.

Ms. Roukya Abdi Aden: The government held consultations recently. As Ms. Kenny was saying, we may be consulted and propose certain things, but what happens to those recommendations? The communities and organizations submit recommendations to the government, but are they taken into consideration?

I will give you a concrete example. I will only talk about employability and will let my colleagues from the FCFA talk about the topic in a more general way.

We are told that they want to convene and meet with employers, and we are asked whether, as representatives of the Réseau de développement économique et d'employabilité du Canada, we can do that. We reply that the reality, in the field, is that employers will not just come when called like that. They are busy, they have businesses to run.

Could these interventions not be prepared in advance, so as not to target all employers, who are not all necessarily interested in this system, but those who are interested? We regularly submit recommendations to the government on how to intervene.

Of course, they can do as they like.

•(1625)

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Dubé, you have the floor.

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

I will use Moncton as an example, where, in 2006, approximately 9% of immigrants were francophones. Nine years later, that percentage has doubled: it is now 18%. So we are moving in the right direction.

Can we take all of the credit? No. It has to be said that in Moncton, 36% of the population is francophone. The only way for us to succeed is to conclude partnerships. We cannot wait for the Government of Canada to do all the work. The government has policies and programs in place and we try to make good use of them. We have had some success because we work jointly with the federal government and the province. The provincial government has an important role to play. It created the Destination New Brunswick program, for instance. We go to France directly, with the provincial and federal governments.

To get back to what the lady who is sitting at the end of the table was saying, we knock on businesses' doors and ask them whether they have jobs available. We go to France and Toronto to talk about available positions. We support them. That is why we have more success with today's system.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Menegakis, you have the floor.

Mr. Costas Menegakis: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I also thank the witnesses for their testimony.

Ms. Kenny, I want to thank you for your work and for having shared your personal points of view with us today. I wish you all possible success in your future projects.

Our government has committed to promoting francophone immigration through its permanent immigration programs in Canada. Last year, we welcomed approximately 1,500 francophone immigrants outside Quebec thanks to our economic programs for permanent immigration. Through the Roadmap for Canada's Official Languages 2013-2018, which has education, immigration and communities components, we will invest \$29.4 million to support immigration to minority communities. In total, \$149.5 million will be allocated over five years for official language initiatives.

Could you share with us the experience your organization and the City of Moncton has had, as well as that of your partner organizations, in obtaining funds through the roadmap, and the importance of that financial help for the community in general?

Mr. Sigouin, you could begin, if you wish.

Mr. Daniel Sigouin: As I mentioned earlier, the programs we have developed to promote economic immigration are very important. However, we see that they are clearly insufficient to meet the demand, and especially to reach the objectives we have set, both at the federal and provincial levels.

The amounts invested are often allocated amongst several organizations and several projects within the same province. That said, it is hard for us to become experts or to serve all of the clientele in the field. The investments certainly need to be increased if we want to reach our targets.

• (1630)

Mr. Costas Menegakis: Ms. Abdi Aden or Mr. Dubé, did you want to add something on that?

Mr. Jacques Dubé: In Moncton, we have the Centre d'accueil et d'accompagnement francophone des immigrants du Sud-Est du Nouveau-Brunswick. That organization provides retention and

integration services that are funded in large part by the Government of Canada. There is also the Multicultural Association of the Greater Moncton Area, MAGMA, which provides guidance and integration services. It works mainly in English, but also has a francophone clientele.

There are two organizations that are funded in large part by the Government of Canada, with the assistance of the province. We also invest a little money in that. The municipality works in cooperation with MAGMA and the Mosaïq organization, which receives funds from the federal government for multicultural festivals, and these activities are expanding at this time.

There are also economic organizations that receive funds from ACOA for mentoring francophone immigrants. We created La Ruche, an organization that helps francophone immigrants set up in business. As I was saying earlier, francophone immigration has to depend on local, provincial and federal partnerships. One level of government cannot do everything and that is certainly true of the municipalities. That said, by using common resources and strategies, as we have done in Moncton, success is possible.

Ms. Andrée-Anne Martel: The AJEFO is very grateful for the roadmap. We find that it generates very positive spinoffs. AJEFO is financed by the Department of Justice, but not necessarily in the area of immigration. The two pillars I mentioned earlier have allowed our organization to develop its projects for the next four years. I talked about the "information" pillar. Its purpose is to allow citizens to become informed about our justice system. I also talked about the "training" pillar, whose purpose is to help lawyers to serve that population.

The roadmap has not only allowed us to focus our mandate, but also to set up partnerships and diversify our sources of funds for these projects. I talked about the Ottawa Legal Information Centre, which is entirely funded by the Department of Justice through the roadmap. This allows us to set up financial partnerships on a province-wide scale, and of course in the city.

Mr. Costas Menegakis: Do I have any time left, Mr. Chair?

The Chair: You have three minutes.

