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Chair

The Honourable Denis Paradis

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• (0850)

[Translation]

The Vice-Chair (Mr. François Choquette (Drummond, NDP)): Good morning, colleagues.

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

It is a pleasure for me to introduce our witnesses.

By video conference, we have Robert Therrien, executive director of the Conseil économique et coopératif de la Saskatchewan. Then we will hear from Lynn Brouillette, acting director general of the Association des collèges et universités de la francophonie canadienne. She will be joining us shortly.

We will begin with you, Mr. Therrien. You have 10 minutes to tell us about the roadmap for official languages.

Mr. Robert Therrien (Executive Director, Conseil économique et coopératif de la Saskatchewan): Good morning, everyone.

Thank you for the invitation to appear before you this morning.

I would definitely like to talk to you about the roadmap.

The Conseil économique et coopératif de la Saskatchewan, or CECS, is a member of the Réseau de développement économique et d'employabilité du Canada, RDÉE Canada, to which I will be referring. We benefited from the last roadmap, that of 2013-2018.

The RDÉE is established in all provinces and territories of Canada. The funding we receive enables us to assist francophone entrepreneurs in preparing business plans and market studies, for example, and to work with companies on business expansions, purchases and successions.

We also work closely with the official language minority communities in Saskatchewan, mainly in establishing community economic development projects.

You may wonder what community economic development is. Consider the example of Ponteix, an official language minority community that we helped to develop an emergency centre. That roughly \$750,000 project made it possible to create three permanent and several part-time jobs in the community. The emergency centre provides ambulance, paramedic, and firefighting services.

In the official language minority communities, we use the francophonie as a value added. When we help a community, the community as a whole benefits from our services, both the majority

and minority communities. The fact that francophones are in the community is a value added and promotes the economic development of those communities.

We believe that economic value is the basis of all other development. In other words, economic development is the main driver of everything that happens in culture and even education. If there were no jobs or viable and vibrant businesses in the communities, there would be no population and it would be unnecessary to have schools in our small communities where there is a francophone presence.

As you know, our economy has been quite strong for some years now, but a slowdown is currently under way. Like our neighbours in Alberta, we see the impact of that slowdown on employment and the economy in a community. The creation of a solid economic development base is central to a community's vitality.

We have also helped another minority community in the northwest part of the province, and that enabled it to establish a seniors home, which is also a three-level health centre. Six permanent jobs and three part-time positions were created as a result.

People often get the impression these jobs do not make a big impact. An outside consultant conducted a study on the impact of our investments in the official language communities. In a community of approximately 600 inhabitants, six permanent jobs and three part-time positions are equivalent to 800 jobs in a region such as Ottawa. What we do has a significant impact on the official language communities in rural or remote regions, as some people call them.

The funding we have received also helps Saskatchewan's official language community as a whole.

• (0855)

We are now able to find more efficient ways to manage the money we receive, spend, and so on. We are working to create an administrative services cooperative for Saskatchewan's entire francophone population and for the community's provincial and community organizations.

RDÉE Canada recently published a white paper entitled *Prospérité économique des francophones et acadiens*, or Economic prosperity of francophones and Acadians. Together with Quebec's official language minority community, we have worked to develop a Canadian economic development plan for the official language communities. I cannot provide you with a copy of the white paper for the moment since this is a video conference, but I can definitely send you one if you are interested or if our RDÉE Canada colleagues in Ottawa have not yet sent you one.

Our value added is increasingly apparent in the global economic context. A study the Conference Board of Canada conducted a few years ago clearly showed that the francophone community's contribution to global economic development constituted a value added. Despite that fact, the demographic weight of the OLMCs was a problem as those communities represented only 6% of the total population of Canada, a 3% decrease relative to 1971.

In 2011, the number of francophones in Saskatchewan increased for the first time in decades. However, their representation as a percentage of the population is still in decline. The rise in the number of francophones is obviously due to francophone immigration, which has mainly affected Saskatchewan's two major cities. It is still essential for us to maintain this demographic weight and to belong to the bilingual Canada we know.

