



HOUSE OF COMMONS
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES
CANADA

Standing Committee on Official Languages

LANG • NUMBER 030 • 1st SESSION • 42nd PARLIAMENT

EVIDENCE

Thursday, October 27, 2016

—
Chair

The Honourable Denis Paradis

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• (0850)

[Translation]

The Chair (Hon. Denis Paradis (Brome—Missisquoi, Lib.)): Welcome to this meeting, Minister and colleagues.

We are continuing our study.

This morning, we have the pleasure of welcoming the Minister of Canadian Heritage and Minister Responsible for Official Languages. She will speak to us for a few minutes about her vision of official languages and the two subjects we are studying at present: the roadmap and immigration.

Official languages are a subject about which the Minister is passionate.

We are listening, Minister. You have 10 to 12 minutes.

Hon. Mélanie Joly (Minister of Canadian Heritage): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Good morning, everyone. I hope you are all well; I am, myself. I will be pleased to answer all your questions.

First, before beginning my speech, I would like to introduce the two officials who are with me and who work with me. They are experts in the field. They will also be able to answer your questions afterward. They are Hubert Lussier, Assistant Deputy Minister for Citizenship, Heritage and Regions, and Jean-Pierre Gauthier, Director General of Official Languages.

I am going to start my testimony by reiterating my deep and sincere appreciation for the work this committee has done, and your continued proven commitment to strengthening and defending Canada's official languages.

I follow with great interest your conversations and discussions, generally speaking, about the famous roadmap and immigration in francophone minority communities. I am proud to be able to work closely with colleagues who share the same passion for Canada's official languages. I look forward to our ongoing conversation on these and other important issues.

English and French are at the heart of what we are and who we are. I am a proud Canadian, a proud Montrealer, and a proud francophone who grew up with both official languages. They are a part of my everyday life.

I am a champion for official languages in Canadian society. You can count on me to support the vitality of official language minority communities, because our official languages are a strength and an asset for our future, and have played a central role in our history.

Our country's foundations were built on English and French.

It is in these languages that we have welcomed people from all backgrounds.

Today, as Canadians, we participate in the political, democratic and social life of our nation in English and French. We are engaged internationally in those two languages, in the context of culture and business.

For all these reasons, I am proud to promote our two official languages, with the support of my parliamentary secretary, Randy Boissonnault.

I would like to talk to you about our official languages consultations, which will form the basis of the 2018-2023 Action Plan on Official Languages. First, however, I would like to take a few minutes to talk about the Annual Report on Official Languages 2014-15, which was tabled in July.

The report gives an overview of what my department, but also other federal institutions, is doing to promote official languages and the development of minority English- and French-speaking communities.

It provides information on subjects such as the support of francophone immigration in places where francophones are the minority, and support for artists in minority situations.

As the report shows, some work has been done, but more work remains.

I am proud to be a part of a government whose members, from coast to coast to coast, value our official languages. I have been working closely with my cabinet colleagues on a variety of issues, as we work towards strengthening our official languages.

[English]

For example, we know that immigration to minority language areas is critical to the future of these communities.

This is why I'm proud to work with my colleague, Minister McCallum, to launch

[Translation]

the Mobilité francophone program.

[English]

I look forward to seeing your committee's report on immigration and to working with you on this important issue.

I was also pleased to work with my colleague, the Minister of National Defence, Minister Sajjan, to reinstate training in French at the Royal Military College at Saint-Jean-sur-Richelieu, near Montreal.

Most recently, our government honoured our commitment to appointing bilingual judges to the Supreme Court by nominating Justice Malcolm Rowe of Newfoundland and Labrador. It should be a great source of pride for us all to have heard Minister Wilson-Raybould and former prime minister Kim Campbell discuss the increasing interest being shown in the legal community to learn both official languages and the high level of official language competency shown by many Supreme Court applicants.

Under our leadership, we have ensured that the importance of Canada's official languages is placed at the heart of our most important institutions, and we are very proud of it.

This is a prime example of both the vision and action for official languages demonstrated by our government. I will continue to play an important leadership role alongside my colleagues.

[*Translation*]

We know there are still a number of challenges; for example, in the areas of community infrastructure, early childhood education and postsecondary training.

This brings me to the Cross-Canada Official Languages Consultations 2016. They generated a lot of interest and I am very happy about that. We received 5,000 responses online. By the time the consultations are over, we will have met with almost 350 people in 22 Canadian cities in the most open and transparent roundtable discussions ever.

Why do I stress the fact that our consultations have been so open and so transparent? You know that under the Official Languages Act, we are required to hold public consultations. However, in this case, we decided not to hold them by invitation only, and also to invite journalists and people from the general public, and to conduct a number of consultations online. That is what makes them so open and transparent.

To date, 21 of the 22 cities on our agenda have been visited. Several consultations have been broadcast on the Internet. Interested journalists attended the discussions and I am very satisfied that there has been good media coverage in several regions of Canada.

We are also going to have three meetings here in the greater national capital region, with various national representative organizations.

We wanted to have an open, frank and useful discussion, and that is what we did.

• (0855)

[*English*]

I personally led six round tables from coast to coast to coast, including one in St. John's, Newfoundland and Labrador, while I was there for the Conférence ministérielle sur la francophonie canadienne, as well as others in Victoria, B.C., and Iqaluit, Nunavut. My parliamentary secretary Randy Boissonnault and I were proud to be

joined by various cabinet colleagues across the country, including ministers Bibeau, Goodale, Brison, Chagger, Hehr, and LeBlanc.

The participants identified important matters of interest, such as the vitality of official languages communities, increasing the rates of bilingualism among Canadians of all ages, and bringing anglophones and francophones close together. Let me quote some participants.

The director of the Quebec Anglophone Heritage Network told us, "The language of Canada is French; the language of Canada is English. Both of them. And I like to think that I can go to Vancouver and meet Francophones there that I can speak French with, and vice versa, across Canada, and speak English here."

[*Translation*]

The Co-Chair of Dialogue New Brunswick said:

We forget we have many things in common. We share a history. We have accomplished things together. How can we get to know each other in such a way that we are not afraid, so that we are able to converse and discuss...?

The questions generated a lot of exchange of ideas, and the input that will guide us in developing the action plan for official languages was very useful.

As you know, the current roadmap will end on March 31, 2018. Our action plan will be in effect the following day. The support of minority communities and our two official languages will continue to guide our actions, in keeping with our values.

Our official languages are a strength, and I hope that all Canadians, whether they are francophones in Quebec or Anglophones elsewhere in Canada, whether they are Acadians, Fransaskois, Metis or people from other linguistic groups, will take an interest in our official languages. Together, I would like us to encourage all Canadians to become agents of change, citizens engaged in our great social contract, at the heart of which the two official languages are reflected.

I want to continue to work with you, the committee, and all our government's partners to promote English and French across Canada.

Thank you. I am prepared to answer all your questions.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Minister.

Without further delay, since we have only one hour together, we are going to move on immediately to the first round for comments and questions from members of the committee.

We will start with Mrs. Boucher.

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher (Beauport—Côte-de-Beaupré—Île d'Orléans—Charlevoix, CPC): Good morning, Minister. Good morning, Mr. Lussier and Mr. Gauthier. I am very happy to have this time with you.

I was the parliamentary secretary for official languages from 2006 to 2007, in a previous government, when Ms. Verner was the minister. I am pleased to see that it is a woman defending official languages again today.

Hon. Mélanie Joly: Thank you.

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: I think it is very appropriate to say it. We are starting from behind and we still have a lot of work to do. Our committee is working very well and I am very pleased with it.

Minister, I am going to get to the crux of the matter. At several meetings, many francophone organizations, particularly in the field of immigration, have told us that they have had money taken away from them and given to anglophone organizations that are handing the work of integrating francophone immigrants. I was somewhat surprised to see that this money was being taken away from francophone organizations and given to anglophone organizations, when francophone organizations in minority communities were already working very hard to integrate our immigrants.

Can you assure us, Minister, that this will not continue to happen? We are not trying to find out, here, what side of the House started taking the money away, but in any event, nothing, or very little, was said about it at the time. This may have been because we were admitting fewer immigrants. Given the large numbers of immigrants, can we get assurances that our francophone organizations will not be penalized, please?

● (0900)

Hon. Mélanie Joly: Thank you, Mrs. Boucher. I very much appreciate that.

That is a very good question. This is a subject that I know is extremely important to ensure the vitality and survival of our minority language communities.

I am having ongoing discussions about this with the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, John McCallum. I wanted to make sure that we made some breakthroughs in that regard. Mr. McCallum and I were involved in the operation to bring 25,000 Syrian refugees to Canada in two months. We received a number of applications from organizations to have some of those refugees integrated in the minority language. That is why, with my colleague, I announced the resumption of the Francophone Significant Benefit program, which made it possible to integrate our various immigrants in French outside Quebec in a much more consistent way.

In the context of developing the Action Plan for Official Languages, obviously we want to address the question of immigration.

