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Chair

The Honourable Denis Paradis

Standing Committee on Official Languages

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•(0850)

[Translation]

The Chair (Hon. Denis Paradis (Brome—Missisquoi, Lib.)): Welcome to our committee. It is Tuesday, October 4, 2016.

Pursuant to Standing Order 108(2), we are continuing our study of the roadmap, and immigration in francophone minority communities.

This morning we are pleased to have with us Mr. Denis Vaillancourt, president of the Assemblée de la francophonie de l'Ontario, as well as the executive director, Mr. Peter Hominuk. Welcome, gentlemen.

We will begin with the roadmap. You will have about ten minutes for your presentation. We will then have a question period, with replies and comments. Afterwards we will discuss the immigration dossier with you.

You have the floor.

Mr. Denis Vaillancourt (President, Assemblée de la francophonie de l'Ontario): Thank you, Mr. Chair and members of the committee.

It is a real pleasure and privilege to appear before you this morning to share the point of view of the Assemblée de la francophonie de l'Ontario.

This unifying organization speaks for more than 611,500 Ontario francophones. It is on their behalf that we are speaking this morning.

We appreciate this opportunity to share the point of view of our organization on behalf of the Franco-Ontarian community regarding the renewal of the roadmap, which could also be called an action plan, as well as on francophone immigration.

I am joined this morning by our executive director, Mr. Peter Hominuk, and our analyst Mr. Bryan Michaud, who joined our team recently.

We recently released the Community Strategic Plan for French Ontario, which you already have in hand. The comments we will be making this morning are informed by this document. This was research we conducted with more than 2,500 Franco-Ontarians; we wanted to identify their aspirations and priorities for the next ten years. Behind these comments lies a great deal of research, a public consultation, which took place during the summer of 2015. We are very proud of the results and inspired to further action by the aspirations of our fellow francophones of Ontario.

As I said previously, our community includes 611,500 Franco-Ontarians. This is the largest francophone community outside Quebec. Its numbers make it unique, of course, as does its geography. We are present in isolated regions in Ontario, and in urban ones. The Ontario francophonie is unique because of its origins, and as is the case for other communities outside Quebec, because of its isolation. All of these elements make providing French services a challenge.

According to the last census, 41% of the Franco-Ontarian population resides in eastern Ontario. 117,000 francophones live in Ottawa. The 2011 census also shows that 28.7% of the population lives in south-central Ontario. However, as Bernard Derome pointed out, if the trends persist, that area will soon be home to more francophones than eastern Ontario, mainly because of the influx of francophone immigrants.

However, south-central Ontario, the region from Toronto to Windsor, presents some major challenges. Despite the fact that there are many francophones in the area, they are submerged in the large, dominant anglophone community. Providing services to this francophone population is thus a considerable challenge.

22% of our community resides in northeast and northwest Ontario. Member of Parliament Mr. Lefebvre knows the area well. We are happy that he is at your table.

When I speak about the needs, the roadmap or the Ontario francophonie, I am inspired by a comment made by the Commissioner of Official Languages when he presented his report to your committee in 2013.

He said this:

Our official languages are a defining characteristic of our Canadian identity. We need to feel that both languages belong to us and are a part of our sense of national identity, even if we don't speak one of them.

To that I would add that the French language could be in danger if we don't take care of it.

In that sense, the importance of a roadmap, government support and community engagement leads us to stake our claims and to work for the development of the language so as to ensure its survival and that of our culture in all its diversity. We recognize that the Ontario francophonie, like the Canadian francophonie, is diverse because of its origins and we accept the challenge. The common denominator is the language we want to protect.

And in fact, it is interesting to note that the last survey done by the Commissioner of Official Languages showed the popularity of both official languages in our country. I attended the Ontario consultations conducted by the minister and the parliamentary secretary, who conveyed the Canadian desire to support both official languages very well.

It matters little what name the government chooses to call it, be it an action plan or a roadmap. I remember well that in Mr. Dion's day it was called an action plan. Then it became a roadmap. I heard the minister and parliamentary secretary refer to an action plan. The important thing, I think, is to act. That is the meaning of the plan.

For us as for many others, it is important that the roadmap support francophones outside Quebec in order to allow them to live in French daily, be it in Regina, Victoria, Yellowknife, Windsor, Timmins or Toronto, Thunder Bay or Ottawa.

The government's investments in policies and public practices that further linguistic duality are very important. If it did not make them, French could disappear. This is always a concern for us.

We have to help francophones in minority communities to live their francophonie on a daily basis. We have to broaden the spaces and the active offer of services in education, health, community environments, the legal system, cultural areas and so on. In minority situations, government support and examples and models are crucially important, as is the roadmap.

You have to understand that minority communities do not always have the social and economic infrastructures of the majority. Consequently, we have to compensate by providing spaces and environments. Schools, for instance, are in my opinion the cornerstone for the development of our language and communities throughout the country.

All through my mandate as president of the Assemblée de la francophonie de l'Ontario, I have advocated what I may repeat a few times this morning. It is the idea that we have to promote the "francophone reflex". For instance, in the context of its services, the federal government has to promote this "francophone reflex".

Too often we assume that francophones in our country speak the second language. However, I think that in any society that claims to have two official languages, there is a duty to provide an active offer of services, which you will have heard before and will probably hear again. We have to support communications, arts and culture and social activities in French. We can say unequivocally that in Ontario, the federal action plan and funds are levers to get the provinces to act.

That is the case for Ontario. As a former educator in Ontario, I can state that roadmaps and bilateral agreements concluded in the framework of the Official Language in Education Program and the Ontario-Canada Community Agreement allowed the provincial government of Ontario to play its role, sometimes even beyond what the contributions made possible. This is the type of leverage the federal government can always provide, which is why having a roadmap is important.

Let's move on to our topic of concern in Ontario. Our population is vast and diverse. We have the advantage of having some very well

populated cities and some very isolated areas. Comparisons either dismay or console you. I will not go through the history of the cultural centres that exist in many places in Ontario.

In the past, these cultural centres benefited from important amounts, in my opinion, of \$40,000, whereas the cultural centres of another province might receive a subsidy of \$150,000. We have trouble understanding such disparities and we hope to work on improving those aspects.

We are of course aware that minorities outside Ontario are smaller, and there is a cost to providing service to smaller communities. I would say however that there is also a cost to providing service to more numerous communities that are dispersed throughout a given area.

● (0855)

We can't neglect that aspect. I did not go into it, because it is not as directly related to official languages. However, you can provide leverage to further cultural infrastructure.

In Ontario, our community is interested in three projects, among others.

First, an arts centre is being planned in Sudbury. It is important that this community group work with the federal and provincial governments to make this cultural centre project a reality. What I say to the people of Sudbury is that if Hearst can have an arts centre, Sudbury can have one as well.

If you follow current events here, you probably know the Théâtre du Nouvel-Ontario. That is another example of a cultural infrastructure project.

In Toronto, francophones want to open a permanent maison de la francophonie.

That is the type of thing that should be created through the roadmap, and it can be done with investments.

● (0900)

The Chair: Mr. Vaillancourt, with your permission, perhaps you could continue your presentation during the question and answer period.

Mr. Denis Vaillancourt: Certainly.

The Chair: Since we are pressed for time, we are going to begin the question period immediately.

Four people have asked for the floor: Mr. Généreux, Ms. Lapointe, Mr. Choquette and Mr. Arseneault. You will all have five minutes.

We will begin immediately with Mr. Généreux.

Mr. Bernard Généreux (Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Vaillancourt and Mr. Hominuk, I want to welcome you here this morning.

Mr. Vaillancourt, you said that there are 611,500 francophones in Ontario, and that their numbers are growing.

Mr. Denis Vaillancourt: Yes.

Mr. Bernard Généreux: How many francophones were there in Ontario 10 years ago?

Mr. Denis Vaillancourt: There were 550,000 about 10 years ago, but two things happened. First, immigration played a role, but in addition, Ontario adopted what may be a unique approach: the province adopted an inclusive definition of the francophonie.

While keeping in mind section 23 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, which concerns the right to schooling in the language of the minority, imagine the case of a francophone immigrant. Under this article, in Ontario as in the other provinces with the exception of Quebec, if a francophone is not a rights holder under the Charter, he or she must apply to an admissions committee to be allowed to attend a French school. Just imagine that, if you will. In Ontario 10 years ago, if a French person from France arrived in Ontario and wanted to go to a French school, he had to apply to an admissions committee.

What Ontario did to make that approach more flexible was to make any person who spoke French and arrived in Ontario a person who had the right to schooling in French, even if that was not their mother tongue. That is being done in Ontario, but let's be clear, it is not the case everywhere in Canada.

By adopting that inclusive definition in 2003, I believe, 50,000 more immigrants were included as francophones, so that there are now 611,500.

Mr. Bernard Généreux: Fine.

In 2011, when you appeared before the committee, you said that the roadmap at the time had some very positive aspects. We know that that roadmap included several initiatives.

Which initiatives in the current roadmap, the 2013-2018 one, have been most beneficial?

Mr. Denis Vaillancourt: There are two things. What is beneficial is that local organizations in different parts of the province were provided with operating funds and project funds. Those contributions allowed us among other things to consult the francophone population of Ontario. We formed many partnerships with the federal government last year, when we celebrated 400 years of francophone presence in Ontario. This gave new energy to the organizations and allowed them to take their place in this province.

I would say that the yearly contributions to operations in these francophone environments in our cities and villages is an essential tool in Anglo-dominant circumstances. The cultural centres and groups generate an energy, be they retiree groups or francophone historical associations.