Ms. Marie-France Kenny: I do want to say that the FCFA has worked for more than 15 years with Citizenship and Immigration and that as a general rule our relationship has been good. I am a businesswoman and I have a company. Before I launched it, I prepared a comprehensive business plan to maximize its impact. This is the type of coherent strategy that would allow us to use the funds even more effectively, and that is what is lacking.

As for the roadmap, since the department already had the \$120 million allocated to language training, it is difficult to determine what the impact would be on francophone communities. How many francophone newcomers have had access to these funds to learn French? The funds were already there. This is not a new investment.

As for the \$30 million or so aimed at strengthening capacities,

[English]

it's not, "if you build it, they will come". They need to know we are there.

[Translation]

I am sure you will agree that when you visit a Canadian embassy in a francophone country and you hear about French Canada, the first thing that comes to mind is Quebec. So if there is no promotion of francophone communities to emphasize the fact that there are also francophones outside of Quebec, no one will go to those regions. It is all well and good to strengthen settlement and integration services, but in order to use them, there have to be people. It is in that sense that a global strategy is missing.

• (1635)

[English]

Mr. Costas Menegakis: I heard a little bit about the new express entry system. Contrary to some of what I heard here today, I can say in my capacity as parliamentary secretary to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration that we did in fact hold widespread consultations on the issue of express entry.

The program opened in January of this year, and we are seeing overwhelming interest in the program worldwide, and I might add, considerable interest from francophone people around the world. Some of that will become evident shortly as the program rolls out.

[Translation]

This is a new stream of immigration. Express Entry gives francophone newcomers the opportunity to settle in Canada more quickly. Do you think that this new program will be beneficial to francophone communities outside Quebec and allow them to attract talent to their regions?

I will begin with you, Mr. Dubé.

Mr. Jacques Dubé: As I mentioned in the beginning of my presentation, Express Entry is a very important program and will help grow the urban population of Moncton, a municipality that has quite a large linguistic minority.

We recommend that you grant additional points to immigrants to encourage them to establish in areas outside Quebec. Moncton is fortunate because it has a French-language university where there are a lot of foreign students. We can work with that pool of foreign students once they have finished their studies. We are trying to develop that source of immigration.

However, we go to France and Belgium with the governments of Canada and New Brunswick and we knock on the doors of immigrants who take part, for instance, in the Destination Canada or Destination New Brunswick programs with the help of the government. If you gave those people additional points to encourage them to settle in our area, this would give us a hand up. They must choose to go somewhere to find a job or open a business.

I think it would be very important to consider adding points for that.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

I will now give the floor to Ms. St-Denis.

Ms. Lise St-Denis (Saint-Maurice—Champlain, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

My first question is addressed to Ms. Martel and Ms. Ouellet.

Does informing immigrants about the legal system in Ontario include information about the importance of official languages? In other words, does the immigrant who arrives in our country know that francophones have linguistic claims in Canada in their communities? If not, do they come here because your projects are impressive? I don't know them, but your projects seem very pertinent. I would like to go to a law camp for francophones.

Has the immigrant who arrives here been told that there is a French-language justice system and that he can have recourse to it? I believe you said that 50% of people defend themselves. Do all of the fine projects you have set up have a concrete effect? Also, do you think that the federal government is sufficiently promoting the place of francophones in the communities where the immigrants settle?

Ms. Andrée-Anne Martel: Yes, we see that the projects and legislation on immigrants have benefits.

For instance, when immigrants come to see us at the Legal Information Centre, we talk to them about the three Ontario laws that guarantee services in French, i.e. the French-Language Services Act, the Courts of Justice Act, and the Criminal Code. We even talk about this to the Grade 5 students who register for our law camps.

I can give you a concrete example. In the law camps, when we talk about the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, the Grade 5 students usually know about section 23 and the others that have to do with language rights.

At the Legal Information Centre, we can talk about the legislation that governs French services with immigrant clients. However, I can't confirm whether the immigrants are aware of the laws.

Could you repeat the second question about promoting the place of francophones, please?

• (1640)

Ms. Lise St-Denis: I asked whether the federal government sufficiently promotes the importance of French within the Canadian legal system, to say that this exists and that it is important? Does the federal government talk about this enough?

Ms. Andrée-Anne Martel: That is an excellent question.

There is more and more publicity about French services and language rights. Over the past few years the government has made efforts to mention language rights and services in French. I'm thinking, for instance, of recent reports concerning access to justice in French.

I'm also thinking of the Ministry of the Attorney General of Ontario, which implemented a report in 2012 on access to justice in French. The report talks about francophones and access to justice in French and attempts to solve the problems francophones may encounter with the French-language justice system.

For instance, in the report I just mentioned, they explain that the Courts of Justice Act designates 23 francophone regions in Ontario, and the French Services Act designates 25 such regions. This means that a person may go to a court house and want to file papers in French, but the person behind the desk may be unable to respond in French if he or she speaks only English.

Yes, these issues are being discussed more and more and recommendations are being made. Organizations like the Association of French-Speaking Jurists of Ontario, of course, are working on these issues. That is a part of our principal mandate.

I don't know whether my colleague has something to add on this.