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: I simply want assurance that francophone organizations will no longer be penalized. For one or two months, we have been hearing about money being taken away from organizations that were already helping francophone immigrants and given to anglophone organizations. I simply want assurance that our francophone organizations in minority communities will no longer be penalized in favour of anglophone organizations.

Hon. Mélanie Joly: Thank you, Mrs. Boucher.

I am going to finish my answer, which actually had two parts. First, there is the restoration of the Francophone Significant Benefit program. Second, there is the fact that we have to work with the provinces. Unfortunately, we sometimes see that these decisions are actually made at the provincial level.

That being said, there have still been breakthroughs on this issue. At our Ministerial Conference on the Canadian Francophonie in St. John's, I had an opportunity to talk about the immigration issue.

In addition, my New Brunswick counterpart, Francine Landry, raised this question at the conference on immigration in Winnipeg a few weeks ago. We want to make sure that we work with the provinces. We want the money intended for integration in French to be actually spent by the provinces.

Of course, I want to work with Mr. McCallum to achieve the 4.4% francophone immigration target, which has not been achieved for years. That objective has been defined repeatedly, but, unfortunately, it has never been achieved, given past under-investment. At a time when we are developing new immigration thresholds, we want to be sure we reach 4.4% francophone immigration.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We will now move on to Paul Lefebvre.

Mr. Paul Lefebvre (Sudbury, Lib.): Good morning. Many thanks for being here. This is your second meeting with the committee. It is always an honour to have you here.

I also want to thank you for holding all these consultations during the year. I was very gratified to have you come to my riding, with the parliamentary secretary and Mr. Lussier, to discuss the issues facing minority communities and the vitality of those communities. This is an important issue for Canada and it is important to me as well.

In the numerous meetings you have had, what have you heard about the issues facing our minority communities and the vitality of those communities? How can the action plan you foresee support our francophone communities and ensure their survival?

● (0905)

Hon. Mélanie Joly: Thank you, Mr. Lefebvre. That is a very good question.

First, I have informed my team that I was going to make sure the next action plan would include two major focuses.

The first focus will be to support the vitality of the linguistic communities. I am going to make sure that we build on a holistic approach, rather than the silo approach that was taken in the last roadmap.

The second focus will be bilingualism among the public. I do not see this as the two language groups being in competition. Both of them will contribute to maintaining healthy social cohesion in Canada, between the majority group and the minority group. They are also going to help to reaffirm the social contract I referred to in my presentation. At the very foundation of our country there is a social contract that includes our two official languages, the pluralism of our society and reconciliation with the aboriginal peoples.

Those are the two broad focuses that I want to make sure are addressed in developing the new action plan. Hubert Lussier and Jean-Pierre Gauthier are working on this.

During the public consultations, we heard four major themes.

First, there is immigration. Mrs. Boucher referred to this. It is a very important subject, because, ultimately, it is associated with the survival of our communities. I want to work with the provinces on this issue, to make sure that the federal leadership is transposed to the provincial level.

Another theme that came up often during the consultations is the need to have more funding for community and school infrastructure. I mentioned a little earlier that I had done several public consultations on official languages in several cities in Canada, but I have also gone to Saint Boniface, Halifax, and Whitehorse, where I took part in round tables with local people. I had an opportunity to see the infrastructure in question and I am aware that investments are needed.

The third theme relates to the media. The issue is how we can make sure that information generated within the communities is transmitted and contributes to the vitality of the community. This is an important question, particularly in the digital era. It should be noted that the other component of my ministerial responsibilities relates to culture and the media. The subject of media for minority language communities is therefore an important one.

The fourth and last theme is education, from early childhood to the postsecondary level.

Those are essentially the four broad themes that were raised in the consultations.

Mr. Paul Lefebvre: You visited us in Sudbury during the summer. What observations have you made across the country concerning community infrastructure, more specifically in franco-phone minority communities?

I believe there was a lot of investment in the 1960s and 1970s. Today, a lot of that infrastructure is in need of support.

What was your reaction when people asked you for answers about this?

Hon. Mélanie Joly: I went to St. John's, Newfoundland and Labrador, where the francophone centre is the heart of the community. People come together there and work on projects. There is an abundance of ideas. Of course, the infrastructure in several places is in need of updating. The linguistic communities are interested in us being able to observe the changes in their vitality.

For example, I went to Iqaluit, in Nunavut, where there is a fine francophone community. The same is true in Whitehorse, in Yukon, where there are expansion projects for adding spaces for children and for various members of the community. That is also the way to ensure that children are comfortable and happy throughout their school careers, in community and school facilities that are of equal quality to the majority's facilities. That is fundamental.

It is also interesting to observe the first generation of Canadians born after the Official Languages Act, who have grown up under the influence of the public policies developed under that act. At present, those people are having children of their own, and their children are being integrated into the community. So we are seeing that the impact of the decisions we made as politicians is positive. However, we have to ensure that this leadership and these investments continue, and, to do that, infrastructure is a fundamental issue.

• (0910)

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Mr. Choquette, you have the floor.

Mr. François Choquette (Drummond, NDP): Thank you for being here today, Minister.

I would also like to thank Mr. Gauthier and Mr. Lussier for being here as well. We will be speaking shortly.

I have three or four questions. I need very short answers, because time is limited.

Ms. Joly, do you support the principle of “by and for francophones” in official language minority communities? I am asking for a yes or no answer to the question.

Hon. Mélanie Joly: I think it is important to work with the various organizations and support their development. It is also fundamental to work with the provinces.

Mr. François Choquette: A minute of my time is already over, unfortunately.

Do you support the idea of “by and for francophones”?

Hon. Mélanie Joly: Mr. Choquette, the questions you are asking involve complex issues, and, as Minister, I think it is my responsibility to present all the aspects of a complex question.

Mr. François Choquette: That is fine. We will move on to the second question.

You know we have had some problems with the RCMP recently and a report has been submitted on that subject. I have asked questions about it in the House of Commons. One of the recommendations in the report was to establish an oversight mechanism, by August 31, 2016, that could confirm that bilingual service is available at all times on Parliament Hill.

Can you get hold of the description of that oversight mechanism and provide it to the Committee, please? I have looked for it, but I have never found it.

Hon. Mélanie Joly: I have had an opportunity to speak to my colleague the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Ralph Goodale, concerning the RCMP. We operate horizontally when it comes to official languages, and we are very happy. We see that we have made progress on various issues.

On the question of official languages, I am very pleased with your leadership in that regard, Mr. Choquette, and I would remind you that leadership must be constantly reasserted, and that we can always do better. I am constantly frustrated and angry when I see that federal institutions, or various groups under federal jurisdiction, are not complying with the Official Languages Act. I am pleased to hear your questions, because they enable me to follow up on this issue.

Mr. François Choquette: Thank you, Ms. Joly.

If you find the description of the oversight mechanism, please forward it to the committee.

My third question relates to the Translation Bureau. You have probably read the very fine unanimous report written by the committee. The titles of some news reports give us an idea: “Translation Bureau: government's response termed disappointing” and “Translation Bureau: changes called for are rejected.”

Minister, I know that this subject is the responsibility of Ms. Foote and not yourself. We have not been able to meet with Ms. Foote, unfortunately. We have introduced a motion for that purpose.

In the meantime, can you tell us what recommendations you consider to be very important in that report?

Hon. Mélanie Joly: I am proud of Canada's expertise in translation. I am particularly proud of the fact that the federal government demonstrated leadership by creating the Translation Bureau.

I would note that Ms. Foote is responsible for the Translation Bureau. I also want to make sure that we preserve that expertise, in French, English, and the various aboriginal languages. We will be developing a policy on aboriginal languages. We must therefore make sure that we strengthen the Translation Bureau.

I also understand that the Translation Bureau responds to 80% of translation requests. We must therefore be sure that we have excellent interpreters who will be able to have a good career within the Translation Bureau. I have already said this to Ms. Foote and she completely agrees with me. We want to strengthen the Translation Bureau.

In addition, we want to be able to expand the range of services offered by the Translation Bureau. We know that various technological solutions are available and we want to be sure the Translation Bureau is able to use those various technological services to expand the type of services it offers.

● (0915)

Mr. François Choquette: I have barely one minute left, Minister.

Everything relating to the Translation Bureau is extremely important to the committee. That is a unanimous report and we worked very hard on it. As you know, Mauril Bélanger and I brought that issue forward. I had worked on it for several months before going ahead. I hope you will speak again with Ms. Foote and tell her that perhaps her response needs to be revised. We—and I am not talking about myself, I am talking about the entire committee—will be very happy to meet with her so we can develop a better response regarding the Translation Bureau.

On the question of the justice...

Hon. Mélanie Joly: To conclude on that subject, I would add that Ms. Foote is a very competent minister who cares deeply about official languages. Rest assured that the subject of the Translation Bureau is one of her priorities.

Mr. François Choquette: I have 30 seconds left, Minister.