All you have to do is look at what was done on the cultural plane over the past 10 years. In the past, people spoke about Sudbury already as a place where there was a core group of actors and singers. People spoke about Ottawa as well. If you look at emerging artists today, you will see that they come from everywhere in Ontario. I am thinking for instance of Céleste Lévis, who is from Timmins, or Damien Robitaille, who is from Penetanguishene. There is a very active French theatre in Toronto. These are all things that have developed because of previous contributions.

Mr. Bernard Généreux: You mentioned that the 2013-2018 roadmap should have a higher profile. Is that because you are under the impression, or are certain, that the roadmap is not well known in Canada, or in Ontario particularly?

Mr. Denis Vaillancourt: No, the organizations are quite familiar with the roadmap.

Over the past 10 years, the various roadmap community programs were frozen, which meant that we lost ground. If there is an intention to renew program funding in the new roadmap, that should be done.

I will try to tell you from memory what happened in Ontario; Mr. Hominuk will help me.

There are three or four cultural centres in small communities that had to close because after 10 years of unacknowledged inflation, they could no longer manage to have a volunteer or a physical space. I remind you that in minority communities the environment is Anglo-dominant. So we have to create spaces to promote the language and culture.

There is a comment I often make to my FCFA colleagues.

I have not done the calculations and I won't bother you with the figures, but if you do the math, you will see that the per capita for the 611,000 francophones in Ontario and the other minority communities outside Quebec is much lower than in the rest of the country. In saying that, I'm really speaking as a Franco-Ontarian.

• (0905)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Vaillancourt.

Ms. Lapointe, you have the floor.

Ms. Linda Lapointe (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, Lib.): Good morning.

Welcome. I am very pleased to have you with us at the committee this morning.

I did some research after my colleague suggested that I consult the report tabled in June 2015 entitled "Immigration as a Tool for Enhancing the Vitality and Supporting the Development of Francophone Minority Communities". I believe you contributed to that, Mr. Hominuk.

Two recommendations were made following the publication of that report. Would you like me to read them?

Mr. Peter Hominuk (Executive Director, Assemblée de la francophonie de l'Ontario): Please.

Ms. Linda Lapointe: The first one reads as follows: "That Citizenship and Immigration Canada promote the opportunity to live and work in French in francophone minority communities."

This is the second one: "That Citizenship and Immigration Canada consider options to increase the number of francophone immigrants who settle in a francophone minority community in Canada through its Express Entry program."

According to what you see in Ontario, have those recommendations been implemented?

Mr. Peter Hominuk: If those recommendations were implemented, we cannot yet see the results.

There is no doubt that there's still a lot of work to do in this regard. The federal government is very far from the target it set for itself, which was 4.4%. I think that the most recent figure was 1.5% of immigrants.

The Government of Ontario has begun discussions and created an expert panel on immigration, which is due to report soon. The purpose of those discussions is to see how Ontario and the federal government could work better to reach those targets. On the ground, we don't really see any progress. There is still a lot of work to do.

Mr. Denis Vaillancourt: He is the public servant, and I am the politician, if you will.

Ms. Linda Lapointe: According to the report, Mr. Hominuk took part in that work. I did not see your name and I apologize.

Mr. Denis Vaillancourt: I agree.

I was going to address the second topic, but it will save...

Ms. Linda Lapointe: I had another question, but if you take all of my time, that won't do.

Mr. Denis Vaillancourt: I will skip that and I can talk about it later.

Ms. Linda Lapointe: Fine.

Yesterday, there was an article in the news that stated that new immigrants were "more Canadian than native-born Canadians". I don't know if you had an opportunity to see that.

Does the fact that people who immigrate to Canada are very happy to be here mean that they contribute more economically than those who were born here?

Mr. Denis Vaillancourt: I will tell you something I heard, and Mr. Boissonnault will remember it.

During the consultation in Waterloo, two new colleagues, Ms. Bardish Chagger and Mr. Raj Saini, made a presentation in French, to their enormous credit and to my great surprise. They said that they had not been told about the importance of linguistic duality when they arrived in Canada. They were addressing francophones in the hall.

The problem, regarding immigration, is that linguistic duality is not promoted. I apologize to the members from Quebec, but I get the impression that people are told that French Canada is limited to Quebec.

Ms. Linda Lapointe: I am not offended.

Mr. Denis Vaillancourt: The fact remains that when I hear two people like Ms. Chagger and Mr. Saini—was that it, Mr. Boissonnault?

Mr. Randy Boissonnault (Edmonton Centre, Lib.): Mr. Saini, yes.

Mr. Denis Vaillancourt: Okay.

These immigrants said we should promote the official languages more to immigrants when they arrive in Canada. They want to be told about French and that French is spoken not only in Quebec.

That is my testimony. Do these people contribute to the economy? Yes.

● (0910)

Ms. Linda Lapointe: What you are saying is that we should include in our report your statement that, when people want to immigrate to Canada, they should be informed of our linguistic duality, that we have two languages.

Mr. Denis Vaillancourt: Absolutely.

Ms. Linda Lapointe: Okay. Thank you.

Mr. Denis Vaillancourt: They must be told that it is possible to live in French in all parts of Canada.

Ms. Linda Lapointe: [*Inaudible—Editor*] in Quebec as well.

Mr. Denis Vaillancourt: I understand and I am not taking anything away from that.

Ms. Linda Lapointe: I'm sorry.

I would like to go back to something you said earlier. You said that it was damaging and difficult for organizations such as yours when the funding for roadmap programs was frozen for 10 years.

Mr. Denis Vaillancourt: Yes. If you connect that with immigration, something happened. It was in the roadmap at one point. Then it was transferred to what is now Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada, or IRCC, and the community was no longer able to trace this funding. The funding freeze resulted in a decrease in our activities.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Vaillancourt.

Mr. Choquette, you have the floor.

Mr. François Choquette (Drummond, NDP): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Welcome, gentlemen.

I don't know if you have had time to review the new report by the Commissioner of Official Languages on early childhood. The report just came out, it is hot off the press.

You probably heard that the commissioner was conducting a study on this.

Mr. Denis Vaillancourt: Yes.

Mr. François Choquette: It is quite interesting. He had mentioned to me that he was working on that.

The report points to the need for a new action plan, saying that education must never be forgotten. We are talking about education. Later on, I will of course get back to the university you want, which I think you deserve.

The commissioner said that, if we start from the foundations, if we want children to be able to choose French for primary school, then for high school, and to continue their education in French, it often starts in early childhood. He suggests that the next action plan on official languages should include sufficient, stable and long-term funding for early childhood development in francophone communities.

What do you think of the commissioner's recommendation that the action plan must provide for a strong start in French-language education, beginning in early childhood?

Mr. Denis Vaillancourt: Can I tell you how happy I am that you asked that question? That is one of the new frontiers for francophones communities in Ontario, as far as I am concerned. Early childhood is the key.

Under section 23 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, we gained the right to education and school governance, but there is still another issue. We are very pleased to see that provincial governments across the country are starting to include early childhood in the ministries of education. That is the case in Ontario, New Brunswick, and elsewhere. It goes by different names, but its importance is emerging.

For the survival of francophone communities outside Quebec, access to French-language early childhood services is crucial for French-language schools in the long term. We must focus on early childhood, because the assimilation we always talk about begins there.

Mr. François Choquette: Yes.

Mr. Denis Vaillancourt: I certainly subscribe to the commissioner's recommendation. We have to invest in our communities. For the smaller communities, we will likely have to support the school boards through the schools. I know there is shared federal-provincial jurisdiction here.

We have to find ways, through the OLEP and other programs, to create spaces in French for children, starting in early childhood. Even for exogamous families—where one parent speaks French and the other speaks English—, day care is obviously an important place for language development and especially for the survival of the language in order to access French-language education. I always say that, in Ontario, if we mess up public policies on early childhood education for francophones, we will lose our constitutional rights through the back door.

I am tremendously concerned about that. That is why when the commissioner says that we should invest in early childhood to support—

Let us recall that, in minority communities, English is dominant; we have to work against that. Mr. Landry, a researcher from the University of Moncton, always said that spaces to live in French have to be created. These spaces also help the anglophone community interested in learning a second language. It is an investment not only for the minority, but also for the majority who want to learn French. Those people are called francophiles. Mr. Boissonnault used the term “franco-curious”, which I like very much. I will use it without his permission.

This is crucially important.

• (0915)

Mr. François Choquette: Could you make a brief comment about the French-language university?

Mr. Denis Vaillancourt: A planning committee has been created, chaired by former official languages commissioner Dyane Adam. The community was hoping to be responsible. We wanted a provisional board of governors to make the decisions. The government's response was to create this planning committee. I have not met Ms. Adam, but I have reason to believe that if she agreed to chair the committee it is because she knows that we will

ultimately have a Franco-Ontarian university. This prospect delights us.

Mr. François Choquette: That is very good news.

Mr. Denis Vaillancourt: We hope federal support will be provided as it was when our colleges and school boards were set up, in the 1990s. Major agreements were concluded at that time relating to infrastructure, not always through Canadian Heritage, but also through Industry Canada or other initiatives.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Vaillancourt.

Mr. Lefebvre, you have the floor.

Mr. Paul Lefebvre (Sudbury, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Good morning, gentlemen. We are pleased to welcome you this morning.

Can you talk to us about the action plan in concrete terms? I would like to know what the AFO is proposing, what it would focus on in order to improve the current action plan.

Mr. Denis Vaillancourt: First of all, we do of course want Ontario's share to be increased.