Ms. Lise St-Denis: I would like to put a question to the representatives of the Réseau de développement économique et d'employabilité de l' Ontario and the Réseau de développement économique et d'employabilité Canada. However, if I have any time left, I will put my last question to Ms. Kenny.

I only have a little time left. What is your approach with Quebec employers? Regarding employers like Québecor, Bombardier and Saputo, who are also present in the other provinces, do you adopt a particular approach to these employers in francophone communities, either in Canada or in Ontario?

Mr. Daniel Sigouin: Regarding the question on territories, there is no particular approach. We want to convince employers in Ontario to hire francophone immigrants, to emphasize the importance of doing so and of promoting the community as a destination for francophones. We have to work with local stakeholders and municipalities to do that promotion and involve the employers.

It is important to understand that being able to keep a francophone immigrant in a community has economic value for the employer. We can attract immigrants and give them positions, but if they don't want to stay in a community, they don't want to stay. There are costs involved in that for the employer. The capacity of retaining that immigrant in a community has economic value for the business. And so the approach is the same for the...

Ms. Lise St-Denis: Do the employers see an advantage in hiring bilingual francophones? Is it an advantage? I saw a report on that produced by New Brunswick. Acadians think that the fact that people speak both languages constitutes an advantage.

Ms. Roukya Abdi Aden: For many employers that can be an advantage, since a business wants to develop markets. It is really an asset when we provide a candidate who meets the profile for the position and can develop new markets. I am thinking, for instance, of a business here that operates in English only but wants to receive the representatives of a Quebec business in French. Having a francophone employee is an asset, and people know it. Some jump on the opportunity and encourage that. It can be an advantage, depending on the region.

They always look favourably on the fact that the candidate knows the first language they use well and knows another language. It is always an added value. It can certainly be a sales argument.

•(1645)

Ms. Lise St-Denis: I have a brief question for Ms. Kenny.

Ms. Kenny, in light of your experience—a period of six years and more—if you had to mention a single thing, a single proposal or recommendation, what would it be?

Ms. Marie-France Kenny: Are you talking about immigration?

Ms. Lise St-Denis: I am talking about francophone immigration and its impact on francophones in minority settings.

Ms. Marie-France Kenny: I would like to tell you that all's well with the world.

In terms of immigration, as we have said, we need a coordinated strategy, a federal strategy developed in consultation with the communities, municipalities and provinces. We think all stakeholders need to participate, but we don't need a Band-Aid here and a Band-Aid there to cover up any cuts or scrapes. We really need a strategy, but it has to be coordinated.

You know, the immigration continuum starts with promoting our communities. Afterwards, we can look at recruitment, at everything settlement-related, and so on. Unfortunately, all those steps have been skipped. We feel that with express entry, by making us go through the same funnel as everyone else, without promoting the communities at all, we will not be able to produce the miracles we haven't been able to produce so far with an almost similar approach. In this case, we are all going through the same funnel. That will change nothing for us compared to the current system.

The Chair: You have one minute left.

Ms. Lise St-Denis: Thank you.

Mr. Dubé, a lot of francophone students attend l'Université de Moncton. Do you know what their retention rate is?

Mr. Jacques Dubé: It is 63%.

Ms. Lise St-Denis: So 63% of the students who study in Moncton end up staying there?

Mr. Jacques Dubé: Pretty much.

Ms. Lise St-Denis: That's quite positive.

Mr. Jacques Dubé: It's not too bad. It is quite a significant pool of the population. Clearly, the challenge is figuring out whether we can keep up the same level of education and the same number of students who come from abroad. They actually come from Africa, Haiti, all over the world. The challenge is to figure out whether we can keep that tap turned on. That is one of our challenges.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Gourde, go ahead.

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

My thanks to all the witnesses and especially to Marie-France Kenny.

Marie-France, ever since you started working with the committee and elsewhere, I have felt that you deserve our utmost admiration. I hope your future projects will bring you other challenges that will measure up to what you have contributed to our country so far.

Let me go back to our current study. We want to help official language minority communities—especially the francophone communities in some provinces—to retain immigrants. Several witnesses have told us—and please let me know whether they were right—that the key factor encouraging immigration is the economic factor, that is, when they feel that they can obtain jobs.

Unfortunately, some witnesses have told us that even francophone entrepreneurs don't always consider having another francophone to fill a position because they are looking for skills. They might decide to favour a bilingual employee or an anglophone. I find that a little disheartening.

We want our official language minority communities to be able to survive and grow. Efforts are being made in terms of culture and the quality of life, but it seems that is as far as they go. Immigrants move for jobs and go to other provinces. Not all of them can stay near the communities with the critical mass that allows francophones to live in French. In addition, we have learned that this is not a consideration for entrepreneurs, unfortunately. Basically, if communities don't find a way to attract them, I am not sure what we are going to do.

Could you comment on that?

• (1650)

Ms. Marie-France Kenny: Actually, as I said earlier, I myself am an entrepreneur. All my employees are bilingual and we provide bilingual services in Saskatchewan.