Have you started to work on the report of the Commissioner of Official Languages about superior court judges? In your last visit, you had said you were very interested. Have you started to respond to the recommendations?

Hon. Mélanie Joly: Not only have I worked on these questions, but I have also decided to make it a priority at the next meeting of all the ministers of the Canadian Francophonie. We have decided to address the issue of access to justice. That is a subject I will discuss with my counterparts at the summit next year.

In the meantime, we have requested an inventory of all judges who are in fact bilingual, in all our superior courts.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We will move on to Ms. Lapointe.

Ms. Linda Lapointe (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, Lib.): Good morning, and welcome. We are very happy to have you here this morning.

In my riding, Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, there are anglophone minority language communities and they are very engaged. What is the situation as regards the needs of anglophones in minority communities, in the next roadmap?

In addition, in your consultations, did you consult anglophones in Quebec, when you travelled across Canada?

Hon. Mélanie Joly: Yes, I have had the chance to do that. I will answer that question in English.

[*English*]

Ms. Linda Lapointe: That's okay with me.

Hon. Mélanie Joly: I think it's worth it.

I had the chance to have one round table myself in Montreal with the various representatives of the anglophone community. Minister Bibeau was with our parliamentary secretary, Randy Boissonnault, on an official languages public consultation in Sherbrooke. We had one also in Quebec City. We had three of them in Quebec.

Of course we understand that the needs vary, depending on the region, depending on the different groups who are at the table, but for us it's extremely important to bear in mind that when it comes to official languages, it's about French and English—and English in Quebec, of course, in particular.

We also decided to invest money. We gave money to Bishop's University to renovate and improve their library. This is an important investment in the community in the Eastern Townships.

Also, it's important to know that we are in discussions with different groups, including QCGN, and we want to make sure that we can cater to all the needs they have.

● (0920)

Ms. Linda Lapointe: Thank you very much. I appreciate it for all the anglophones in my riding. Thank you.

[*Translation*]

You may know that Deux-Montagnes is the only place in the Laurentians where Canada Day is celebrated, on July 1.

On December 31, we will be kicking off the celebrations of Canada's 150th anniversary. How are you going to make sure that linguistic duality is reflected in those celebrations? Could you give us a few examples of projects that will reflect our linguistic heritage,

[*English*]

French and English?

[*Translation*]

Hon. Mélanie Joly: Thank you.

The 150th anniversary is going to be celebrated in various ways. There will be 41 Canada-wide projects, the Signature projects, that will travel from one end of the country to the other. *La grande traversée*, which Les Productions Rivard and others have worked on, will describe French colonization. Travelling Through History, a project that the Paul Gérin-Lajoie Foundation, the Ligue nationale d'improvisation and others have worked on, will travel throughout Canada.

In addition, there are community projects that involve only one province. We have already made a few announcements, including one about the Cercle des Canadiens français de Prince George. The Centre communautaire d'Edmonton will be putting on races in a project entitled Flying Canoë Volant. Those are just a few examples.

Yesterday, when I was with the premier of New Brunswick, I pointed out that there would be some very fine celebrations around August 15, National Acadian Day. An Acadian project for Prince Edward Island, New Brunswick and Nova Scotia is being developed.

Of course, we have made sure that all of the Signature projects will be monitored, to ensure that services are offered in French and English. A good practices guide has been prepared by our team. We want it to be possible to celebrate Canada's linguistic duality and also be in compliance with the Official Languages Act.

Ms. Linda Lapointe: It will be interesting to see these celebrations. I hope that we will be able to celebrate our two official languages in Deux-Montagnes in high spirits. You are invited to join us.

Hon. Mélanie Joly: Thank you.

Ms. Linda Lapointe: My constituents would certainly be very happy to meet you. That would also be the case in Saint-Eustache.

Hon. Mélanie Joly: Yes.

Ms. Linda Lapointe: Their celebrations are different, but they are still very worth seeing.

Hon. Mélanie Joly: Yes, absolutely.

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: You could come to Charlevoix.

Hon. Mélanie Joly: It would be a pleasure to visit your ridings, particularly since I am very fond of Charlevoix. Also, my grandmother lives in Saint-Eustache. You know her well, Ms. Lapointe.

That being said, I spoke to you earlier about our famous social contract. I want to make sure that when it comes to the 150th anniversary, people understand that our two official languages are a legacy, that they are part of what Canada is. That is central to the values that unite us as Canadians. That is why we are offering significant funding for the projects. I hope that you will all be ambassadors, during these celebrations, for the 150th anniversary of linguistic duality.

[English]

Ms. Linda Lapointe: You can count on me.

[Translation]

The Chair: Mr. Arseneault and Mr. Vandal, you will be splitting the next block of time.

Mr. Arseneault, you have the floor first.

Mr. René Arseneault (Madawaska—Restigouche, Lib.): So I have only three minutes.

If you are coming to visit our regions, I would say that it is beautiful everywhere, but the beautiful Ristigouche River, that joins up with the Baie des Chaleurs, is hard to beat.

Ms. Linda Lapointe: Rivière-des-Mille-Îles is also a lovely spot.

Mr. René Arseneault: That being said, my comments may be a little scattered.

I would first like to come back to what Mrs. Boucher said about the money that does not seem to be going to the place where it really counts, to encourage immigration. I recognize that you are not the Minister of Immigration, but some witnesses have told us that the majority community was better organized for responding to invitations to bid for providing services. Organizations that represent the majority, in terms of community organizations, say they are bilingual and able to offer services in both languages. They say they are capable of offering services to minorities because they can provide these bilingual services.

Witnesses have told us that this does not work, because those organizations are not on the same wavelength as the minority community. They seemed to be saying—at least, that is what I understood—that the services should be provided by and for the minority community. In the case of a francophone minority community living in an anglophone majority environment, the service should therefore be offered by and for that community. From what I have understood, what often happens with tenders is that the highest bidders who are the best organized win the prize.

How can we make sure that this money is directed to the organizations that genuinely respond to the community and are on the same page as it?

• (0925)

Hon. Mélanie Joly: That is a very good question.

I am eager to read your report on immigration, which we will study, of course.

This is what we want to do, to implement the action plan.

I talked to you about the vitality of the linguistic communities. When it comes to the vitality of minority language communities, there must necessarily be services in people's mother tongue in all areas, be it health, education, early childhood, immigration or economic development. We also have to offer the jobs for the minority group in their mother tongue. That is a form of economic development, but also support for employment.

I am eager to hear about integrating immigrants. That is a lot of what you are talking to me about. The federal government has introduced the Francophone Significant Benefit program, which promotes francophone immigration. I am very interested in studying your recommendations about integration and the types of services that will be offered, and to discuss this with my colleague Mr. McCallum, the Minister.

We have established new thresholds for francophone immigration. We want to achieve the target of 4.4% of immigrants being francophones and ensure that they are able to integrate in their mother tongue, in linguistic minority communities. That is very important.

The Chair: Mr. Vandal, you have the floor.

Mr. Dan Vandal (Saint Boniface—Saint Vital, Lib.): Thank you for being with us, Minister.

I represent Saint Boniface–Saint Vital, which is in a francophone area in a minority environment. I agree with you about the importance of francophone immigration. In Manitoba, we are more effective at welcoming and integrating immigrants than at recruiting.

I absolutely agree that if we are to achieve the 4.4% target, the province certainly has to do its bit, but so does the community. In Manitoba, community groups simply do not have access to funds for recruiting francophone immigrants.

Do you anticipate providing additional support to community groups, not only in Manitoba, but throughout Canada, to help them recruit francophone immigrants?

Hon. Mélanie Joly: The Francophone Significant Benefit program was relaunched in June, and that is exactly its objective. The return of this program was lauded by a number of people in the community.

We also want to put the French language skills of the people we admit to work, in order to achieve the objective of 4.4% francophone immigration. I am working very hard on this with the Minister, Mr. McCallum I would like to say that Mr. McCallum is doing an extraordinary job and he is a real ally when it comes to official languages and promoting the francophone minority community. This is a discussion I also have to have with the government of Manitoba and that my colleague at Immigration has to have with his counterparts.

That is why I think our approach to official languages is so important. We have to have allies in all areas and in all departments, and all ministers have to have responsibility for official languages.

As I said earlier, my team and I will be very interested in reading your report, as will Mr. McCallum and his team.

• (0930)

The Chair: Thank you.

Bernard Généreux, you have the floor.

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

Thank you for being here this morning, Minister.

There seems to be a popularity contest. In my case, my entire riding is pretty.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Bernard Généreux: Enough joking; I will get on with my question.

Minister, we had a prime minister who was in power for nine years and made a point of starting all his speeches in French, both in

Canada and abroad. As a champion of official languages, should you not be asking your Prime Minister to do the same thing?

Hon. Mélanie Joly: Yes.

In fact, our Prime Minister is a champion of official languages. This was demonstrated when it came to appointing judges to the Supreme Court. We want to make sure that we have bilingual judges. It has also been demonstrated in the area of immigration, as I said just now, as well as in respect of defence.