Second, whether it is increased or not, the next action plan must calculate inflation for the programs referred to as community programming initiatives, and must focus on planning. If the approach is fragmented, there will be no continuity and there will be poor investments.

Third, multi-year funding should be considered. I must say that, with our regional Canadian Heritage colleagues from Ontario, we have experimented with this and the results were very positive. Moreover, the strategic plan that we developed with support from Canadian Heritage allowed us to obtain help to mobilize people in the community. On behalf of the Assemblée and with staff, Mr. Hominuk chairs four round tables that support local activity, promote the language, create leadership, in short, anything to round out the plan. So multi-year funding is needed, taking inflation into account.

I have two comments. I followed Mr. Boissonnault during the consultations in Ontario. It is clear that measures can be taken in minority communities with regard to the digital space. We have to invest in the digital space. Governments could play a role through their own websites. I think the federal government does this, despite some minor weaknesses. My province also does it quite well, also with minor weaknesses. But these are steps in the right direction.

The digital space is important to young people. Clearly, it is the new avenue for communications. Nevertheless, a minority community has to stick together physically from time to time. The importance of public spaces must not be overlooked. With respect to the francophone university, for instance, the Ontario government has often said it could be a virtual university. For higher education, though, we need to be surrounded by walls. The best description I heard, during the consultation on the Franco-Ontarian university, came from a young person who said we need walls that breathe what we are. I'm sorry, but the Internet does not breathe. The walls and hallways of an institution are important points of reference.

So we must invest in continuity. There was a time during the last six years of my mandate when we were not allowed to travel. If we do not help the community to come together from time to time, how can we create synergy and compare experiences? These factors should be considered.

Mr. Peter Hominuk: I would like to add that the community strategic plan is very clear, with measurable indicators. With the round tables Mr. Vaillancourt mentioned, we are making the plan operational, determining who will do what and how. So we have a very clear plan. We know what our 10-year objective is and we know how to get there.

Mr. Paul Lefebvre: How could the federal action plan support your strategic plan?

Mr. Denis Vaillancourt: We want the action plan to continue to provide multi-year funding for community activities. For our part, we know we have to be accountable. We are not there yet, but we are working on a comprehensive overview. Within the next six months, we will be able to tell you who is doing what in each community in Ontario, how it contributes to the objectives of the strategic plan, and how it lines up with government objectives.

● (0920)

Mr. Peter Hominuk: One thing the federal government could do through its committees is ensure that all departments are involved in the implementation of the programs for francophones. All departments could be partners in this. It is not the responsibility of Canadian Heritage alone. That is one of the key messages we are giving you today.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

That concludes the first round.

We will now move on to the next subject, immigration.

Mr. Vaillancourt, you have the floor.

Mr. Denis Vaillancourt: We have said a few things about immigration; I will not get into the figures.

Francophones who are immigrants account for about 10% of the Franco-Ontarian community. There are 50,000 to 60,000 newcomers. That is the basis for our survival. Franco-Ontarians spoke to us during the consultations about demographic weight. These 611,500 people represent 4.5% to 5% of the approximately 12 million residents of Ontario. The number of francophones is increasing in each census, primarily due to immigration from other countries or from other parts of Canada.

Sometimes we have immigrants who first arrive in Quebec, in Montreal, specifically. Being unable to find work, they move to Ontario. This poses a problem with respect to funding because it is the initial entry point that receives the funding. If the immigrant changes provinces, the new province does not receive that funding. This is our main demand with respect to immigration. The funding allocated when the immigrant first arrives must follow them when they change provinces. This is crucial for francophone communities.

Ms. Lapointe raised this earlier and I said I would respond. So now I will. In my opinion, IRCC must develop a “franco reflex”. Let me give you a few examples.

When immigrants are recruited abroad—you are familiar with the Canada-Quebec immigration agreement—, francophones from outside Quebec are sometimes part of the delegation and sometimes they are not. The federal government must do more to ensure that francophone communities have some visibility outside of Canada. I call that creating a “franco reflex” and talking about francophone communities.

I have already given another example. At a meeting, I received a catalogue, available in both official languages, of all the resources available to immigrants. It was a meeting with francophones. I was shown the catalogue and all the resources available. There were a lot of resources, but the official had left the French version of the catalogue at the office. I told him that the corporate image should not be unilingual, in English only. The catalogue should be in both languages, double sided. If one image is projected and the other image is forgotten, it is like forgetting that francophones exist. It is not better than providing a catalogue in French only if the image to be projected is one of linguistic duality. That is important when we are outside the country.

I hope therefore that we can work more closely with the provinces in recruitment initiatives. I know that bilateral discussions must be held in this regard, but Franco-Ontarians must be part of those delegations. Our provincial government made a move recently. With the support of Quebec and New Brunswick, Ontario will become an observer at the International Organization of La Francophonie or the OIF. That will provide a showcase for Franco-Ontarian communities that we do not currently have.

Having a “franco reflex” is one part. I mentioned the very favourable comments by Ms. Chagger and Mr. Saini. They would have wanted to have been told that there are two official languages in Canada and to have heard about the benefits of learning French.

The other part is the economic benefit. As you know, the Conference Board has studied the economic benefits. I am a bit jealous of people in New Brunswick, for example, because they have bilingual call centres in that province. They could have been bilingual in Ontario. We have enough bilingual people but that argument was not made strongly enough.

Promoting linguistic duality at the international level provides an economic benefit for the whole country and for every province. There is a distinct benefit.

As I have often said this morning, the infrastructure in our province is predominantly anglophone.

● (0925)

When it comes to immigration, the welcoming and inclusion of francophones are not easy tasks. Among the groups working in the majority language, there are private agencies that specialize in helping immigrants integrate. That doesn't exist in francophone communities. Those agencies don't do that work in French. However, we have developed abilities to do so through our community organizations.

I will talk to you about the La Passerelle program in Toronto and about CESOQ, here in Ottawa. Those people are working on welcoming francophone immigrants to help them integrate the work community. Improvements are being made. Mr. Hominuk was a member of an expert panel in Toronto. So far, Ontario is the only province that has enshrined a 5% target in its legislation. We are happy to learn that the deputy ministers of francophone affairs of the provinces outside Quebec recently met in Yellowknife and agreed that all the provinces should work on reaching a target of 5% for francophone immigration outside Quebec. That's a positive development, as there is some synergy. What francophone community groups are lacking is stable funding to help them play that community role.

I have met two or three French people from France who arrived through Toronto's Pearson Airport. However, it took them 18 months to find out that Toronto had a vibrant francophone community. Why did the border officers not tell them that? Why aren't they better connected with francophone organizations? Those are elements we have to take into account.

The other element that must be taken into account is what I would refer to as language training, as newcomers in Canada are concerned about finding work. The language issue aside, they want to work. In Ontario, they clearly must be provided with an opportunity to learn a second language, French, and also some English. We have to be careful about the learning of English. I am talking to you about Ontario as an educator. We have the ability to teach English because our French schools in Ontario are not unilingual. Students who graduate from our high schools are eligible to enrol in any university in the country, in English or in French. Our young people are so successful that we are losing leadership because they end up working internationally.

The training of immigrants in the language of Shakespeare for work should be provided by our francophone establishments. While they're learning the language, immigrants will also get references that will help them become part of the community. For example, are you familiar with Ottawa's Algonquin College? The college provides English as a second language courses for immigrants. However, the classroom references for those students do not come from the francophone community. Conversely, if the course was provided at Cité collégiale, the staff and the environment being francophone, the people learning English would be part of the context of that community, to which they would remain connected.

All too often, we manage to recruit them and bring them into the country, but despite that, three or four years later, they are in English schools and we have lost them. In addition to all the energy we have to expend to reach the 5%, we also have to invest energy into helping retain those people in the communities. They have to establish connections to the communities.

Thank you.

The Chair: Very well. Thank you, Mr. Vaillancourt.

We will go to questions immediately, starting with Ms. Boucher.

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher (Beauport—Côte-de-Beaupré—Île d'Orléans—Charlevoix, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Good morning, Mr. Vaillancourt. Good morning, Mr. Hominuk.

It's very interesting for me, coming from Quebec, to hear people from Ontario talk about the francophonie in this way. I used to be the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for la Francophonie and Official Languages. I feel that, as far as linguistic duality in 2016 goes, everyone should be bilingual or at least speak both of Canada's official languages.

We have heard from IRCC representatives. You talked about the figures for Franco-Ontarians that have increased primarily because of immigration. Nevertheless, the officials were saying that they had not reached their target. The target was 4.4%, and they are at 1.4%.

Do your figures also reflect interprovincial migration?

• (0930)

Mr. Denis Vaillancourt: Yes, absolutely. We call that secondary immigration.

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: Okay.

Are those people primarily Quebecers? What percentage of them come from Quebec?

Mr. Denis Vaillancourt: They come from Quebec for the most part, but also from elsewhere. Francophones sometimes arrive in Vancouver or in Manitoba. Immigrants do migrate within the country, but many francophones arrive in Montreal and, failing to find a job, they end up in Ontario because of Ottawa's proximity. Mr. Hominuk may have seen some figures on this—I have not—but I would bet that immigration to Toronto is mostly international.

Mr. Peter Hominuk: I would like to clarify that the number of Franco-Ontarians is increasing in Ontario, but not as quickly as the number of anglophones or people who are not Franco-Ontarians. In short, our population is growing, but it is experiencing a decline as a share of Ontario's population.

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: As I said, I am a big advocate of health care services in French.