Again on the subject of francophone immigrants—and I know we will be discussing this later—they represented only 2.4% in Saskatchewan, which is far from the 4.4% target established by the federal government a few years ago. For us, francophone immigration represents our community's long-term vitality. It is therefore essential to take all possible measures so that francophone immigrants and their families can come and settle here, help populate our schools, take part in our community's activities, and help us maintain our demographic weight within the community.

Early childhood is another component we are examining. We have enormous problems. Our inadequate infrastructure prevents us from offering early childhood day care services. Whether newcomers or not, the fact that people do not have access to these kinds of services in the official language of their choice—French in this instance—often means these children wind up in anglophone or other child care facilities. It is essential for us that special attention be paid to early childhood.

● (0900)

In the past, we have nevertheless benefited from tourism projects as a result of roadmap funding. The Prairies region and the four western provinces are working on various projects, and doing it together.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. François Choquette): Mr. Therrien, I will have to stop you there. You may continue your presentation during the period of questions.

I would like to note that Lynn Brouillette, acting executive director of the Association des collèges et universités de la francophonie canadienne, has arrived.

For members who may have been wondering who the people at the back of the room were, they were young francophone parliamentarians who were attending our proceedings. We have

welcomed young people from Alberta, Quebec, Belgium, and elsewhere who have come to see the work we do.

Before moving on to questions, we will immediately hear what Ms. Brouillette has to say about the roadmap.

You have 10 minutes or so to make a presentation. Then we will move on to the period of questions.

Ms. Lynn Brouillette (Acting Director General, Association des collèges et universités de la francophonie canadienne): Good morning, Mr. Chair and ladies and gentlemen members of the committee.

On behalf of myself and the board of the Association des collèges et universités de la francophonie canadienne, which is known by the acronym ACUFC, I want to thank you for your invitation to give you our comments on your studies on the current roadmap and on francophone immigration in the official language minority communities.

In this first, slightly longer part of my remarks, I will focus on the roadmap and the next action plan for official languages. Then, following your questions, I will more briefly address the issue of francophone immigration in the francophone minority communities.

First, I would like to tell you about the association and its contribution to promoting the Canadian francophone community and official languages. Then I will outline the connection between that contribution and the subject of your committee's studies for each of my presentations.

ACUFC is a unique model of inter-institutional, interprovincial, and federal-provincial and territorial collaboration for carrying out collective initiatives across Canada. Its membership consists of 21 francophone or bilingual colleges and universities located in francophone minority communities. All are situated outside Quebec.

ACUFC aims to expand access to post-secondary education in French across the country and thus to provide a true continuum of French-language education from early childhood to the post-secondary level. Mr. Therrien, who is testifying by video conference, spoke about early childhood and child care centres. We train the professionals for those centres in our colleges.

Our student clientele include youth, obviously, old-stock francophones, and French speakers from French second language immersion programs, but also immigrants, international students, and adults involved in continuing learning and the job market.

The colleges and universities of the Canadian francophone community play an essential role in ensuring the vitality and sustainability of the francophone minority communities they serve. They are pillars in their communities and contribute to both the development of their human capital, cultural development, and economic growth by training the highly skilled and bilingual labour force of today and tomorrow.

This state of affairs is clearly outlined in the brief we sent you last summer as part of the cross-Canada consultations on official languages launched on June 17. Our colleges and universities are clearly the standard-bearers of our official languages and the Canadian identity, inclusion, vitality, and resilience of those communities, and ultimately of our country's prosperity.

Now I want to tell you about the initiatives and convincing results we have achieved with the funding we received under the roadmap for Canada's official languages 2013-2018 in health and justice, two essential fields for francophone minority communities.