Mr. Bernard Généreux: I am talking about him, personally.

Hon. Mélanie Joly: Our Prime Minister is a...

Mr. Bernard Généreux: He is a strong advocate; that is fine. I do not want to dwell on that point.

Hon. Mélanie Joly: He is a strong advocate and I am very proud of his leadership in that regard.

Mr. Bernard Généreux: Minister, in the Annual Report on Official Languages 2014-15, we see that from 2003 to 2014, there was an increase of nearly 40% in the number of enrolments in second language immersion programs everywhere in Canada, in spite of the budget constraints imposed by the Conservative government in order to rebalance the budget. We might call that an excellent result. So we are talking about more than 400,000 students across Canada.

My question is this. Can we conclude that with the money you are reinvesting in Canada's francophone community, or that you are considering reinvesting, we will be able to exceed that number of enrolments and have brand new schools everywhere in Canada?

Hon. Mélanie Joly: The federal government respects the provinces' jurisdictions. You are well aware that the federal government is not responsible for education or for investment in school infrastructure. Our responsibility is to support certain projects. Sometimes that is the case for a school where community infrastructure is found. We can invest in early childhood or postsecondary education, for example.

Mr. Bernard Généreux: In other words, in the action plan you currently have, in terms of both infrastructure and languages, there is, to all appearances, a glaring need for community and early childhood infrastructure. We have observed that from the beginning of our study. In minority communities, we often see projects that bring these elements together in one building.

Are you able to guarantee that money will be promised to minority regions for new infrastructure? Can you give figures for that money now?

Hon. Mélanie Joly: Some funds have already been distributed, by year, for community infrastructure. However, I would like us to be able to add to the envelope.

My own view is that it goes without saying that whenever a family is unable to send their child to a school to become bilingual, that is certainly not an affirmation of the social contract that unites us.

That is why I have to make sure that the provinces exercise significant leadership when it comes to official languages. However, the level of leadership varies from one province to another. My role is therefore to make sure that it is a priority.

That being said...

Mr. Bernard Généreux: You are right, Minister. Excuse me for interrupting.

Accountability also varies from one province to another. Communities have told us that funds were distributed in the provinces, but they never saw any of the money.

The question of accountability is extremely important. It is all well and good to send money to the provinces and the communities, but there has to be accountability. Even the organizations tell us that they would like to be more accountable and to have access to more funding, if they can meet the program criteria. They say that, in some cases, they are unable to prove that they meet the program criteria because the accountability process is too vague.

● (0935)

Hon. Mélanie Joly: I would like to finish explaining my idea before you interrupt me.

In both Alberta and Ontario, or in New Brunswick, there is a new type of leadership when it comes to official languages. In some places in Canada, there has even been a reduction in language-related tension, particularly in Manitoba. In that province, they have just enacted the first law that recognizes the language rights of the francophone minority.

This means that, on the one hand, leadership may sometimes vary from province to province, and on the other hand, there really have been breakthroughs and we are looking at excellent social cohesion.

That being said, when it comes to accountability, which is the subject of your second question, I have heard this sort of thing a lot from school boards on the question of the transparency of the federal-provincial agreements. Certainly this is a question we are prepared to study, to make sure the money is well invested. That being said, to the extent that I manage to have good provincial allies, this issue will probably become less important.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Mr. Samson, you have the floor.

Mr. Darrell Samson (Sackville—Preston—Chezzetcook, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Good morning, Minister. I would also like to welcome the two officials from Canadian Heritage, whom I have known for a long time. It is always a pleasure to see you again.

That makes me think somewhat of the message I delivered last week in Yellowknife, which was that we had to move from actor to decision-maker. That is somewhat what I am feeling today.

Minister, I would like to go back to a few points you mentioned a little earlier, on which you can perhaps add some information.

You said that Yukon and Yellowknife were looking for funding to expand their schools, because of the increase in the number of students. In fact, our government has just offered a new allowance to help young families, which should contribute to increasing the number of students in these schools everywhere in Canada.

I had the chance to visit the school in Yellowknife. From what I understood, construction costs are much higher in the North, and the

amounts normally given to fund infrastructure in those communities are not sufficient. The situation should be reviewed or, at least, another strategy should be found for that region.

Do you have any comments on that subject?

Hon. Mélanie Joly: That is the reality for all infrastructure in the North. It is part of our approach for infrastructure projects in Iqaluit, Yellowknife and Whitehorse.

I am familiar with the projects in those three capital cities. The teams on the ground are familiar with the situation. They also know that, going beyond words, what is most important is to have a project. I have clearly asked my teams and the people I have met in those cities to propose something to us, instead of simply talking about it. That is how we can make sure investments are made.

Mr. Darrell Samson: It needs to get going fairly quickly, because I know those people are waiting for funds to do the work. The government of Yukon would like to start the project, but your team needs to respond quickly to its request.

Hon. Mélanie Joly: We are working very hard on that.

Mr. Darrell Samson: On the question of francophone immigration, you have a target of 4.4%. No other member of the committee will be happier than me when that target is reached. However, we have to make sure that francophone immigrants settle all over Canada, in rural areas, and not just in big cities.

There is also the question of childcare, which is probably the most important subject. I know you have done good work on that question. That being said, I would like to hear your views on the fact that a child who goes to an English childcare centre is probably going to attend English school later. So they really have to start their career in French as early as possible.

I know you are having discussions about this with the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Mr. Duclos, and with the Minister of Infrastructure and Communities, Mr. Sohi. In fact, infrastructure could come under other departments, and that would mean that the envelope for the funding would go much further. We should seize this opportunity. So every time an investment is made in infrastructure, you could take advantage of it to address the question of minority community infrastructure.

Can you give us more details on this subject?

● (0940)

Hon. Mélanie Joly: In the first Dion plan for supporting the vitality of language communities, early childhood was an important issue. It is in the roadmap, as well.

More recently, Mr. Duclos has made some funds available that had not been allocated for social development. That has been welcomed by various organizations.

I would urge you to talk to Mr. Duclos about the importance of investing in early childhood education, from the official languages perspective, particularly in the context of investment in our major social infrastructure project. These are discussions that I have had with Mr. Duclos, but I urge you to do so as well, as official languages allies. I am sure that he will demonstrate leadership on this question.

Mr. Darrell Samson: I have two more questions to ask you.

I am concerned about the 5% francophone immigration target in the communities. We have already dealt with this. It worries me. In my view, it is extremely important to quickly discuss Bill S-209, which has been introduced by Senator Maria Chaput, to show that we are expanding our services.

Hon. Mélanie Joly: I have addressed this question with Mr. Scott Brison and we have met with Senator Chaput. I appeared before the Standing Senate Committee on Official Languages earlier this week. I was asked a lot of questions about the Senate bill.

That being said, the President of the Treasury Board, Mr. Brison, has already announced that he was prepared to study the regulations to facilitate services in French.

Mr. Darrell Samson: I would like to congratulate you, because that is very important.

I am going to continue and ask one last question.

Work has been done on the census, but two or three essential questions need to be added, in order to properly identify minorities from one end of Canada to the other. I am prepared to work with people in your department to study those questions.

Some questions do not provide enough information. We cannot determine which people are bilingual, are francophones or are francophiles. It is very important to have that information.

I do not know what the best structure would be for doing that, but it is essential to examine it. I think I understand that you are already working on these questions.

Hon. Mélanie Joly: Thank you.

I am pleased that we will be working on this question, Mr. Samson. Our decisions are always based on the information available to us. If we can do a better job of gathering that information, it will certainly help us make better decisions.

Mr. Darrell Samson: I have to say that the four themes are interesting. Immigration, infrastructure, the media and education are very interesting themes.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Thank you.

I would like to ask a question before concluding.

In the departments, there are branches that deal with the Francophonie. There are branches in the Justice Department, Treasury Board, the Department of Citizenship and Immigration, and so on.

Hon. Mélanie Joly: Do you mean official languages?

The Chair: That is right, I meant official languages.

Do you think a coordination mechanism might be useful and could make it possible to reach all of these departments, so that everyone was working in the same direction? One minister could be responsible. Why not you? The coordination mechanism could provide for regular meetings to make sure that the official languages are being respected throughout the apparatus of government, and to ensure that everyone is going in the same direction.

Hon. Mélanie Joly: Yes. I think that is already the case. I do this with my colleagues. I am working very hard with my parliamentary secretary on this question.

In addition, my officials are ensuring that contacts are made with the various departments. If you have any proposals, I would always be interested in studying them.

The Chair: Thank you, Minister.

Before concluding, Mrs. Boucher has asked me to give her the floor for a few minutes.

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: I would like to do something I do not usually do, especially when it is someone from another party, but sometimes we have to recognize people who distinguish themselves.

I would like us to congratulate Darrell Samson on being awarded the 2016 Prix Edgar-Gallant. If you are looking for an official languages champion, I think the fact that Mr. Samson has won an award cannot be ignored.