When francophone immigrants arrive in your region, do you have structures to help them when they are sick?

Are there guidelines that help them find health care services in French?

Mr. Denis Vaillancourt: The short answer is yes. Having worked in the health care field in French, I have often said that Ontario has made progress in that area. Six planning entities spread out across the province have the mandate to inform the government of francophone communities' needs, including those of newcomers, and to implement the necessary health care services in French.

That often begins with schools. There are also francophone community health centres. Those people work with both the province and the Société santé en français nationally. As for the professionals we need in health care, we are connected to the Consortium national de formation en santé. That organization provides health care professionals.

To summarize my answer to your question, I would say that those community networks connect the entities. So we can refer those people to health care services in French.

That said, more work needs to be done to ensure access across Ontario. When it comes to the delivery of government services in French, designated areas cover 80% of Ontario. But as I already mentioned, in a city like Toronto, the problem is that the Toronto-Windsor corridor is so populated and urbanized that francophones often live in islands. The challenge is great, but we are working on it. It would be good for newcomers to be put in contact with francophone community groups from the outset. In downtown Toronto, for instance, there is a francophone community health centre. It's in the heart of the city, and all the services are available there.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Vaillancourt.

Mr. Vandal, go ahead.

Mr. Dan Vandal (Saint Boniface—Saint Vital, Lib.): Thank you. Your presentation was insightful.

I am from the Saint-Boniface neighbourhood, in Winnipeg, Manitoba. I believe the Société franco-manitobaine, the SFM, is your counterpart. That entity has sponsored a lot of organizations working in immigration in Manitoba. I would like to know what role you play in recruiting and welcoming immigrants.

● (0935)

Mr. Denis Vaillancourt: Once again, I am happy that you are asking me this question.

If I was to talk to you about success stories in francophone immigration, I would talk about Winnipeg and Manitoba.

I will come back to what we are trying to do in Ontario. I am not a Franco-Manitoban, and I may give a poor rendering of the experience. The Winnipeg Chamber of Commerce meets with both francophones and anglophones. They have created niches. They were able to seek out francophones and integrate them into the communities, schools, universities and health care services. It's a success story in the sense that everyone has played a part.

In Ontario, we are trying to do the same thing. I talked to you about the community strategic plan. We are currently starting a sort of a white paper on immigration, to use government language. We are receiving support in that endeavour from Canadian Heritage, and we are extremely appreciative. That enables us to communicate with the community, determine specific needs and have lobbying tools to influence changes to public policies and help people collaborate.

Ontario has three immigrant welcome networks for francophones. Those networks' coordination with our committees is not perfect. However, the white paper will help us get structured in terms of the welcoming, inclusion and potential recruitment. Currently, francophone Ontario is having its voice heard in immigration, but it has not coordinated its efforts to enhance collaboration.

The white paper is in the works and will be published in the spring. It will talk about public policies or necessary changes, both in Ontario and in the federal government, for concerted action in terms of recruitment, inclusion and long-term retention.

Having worked with Mr. Hominuk in immigration, I can tell you that it's a very complex field, first because of federal-provincial jurisdictions that come into play, and also because of immigrants'

diverse backgrounds and all the needs they have when they arrive in our region.

Mr. Dan Vandal: You mentioned several times that immigrant resources should follow them when they move. What is the rate of immigrant retention in Ontario? Can you tell us more about that?

Mr. Denis Vaillancourt: I have not analyzed the retention of immigrants in communities, but perhaps Mr. Hominuk has gotten hold of some files and could talk to you about that.

In many cases, francophone immigrants have become the biggest activists when it comes to the language, especially in the regions of Toronto and South Central Ontario. We would like our own Franco-Ontarians to speak out as much. They say that they are entitled to this and that they are told that Canada is a bilingual country. We are currently explaining the Ontario reality to them. Those people are our allies and are interested in this issue.

Some people have been here for 20 years or 30 years and have remained in the francophone community. They are active in French, even if they work in English on a daily basis to survive. They remain very involved. I cannot tell you what the retention rate is, but I think the figure is positive.

Mr. Peter Hominuk: If you want figures on this aspect, we could obtain them from school boards. There are a lot of immigrants in the schools of our regions.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Mr. Choquette, the floor is yours.

Mr. François Choquette: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Vaillancourt, I would like to quickly come back to what you said about francophone immigrants who arrive in Ontario and have to learn English. Immigrants already speak French when they settle here, but they often have to learn some English because their workplace requires it. You mentioned that they often move to anglophone areas instead of staying in the francophone community.

Why is that the case? What could the action plan or the federal government suggest to improve the situation? I don't understand why that has not been done already. Frankly, I am a bit shocked to see that our francophone immigrants are being sent to learn English in anglophone spaces, and not in a francophone community where they could continue to build ties with the community.

● (0940)

Mr. Denis Vaillancourt: Why is that so? First, education comes under provincial jurisdiction, and the application is different.

I think that, with its target of 5% for francophone immigration, the Ontario government is aware of the reality. In addition, Franco-Ontarians know that they need to speak the other official language to work, unless they have a job in education or in some health centres. They have understood that.

At some point, the government told francophone immigrants that it would provide them with free language training courses. I had discussions with the Minister of Francophone Affairs at the time. I think that the action was initially very positive. It enabled francophone immigrants to take English as a second language courses for free, but they could take those courses in any educational institution in Ontario, either anglophone or francophone. Those are provincial decisions. That's when we said that, if an immigrant learns English in an anglophone institution, based on the community reference, there is a risk of investing in the second language, contributing to a loss for francophones.

In such cases, there are jurisdictional problems. I have heard about those aspects in consultations on official languages in Ontario and I have heard them in Sudbury. The roadmap can play a role of lever in some of those cases. So, if that is done, institutions will be eligible for certain funds and incentives. In that area, we have to be aware of the subtleties in the federal-provincial relations in education. In that sense, there may be some levers that can be used with the roadmap in immigration, for example.

Mr. François Choquette: That's interesting.

We are also talking about immigration, of course. Earlier, you talked about the roadmap. All departments and federal organizations must get involved. I don't know whether you participated in the review of horizontal governance of official languages.

Mr. Denis Vaillancourt: Not really.

Mr. François Choquette: So you did not have an opportunity to participate in that review.

In terms of immigration, you have perhaps heard about tests required for immigrants. The French-language tests are less available and are also much more expensive.

The Government of Ontario is also asking people to pass the English-language test. Some organizations are recommending, for example, that the second test be less expensive or free, since people are already required to pass a test in French.

Do you have any recommendations on that?

Mr. Denis Vaillancourt: Absolutely.

Let's talk about the cost of the tests. To our dismay, we learned that in Ontario, the French language proficiency test is European. It's twice as expensive as the English test. It's a test in one of the two official languages. The French test is twice as expensive and takes twice as long to correct.

I'll tell you what Canada can do. We can prepare tests in the country, administer them and correct them ourselves. If that's what it costs to promote linguistic duality, I think that's the price to pay to run our country if we believe in linguistic duality and in Canada's very identity.

On that note, last week, I was speaking with a group of medical students about how both anglophone and francophone medical students must take a test to determine their likelihood of success. However, the test is American. Francophones must take the test in English. If we want to encourage professionals to practice in French, it would be better for them to take the test in their own language. Canada has the expertise to prepare, administer and correct its own

tests. We have francophone universities. We have experts everywhere. Why do we purchase things that come from abroad and that cost more?

I was at the Alliance française on Friday. We were celebrating the 90th anniversary of the Maison des étudiants canadiens in Paris. I don't know whether you're familiar with it. One of the French people there told me that he didn't understand why a European test is used to assess language proficiency in Canada. It didn't make any sense to him.

Regarding the issue of the more costly French test, if a francophone immigrant who wants to obtain qualifications must pay more to take a test, he may wonder whether it would be better to follow the English route.

The other aspect I want—

● (0945)

The Chair: Excuse me, Mr. Vaillancourt, but we must move on to the next speaker.

Mr. Arseneault, you have the floor.

Mr. René Arseneault (Madawaska—Restigouche, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

How much time do I have?

The Chair: You have four minutes.

Mr. René Arseneault: Mr. Vaillancourt and Mr. Hominuk, thank you for being here. It's very interesting.

I will jump from one subject to another with my questions because I don't have much time.

You have many statistics and studies. Do you have a study conducted in Ontario on francophone immigrants and on the generation that followed those immigrants concerning their attachment to French and to working and studying in French? Do you have statistics on the generation that followed those francophone immigrants in minority communities that show whether they're still living in French?

Mr. Denis Vaillancourt: We don't have a longitudinal study of that nature. We suspect our retention level is relatively good, but it's not recorded.

I spoke earlier about the white paper. These may be requests that should be integrated into public policy. Perhaps we should invest funds to look at our ability to retain francophone immigrants and our strengths and weaknesses in that area.

Mr. René Arseneault: You said earlier that, within six months, you would have a study that lists all the francophone hot spots in Ontario and describes their needs and demands. I imagine the study will mention the government agencies these groups work with and how the federal government can supplement the assistance.

Mr. Denis Vaillancourt: I'll give you a concrete example. It's called a dashboard. We listed all the projects in the northern table, a region Mr. Lefebvre is somewhat familiar with. I'm not talking about it because he's here, but that's the table I saw at the office this week. We listed all the projects being carried out by community groups in northern and northwestern Ontario, whether they are being carried out by a cultural centre or another entity. We also recorded the basics of the projects.