That being said, whether you are a francophone or anglophone employer, you need an incentive. What is the benefit of hiring a plant worker who speaks French and English if the plant is small and does not work at a national or international level? What is the benefit then of telling employers that we will help them recruit people who speak French and English?

There is no denying it. If a person settles in Regina, it is very likely that they will be working in English. A basic knowledge of English is therefore needed. We let francophone immigrants know that. Language training is also provided in a number of our institutions.

Earlier, Mr. Nicholls talked about the Desrochers case, the CALDECH case. As a result, we know that, under the legislation, federal programs designed for the anglophone majority must be adapted for minority francophone communities and for anglophone communities in Quebec.

Let me give you a concrete example. Under a government program, you are entitled to funding if you have 500 participants. It is highly unlikely that you will obtain funding in Regina, just because you will not have 500 participants. The fact remains that under part VII of the Official Languages Act, federal programs must be adapted according to the specific needs of communities.

It is important to be able to hand out a carrot. There was one with the francophone significant benefit program. With that program, the idea was to find an employer a francophone employee who also spoke English. As a result, a labour market opinion was not necessary, which meant significantly less red tape for the employer

and fewer fees. Employers agreed to hire francophones. We were really making up ground.

I was listening to Mr. Dubé earlier. I'm happy that the number is 15% in Moncton, because that is my former city. We hear talk about 38% francophones in Moncton, but we must raise the target to 38% because, if we don't meet it, the percentage will keep on dropping. We also say that the percentage in New Brunswick must not fall under 33%. In my community, the percentage is 5%. Soon the federal government will no longer provide French-language services there. Do you think the province will continue to provide us with French-language services if the federal government no longer provides them?

In Saskatchewan, we do not have legislation on bilingualism, we only have a policy that refers to the concept of "where numbers warrant". We also have the schools. That is where we are. We need to find a way to do more for francophones, just like we did with the legislation on diversity. We took the positive recruitment approach to fill the gaps within organizations. We need to do the same for francophones.

Mr. Dubé's suggestion to give more points to francophones is excellent. It is unfortunate that your colleague has left the room. In his view, more and more francophones are interested. However, we learned yesterday that, when people use the express entry program, there is no way of knowing whether they are francophone. We are able to know whether they speak English and French, but not whether they are francophone. As a result, I don't know how we can say that francophones are very interested based on the express entry program. It is impossible to tell.

We are holding discussions with the department. We would like a significant number of additional points to be given to francophones who settle in a community. The provinces also have the nominee program. There is one in Saskatchewan and one in New Brunswick. Why is there no federal nominee program that would allow the government to consider the big picture when a person is francophone and qualified?

It is a matter of jobs for us as well. We want these people to come and settle in our communities, not for EI benefits but for jobs. We want to do our part. However, we need incentives but we have lost them all. In addition, our communities are no longer promoted. In express entry, there is absolutely no indication that there are francophones outside Quebec.

Mr. Jacques Gourde: Does anyone else have anything to add?

• (1655)

Mr. Daniel Sigouin: RDEE Ontario is trying to use the Canadian francophonie as an increasingly stronger economic driver internationally. That can support, if you will, the economic development strategies used by communities.

To give you a few figures, in 2014, the Organisation internationale de la Francophonie identified 274 million French speakers in the world compared to 220 million in 2010. So there has been a 25% increase in four years. A study by Natixis Bank, republished by *Forbes* magazine, advances the hypothesis that, by 2050, French will be the most widely spoken language in the world, more than English and Mandarin—perhaps Ms. Kenny's long-awaited dream—with 750 million speakers.

In a context where the world's francophonie is experiencing an unprecedented demographic growth and with the Canada-European Union Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement that will hopefully come into effect soon, RDEE Ontario is trying, as I said earlier, to use those assets as increasingly more efficient economic drivers on an international scale.

Businesses that include a cohort of bilingual francophones in their workforce planning will clearly have an advantage on the world's francophone markets.

The Chair: Are there any other questions?

[*English*]

Mr. Williamson.

[*Translation*]

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

My thanks to all the witnesses here with us, and especially to Ms. Kenny.

I will start with Mr. Dubé, but perhaps I can ask several other questions for the many people here in the room.

Mr. Dubé, you talked about the numbers for Moncton. The percentage of francophone immigrants has gone from 9% in 2006 to 18% today, so it has doubled. What needs to be done for this number to double again from 18% to 36%? We are looking for broad ideas. I know this is a difficult task, but what tools do you need that the federal government and our province of New Brunswick might be able to provide?

Mr. Jacques Dubé: I will go back to the early 2000s, or even the late 1990s. Economic development was then based on attracting businesses. We were running after everyone and their dog: businesses, call centres, manufacturers and high-tech industries. There was a boom.

As you know, I was involved in New Brunswick's economic development. At the time, I was actually the deputy minister responsible for the development of the province. I saw the economic growth at that time because our efforts were geared toward attracting existing businesses and helping them grow. Things are different today. Economic development has become a way to attract individuals, more people.