Congratulations, Mr. Samson. I think everyone here congratulates you on this fine award.

• (0945)

Mr. Darrell Samson: Thank you.

Hon. Mélanie Joly: We are proud of you, Mr. Samson.

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: You must be very proud. Now, I hope this fine award will teach you to speak French.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: Congratulations.

Mr. Darrell Samson: Thank you. That is very kind of you.

The Chair: Thank you very much and congratulations, Mr. Samson, on behalf of everyone on the committee.

Mr. Darrell Samson: I should get a bottle of wine or a gift.

Voices: Oh, oh!

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: I will buy you a coffee.

The Chair: Minister, thank you very much for making your presentation and answering questions.

Hon. Mélanie Joly: Thanks to all of you.

The Chair: We will suspend for a few minutes. The people with you will be staying with us and will be here for the second hour.

Hon. Mélanie Joly: Perfect, thank you.

The Chair: We will suspend for a few minutes.

Thank you.

• (0945)

(Pause)

• (0950)

The Chair: I call the meeting back to order.

Messrs. Lussier and Gauthier, I believe you have no special presentation to make to us and will simply be answering questions.

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: Then we will continue.

The Chair: We will continue the period of questions. We will begin with John Nater.

Mr. John Nater (Perth—Wellington, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thanks as well to our witnesses.

I am going back to the question that Mr. G n reux put to the minister about education and immersion programs.

[English]

My riding is a heavily anglophone riding, very much English, very little francophone population, but we've seen a very high demand for French immersion. In many cases the demand far exceeds the spaces available. We've seen one school board in my riding try to put caps on French language immersion enrolment.

I've spoken to some parents over the last week or so about this issue, and their concern very much rests with the fact that there is funding provided by the federal government but that the funding doesn't necessarily make its way to French language and French immersion programming.

We have seen the Minister of Health suggest that there should be certain rules placed on health care funding. One of my constituents brought up this particular issue: why are there are not similar strings attached to funding for French language programming in places such as Ontario, whereby we can justify and hold accountable the funds that are being provided in communities across the region to make sure they actually go to French language programming?

• (0955)

Mr. Hubert Lussier (Assistant Deputy Minister, Citizenship, Heritage and Regions, Department of Canadian Heritage): There's a lot in that question. I'll try to address some of the points.

First of all, in terms of the number of requests and the capacity of the school system to offer immersion, one of the biggest issues, I'm sure you're aware, is the number of competent teachers available, which creates a bottleneck.

Another thing that is worth noting is that the federal support for second language education, be it French or English, will in the case of French in large part go toward immersion, but there are also other methods of teaching French that are not immersion based and that do not necessarily work as well as immersion. There is intensive French, and there's basic French. You can't discount these two types, which sometimes also benefit from the federal funding.

With respect to the French minority school systems—you've heard a lot about them—we also have heard and keep talking with our partners from the F d ration nationale des conseils scolaires francophones and have heard from individual members around the tables at the consultations that the minister and Mr. Boissonnault held. It has been a very frequent topic of discussion.

We'd like to have discussions, in the course of renewing our partnership with the provinces, whereby these issues will be addressed both from the point of view of better integrating the *conseils scolaires* in the discussions we're having with the provinces and from the point of view of the clarity and the quantity of the reporting that is done. This is definitely on our *table de travail*.

Mr. John Nater: Thank you very much. I appreciate that.

I want to go back to the question of francophone immigration. We know that we're not meeting the 4.4% target. I think it's a laudable target and frankly that an even higher one would be better. We heard from immigration officials that 4% was basically maintaining the status quo, not increasing it.

From your perspective, from the perspective of official languages, what types of steps ought we to be taking, beyond the programs that were mentioned by the minister, to get to that 4% target, and what timeline do you think would be realistic to get to that 4% target? Can we do it within a calendar year? We haven't gotten to it yet. That's why I'm asking what the timeline would look like, from that perspective, to get to the 4.4% target.

Mr. Hubert Lussier: I think it would be presumptuous for us and a bit outside of our duty to express opinions on how to go about it, but I will say that these issues, at the level both of recruitment and of integration, are the object of constant discussions between ourselves and our colleagues in Immigration.

Madame Joly made reference to, I think, the significant progress that was made in the discussions with the provinces, which are essential partners in this. Not only was there discussion of francophone immigration at the last ministers of immigration meeting a couple of weeks ago, but there is also a forum which is planned for the spring—

Mr. Jean-Pierre Gauthier (Director General, Official Languages Branch, Department of Canadian Heritage): It's in March.

Mr. Hubert Lussier: Maybe Jean-Pierre can add to that.

It is going to be focused specifically on that very issue, with federal and provincial officials around the table.

Mr. Jean-Pierre Gauthier: I can add a few comments on this. It is well understood by all parties concerned that there are big challenges to be resolved. Nobody has a magic solution. That's one thing to say, for starters. It's going to be a challenge, and this is known by everybody—departmental, community organizations, and everybody else.

There are consultations, actually. They were set up probably two weeks ago by the immigration department with the communities, trying to go over all the challenges and come up with solutions, and we are waiting to get feedback from our colleagues from Immigration as to what they are going to be putting forward for the next action plan.

Indeed, there is a forum being developed, to be put in place at the end of March, where all the ministers from the FPT table on immigration will meet with ministers from the francophonie table, trying to come up with more solutions and ideas as to how to move forward on this. As you know, in the summer, the Council of the Federation made a joint declaration that they are aiming for 5% francophone immigration, so there is a will to make it happen. The how is going to be complicated, but the fact of the matter is there is discussion going on, trying to come up with specific ideas and initiatives.

●(1000)

The Chair: Thank you.

René Arseneault, go ahead.

[*Translation*]

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

Mr. Gauthier, I am asking you the following question because I had no time to put it to the minister. She said there would be discussions on access to justice in French in the near future. Is anything already on the drawing board in that regard? If so, what is its purpose?

Mr. Jean-Pierre Gauthier: As regards access to justice, the work is being done by our colleagues at the Department of Justice. In the context of the next action plan, we have already begun to ask our colleagues from all departments, including Justice, to think about what could be done with existing funding. Available money is already allocated to that under the current roadmap. The Department of Justice is already receiving \$93 million over five years for the Contraventions Act and access-to-justice issues. We also want them to give us some innovative ideas for moving forward.

There is one access-to-justice issue, and that is the appointment of bilingual judges. I am not talking about Supreme Court judges here, but rather those on the superior court and appeal court benches. The Canadian Judicial Council is examining the issue of language skills. Courses supported by the Department of Justice are offered to judges at the time of appointment. There is a well-known course in New Brunswick that judges can take to practise their second language, French, in simulation settings.

Initiatives are in place, but we must do a little more. However, the administration of justice is a provincial jurisdiction. The Government of Ontario, for example, has conducted a pilot project at the Ottawa Courthouse to explore ways to improve the experience of litigants who enter the courthouse. That includes reception in the building, bailiffs, clerks, and all the staff involved in the judicial process. In that case, offering this kind of interface in the minority language is much more a provincial jurisdiction.

Mr. René Arseneault: It is always difficult, or I should say a challenge, to balance the powers of the various provincial and federal bodies in the justice field. There is no constitutional obligation to have bilingual judges at all. The government that has just been elected undertook to appoint one bilingual judge to the Supreme Court, which will be bilingual in 2016.

I have a legal background and was a practising lawyer in my previous life. It was time we imposed this obligation on the highest court, whose role is to ensure that everyone's rights are respected. But how do we do that? I am pleased to hear the various departments are cooperating because this is the responsibility of several departments. In addition, there are all the various jurisdictions.

Is there any hope that bilingualism will be mandatory for judges of the Superior Court and the Court of Queen's Bench, right up to the Court of Appeal and the Supreme Court?

Mr. Jean-Pierre Gauthier: That is a decision for the government's cabinet to make.

Mr. René Arseneault: My question was poorly worded. Is it on the drawing board?

Mr. Jean-Pierre Gauthier: We are focusing more on putting access-to-justice measures in place to improve the experience of the judiciary and the entire interface with the judicial system, including providing information to the public.

We are currently focusing on those aspects, but we are aware of this issue. It is part of the discussion. The minister mentioned the discussions that were held with the ministers of the francophonie in Newfoundland and Labrador last June. They discussed access-to-justice issues, including judicial appointments.

Mr. René Arseneault: With respect to access to justice, litigants are responsible for requesting services in their language. There is also the issue of service delivery, ensuring that the judicial system can respond in the minority language. These two bodies must come together and form a single service.

Mr. Jean-Pierre Gauthier: Absolutely, we must work simultaneously on several aspects.

Mr. René Arseneault: All right, thank you.

I want to share my remaining speaking time with a colleague, if anyone has a question he or she wants to ask.

With regard to access to justice, I am thinking of the court challenges program. This is a separate program that we know about. How important is it in this discussion on access to justice? Is it part of the puzzle or solution? Is it a program exclusive to minorities, including linguistic minorities?