The interesting thing about our strategic plan is that all the areas are explored, except there's nothing regarding immigration. At the community level, this means that, as an organization that brings people together, we need to work on mobilizing people to become more welcoming toward francophone immigrants.

Northern Ontario has other constraints. It's subject to other pressures. There's an exodus from the north. There's the matter of frontline industries. Nevertheless, as I have just told you, communities are needed to welcome people. If the communities aren't paying attention, plans must be made in that area.

Mr. René Arseneault: In case we forget, once the dashboard has been created, could you send it to the clerk of the committee?

Mr. Denis Vaillancourt: Yes, once it has been created, we can send it. I don't know whether it will be on time, but we can certainly provide some parts of it. It's one of our criteria or deliverables to receive funding. As I told you, we have just started. We have just completed a tour of the province, with our three tables. The dashboard has just started taking shape.

Mr. René Arseneault: It's a tremendous amount of work.

I'll change the subject.

Does the Ontario government have a coordination strategy with the federal government to attract francophone immigrants to Ontario?

Mr. Denis Vaillancourt: There is a desire for one. Dialogue at the federal-provincial level has not been easy in the past. I think there's a new energy. Mr. Hominuk can talk to you more about it, because he was part of a group of experts.

Mr. Peter Hominuk: I can tell you that a group of experts is currently working for the Ontario Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration, or MCI, on making recommendations to the provincial government. The report hasn't been published yet. I can't tell you what's in it. However, there are recommendations in that direction.

Mr. René Arseneault: So, federal public servants will make recommendations to the province of Ontario. And the province of Ontario—

Mr. Peter Hominuk: No. The Ontario government created the group of experts to explore ways to work with the federal government to achieve the target of 5%.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Arseneault.

The round of questions is over.

Mr. Hominuk and Mr. Vaillancourt, thank you for your presentations. They were very interesting. Thank you again on behalf of the committee.

Ms. Boucher, do you have anything to add?

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: After hearing from the witnesses, I need two minutes to make a proposal to our anglophone friends.

The Chair: Okay.

We'll suspend the meeting for five minutes.

● (0950)

(Pause)

● (0955)

The Chair: Please take a seat. Pursuant to Standing Order 108(2), we'll continue our study on the roadmap and immigration in francophone minority communities.

We're pleased to have with us the Réseau de développement économique et d'employabilité Ontario and its representatives, Annick Schulz, Director of Communications, Marketing and External Relations; and Valérie Sniadoch, Director of Employability and Immigration. Welcome to the committee.

The rules are as follows. You will have about ten minutes to speak about the roadmap and action plan, then committee members will ask questions and provide comments. Afterward, we'll move on to the second step concerning immigration, which will also be followed by questions and comments.

Let's hear from you regarding the first part, the roadmap. You have about ten minutes.

Ms. Annick Schulz (Director of Communications, Marketing and External Relations, Réseau de développement économique et d'employabilité (RDÉE) Ontario): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Chair and committee members, thank you for having us.

RDÉE Ontario would like to thank you for the opportunity to speak as part of the study you want to conduct on the roadmap and immigration in francophone and acadian communities.

Since 2001, RDÉE Ontario has been a key player in the francophone and bilingual economic space in Ontario. It's a member from the RDÉE Canada national organization. RDÉE Ontario promotes a strong and responsible economic vision. It has a professional team, and it demonstrates innovation in economic development, entrepreneurship, employability and immigration. We ensure that all players in the francophone and bilingual economic space fully contribute to making Ontario and Canada prosper.

I'll start with a few considerations regarding the roadmap and upcoming action plan. These considerations are in a brief that will be submitted to the Department of Canadian Heritage.

Linguistic duality makes our country unique and particularly attractive.

The Chair: Please slow down a bit so that the interpreters can follow you.

Ms. Annick Schulz: Yes, excuse me.

It is a fundamental aspect of our Canadian identity. It is also a factor in Canada's economic prosperity. Ontario is a diversified economic ecosystem. In the francophone economic space, bilingualism represents a competitive advantage for new markets, for our entrepreneurs and for our francophone and bilingual businesses in Ontario.

The current growing relationship between the governments of Quebec and Ontario, and their political will to strengthen the Quebec-Ontario economic space to make it a hub of productivity, innovation and exportation, will greatly benefit our businesses and our francophone entrepreneurs, who will be able to develop interprovincial and international markets, and therefore set themselves apart from their competitors.

If bilingualism is a major asset, clearly our prime strength is our francophonie, a culture and language that we share with over 274 million people. The potential for economic opportunities and business development is huge. To that end, the fact that the Province of Ontario recognizes the importance of its francophone character, through its membership in the International Organisation of La Francophonie, is a unique opportunity for the province's francophone entrepreneurs and businesses and a major step forward.

We have identified a number of priorities for the federal government's next action plan. Let's talk about innovation first. RDÉE Ontario considers that francophone and Acadian communities, particularly the franco-Ontarian community, must be able to benefit from optimal use of new virtual platforms, mobile applications, to promote our areas of activity and to be more competitive. We want to have more of a presence in the WebSphere, on the new virtual platforms. For example, we want to create an interactive virtual platform for our entrepreneurs, for our young entrepreneurs and for our employability and immigration sector. My colleague will be able to tell you about the virtual job fair that was held recently, in February.

RDÉE Ontario recommends that the federal government creates a specific digital fund to enable francophone and Acadian communities to fully benefit from these new virtual platforms, to increase the presence of French in the WebSphere and to encourage the move to digital to strengthen the competitiveness of our areas of activity across the country so that we can become true drivers of innovation.

The second priority is to support economic sectors that are both innovative and promising. RDÉE Ontario has targeted two sectors, including the green economy. RDÉE Ontario will invest in the green economy and will be in line with the Eco-West project launched in Manitoba several years ago to reduce greenhouse gases. This project is also supported by RDÉE Canada. Its goal is to support rural and other communities commercializing clean technologies and implementing sustainable infrastructure projects.

The other sector is tourism. Over the years, RDÉE Ontario has developed excellent expertise in tourism through the Circuit Champlain project. It wants to develop more initiatives to promote francophone Ontario. We are also going to start promoting sustainable tourism, especially with the first North American edition of the ECORISMO event, in collaboration with RDÉE Canada.

The third priority is youth. It's very important to introduce the entrepreneurial culture to young people. Recently—last week, I think—the Fédération de la jeunesse canadienne-française, or FJCF, published a study on the program for youth in the region. It clearly stated that an entrepreneurial culture needs to be developed to keep our young people in the region.

In 2015, the National Research Institute on Linguistic Minorities clearly acknowledged that 12 regions of Ontario have a significant negative migration flow. The migration of young francophones in Ontario is directly related to the jobs available in the regions. As a result, RDÉE Ontario proposes that the federal government put in place a special fund for youth in the regions to encourage our young people to stay.

We would also like the federal government to establish a fund that will help us to ensure a continuum of support services to young people to start a business.

In a moment, my colleague will speak to you in more detail about francophone immigration because she is an expert in it.

•(1000)

Briefly, Ontario is home to 70% of francophone immigrants outside Quebec. Unlike other provinces, Ontario was not identified in the roadmap and, therefore, did not receive funding. To promote francophone Ontario nationally and internationally, we are asking the federal government to put in place a special budget envelope for Ontario, using a model that has been put in place in New Brunswick's roadmap, which was managed by ACOA. We think that this initiative would enable the provincial and federal governments to meet the quotas for francophone immigration that they have set for themselves. Our organizations are excellent in this area, and my colleague will tell you more later.

As for promoting francophone communities outside the country, it is important that, before they enter the country, newcomers know about the francophone and Acadian communities, the vitality, the employability sectors and the organizations that work within our communities. Visibility means knowledge. There is still a lack of knowledge about the vitality of our francophone and Acadian communities. Again, a big marketing investment is needed to promote the pan-Canadian francophone presence outside the country.

Let's talk about intensifying recruitment fairs and missions. RDÉE Ontario will attend Destination Canada, a major event held in Paris and Brussels. However, be aware that we have to cover the cost of our own participation, which is a fairly substantial budget. We have to tighten our belts, but it's important for us to be there. Therefore, the federal government should think about setting aside additional budgets that would enable us to attend events like that.

We are requesting a real increase in the budget envelopes for francophone immigration. My colleague will speak to you about this. Our team is very small and covers the province. Our activities are wide-ranging but to adequately meet the needs on the ground, the budget envelopes given to immigration and employability must be increased.

The last priority in our brief is the sustainability of our fields of expertise. It's clear that it is urgent that multi-year budgets be put in place and increased to improve our human resources, especially in employability and immigration. We must encourage the settlement of our human resources.

Everyone at RDÉE Ontario has professional experience and qualifications. Ms. Sniadoch's team includes human resources counsellors from the private sector. We use our expertise for the benefit of pan-Canadian francophonie because we believe in the cause, but we need to optimally strengthen our capacities for activity in the field and to consolidate our unique professional expertise to adequately respond to economic market trends. Therefore, RDEE Ontario intends to increase its budget envelope.

I'd like to talk about building our capacity. We currently have a team of 25 employees. There are six people at headquarters in Ottawa, 14 economic development officers to cover all of Ontario—it's big, as you know—and five employability and immigration professionals.

In conclusion, RDÉE Ontario is renewing its willingness to work with the federal government in an open and constructive spirit so that the next official languages action plan is focused on a strong, mobilizing economic vision enhanced by strategic orientations that will actively support the economic fabric of our francophone regions, while communicating its relevance to the present and the future for the francophonie in Ontario and in Canada.

• (1005)

The Chair: Thank you very much, Ms. Schulz.