Basically, even in Moncton, as I mentioned in my presentation, we need at least 1,500 immigrants a year just to maintain our growth. That is the minimum. In fact, if you look at our recent analyses, we need over 2,000 people a year.

Right now, there is a labour shortage and a shortfall. Our forecast is that there will be a shortage of 3,000 people to fill the positions

available in Moncton's businesses in 2016. So there will be 3,000 unfilled positions in Moncton.

[*English*]

Therefore, we have an unemployment problem and a labour shortage at the same time.

[*Translation*]

That is the situation we are in.

In terms of what the federal government could do, I would say that the roadmap is an excellent program, which we are using to our benefit. We also enjoy the fact that New Brunswick has Bill 88, which gives us guaranteed rights. The other provinces don't have that. They could perhaps take action in that sense.

Economic development agencies, such as ACOA, should review their ways of doing things in this area by helping communities and municipalities set up very targeted programs to attract people from outside.

In Moncton, we have been successful because we have partnered with the province. We are helping the province to implement its francophone immigration strategy. We participated in developing the strategy and we are using it. We also work with Citizenship and Immigration Canada. We all work together to achieve the objectives that we set.

Earlier, we talked about express entry, which uses a point system. Quebec does not have an immigration problem right now. I think the immigration problem in Quebec has more to do with refugees than immigrants. In New Brunswick, we would love to have an immigration problem with refugees, but that is not the case. New Brunswick needs immigrants.

Rural regions in Canada must take positive steps on behalf of official language minority communities. Moncton has 130,000 residents. It is true that our economy is growing, but we still need to see what could be done in terms of economic development through ACOA and other economic development agencies such as Western Economic Diversification Canada and FedNor. Those agencies could review their approach to support the work being done to attract people.

In my comments, I said that the mortality rate has exceeded the birth rate in New Brunswick. In Moncton, it is the other way around, but everywhere else, that is what is happening. I am sure the same is true for Saskatchewan.

We need to do something to help those people. I think other federal departments, not just Citizenship and Immigration Canada, have a lot of resources that could help us. I mentioned Canadian Heritage and economic development agencies. We need to work together and form local partnerships. That is why we have developed a local strategy in Moncton. We have brought together ACOA, Citizenship and Immigration Canada, Canadian Heritage and all stakeholders to see what we could accomplish together.

● (1700)

If I were you, that is the approach I would take.

The Chair: Okay. Thank you.

Mrs. Day, the floor is yours.

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

My thanks to all of you for joining us today. It is truly an honour for us to welcome you and be able to have these discussions with you.

Two days ago, I moved a motion before this committee asking to find out the number of people currently in the express entry pool, their country of origin, their languages spoken, including their proficiency in one official language or both, their level of education, and their first language spoken if, of the two first languages, the second language was French.

In the House, I approached Minister Alexander to tell him about the motion and that we wanted him to provide us with those numbers prior to his appearance before the committee, which should be soon. He told me that he didn't think those numbers really existed, but that he was going to do his best to obtain as much information as possible. He added that he recognized that recruiting francophone immigrants is a problem in this country.

It is an obligation under the law.

Could the members opposite be less noisy, please?

Under the law, there is an obligation to recruit a certain percentage of francophone immigrants and to maintain the linguistic duality. Ms. Kenny, you think that we are heading toward a significant decline in that area.

I have several questions.

Ms. Kenny, your presentation was very intense. You even said:

...more than 98% of the immigrants that Canada welcomes outside Quebec are anglophones, compared to francophone immigration rates of less than 2%... Anything that might have made a real difference to French-language immigration into our communities has been eliminated.

Are we going back to the far-reaching plan of 1840, which was designed to assimilate the francophones in this country outside Quebec at all costs?

● (1705)

Ms. Marie-France Kenny: I'm not saying that it is done intentionally. However, even if that isn't the case, we couldn't do it more efficiently. I'm not saying that what is happening is being done on purpose. I'm saying that things aren't working. We are at the point of doing whatever it takes. We must find a solution together. We don't think the government should do everything. For several years now, we have been there to recommend solutions and changes. We would like to sit down with these people to find solutions.

Officials have been saying no for almost two years, but finally, last November, things changed. However, express entry was to come into effect in January. We were told that it was too late, given that phase 1 was over, and we would see in phase 2.

The minister himself told me on March 2 that he was very disappointed in the numbers for 2014. Moreover, he hasn't been able to tell us yet. I imagine that's because he did not want to shock us further. He said himself that he is very disappointed. We see that he wants it, but that nothing is being done. We're told, "We'll see. We

will make an announcement eventually". We've been living with the eventuality that things will change for 10 years, but nothing is working. We are on a decline and, at some point, we will simply disappear.

It's now or never, and this doesn't just mean doing new things, but fixing the harm done in the past 20 years where 3,000 francophones have arrived outside Quebec. I have the impression that they are almost all in Moncton. During that time, Canada has received 250,000 anglophones across the country.