●(1005)

Mr. Jean-Pierre Gauthier: We are examining the court challenges program with a view to completely restoring it. It included a language rights component, and so the idea is to restore it to something closer to its original mandate.

Work is progressing on this issue. Announcements will be made by the Minister of Justice and the Minister of Canadian Heritage at the appropriate time. That will definitely facilitate the development of case law, which is the aim of the program. With its funding, the program also facilitates a form of access by addressing the costs of litigation. It now remains to be seen whether the program's objective is to facilitate access to a large number of people or organizations or to promote the development of case law for test cases that advance the state of the law. This is the kind of thinking that is under way; it is these kinds of ideas that we received when we conducted consultations to prepare opinions and advice on the subject, and it is these kinds of issues that will eventually be considered. An announcement will be made soon.

Mr. René Arseneault: Thank you very much.

Mr. Hubert Lussier: Mr. Chair, I would like some clarification.

The Chair: All right.

Mr. Hubert Lussier: This file is the responsibility of the Department of Heritage, not the Department of Justice. However, we are working very closely with our friends at the Department of Justice in order to offer the program.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Choquette, you have the floor.

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

Thanks to our two witnesses for being here.

I did not understand the Minister, Ms. Joly, when she said the provinces had to be consulted before “by and for” was applied. These are federal programs that are offered to organizations, not to provinces. Why would they not be able to apply “by and for”?

Mr. Hubert Lussier: There are obviously a lot of scenarios. Some programs are exclusively our responsibility, while, under others, it is the provinces that deliver a particular service with federal government support. So there are many service delivery levels. The “by and for” question has come up in relation to immigration and employment support. It is a tangled issue involving many levels.

Mr. François Choquette: If we consider the example of your programs, you can include in your calls for tender the requirement that the work must be done by and for the organizations of the official language minority communities. There is nothing preventing that.

Mr. Hubert Lussier: Yes, that is our responsibility.

Mr. François Choquette: I have been an MP for a few years now, and I am beginning to understand this issue. However, there is one subject I do not understand and that is the roadmap.

In financial terms, does the roadmap represent an improvement over the official language support programs, the OLSPs, or does it just move money around? Is the roadmap just a showcase?

I do not understand exactly what it is.

Mr. Hubert Lussier: I can understand this is a bit hard to follow.

The current roadmap is essentially a presentation of funding that was increased in the early 2000s and that, to a large degree, has been preserved. In many cases, it has been preserved by programs that that have been amended and improved over the more than 10 years these action plans have been in existence. The reality is that the roadmap's funding existed before the roadmap itself and has been maintained by the government, which has turned it into its roadmap.

Mr. François Choquette: In reality, there was never any increase.

If you look at the total amounts of the regular budget and those of the roadmap for 2003-2004, the year it came into force, you see that the budget declined by 3.7% relative to 2002-2003. Consequently, I realize that the roadmap is more of a showcase than an increase in the total amounts.

• (1010)

Mr. Hubert Lussier: I would like to clarify one point with regard to the figures. In the second roadmap, which is essentially the third action plan for official languages, certain amounts that were previously included and that concerned the administration of programs were cut.

Mr. François Choquette: Exactly.

The roadmaps preceding that of 2013-2018—I am talking about the roadmaps, but there was also Stéphane Dion's action plan for official languages and so on—included a management framework. The first and second roadmaps contained a management framework that showed more precisely where the money went. The account-

ability was clear. However, we are still looking for the management framework in roadmap 2013-2018.

The Commissioner of Official Languages also asked you when you would adopt a management framework. It is almost 2017, and this roadmap is coming to an end, but there is still no management framework. I look at the files and I see the researcher has done an excellent job. Starting in 2011-2012, when we want to know where the regular budgets are, we manage to find amounts, but when we want to know what amounts are specifically allocated to the roadmap, we do not have the slightest idea. Since 2011-2012, there have been no figures on the additional roadmap strategy. We find that nowhere and we understand nothing. That is why I am telling you that the roadmap is frankly just a showcase.

Mr. Jean-Pierre Gauthier: I would like to address two or three points that I hope may clarify matters.

There is a management framework. Unlike in the first and second roadmaps, they were the subject of specific publications. In the first roadmap of 2008, more particularly, there was a separate document. I have it in my briefcase. It is literally the management framework. In the 2013 roadmap, in accordance with directives and procedures, the management framework was included in the submission to Treasury Board and totalled 600 pages. That document concerns evaluation, accountability, and so on.

Mr. François Choquette: Mr. Gauthier, for the benefit of all committee members, would you please send us that management framework via the clerk?

Mr. Jean-Pierre Gauthier: I will check to see whether that is possible. Cabinet has designated this document as confidential. That is why, for the moment, it has not been published.

Mr. François Choquette: How can we, as MPs, look at accountability if the part concerning official languages is not in the public domain?

Mr. Jean-Pierre Gauthier: As regards accountability—and this is true for all the roadmaps—you can consult the table included in the departmental performance reports. These reports present expenditures for each initiative. There is also—

Mr. François Choquette: But that is not detailed. We need—

Mr. Jean-Pierre Gauthier: It is indicated for each initiative. Exact figures are provided for expenditures that correspond to each of the elements of the action plan.

Mr. François Choquette: The fact remains that the management framework helps determine whether accountability is adequate.

Mr. Jean-Pierre Gauthier: The management framework implements the mechanisms. So they exist, play their role, and are accessible. In particular, they concern evaluation and annual financial accountability. The annual report now even includes accountability for roadmap activities. As you have no doubt noticed, a number of passages refer to roadmap initiatives. Accountability is provided for and the framework that presents the—

Mr. François Choquette: Please understand. Pardon me, Mr. Gauthier, but I am out of time—

The Chair: Mr. Choquette, please—

Mr. François Choquette: I just want to say—

The Chair: Mr. Choquette, we must move on to the next speaker.

Mr. François Choquette: My speaking time is unfortunately up.

The Chair: Mr. Lefebvre, go ahead.

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

The minister explained in her speech that the Official Languages Act enables families to receive services in French. Now the children of those families are starting their own families. I can identify with what she said.

I come from Kapuskasing, a town in northern Ontario. My parents did not have access to a high school education in French. Since the federal government provided assistance to the provinces so they could offer secondary education in French, I went to high school in French at that time, in the late 1960s. I even studied law in French at university. It is because the federal government supported the provinces in this way that I was able to do it.

One of the current problems is early childhood, and the minister discussed it. Consider the example of my godson. My sister-in-law was looking for a French-language day care centre in the Sudbury region but could not find one on time. My nephew therefore went to an English-language day care in an exogamous home. As a result, when he started school, his French was at 20% of the level it might have reached.

Several witnesses have spoken about early childhood in recent weeks. Early childhood is a provincial jurisdiction, but the Commissioner of Official Languages recommended in his report that the federal government work with the provinces on this issue.

The new action plan states that early childhood must now be a priority. How could Canadian Heritage and the Official Languages Branch support this new program?

• (1015)

Mr. Hubert Lussier: It can be done in several ways.

In infrastructure, Canadian Heritage can help the provinces build day care centres in the schools. That is what we have done in some instances. Mr. Samson will remember this because there are examples of it in Nova Scotia.

We have done this to a lesser degree in certain provinces because the provincial education department has adopted a policy to provide equipment for early childhood in the schools. This is something we have heard, and the minister also referred to it. The topic of infrastructure associated with early childhood was raised in virtually all the round table discussions during the consultations.

In addition to infrastructure, there is another aspect that may be the responsibility of the Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos and his early childhood initiative. I am talking about professionals' skills or training. A sum of \$500 million was announced in the last budget for early childhood initiatives across the country, and a consultation is under way.

Mr. Paul Lefebvre: I have another example. People in western Canada often tell us there are waiting lists to register their children at school, even in immersion. Some parents show up 24 hours in advance because they know that, if they cannot get spaces in immersion kindergarten for their children, they will never be able to have an education in French and will be educated in English only.

How could the action plan help the provinces offer more immersion spaces? This is more a problem of supply than demand.

Mr. Hubert Lussier: Yes. One priority area we intend to act on is teacher training. For the moment, supply is one of the major barriers to increasing the number of teachers and, as some will say, improving the quality of immersion teachers.

Mr. Jean-Pierre Gauthier: We heard a lot of comments to that effect during our consultations in the summer. We have the same reading on the situation. There is a lot of demand, but the supply is inadequate, as a result of the training of early childhood immersion educators or teachers.

These issues will definitely be examined over the next few months with a view to offering the minister and cabinet options on ways to address this. The minister intends to give these issues priority. We have been instructed to examine opportunities in this area.

Mr. Paul Lefebvre: We often hear about capacity development. Even in 2016, we are still thinking about how to go about building this capacity. People in some minority regions may be quite well served. That is the case in Sudbury with regard to education, but we are having difficulty with early childhood.