As you know, access to health and justice services in French is an additional challenge for those communities. In these two fields, service recipients are vulnerable, and the language barrier exacerbates their situation. It is therefore essential that we train professionals who are able to provide services in both official languages in these two fields.

In health, a consortium was created thanks to the first action plan for official languages in 2003. The Consortium national de formation en santé, or CNFS, was established and has continued to develop over the past 13 years with support from the two subsequent roadmaps. Health Canada is the recipient of the funding that is allocated to us.

Even though education and health are provincial and territorial jurisdictions, federal funding is essential for our communities because it has a significant leverage effect in the provinces. That has helped us to achieve convincing results and to carry out many innovative initiatives under the aegis of the Consortium national de formation en santé. For example, 68 new French-language post-secondary health programs have been established in the 13 years since 2003.

- (0905)

Furthermore, 32 existing programs have been enhanced. In addition, 6,700 professionals capable of providing health services in French have been trained. We know that 94% of them work in francophone minority communities and that 91% work in their home province.

As language is a health issue, we have developed genuine expertise in actively offering French-language health services and have produced a framework for modelling that active offer. We believe that model can be transferred and adapted to other essential service areas in the official language minority communities.

Programs have also been developed and are being offered jointly by our member institutions. Here are some specific examples that will provide an overview of the kind of cooperation we have established and the impact it has had.

Four of our member colleges located in three different provinces offer a post-diploma college program in community health services management.

As you can see, federal government funding helps us take action at another level. These projects have become collective projects that enable us to transcend borders. Sometimes we feel as though we are in an eleventh province and able to work together without interprovincial barriers.

Another promising program is the auxiliary nursing science program at the Collège La Cité, here in Ottawa, which was also offered at the Collège Éducentre, in Vancouver. This is really from one end of the country to the other. As a result of this type of partnership and the cooperative arrangements we have put in place in the past 13 years, 68 new programs have been established in that 13-year period. The fact that we have created two-, three-, or four-year post-secondary and university-level programs is quite a tour de force. There is strength in numbers, and that is as true today as it has always been.

In justice, we achieved a significant result, the creation of the Réseau national de formation en justice in February 2014, following a feasibility study that the association's national secretariat conducted. ACUFC administers and coordinates the network's activities. Nine of our network's member institutions belong to this justice network. The full list of network members is provided in a package that we will be distributing to you later.

Following the research conducted since 2004, the network will shortly submit a proposal to the federal government for the next action plan for official languages. The network will develop cooperative approaches to make tangible improvements to provide equal access to justice in both official languages, by significantly increasing the number of graduates from post-secondary French-language justice programs, enrolment in on-the-job training, and the production of and access to legal and jurilinguistic tools for jurilinguists, justice professionals, and litigants.

Our health and justice initiatives have proven the strength of national institutional associations such as ACUFC, which help us carry out collective national projects, share resources, and, consequently, generate significant economies of scale. Our initiatives focus on achieving actual results and establishing effective partnerships so we can have a direct and lasting impact on the francophone minority communities.

In conclusion, I have a number of recommendations. The solutions we are proposing to the Government of Canada for the next action plan for official languages may be summarized as follows.

First of all, we recommend providing increased access to post-secondary education in French in the communities. I discussed early childhood, and that is one example among many.

We also recommend expanding access to intellectual and institutional capital in French and providing broader access to public, parapublic, and private French-language services that are actively offered and linguistically and culturally adapted to the needs of our communities.

We are satisfied that the solutions we propose involve structural factors that will help the Government of Canada realize its vision for official languages, the social contract that was reached many years ago, as the Minister of Canadian Heritage repeatedly says.

●(0910)

Lastly, by reinforcing the capacity of our colleges and universities, the government will achieve its objectives for bilingualism and the vitality of the communities, which are two major components of the next action plan, as the Minister of Canadian Heritage noted when she appeared before your committee and that of the Senate last week.

Thank you very much for your attention. I will be pleased to answer your questions.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. François Choquette): Thank you very much, Ms. Brouillette.