We aren't asking the government to do it all itself. We need to take the time and take a step back to sit down together and develop a strategy. This work needs to be done in cooperation with the municipalities, the provinces, the communities, the community organizations, the employers and, of course, the federal government. But, we don't want to be told that a little program is being established and that it will be announced soon. It's time to admit that an announcement isn't going to bring more people to our communities.

Mrs. Anne-Marie Day: Mr. Dubé, you said that there was a 9% increase in francophone immigration to Moncton, which is great. Congratulations to your city on that. However, your population is decreasing. In fact, your population had about 2,000 fewer people in 2014. The population of New Brunswick is about 754,000. The call centres, which require bilingualism, are one of your sources of retention, and that's excellent. It would be very good if we could do more in our communities to ensure bilingualism. Your university also encourages retention. But this isn't the case across the country.

New rules have been adopted that require paying to receive interns, completing a large number of new forms and considering the responsibilities of future interns.

Have you considered the impacts of these new rules?

Mr. Jacques Dubé: No, we haven't looked at it in depth. Our approach is to try to help entrepreneurs who want to hire someone. We try to reduce their paperwork as much as possible. For example, when there are job fairs, we offer positions and try to navigate the whole process for them.

Mrs. Anne-Marie Day: I think recruiting newcomers is done internationally, particularly in Belgium. However, it is my understanding that this does not affect temporary workers, but only individuals who enter through the express entry program.

Mr. Jacques Dubé: I think that's right.

Mrs. Anne-Marie Day: So there's no increase in that area.

Of the number of temporary workers you deal with, do some of them apply to become immigrants? Do you have any data on that?

● (1710)

Mr. Jacques Dubé: We don't have any data on that, but it's clear that some of them want to stay. Actually, there are very few temporary workers in Moncton. They are mainly in the regions, including in Kent County in the northeast, near Mr. Williamson's riding, where there are fish plants.

The Chair: Thank you.

[English]

Mr. Chisu, go ahead please.

[Translation]

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

Mr. Dubé, thank you for your testimony.

I will continue in English because my French isn't very good.

[English]

I would like to ask all of you this. With which countries is Canada in competition to attract francophone immigrants? What countries are having a lot of success attracting francophone immigrants? What are they doing differently from Canada?

Mr. Jacques Dubé: Our competition, frankly, is in French-speaking nations. France itself has lots of francophone immigrants from Morocco and other places in Africa, for example. A lot of immigrants go there, so we are in competition with France. I would say any French-speaking nation would be our competition at the end of the day.

[Translation]

Ms. Roukya Abdi Aden: Every country around the world, and not just countries of the Francophonie, are looking for qualified employees, period.

You can be francophone and speak other languages. I'm francophone, but I can also work in other languages, including Arabic. I could immigrate to an Arabic-speaking country were I offered a job. I would do it, but I'm francophone. I would be drawn to a quality of life. It's true that Canada is competing with francophone countries looking for great minds, but the same is true of other countries looking for qualified candidates. Canada is in general competition.

What do the other countries do better than us? They give themselves the means to attract these candidates. What's happening today is that we are not giving ourselves the means to attract these francophone candidates. We aren't giving ourselves the means to compete with these countries.

People don't just go to France and Belgium. That's all well and good, but there are other countries within the francophonie. There are plenty of candidates in other countries of the francophonie who would be qualified for a position here. I was recently told that there were 28,000 positions to fill in British Columbia. Why couldn't francophone candidates from various Francophonie countries fill those positions? We shouldn't be closing any doors, but opening them to all opportunities. There are people in every country of the francophonie who speak French and who have the skills to fill these positions. We need to be able to go and find people where they are, and give ourselves the resources to go to those countries.

Daniel was just telling me that Quebec is everywhere in France these days. Quebec doesn't go only to Paris; it goes to all the job fairs in France. It goes to other countries, as well. But where does Destination Canada go? To Paris and Brussels once a year. In the meantime, we aren't building any other relationships, and we aren't going to any other fairs. Nothing is being done. We don't have the

resources to do this enormous amount of work. We need to have the resources to attract them. I am convinced that there are francophone candidates in every Francophonie country who could fill vacant positions in Canada, but we need to want to do it.

Ms. Marie-France Kenny: I would quickly like to add something to that. If I'm not mistaken, there are 67 member countries in the Organisation internationale de la Francophonie. So there is competition. Even here, in Canada, Quebec is most certainly a competitor.

[English]

Mr. Corneliu Chisu: I'm sorry, but I would like to say that there are some members of the Francophonie from my original country, *la Roumanie*, which is not a French-speaking country. They are people for whom it is not a mother tongue, but they speak French because in Europe you need to speak many foreign languages. I speak German, Italian, and so on. French is a little bit shaky for me. I need to think in Italian to speak French.

The fact is this. I am just looking at the example of Moncton. It made an impression on me how they succeeded in increasing the number of francophone people, bilingualism, and so on, but I think this success is connected with jobs and the economy. For example, in one of the largest provinces, which is my province of Ontario, I think there are opportunities to do the same thing eventually, but we need to have cooperation between the communities, the municipalities, the province, and the federal government.