However, this is still an important issue across the country. Since we say our country is bilingual, and since this is 2016, I think it is a priority to go back to that, especially in the context of the 150th anniversary. The action plan must reflect this. That is essential if we want people to talk about strong minority languages in 150 years. The situation is sustainable across the country.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Lefebvre.

Mr. Vandal, you have the floor.

Mr. Dan Vandal: Good morning.

The minister just said that one of the priorities that emerged from the consultations was the situation of the media. In 2010, the publication assistance program was replaced by the Canada periodical fund. If I understand correctly, there is no recognition of their status as francophone minority publications. Is that correct?

• (1020)

Mr. Hubert Lussier: In fact, the provisions of the new program make it easier for minority media to qualify. The eligibility threshold is lower for minority media. That was a consideration when the new program was developed.

Mr. Dan Vandal: We are talking about minority media, but that does not include minority francophones. Is that the same thing?

Mr. Hubert Lussier: Yes.

Mr. Dan Vandal: How did that change?

Mr. Jean-Pierre Gauthier: Perhaps I can cite some examples.

Magazines or periodicals seeking assistance must, in general, sell 5,000 copies or have 5,000 subscribers. However, that figure is lowered to 2,500 for minority publications.

Generally speaking, they must also have sold 50% of their distributed copies. However, that requirement is lowered for minority magazines.

A minimum subscription price of \$12 is set for magazines in general. However, that price is dropped to one dollar for minority community media.

Consequently, various measures such as these facilitate access to publications from minority communities.

Now, we have to know the net result because that is what ultimately counts.

Funding for most minority publications has therefore increased, but that is not true in all cases. The reverse has occurred in three, four, or five cases, and that has raised a lot of questions and reactions. This is the kind of issue we are examining: how to manage this situation?

Mr. Dan Vandal: In Manitoba, if I understand correctly, funding for the weekly *La Liberté* was cut by 50%.

Mr. Jean-Pierre Gauthier: Yes, that is one of the cases that were not helped by the change.

Mr. Dan Vandal: *L'Eau vive* in Saskatchewan and *L'Express* in Ottawa are no longer able to publish, as I understand it. Am I right?

Mr. Jean-Pierre Gauthier: I do not know all the individual cases. I am somewhat aware of *La Liberté*, but I am not familiar with the specific situation of Ottawa's *L'Express*.

You also have to bear in mind that we do not manage the program. We know that three or four publications, in the financial tables we examined, did not fare well under the changes. Now, we should check to see the actual situation on a case-by-case basis.

Mr. Dan Vandal: Do you anticipate that changes will be made to the Canada periodical fund to readjust the objectives for minority publications?

Mr. Hubert Lussier: My colleagues who manage the program have it evaluated every five years. That is an opportunity for them to consider whether existing criteria are appropriate. I cannot speak for them, but that is one of the responsibilities at the time of the evaluation. Checking to see whether anything can be changed is part of the lifecycle of these programs.

Mr. Dan Vandal: Who manages that, your department or another? Is that the responsibility of Canadian Heritage?

Mr. Hubert Lussier: It is the responsibility of Canadian Heritage.

Mr. Dan Vandal: Another branch of Canadian Heritage?

Mr. Hubert Lussier: They are colleagues within Canadian Heritage.

Mr. Dan Vandal: Thank you.

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

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

Good morning, Messrs. Lussier and Gauthier. This is very interesting.

We have talked about many things today. We talked about the next action plan and about the roadmap for Canada's official languages 2013-2018. I am still very surprised to see that we have not spoken, or have said very little, about health.

We have heard a lot about education, early childhood, and immigration, but very little about health. And yet health in French was a winner in the roadmap for Canada's official languages 2013-2018, and even before that. The roadmap even stated the following:

The health field has seen steady progress in recent years and the long term, as a result of Roadmap funding.... It's important for health that the Roadmap be renewed, because although health is a provincial responsibility, linguistic duality is a federal responsibility.

To your knowledge, will health be part of the new action plan? I think it is important that it be included. I am a francophone first and foremost. I can get along in English, but I have always said that, when you are sick or hurt, you are hurt in your mother tongue.

A lot of progress has been made with the roadmaps; now it will be an action plan. Can you give us a few words on the success stories of the roadmaps? Can we expect another success with the action plan?

● (1025)

Mr. Hubert Lussier: Health was discussed around the consultation tables, and I think we can say without boasting that it is a field where there have been great successes.

There are two basic areas: the training of health professionals, which represents an investment of—

Mr. Jean-Pierre Gauthier: \$106 million over five years.

Mr. Hubert Lussier: It is an investment of \$106 million over five years. Then there is the number of professionals who have been trained: thousands since the action plans started. It is not just physicians who have been trained at linguistic minority institutions and then who serve minority communities—

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: Pardon me for two seconds.

It would be good if everyone listened. Thank you.

Mr. Hubert Lussier: —but also nurses, paramedics, stretcher-bearers, and people at all levels: the first area is therefore training.

The second area is health networks. To give you an idea that is quite spectacular, 2,400 professionals have been trained since 2013. We are talking about francophones outside Quebec and anglophones in Quebec.

The Société santé en français, in particular, works with the provinces and local organizations to develop services. It does not deliver services, but it does develop minority-language services in partnership with provincial organizations. Considerable success has also been achieved in this area. It is still too soon to tell what position health will occupy in the future plan, but these are definitely success stories that will have to be perpetuated.

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: Thank you very much.

We also talked about immigration. I know that immigration is partly the responsibility of certain provinces such as Quebec. However, we have realized that the 4.4% target we set for ourselves is difficult to achieve. Communities outside Quebec seem to be having a lot of trouble retaining francophone immigrants. Do you have any potential solutions for retaining our francophone immigrants? Will that be included in the action plan?

Mr. Hubert Lussier: You are right in saying it is a big step to achieve the 4.4% target—my colleague Mr. Gauthier talked about that a little earlier. One of the things we often hear is that there is a flaw in the way francophone immigrants are directed when they set foot in Canada. That flaw lies in the ability of the francophone community and school system to catch them early enough in their integration process so that their children go to school and use francophone services so that they can ultimately enter the francophone community. Too many of them slip through the net. One of the things our Immigration colleagues think about together with the provinces and us is how to improve the ability of the community and school networks to meet with these people immediately in order to direct them to the services that exist in French rather than let them turn to anglophone institutions.

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: Thank you.

Mr. Jean-Pierre Gauthier: On the immigration question, I would add that we talk a lot about immigrant intake and retention in the minority communities.

Obviously, there are also other challenges and thoughts about international recruitment and promotion of the minority communities as immigration venues. That is done through our network of embassies. Initiatives are also in place, particularly in Paris and North Africa.

•(1030)

The Chair: Thank you,

Ms. Lapointe and Mr. Samson will be sharing the speaking time allotted to them.

Ms. Lapointe, you have the floor.

Ms. Linda Lapointe: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Thanks to the witnesses for being with us.

To respond to your remarks, Mrs. Boucher, we were preparing our questions. It is not that we were not listening to you. The topic of health in the language of one's choice is very important. Please be assured of that.

Mr. Gauthier, you must be aware of the report that was published in 2015 and entitled “Immigration as a Tool for Enhancing the Vitality and Supporting the Development of francophone Minority Communities.”

Were you in your position at that time?

Mr. Jean-Pierre Gauthier: Yes.

Ms. Linda Lapointe: All right, thank you.

It contains two recommendations. Would you like me to read them to you?

Mr. Jean-Pierre Gauthier: Please do.

Ms. Linda Lapointe: The first states, “That Citizenship and Immigration Canada promote the opportunity to live and work in French in francophone minority communities.”

The second reads as follows: “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.”

Do you think Citizenship and Immigration Canada has adopted and implemented those two recommendations?

Mr. Jean-Pierre Gauthier: Certainly. I know perfectly well that our colleagues have read the report.

Ms. Linda Lapointe: I remind you that we have not achieved 4.4% francophone immigration.

Mr. Jean-Pierre Gauthier: No, that is correct.

I would like to clarify one point, and, even then, I am not sure that will change much in the debate. However, the target is set for 2023. The fact remains, however, that 4.4% is still a challenge.

Yes, the department is working on these two aspects: international promotion, and thus recruitment; and the settlement of immigrants here. That is clear.

That was part of the discussions held during consultation sessions with community groups two or three weeks ago to help us reflect together on what should be done.

It is also included in the discussions that are taking place at the intergovernmental level with the provinces and territories to study, together with the partners, ways of finding solutions and achieving these targets.

Consequently, our colleagues definitely have clearly heard the committee's recommendations and are very much aware of these issues.

Ms. Linda Lapointe: Thank you.

Earlier my colleague talked about early childhood, immersion, and the lack of access to French-language schools. I think that is quite appalling. It is in early childhood that you really begin to learn your language.

Many francophone teachers from Quebec have graduated from university. I suppose some would definitely be interested in going to work in western Canada.

I would like to hear what you have to say on that subject.

Mr. Hubert Lussier: That is a fact; many are trained in Quebec and teach outside their home province.