I am sure we will be putting many questions to the two witnesses with us here today.

We will immediately begin the first round of questions with Ms. Boucher, who will have six minutes.

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

Good morning to both witnesses, and welcome to the committee. It is always very interesting to have you here. I have a lot of questions in mind.

Mr. Therrien, you work in the economic development field. We have learned in recent weeks that all the economic development agencies are to be centralized.

In view of the fact that you are in a region, do you fear the consequences of that decision? What will your challenges be? You will no doubt have more challenges because you have also heard that there will be fewer jobs, that the situation will stagnate, and that there will be unstable employment. Life is not always easy in a minority setting.

How then do you view the future? What would be the best long-term solutions for keeping jobs in the rural areas since the economic development agencies will be centralized? There is only one minister now, whereas there were previously several ministers in several regions. What is your perception of employment in your region in Saskatchewan?

Mr. Robert Therrien: With respect to Saskatchewan's economy and future, our province relies to a large degree on resources. That sector has always been cyclical. I lived in a rural community for the first 40 years of my life, and I am familiar with the agricultural cycle. It appears that potash mining and oil drilling are cyclical phenomena with ups and downs. The population of Saskatchewan is used to managing and dealing with those cycles.

As regards the centralization of the economic development agencies and the fact that there is only one minister, from what I know about these matters, we will not be losing the regional agencies that support us. They will not be directly part of the roadmap for our basic funding, but definitely will be for special initiatives in this area. We will continue dealing with those federal agencies in our region. I do not anticipate too much of an effect for the moment, and perhaps I do not know all the details, but I do not think there will be a major impact.

As for the economic future of the official language minority communities, one thing that concerns us is that the funding we

receive from our regional agency has not increased in nearly 15 or 16 years, which has reduced our ability to provide services. We want to continue providing the same services and programs across the province because we are a provincial organization.

Does that answer your question?

●(0915)

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: Yes. That is fine.

Ms. Brouillette, we have heard from many organizations. They have told us about something the committee has often discussed, and I would like to hear what you have to say on the subject. We have learned that some francophone organizations in certain provinces that work closely with immigrants have lost their funding to anglophone organizations that say they can provide services in French.

Have you experienced this kind of situation? What would be the best way for the present government to compensate for this state of affairs, which we have heard about on several occasions?

Ms. Lynn Brouillette: That is a good question.

This is something we regularly hear about. It is something we rarely see nationally, but it is the kind of thing we particularly hear about on the ground. We have to be on the look-out because this is a situation we constantly face in our francophone minority communities.

When funding is granted to an organization, it should be ensured that the organization is in fact subject to francophone governance and is indeed able to serve francophones. The organization should ideally have francophone governance since that often makes a difference.

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: Thank you.

Do I have any time left?

The Vice-Chair (Mr. François Choquette): You have 45 seconds left.

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: Fine. I said what I had to say.

Thank you.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. François Choquette): Now we will turn the floor over to Mr. Vandal.

Mr. Dan Vandal (Saint Boniface—Saint Vital, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

First I will address Mr. Therrien.

In your presentation, you described your tourism partnerships with the other provinces.

Can you tell us a little more about those partnerships?

Mr. Robert Therrien: Certainly.

Allow me to cite an example of a result we achieved with the funding we received. We are working with our neighbouring provinces, Manitoba and Alberta, on a project entitled "La Route 1885," the route of Louis Riel. It is a tourism project to promote the French fact in the Batoche region where the route is located.

Again with regard to tourism, we have benefited from an app that was developed by the Province of Alberta but made available to the four western provinces. We use that app, which is based on new technologies, to promote tourism in French.

Lastly, we will soon be introducing a project in our province that should increase tourism in various regions. So those are a few examples of the impact we are having with tourism projects.

● (0920)

Mr. Dan Vandal: Could you tell us more about Batoche, a national site of great importance to the Métis nation?