We cannot expect that the federal government alone can have millions of road maps for everything. If we are not working in cooperation with all three levels of government—because there is only one taxpayer—we will not achieve the goal of making the French minority communities prosperous.

• (1715)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Chisu.

We'll go to Mr. Gravelle.

[Translation]

Mr. Claude Gravelle (Nickel Belt, NDP): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Dubé, in your speech, you said that for every francophone job in your city, two more anglophone jobs are created. Did I get that right?

Mr. Jacques Dubé: What I said was that the New Brunswick Commissioner of Official Languages published a report yesterday by Pierre-Marcel Desjardins and David Campbell, two experienced economists who live in Moncton. They did an analysis and discovered that each position filled by a bilingual person creates two unilingual positions. In other words, when a bilingual position is created in New Brunswick, there are direct economic impacts on the community, especially the anglophone community.

Mr. Claude Gravelle: In other words, it's a good thing?

Mr. Jacques Dubé: Absolutely.

Mr. Claude Gravelle: Could we see that report?

Mr. Jacques Dubé: Yes, I can send it to you. Actually, it's available on the website of the New Brunswick Commissioner of Official Languages, Ms. d'Entremont.

Mr. Claude Gravelle: Okay, thank you very much.

Ms. Kenny, I think it was you who said that embassy employees in Europe send francophones to Quebec instead because they think there are francophones only in that province.

I spend a lot of time in western Canada. When people hear me speaking French, they ask me if I live in Quebec. When I say that, no, I live in Ontario, they don't believe me. It's not just embassies that have this problem but Canadians, too.

Ms. Marie-France Kenny: Yes, and I would say that it's largely the case in Quebec. Francophone and Acadian communities are a well-kept secret. To be honest, I blame the media. Even in national news broadcasts, the media speak very little about language issues outside Quebec. If no one hears about us and our reality, we will remain a well-kept secret.

As for the embassies, work is being done by Citizenship and Immigration Canada. Have we caught up with the 67 member countries of the francophonie, including Romania? I've had the opportunity to visit these countries, where I spoke French and Italian the entire time I was there. The embassies, particularly the Canadian embassy in Paris, are working to raise the awareness of potential immigrants by offering evening information sessions to tell them about some communities.

I myself took part a webinar on the Journée internationale de la Francophonie. I spoke to 130 participants who were potential immigrants about each region in our beautiful country and about our communities. Work is being done, but we are still in the early stages. In 2004, during the first Destination Canada—which I took part in—we were doing more promotion. People now are a little more aware of us, but there is still a lot of work to be done in terms of promotion.

When I arrive in Paris, people also say to me, “Oh, Quebec, ceinture fléchée, Céline Dion”. I answer that, no, I'm Franco-Saskatchewanian. That's what happens. It's the same thing across the country.

• (1720)

Mr. Claude Gravelle: They don't mention the comedy site “Têtes à claques”?

Ms. Marie-France Kenny: Francophones who tend to come to Canada have mainly heard about Quebec. They arrive at the embassy and mention the province of Quebec. Staff at our embassies don't necessarily tend to say that there are places other than Quebec where French is spoken, including Ontario, New Brunswick and, in fact, across the country.

Mr. Claude Gravelle: You just said that there's a problem with the media. When I stepped out a few minutes ago, I spoke to a Radio-Canada reporter who works in Sudbury. He told me that they lost seven positions today.

Ms. Marie-France Kenny: Fifty positions in communities outside Quebec have been cut.

Mr. Claude Gravelle: What will the impact be on the francophonie outside Quebec?

Ms. Marie-France Kenny: I'll tell you the same thing I've been saying for two years now. The very identity of our communities is in jeopardy. If we can't see ourselves or hear ourselves on television,

that's a problem. In Regina, where I'm from, the only local news in French is broadcast by Radio-Canada. It's pretty much the same thing everywhere. Half an hour has just been cut from my news program.

People tend to say that we want news in French. Of course, I can get news in French, but in Regina, how many times do I have to hear that the Champlain Bridge in Montreal needs to be replaced? That's the news I get. If I don't get a local news broadcast where I live, I have TVA and the national Radio-Canada talking about the Champlain Bridge.

Mr. Dubé and I say that, after hearing about the Champlain Bridge a few times, we have no interest in it.

Mr. Claude Gravelle: Thank you very much.

I hate hearing the Montreal traffic report on Radio-Canada.

I have a quick question for either Ms. Ouellet or Ms. Martel.

In your document, you say that the Ottawa Legal Information Centre is a four-year pilot project. What will happen at the end of four years?

Ms. Andrée-Anne Martel: That's an excellent question.

The pilot project will essentially be funded until the end of the roadmap. We are in the process of diversifying our funding. We want to request funding from the province and the City of Ottawa. We are also hoping that, with the renewal of the roadmap, the project will also be renewed, depending on statistics and the centre's use.