We also have a monitor program that provides support to students, often Quebecers, so they in turn can support teachers from French schools elsewhere in the country.

Ms. Linda Lapointe: I will close with a comment.

My eldest child earned her teaching degree from the Université de Montréal last year. She has never mentioned that she has received offers to teach elsewhere.

Consequently, I think it would be appropriate to offer that opportunity to teachers from francophone universities, particularly when they are young and just starting their careers. They are less attached to their environment and are more mobile than when they have family responsibilities.

That is a suggestion I am making to you.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Samson, you have the floor.

Mr. Darrell Samson: Thanks to my colleague.

In connection with immigration, we have heard about the French test, which is a problem, costs more than the English test, is very difficult, is complex, and so on.

Is it possible for your department to handle that test, manage it, and simplify it?

Mr. Jean-Pierre Gauthier: The test is an integral part of immigration system management.

It is used to assess the qualifications of immigrants, and I believe that task definitely falls to the department responsible for immigration.

The department has made a considerable investment in an attempt to establish tests that evaluate immigrants' language skills. Obviously, it has also closely monitored the criticisms that were made during the summer about the cost of the tests.

I know the department is considering the matter in an attempt to find solutions and to correct the situation, which no one considers appropriate.

Mr. Darrell Samson: Mr. Lussier, do you want to comment?

Mr. Hubert Lussier: I simply want to recall that these tests are administered by organizations that are under contract to Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada. So these outside organizations are accredited by the department to administer the tests.

• (1035)

Mr. Darrell Samson: I agree. The fact that, according to the minister and you, there is an excellent relationship between Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada and Canadian Heritage may improve matters.

You conducted consultations across the country. Are the priorities that the official language minority communities across Canada described to you the same as those of the departments?

Mr. Jean-Pierre Gauthier: Yes. The situation of the minority communities is quite well known. The consultations are invaluable because they are an opportunity to hear people explain what they experience. That adds texture to what we think we know because, in many cases, we are far away from the regions. It also helps us put each of the issues into perspective. Some are more important than others, depending on the region.

This is a chance for us to listen to people and to learn about the reality of their region. It is all well and good for us to know that reality, but it is also good to know what challenges they face and what their own priorities are.

Mr. Hubert Lussier: I would like to add something.

We invite members of the minority communities to take part in these consultations, as well as Canadians who are part of the majority—let us call it that.

In many of these consultations, an interesting dialogue is established between the minority and majority communities. The consultations are often attended by people from the majority communities, whom we call francophiles or the franco-curious, to use an expression dear to Mr. Boissonnault—I think he has copyrighted it. Viewed in that light, this willingness to cooperate is promising and helps reinforce the objectives of both sides.

Mr. Darrell Samson: Many people who work in the first-language education system say that the departments do not necessarily take their priorities into consideration in establishing their own priorities.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Samson.

Mr. Gagnéux, you have the floor.

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

Gentlemen, thank you for being here.

Earlier I had a conversation with Mr. Lussier that was off the record.

He said that major discussions had taken place on the communities. From what we hear, the communities have significant needs. There is the concept of “by and for” that we discussed earlier. The people from those communities rightly want more resources so they can provide more services.

That is not in contradiction with what is already being done, but I imagine the discussions in your department must focus on the question whether these people can be given more money or resources so they can provide more services. What difference would there be between those two ways of doing things, that is to say between the current way things are done and the idea of giving those communities more resources so they can provide more services?

Mr. Jean-Pierre Gauthier: In official languages, the fact that it is community organizations that provide services is already one very common way of proceeding, regardless of whether funding comes from Canadian Heritage or another department. However, that is not universal. We have previously issued calls for tender that were open to all those interested in providing services. There were cases in which various departments, such as Employment and Social Development Canada, Health Canada, and Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada, which we just discussed, asked groups with some bilingual capacity to provide services to the minority community.

Some are exceptions, and we should not generalize. In the majority of cases, it is minority organizations that have the mandate to provide services to their community. However, that is not a principle. It is the result of the activities of our programs, and that means something.

We have discussed this issue in interdepartmental committees. We share our experience, which enables us to reflect on the concept of “by and for.” We are sensitive to that issue and we are reflecting on it.

Should more resources be allocated to that? This somehow takes us back to the question that was asked earlier about the roadmap. The amount set forth is an actual amount. Those resources are in fact disbursed every year. That funding could not be increased very much. There is a little here and there. It depends on the departments and programs, but there is not a lot.

We are already using all current resources, which are nevertheless significant, to carry out our activities. Every department will determine, based on circumstances, whether it can move resources around in order to allocate them to emerging priorities rather than continue funding something in the same way it has been funded for several years. This is how we are thinking in the context of the regular management of these programs.

• (1040)

Mr. Bernard Généreux: How do you explain the sharp increase in registration for second language immersion programs across Canada?

I see it as a very positive sign that Canada's anglophone community wants to learn French. However, a saturation level is being reached. My sister-in-law, for example, waited outside a Toronto school for 36 hours to register her children there.

Mr. Hubert Lussier: You are right. The fact that the majority population is so keenly interested and therefore wants to send their children to learn the minority language is quite unique in the world.

Mr. Bernard Généreux: Should we increase funding so that more children can learn French?

Mr. Hubert Lussier: You are right. There is an appetite that is not completely satisfied.

Mr. Bernard Généreux: Far from it, in my view.

Mr. Jean-Pierre Gauthier: Absolutely. We also know that many school boards despair that they are unable to meet more of the demand. Mr. Lussier talked about that two minutes ago. We spoke about teacher mobility, the ability to recruit qualified teachers to teach in the minority language, in this case French. This is a challenge that we address in the discussions we have with the provinces and territories when we fund second language instruction. We agreed with the provinces that we wanted to focus resources on this in an attempt to break the deadlock. The challenge is enormous.

Mr. Bernard Généreux: Surely there are pools of teachers in Quebec.

Mr. Jean-Pierre Gauthier: Yes.

The Chair: Mr. Choquette, you have the floor.

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

I only have three minutes, right?

All right.

First, I want to thank you, gentlemen, for being with us. I interrupted you a little earlier because there was little time left, and I apologize for that. We have very little time, but we want to get to the bottom of things. However, we clearly will not do that today with regard to the management framework. We talked about that earlier, and you provided us with some explanation.

I asked the chair whether it would be possible to organize a separate meeting, as you sometimes do, so that you could give us a presentation on the management framework, which would help us understand those elements, including accountability. You say there is a management framework for 2013-2018. Well, it is extremely important for us MPs to understand that framework.

I understand that you cannot give us a long and detailed explanation in two minutes. In the circumstances, if you could organize that meeting with the committee, that would increase our understanding and help us continue our present study on the roadmap.

Mr. Hubert Lussier: Certainly.

Mr. François Choquette: Thank you very much.

As I mentioned earlier, we still wonder whether the roadmap is more showcase than improvement. We will have to think about that before this plan or roadmap is implemented.

The consultations you are conducting internally are about the OLSPs, the roadmap, and everything the other departments are doing in official languages. I am thinking of immigration, for example. We have discussed that at length, and we are conducting a study on the subject.

With respect to justice issues, you mentioned the work you are currently doing with the provinces.

Do you think it is easy for an MP to find out what each of the departments is doing in official languages?

Are we able to access that information?

Can we find out how much money and human resources, specifically full-time equivalents, are allocated for that purpose in all departments and organizations?

Since we consider accountability and governance important—I think it was René Arsenault who asked a question on that subject—we want to know who is ultimately keeping an eye on what goes on.

• (1045)

Mr. Hubert Lussier: That is an important question.

With respect to accountability for what is done under the roadmap, it is possible for MPs, as it is for anyone else, to find out exactly what is being spent by consulting the documents that Mr. Gauthier referred to a little earlier. We can probably improve the way that is presented in the document, but it is available.

I would add one detail that I consider important. Many official languages initiatives that are taken are introduced under the authority of the roadmap and the departments concerned. However, many other things go beyond what is set forth in the roadmap, at Radio-Canada, the National Film Board, Telefilm Canada, and others. All these institutions do a great deal to interconnect the country's two majority cultures, anglophone and francophone, but also to support cultural production in the minority communities. These are things that these institutions do not highlight probably as obviously as those that are part of the roadmap, but they are nevertheless fundamentally important in achieving official language objectives.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Messrs. Lussier and Gauthier, for your presentation and answers to our questions.

This brings today's meeting to a close. I know that Mrs. Boucher wanted to talk to us about future business, but I simply want to inform committee members that, next Thursday, we have reserved an hour to review committee business. Consequently, we will defer the subject to next Thursday. Until then, we will adjourn to—

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: Mr. Chair, I want to discuss that. I have received the text in French.

The Chair: Have you all received it?

Ms. Linda Lapointe: I have a committee meeting in another building at 11 o'clock.

The Chair: Mrs. Boucher, I will try to find the time at the next meeting, but we must end this one. We will see each other again next Tuesday morning.

The meeting is adjourned.

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