Has the trail already been started in Batoche, in western Canada?

Mr. Robert Therrien: No, we are in the process of implementing the project. The trail should be completed and open to the public within 12 months. We have been working on this project for a year and a half thanks to the funding we received. We are working on the project in partnership with the anglophone communities in the region.

Mr. Dan Vandal: Every July, there is a major gathering in Batoche, the *Back to Batoche Days Festival*.

Is there a francophone presence now at celebrations like that?

Mr. Robert Therrien: Yes, there is a francophone presence at celebrations like the one in Batoche because they are open to everyone. Many old-stock inhabitants are Métis, who have francophone names but no longer speak the language, having lost their French over the years. That is why the French presence in Batoche is not a big one, but there is nevertheless something of a presence.

Batoche is located near Saint-Isidore de Bellevue, a mainly francophone community.

Mr. Dan Vandal: Thank you.

Now, coming back to the roadmap, how have Saskatchewan and your communities benefited from the roadmap 2013-2018?

Mr. Robert Therrien: I cited some specific examples. I mentioned the emergency centre that was established in one community as well as the seniors home.

In addition, tourism is linked to the roadmap and to special economic development initiatives.

Roadmap funding has provided us with assistance for job creation, business creation, and so on.

We have special economic development initiatives, on the one hand, and we receive funding, on the other.

Earlier I mentioned the Réseau de développement économique et d'employabilité, which provides support to the communities. That funding is managed by the enabling fund for official language minority communities, which comes from Employment and Social Development Canada. As a result of these measures, we have been able to support the communities through various projects.

Mr. Dan Vandal: Are there any challenges—

The Vice-Chair (Mr. François Choquette): You have very little time left.

Mr. Dan Vandal: Then I will skip my turn and speak at another time.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. François Choquette): Now I turn the floor over to Mr. Lefebvre for six minutes.

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

Good morning, Mr. Therrien, and to you, Ms. Brouillette.

Mr. Robert Therrien: Good morning.

Mr. Paul Lefebvre: Ms. Brouillette, I have a brief question concerning ACUFC. How much money do ACUFC members receive under the roadmap? What funding did they receive under the last roadmap?

Ms. Lynn Brouillette: We have received money directly from Health Canada under the roadmap since 2003. It was the action plan at the time.

We have received \$17 million a year for the past 10 years. That money is allocated among 11 colleges and universities to support some 100 programs in the field of health.

We have established 68 new programs since 2003. However, some of that number were already in existence. This funding has made it possible to maintain those programs.

You know as well as I do that student cohorts in minority communities are, in many instances, not as large as those in the anglophone institutions. Funding is required to maintain student cohorts, and the provinces sometimes impose certain quotas, which requires us to increase the cohorts.

Furthermore, we were able to equip laboratories with the funding from health Canada. Those who have had a chance to visit our colleges and universities recently, particularly in the health field, have seen simulation labs borrowed from aviation. This is very sophisticated and expensive equipment. As francophone institutions, we have a duty to be on the cutting edge of technology. We often have to be better than everyone else in order to attract a clientele. I know you all understand that aspect.

● (0925)

Mr. Paul Lefebvre: Exactly, I went to visit the Collège Boréal and saw the simulation lab there. It really was cutting edge.

You mentioned a figure of \$17 million. For how many years has it been at that level?

Ms. Lynn Brouillette: For the last ten years, we've been receiving \$17 million per year for the 11 colleges and universities.

Mr. Paul Lefebvre: You've received no increases.

Ms. Lynn Brouillette: The last two roadmaps, which cover the last ten years, contained no increases.

That gave rise to problems. Let's just say that it really put a brake on the momentum we'd been building since 2003. Nonetheless, we implemented a few new programs. Those new programs were possible because of collaboration, however.

Mr. Paul Lefebvre: If you had to make a recommendation to the ACUFC's members about the new action plan, what would it be?

Ms. Lynn Brouillette: I have more than one, actually.