We are starting our first round of questions with Mr. Généreux.

Mr. Bernard Généreux: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

Ms. Schulz, you spoke about funds. I'd like to know how much you were allocated for 2013 to 2018. How much, approximately, did you receive?

Ms. Annick Schulz: We received funds from Employment and Social Development Canada, or ESDC. We currently have an overall annual budget of \$2 million, and we receive \$448,000 a year from IRCC for our five employees.

Mr. Bernard Généreux: So you received \$2.5 million from the federal government. Do you have your own funds, meaning funds from other partners? I would imagine that you receive money from Ontario.

Ms. Annick Schulz: It's limited. For example, we have specific projects with the Ontario Trillium Foundation that gives us grants. We recently applied for an Ontario 150 grant, but it's project specific and completely limited.

Mr. Bernard Généreux: Right.

What are your financial expectations for the next roadmap?

Ms. Annick Schulz: We were thinking a third more from ESDC. Our expectations are much more concrete in terms of employability and immigration, since the current budget does not allow us to have enough human resources to cover the entire province and adequately meet immigration and employability needs.

Our team is currently drowning in work. There's an imbalance. Valérie could give you more details about this. In terms of economic development, things are going very well for our 14 officers who cover the province. Activities are multiplying and the team assigned to economic development is stable.

Mr. Bernard Généreux: What about the people on the ground?

Do they arrange activities for francophone entrepreneurs?

Ms. Annick Schulz: Yes, we work very closely with entrepreneurs. There is a continuum of services: how to start a business, financial literacy, support for young entrepreneurs, succession and mentoring. Moreover, as I have said very clearly, we have projects, including ecotourism, tourism, development of the Champlain route and green economy. I didn't mention the agri-food, but we are involved in that sector, as well. We created the Réseau agroalimentaire francophone de l'Ontario, which will soon begin operations. We are present in several growth sectors, which requires a lot of energy.

Mr. Bernard Généreux: What will you use the additional money you're requesting for under the next roadmap? We're talking about a third more than what you're already receiving.

You spoke a great deal about youth.

• (1010)

Ms. Annick Schulz: Yes.

Mr. Bernard Généreux: We spoke earlier about early childhood, in the context of education.

The same is true for a company: the sooner we do it, the better the chance of succession.

Ms. Annick Schulz: Yes.

Mr. Bernard Généreux: Would those amounts be earmarked specifically for that priority?

Ms. Annick Schulz: Absolutely.

We are in the process of creating two major projects for youth. We are going to start consultations with school boards in Ontario. We have a project called Apprendre l'entreprise, which is for schools, and another by the same name that's for older kids, who have access to a virtual resource centre. We want specialized courses to be offered in the schools to develop the sense of entrepreneurship and leadership in young people.

We have a somewhat more ambitious project that involves creating an entrepreneurship academy. We would like to create a program at the provincial level that is similar to Sport-études. We will take several steps for this. The potential program, Entreprenariat-études, would enable young people to recognize the opportunities related to being an entrepreneur and the opportunities in the market. There are talented young people in the schools. We need to support and motivate them from the get-go.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Ms. Schulz.

Mr. Bernard Généreux: May I steal your idea for Entreprenariat-études?

Ms. Annick Schulz: You'll have to talk to my executive director.

Mr. Bernard Généreux: We need this in Quebec, too.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Mr. Lefebvre, you have the floor.

Mr. Paul Lefebvre: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Good morning.

I have a slight conflict of interest to declare: I have been on the RDÉE Ontario board of directors. It was several years ago. I just wanted to let you know.

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: You know the subject?

Mr. Paul Lefebvre: A little.

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: Well, you're excused.

Mr. Paul Lefebvre: Thank you.

Perhaps I don't have much time to talk about immigration and employability. Maybe Ms. Sniadoch will talk at greater length about it.

I would like to know what challenges you face when it comes to francophone immigration and employability. I'm going right to the heart of the matter, but it's important. I really want to focus on it, since in Ontario, the government wants to reach a target of 4.4%. Now they're saying that the result for recent years was 1.4%. These are the only immigration results that can be calculated.

I'd also like to know, in terms of attracting francophone individuals and immigrants, what employability issues or challenges do you face.

How does RDÉE support this?

Mrs. Valérie Sniadoch (Director, Employability and Immigration, Réseau de développement économique et d'employabilité (RDÉE) Ontario): There are obviously challenges, but also opportunities.

Just before the meeting began, I did a very quick search on indeed.ca to find out how many available bilingual positions there are in Ontario. There are 2,500 new bilingual French-English positions today. We are seeing that there is enormous potential for attracting the francophone workforce to Ontario.

Mr. Paul Lefebvre: There are 2,500.

Mrs. Valérie Sniadoch: That was just before the meeting started, so the number is really up-to-date.

We attend fairs like Destination Canada and others. We are seeing that there is a strong interest among francophones to come to Canada.

In Canada, we are looking for skilled people who have a high potential for economic integration so that they do not end up in secondary positions or food services. We must therefore make a preselection from the start to ensure that these people will integrate and stay in Canada and that they will not leave. We're also talking about retention. We don't want to see people leave later.

There are job opportunities at various levels. However, we need to raise employer awareness, and that's where we come in.

As you know, we have an officer based in Sudbury, and we also have officers in Ottawa and Toronto. In our daily work, my team from human resources and the private sector and I, we make sure we have a dialogue as equals with companies to understand their needs

and to get them the best workforce possible. They really need to be shown that the issue isn't hiring a francophone immigrant, but hiring a skilled, bilingual person.

Mr. Paul Lefebvre: You have to hire the right person.

Mrs. Valérie Sniadoch: As they say in HR, you have to have the right person in the right place at the right time.

Mr. Paul Lefebvre: It is one thing to bring in francophones who can work in both languages in Ontario, but what challenges are there in retaining them once they are settled and working?

Mrs. Valérie Sniadoch: Are you talking about retention in Ontario, or at a job?

Mr. Paul Lefebvre: Both.

Mrs. Valérie Sniadoch: "Millennials", that is, those under 30 years old, keep a job for between 15 and 18 months, no more. Especially in the Greater Toronto area, people want to move very quickly, to get a higher salary and a more interesting job. People like that keep jobs for between 15 and 18 months. Retention at work, whether for a person born in Canada or for an immigrant, is somewhat similar, but an immigrant will stay in a job longer than someone born in Canada because they are looking to get more used to Canadian workplace culture. That's the kind of division we are seeing.

As for integration into Canada, you have to know that the immigration process takes time. I am an immigrant myself and it took me more than two years to get my immigration documents, even though I have a Canadian degree. It is quite the process, but people really want it. When you come to Canada, you arrive with the desire to settle and some money, which we are asked to bring. Once you are here, if you are properly advised and shown the right direction, you aren't going to leave.

You were talking about health earlier. Immigrant doctors are told that it is great that they are coming here because we need French-speaking doctors in Ontario. But when they arrive, they are told that they are not allowed to practice. That is when people leave. I have seen clients who were hospital directors, in Abidjan, for example, or in other places. They were happy to come with their wives and children. But once they got to Canada, they were told that they are not allowed to practice, that they have to go back to school and take jobs as orderlies and such. What do people do in situations like that? They leave, because their lifestyle was better in Abidjan than it would be in Ontario.

I have no figures to give you, but retention really depends on a person's area of activity and level of education.

● (1015)

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Mr. Choquette, the floor is yours.

Mr. François Choquette: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Mrs. Sniadoch, I am going to take full advantage of what you have just said. It is interesting and it leads to the question: how come we still come across these kinds of cases in 2016? How come this is still happening today? When we recruit doctors, we tell them to come here, that they will have a job and that we will help them to become integrated. But once they arrive with their whole families, they realize that their skills are not recognized and they have to leave again. How come we are still wasting so much energy on immigration in general and francophone immigration in particular? It is a big investment; it takes lots of energy. You mentioned your own story, which went on for two years. We want to make sure that people become integrated and enrich our communities. Why do we still have obstacles like this?

Mrs. Valérie Sniadoch: First, I think there is some misinformation for immigrants. If you go to the IRCC site today to apply for immigration, you will see the positions and the areas in demand. However, if you don't dig into the information, you will not see that, in Ontario particularly, there is a very long list of regulated professions. So, if you do not continue with your research, it is not something that you will find out. It is reasonable for you to believe that, since there is a demand, you are going to be able to work immediately.

Some provinces, like Quebec—as Ms. Schulz mentioned a little earlier—have agreements. For example, France has signed an agreement with Quebec in the health area, with nurses. I feel that it is something that should be developed in Ontario. Of course, some countries do not have equivalent studies for a particular area, but other countries do. So it is important to establish a kind of equivalency in the jargon of certain activity areas, because we want to make sure that people can speak English as required in their field of activity. However, some skills are transferable.

Two years ago, IRCC opened a bidding process for pre-departure services for francophones. Today, we have the opportunity to coordinate that service all across Canada, with RDÉE Canada. We can provide people selected for permanent residence with information on areas of activity, on what they have to do in order to work. In fact, at the moment, we are seeing that people are becoming more and more informed. They come to ask us questions, so I feel that the government has done well to inform people beforehand, not once they have passed through through Customs.

Mr. François Choquette: I feel that there is clearly more to be done.

The Avantage significatif francophone program has been reinstated, something we have been demanding for a long time. It is now called Mobilité francophone. So now, if we want to maintain francophone immigration outside Quebec, in minority communities, it is extremely important for those candidates to receive more points. However, I understand that it can take two years, despite the return of the Mobilité francophone program.