Ms. Sonia Ouellet: I would like to add something.

The Chair: Please go ahead.

Ms. Sonia Ouellet: The site cliquejustice.ca started with a “careers in justice” component. Initially, this component was fully funded by the Ministry of Justice. However, over the years, it became a larger project. We sought other sources of funding, and it became a pan-Canadian project. It was initially a pilot project in Ontario and then became a model applied across Canada.

Let me tell you about the approach that AJEFO has adopted for this kind of project. Like the City of Moncton, we used funding and strategies. We didn't think the justice system was the sole responsibility of lawyers, but also of the entire community. That's why these kinds of projects have broken boundaries. They have made it possible to create a provincial strategy with the Ministry of the Attorney General and various sectors to set objectives. The strategic plan to improve services in French has been around for 15 years now.

There is something you could do when it comes to official languages. It is important to realize that many sectors need to work together, particularly in immigration. You have to talk about employment, local development and communities. You need to adopt a multi-party approach with very specific objectives. Obviously, things won't change overnight, but you need to work bit by bit. It will be positive and will get some results.

• (1725)

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Daniel, you now have the floor.

[English]

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

Let me just put it on the record first that the recruitment strategy for CIC was not only in Europe, but it was also in Tunis, in Africa, on November 24 and 25. In a funny way, I think this whole situation is because of the fact that even in the francophone communities, the francophones are not staying there, and they're not staying there because of economic development in many cases. So I was delighted to hear from Mr. Dubé about their approach to it.

Madam Aden, you spoke about jobs, finding the jobs. We were at Bombardier and at Pratt & Whitney, and all these other companies in Montreal. They expected a growth of some 30% this year and had no idea where they were going to fill those positions from. These weren't just highly technical positions. There was everything, right across the spectrum.

I really want to see how you feel about what the role of the business sector should be in the recruitment and integration of francophone immigrants in Canada.

Ms. Marie-France Kenny: First, I'd like to say that I live in Saskatchewan—economic boom in Saskatchewan.

[Translation]

It's wrong to say that people come here and leave because they don't have a job. There are a lot of jobs there, but there aren't necessarily the tools to let employers know about French and the advantage of having bilingual workers. As I said, there isn't that carrot that existed in the past.

Some employers recruit at fairs like Destination Canada, which was also in Tunis. The entire Destination Canada fair didn't go to Tunis, just a part of it. The same is true for Belgium. There are some employers and even some recruiters that come. An employment database was created for Destination Canada for that event.

I'm a businesswoman. When Destination Canada was cut, I was the first to say that if I wanted to recruit employees in France, Belgium or Tunis, I would pay for my trip myself, knowing that ultimately it would let me recruit employees elsewhere. What was cut was all the help that communities provide to these employers. The connection is lost. In the past, employers were told to recruit a good, bilingual employee, in other words someone who speaks English and French, and we helped to welcome and integrate that person.

That's what we need to do. Employers have an important role to play, but if they don't know about francophone immigration and don't see the advantages of recruiting a francophone or an anglophone, they are going to wonder why they would and what the benefit would be for them.

[English]

Mr. Joe Daniel: Are there any other comments from any of you?

The Chair: Madam Aden, go ahead please.

[Translation]

Ms. Roukya Abdi Aden: As I said in my presentation, we need to adopt a certain approach with employers. Employers are looking for workers. We can't go and say that we want to talk to them about francophone immigration. They don't have time for that. Of course, large Canadian companies have a human resources department that can communicate with immigrants who have already taken action. But 98% of our businesses are small businesses. If we tell that we want to talk to them about francophone immigration, they'll say that they don't have time for that. However, if we help them prepare a human resources plan and present francophone immigration to them as a solution to their labour problem, then they'll be willing to listen.

The second point is that we have to have the resources to help the businesses. It can be on a case-by-case basis. As Ms. Kenny just said, some of these companies have been going to other countries for a long time. There's a company in Manitoba called HyLife Ltd. that recruits 400 immigrants a year. It recruits people from the Philippines. Our RDEE representative in Manitoba went to see this company to ask whether it was interested in recruiting francophones. It said that it was used to going to the Philippines.

Businesses are reluctant. I think there's a way to help businesses recruit francophones. Businesses need employees, but we need to take specific approach so that the francophonie can make the difference for these employers.

• (1730)

[English]

Mr. Joe Daniel: Certainly I think the Moncton example is a good one. It's bucking the trend, it seems, of other communities by increasing, by making a very positive and a very strong move to encourage the businesses that will actually support it and grow its communities.

[Translation]

Ms. Marie-France Kenny: One of the particular characteristics of Moncton is that it is in an officially bilingual province where a large proportion of entrepreneurs are francophone. That's not the case where I'm from.

That makes a very big difference when the employers are already francophone, and we don't need to raise awareness. I'm not saying that they aren't doing good work, quite the opposite. I'm simply saying that the challenge of telling my province to hire francophones isn't exactly the same.

The Chair: Thank you, everyone.

[English]

This meeting is adjourned.

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