Have we started to see the benefits of the return of the Mobilité francophone program? Do you hear people talk about it? Should we make other improvements to attract skilled immigrants so that they can get into the labour market that you are working on?

Mrs. Valérie Sniadoch: First, I would like to clarify that my two-year process goes back six years, so things have evolved since that time.

As you know, the Avantage significatif francophone program was abolished in September 2014 and the Mobilité francophone program started on June 1 this year. Two years ago, we did a lot of work to make employers aware of the program. We had some excellent success, and then it was abolished. For two years, nothing happened and then the requirements for labour market impact assessments, LMIA's, were tightened. The posting had to be longer and the fees for employers increased. In cases of misconduct, you even went onto a list of unsatisfactory people, and so on. So employers have become more and more cautious about work permits for people who are not in the country.

When Mobilité francophone returned, I genuinely felt that 50% of the awareness work had already been done. With time, we found out that about 70% of the work had to be done again. It was no longer 50%, it was 70%.

Mr. François Choquette: You say that it's because of this period.

• (1020)

Mrs. Valérie Sniadoch: Yes, because of this period.

Employers were told the person had to be qualified, had to speak French, etcetera. They were given all the criteria for applying for a work permit. Sorry to say, but it's so easy that it become complicated for employers.

I don't know if you're familiar with LMIA's, but the process is extremely fastidious, protracted and complicated, and ultimately, they can be rejected. Mobilité francophone is a very good effort from the government, and we, at RDÉE Ontario, salute it. It facilitates work permits for francophones, but it's so "easy" for employers that they start nitpicking and say to themselves, "Previously, I had to provide justification, but I no longer have to do so. Why?"

Mr. François Choquette: They're somewhat incredulous.

Mrs. Valérie Sniadoch: That's right.

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

The next two people will be sharing their time.

I'll begin by giving the floor to Robert-Falcon Ouellette, for two minutes. It will then be Mr. Arseneault's turn, for the same amount of time.

[English]

Mr. Robert-Falcon Ouellette (Winnipeg Centre, Lib.): *Kwe kwe.*

Thank you for the chance to hear you speak with such passion for your community. I understand that you're speaking for the needs of your community.

You talked about the linguistic duality of our nation, and I believe also that we need to respect both English and French.

Could you just talk about how your life would be different if you didn't speak French? What would that have changed in your life?

[Translation]

Ms. Annick Schulz: I hope you'll forgive me for answering you in French.

In any event, you've noticed from my accent that I'm from France. There's no sense hiding it. I'm not an immigrant like Valérie Sniadoch, because I'm a former French diplomat who remained in Canada, out of love for the country. In short, my story as an immigrant is a bit different from that of newly arrived people, or traditional immigrants.

French is truly a part of my being. The reason I remained in Canada is that it's possible to speak both French and English. It's worth mentioning that there's some German in my profile too, due to my background in German language studies. I'm trilingual. I think I would really have found something missing if I had arrived in an English-only country. As a diplomat, I've worked in countries where only English was spoken. Being unable to use my mother tongue meant I found something was missing from my everyday life.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Mr. Arseneault, you have two minutes.

[English]

Mr. Robert-Falcon Ouellette: I actually have about 20 seconds. Sorry, Chair, I guess I better use my full time.

[Translation]

The Chair: Since it's the first time, I will allow you to continue, Mr. Ouellette.

[English]

Mr. Robert-Falcon Ouellette: I am just wondering if you believe that indigenous peoples also have the right to speak, live, and work and, as far as possible, to be educated in their languages; and to hear their languages on the Internet, read their languages in the newspapers, see their languages in Parliament, and watch their languages on TV as well.

•(1025)

[Translation]

Ms. Annick Schulz: Yes, totally. First nations are an integral part of Canadian civil society. Therefore, as far as I'm concerned, they have the same rights as the anglophone and francophone population.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Arseneault, you have the floor for two minutes.

Mr. René Arseneault: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I thank Ms. Sniadoch and Schulz as well.

We were talking about retention, and I'd like to spend a bit of time revisiting what my friend Paul Lefebvre was discussing earlier.

We do not live in a republic. When someone from southern, northern or western France finishes secondary school, or its equivalent, he can apply to study at a college or university, and might be accepted. There are no equivalency problems. But this country is vast. It's a federation. There are different levels of government. There's a federal government, and there are provincial governments, and to complicate matters, there are self-governing professional bodies.

Ms. Annick Schulz: Okay.

Mr. René Arseneault: My question will be about those challenges.

Francophones arrive here with their skills, and I think the challenge, as far as their retention is concerned, is to ensure that wherever they may be, the professional bodies talk to each other, and are harmonized.

If I understand correctly, your organization is making efforts in that regard; it's trying to get them to confer and coordinate, and this is the case with lawyers, engineers, physicians and land surveyors, to name a few. Is that right? Are efforts being made so that a francophone immigrant who arrives with a diploma in land surveying can work in Manitoba and meet our friends Mr. Vandal or Mr. Ouellette, or work in Ontario, Acadia or Quebec?

Mrs. Valérie Sniadoch: Yes, that's right. We are fortunate to be able to work closely with IRCC and the Ontario MCI on things like the Express Entry roundtables and the Ontario government expert committee. The question was raised several years ago, and continues to be addressed daily. We have formed a partnership with GEO—that is, Global Experience Ontario. It's a section of the MCI. It provides videos on all the regulated professions. The government is making an effort in this regard, so that people abroad are informed ahead of time that regulated profession *x* requires a certain professional certification path or educational background.

It's important—and I say this in my interventions—that Ontario and the federal government regularly work together on signing agreements with various francophone countries, to ensure that people have a gateway to certain fields of endeavour if they've achieved an equivalent level of studies.

We were talking about retention. Let me use a number at random. We don't want to have 25 physicians arriving, and 20 leaving because they can't practice, have to invest \$10,000 in studies, and have to work at a Starbucks for the coming two years.

Clearly, then, efforts must be made in this regard.

The Chair: Thanks very much, ladies and gentlemen.

We now move on to the second part of the meeting concerning immigration. We have already addressed this question, in part. I'll give you five minutes to round things up on immigration, and will then reduce all the speakers' times to three minutes so we can end at 10:45 a.m. You have five minutes to give your presentation.

Ms. Sniadoch, you have the floor.

Mrs. Valérie Sniadoch: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I've already said a lot, so I will try to address the subject concretely.

Immigration is Ontario's way to renew itself. As I regularly say, we need immigration for economic stability and growth. Based on what I believe are the 2014 numbers from the Conference Board of Canada, we'll be needing 300,000 people over each of the coming years, given the many people who will be retiring. So the need is clearly there. Professionals and businesses also have needs. As I mentioned, there were 2,500 jobs on indeed.ca a half-hour ago.

Ontario has set a 5% target for francophone immigration. At the moment, we're at 2 or 3%. The province has brought together an expert committee, which can make practical recommendations that can be implemented rapidly. These are not long-term recommendations; immigrants are needed quickly.

The RDÉE Ontario employability and immigration team works to make effective connections between candidates and employers on a day-to-day basis, and to ensure that our immigrants are prepared for the realities of Ontario's market. As I mentioned earlier, we have a five-person team: one of us is in Ottawa, another is in Sudbury, and three people, including me, are in Toronto. That is what we do daily. Our members are human resource experts, and others from the private sector.

That was my wish when I became director. My own background is in HR. I have 15 years of experience in the field. Who better than a human resource specialist to talk to a human resource person in the private sector?

It's important to understand their needs in order to train our francophone immigrants as well and as accurately as possible. Based on our performance, our funding from IRCC was increased.

In 2013, when our funding was renewed for three years, we received \$350,000. This amount was increased to \$428,000 in 2015, and \$448,000 in 2016. So our work is making its mark, and IRCC is recognizing our efforts. But there is additional need, because more and more people seek our services.

I will now cite some much more concrete figures. In 2015 and 2016, our four-person team met with 764 people. We gave employability training to 800 people. We met with more than 700 Ontario employers to raise their awareness. We held a virtual job fair in February.

Why a virtual job fair? It's well-known that people love computers. Wherever we go, we have our cellphones within reach. Moreover, a virtual approach reduces costs. Brick-and-mortar job fairs mean expenses for employers, as well as travel, lost productivity, and more. That's why we held the virtual job fair.

It spanned two days—February 24 and February 25, from 9 a.m. to 9 p.m.—because we wanted to reach all of Canada, and extend our reach as far out as Belgium. With the first virtual job fair, we managed to welcome more than 5,000 visitors over the course of the two days. More than 80% of visitors were from outside Canada; 19% were francophones in Canada, whereas 81% were from elsewhere, including France, Tunisia, Mauritius and Martinique, among other places. This shows that people have a real interest in Canada. The evidence is there.

However, there is the Express Entry system. The government is making efforts to speed up the immigration process. And cases are indeed being processed in six months, but it's difficult to get the human capital in an arranged employment context.

We're working closely with embassies in sub-Saharan Africa and North Africa to identify people in the pool who have very high economic potential, but do not have sufficient points to be taken from the pool because they have no Canadian experience.

It's an initiative called *Entrée francophone*, put in place by those embassies. The people in question have granted permission for their file—French and English proficiency, degree equivalency, activity sector—to be disseminated to partners in Canada, so that more people can be matched with employers.

•(1030)

We continue to work with people to ensure they understand the market, to submit their file to employers, and to facilitate francophone immigration. The potential is there.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Ms. Sniadoch.

We will now move on to the comments and questions period.

Ms. Boucher, you have the floor for three minutes.

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Hello, Ms. Sniadoch and Ms. Schulz. Thanks very much for being here. That was very interesting. I have many questions to ask you.

I know the organization you represent is involved in recruiting, welcoming and integrating immigrants. You spoke at particular length about the challenge of retaining immigrants—a challenge chiefly associated with credential recognition. At the federal level, former Minister Kenney acknowledged the importance of credential recognition during his tenure.

Has the province of Ontario implemented a structure for recognizing the credentials of francophone immigrants? What are the problems? When you recruit francophone immigrants abroad, and you hold out the prospect of employment as a physician, a physiotherapist or a surgeon, are they aware, before arriving in Canada, that certain provinces won't recognize their credentials? Do they realize this?

•(1035)

Mrs. Valérie Sniadoch: As I explained earlier, I think that when a person applies to immigrate, they choose the quickest path. They go to the IRCC website, and see what documents they need to fill out. If they're a doctor, and they see a request from the health care sector, they think everything is perfect, and submit their application. They don't necessarily go beyond that. It's fastidious, and there are many documents to fill out. People don't think about credential recognition.

However, as I was saying, IRCC has implemented the *Pré-départ*, or pre-departure, program for francophones, a program we are coordinating Canada-wide. We work with the people abroad, to raise their awareness about the credential recognition issue. We work a lot with engineers, and people in the information technology and health fields. Thanks to this pre-departure program—it takes place before the people leave their countries of origin—we explain all the steps they will need to take. They are generally not aware of this beforehand; we explain the process to them, and give them the information. Then, they begin planning their short-term, medium-term and long-term activities, and start to put money aside for their return to studies. Thanks to this pre-departure program, there is less of a shock when they cross the border.

Many immigrants are not adequately informed before arriving in Canada. The example I know best is my own. When I immigrated, with my degrees in policy and human resources, I didn't know that people need a human resource certification to practice in Ontario. Even I didn't know, and I have a Canadian degree.

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: Thank you very much, Ms. Sniadoch.

Mrs. Valérie Sniadoch: You're welcome.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Mr. Vandal, you have the floor for three minutes.

Mr. Dan Vandal: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Ms. Sniadoch, Ms. Schulz, both your presentations provide a great deal of information. We don't have much time. What percentage of your team works in immigration?

Mrs. Valérie Sniadoch: My entire team of four people plus myself. There are five of us.

Mr. Dan Vandal: What percentage of the RDÉE team does your team represent?

Mrs. Valérie Sniadoch: There are 25 people at RDÉE, so we are one-fifth of that.

Mr. Dan Vandal: Do you travel to the countries selected by Destination Canada as part of your duties?

Mrs. Valérie Sniadoch: Yes. In 2014, we went to the Paris emigration fair. I met 300 people in the course of a recruitment day that ran from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. And Europe is seeing an increasing number of fairs promoting Canada as a destination.

There is a desire to emigrate to Canada. Destination Canada consists of three days in Paris, one day in Brussels, and one day in Tunisia. We don't go to Tunisia, because that day is mainly about technicalities, such as verifying the skills of a heavy truck driver or welder. Destination Canada representatives welcome 900 people per day, and the line for Ontario is very long.

Mr. Dan Vandal: Where do most of the immigrants come from? From France, Belgium or North Africa?

Mrs. Valérie Sniadoch: The percentage of immigrants from Europe is higher. So they come from France, Belgium, Switzerland, and other francophone countries in Europe. As I mentioned, there's a lot of potential in sub-Saharan Africa and North Africa, but most people in that pool do not have the human capital, because they've never visited Canada. Many immigrants from France have already been to Canada, or are there already.

Mr. Dan Vandal: Since we only have three minutes, I need to interrupt you.

Mrs. Valérie Sniadoch: Not a problem.

Mr. Dan Vandal: We have a minute and a half remaining.

What could the government do to better serve you? You have the floor.

Mrs. Valérie Sniadoch: I would agree with my colleague that the first thing would be to increase the budget we're allocated. With Express Entry, an effort has been made with regard to immigration policy. I am part of a roundtable with IRCC to re-adjust the points for francophones, because we want to attract more francophones. It's very important to get some support in that direction.

The submissions are being drafted, but it's important to get an increase.

Mr. Dan Vandal: Thank you.

The Chair: Mr. Choquette now has the floor for three minutes.

Mr. François Choquette: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I will be brief. Ms. Sniadoch, you mentioned the importance of the green economy, green infrastructure, and innovation. When you take part in fairs to recruit candidates, do you promote that? Are you trying to achieve alignment between this sector of great focus for you—innovation, green infrastructure, clean and low-carbon technologies—and the needs of workers who have skills in those areas, so we can improve our knowledge?

It's well-known that the folks in Europe have a lot of skills and are very advanced in this field. Here in Canada, we're taking our first baby steps. Would it be advantageous to align the economy and francophone immigration needs?

• (1040)

Mrs. Valérie Sniadoch: It's important to note that, in the case of Destination Canada, we are mandated by employers. So we start from job descriptions and offers from the various employers.

We were able to act on mandates in the audiovisual field, but this year, we're exploring the prospect of eco-tourism and green economy mandates, because we know there's potential, and we know there are people in Europe in those fields who don't have a job. So we start with a specific mandate. When we're at the fair, we promote those activities as well.

Mr. François Choquette: I'm not sure there was much talk about indexation before the roadmap, but there was the issue of unspent amounts from the roadmap. Did you receive all the amounts contemplated by the roadmap?

Ms. Annick Schulz: Yes, we received them.

As for the economic sector, we have received our funds in the manner—

Mr. François Choquette: So the need is for indexation as soon as possible. If I understand correctly, it would be good to have it next year, if possible.

Ms. Annick Schulz: Exactly. Our agreements with ESDC end in March 2017.

Mrs. Valérie Sniadoch: As for my organization, the three-year agreement ended in 2016, but, following the arrival of Syrian refugees, it was extended by a year, and we've received promising input about our 2017-2020 agreement. We're awaiting negotiations with IRCC.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Mr. Lightbound will have the last word.

Mr. Joël Lightbound (Louis-Hébert, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Ms. Sniadoch and Ms. Schulz, thank you for being here.

You spoke about LMIA's earlier. In the Quebec City area, where I come from, there is full employment. Bakeries teeter on the edge of bankruptcy because they can't recruit bakers, whereas, in France, there are people who would be glad to come help. Unfortunately, the process for creating an LMIA for each job is really quite onerous, even though there could be one for an employment category.

I'd like to hear your thoughts about LMIA's. How could we improve them?

And more specifically, how could they be put to good use for francophone communities outside Quebec?

Mrs. Valérie Sniadoch: It's true that Mobilité francophone does not apply to you, because it's for francophones outside Quebec. I can say, from experience, that I have worked on labour market opinions, or LMOs, which preceded labour market impact assessments, but were easier. The fee for the employer was \$250, as opposed to \$1,000. The posting period on job banks would be two weeks, compared to four at present.

The government's efforts on these LMIA's have not produced the anticipated results. Employers are reticent. It's very difficult. When someone makes an LMIA application, they contact ESDC, which responds that this aspect is handled by IRCC. When they contact IRCC, the response is that the ESDC is the responsible for it. So there's a lack of coordination, discussion and communication between these government bodies on the subject of LMIA's. It's very difficult to get answers, and it's very difficult for an employer to get support for the process.

If efforts were made to provide support for the process, and provide help for preparing LMIA applications, more employers would be inclined to submit such applications.

It's certainly possible to reduce the posting time for positions in short supply, such as bakers. In Ontario, there's a shortage of heavy truck drivers. In my opinion, LMIA's should be simplified for fields where there's a shortage of workers.

Mr. Joël Lightbound: Perfect. That answers my question.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Lightbound.

Ms. Sniadoch, Ms. Schulz, on behalf of our committee's members, thank you very much for your presentations and testimony. It was very interesting.

Ms. Annick Schulz: For information purposes, we will be pleased to send you the brief that will be submitted to the Department of

Canadian Heritage, along with the answers we've provided you today.

The Chair: We would ask that you submit everything to the clerk of the committee.

Very good. Thank you, ladies.

Ms. Annick Schulz: Thank you as well.

The Chair: Ms. Boucher, you have the floor.

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: I have a proposal.

I would like the Standing Committee on Official Languages to hold an after-work reception, like francophone Conservatives. Once a month, we invite our anglophone friends to spend an evening with us in French only, and to exchange ideas with us, in French. I'd like our committee to do the same thing in November, so we can show our anglophone colleagues that we're not dangerous. It can be enriching to open up to the world.

• (1045)

The Chair: Well, gentlemen?

Mr. Choquette, you have the floor.

Mr. François Choquette: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Last session, there was a request—it's certainly been a while, but perhaps it was forgotten—that, at the beginning of each session, an email be sent to all staffers on the Hill, to remind them to ensure their mass emailings are sent out in both official languages. It might be a good idea to reiterate that request. I asked that the Committee be permitted to do this. It might be worthwhile.

Randy Boissonault could also look after it. That way, we would ensure that we're sending a clear message that when we prepare communications, we must do so in both official languages. Sometimes people simply forget.

The Chair: Firstly, I will ask the clerk to prepare wording I can sent to all staffers.

Secondly, further to Ms. Boucher's recommendation, I will ask the clerk to organize an evening reception from 5 p.m. to 7 p.m., somewhere in Parliament, to which we can invite our anglophone colleagues.

Does that work?

Thank you.

The meeting is adjourned.

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