Mr. Paul Lefebvre: Go right ahead!

Ms. Lynn Brouillette: Obviously, I would recommend that health care training be maintained. As I said, we've provided support for roughly 100 programs over the last few years. It makes a big difference when services are actively offered in the health care field.

Since you know the communities very well, you understand that we can't wait for the active demand. That's why we're working on this file. In fact, we're one of the leaders on the question of active offer, having worked on it since 2008.

The way we work together is interesting. Active offer is one of the great projects that we've been able to put together nationwide. We would not have had the success we are having with active offer, if we had only pursued it in a few institutions here and there, and had each worked in our own provinces. We did this work collectively. We drew on the strengths and areas of expertise of our colleges and universities. Academics did a lot of work in this regard.

We have put a skills profile in place. We will also have a certificate for the 100 programs or so throughout Canada. They are health care programs aimed at offering services actively.

It really is thanks to federal funding that we were able to carry out such a collective project. Thanks to such funding, we can truly move on to another phase.

Mr. Paul Lefebvre: Thank you.

Mr. Therrien, you mentioned that early childhood services and infrastructure in Saskatchewan have been a challenge. Have you measured demand for day care, and the available supply? Could you tell us about that?

Mr. Robert Therrien: With respect to current demand in Saskatchewan, there are still waiting lists for spaces in francophone day cares.

Mr. Paul Lefebvre: Do you have numbers? Have you measured this phenomenon?

Mr. Robert Therrien: Two or three years ago, we determined there was a waiting list of 400 kids for francophone day cares in Saskatchewan. To us, that's considerable.

We tried to put measures in place. We tried to help people open day cares in private homes. That proved a sizeable challenge. Admittedly, this is clearly an area within provincial jurisdiction. Nonetheless, the number of francophone day care spaces increases very little each year.

• (0930)

The Vice-Chair (Mr. François Choquette): Thank you very much, Mr. Therrien.

We now move on to the second round, which will be about immigration.

We could start with you, Mr. Therrien. Do you have a presentation to give concerning immigration?

Mr. Robert Therrien: The immigration field is still rather new to our community as far as programming and planning are concerned. It's new in the sense that, even though we've known for years that we should have been doing something to increase francophone

immigration in our communities, we still don't have the means to make significant inroads in that regard.

As you might know, the demographic weight of francophone immigrants in official language minority communities increased from 6.2% in 1991, to 11.7% in 2011. According to our most recent study, the rate in Saskatchewan is even higher, standing at approximately 15%.

In large cities, the incidence of francophone immigration can even be seen in the schools. Francophone school enrolment in Saskatchewan has increased, and roughly 25% of the children are from visible minority families.

Immigrants who settle in Saskatchewan help us offset the aging of the francophone population. And it's worth noting that, of all Canadian provinces, Saskatchewan has the highest percentage of elderly among its francophone population. This is why we believe francophone immigration is the only way to maintain a vibrant francophone population in our province.

Our role is to facilitate economic immigration in order to meet needs like access to the workforce needed to grow Canadian businesses, and to attract foreign investors to stimulate job creation and ensure job retention for Canadians.

That said, there are still major complications in matching potential francophone immigrants to Canada's workforce requirements.

In my opinion, we must ask ourselves two questions.

The first is: How do we increase the capacity of official language minority communities to recruit, welcome and integrate immigrants?

In my last presentation, I spoke about the importance of economic development. Naturally, immigrants come to Canada to work. And they need to join the workforce as quickly as possible, or, in some cases, start a business to replace jobs or others, so they can remain here, and live a full life in their communities.

The second question is: How do we ensure that immigrants and refugees settle and integrate successfully in official language minority communities? For us, it's essential to have a support network in fields like fields of health, education, culture and law. We need to be able to offer a set of services that will help immigrants integrate into the community.

Right now, we don't have the means. Our organization has 1.5 dedicated person-years for economic integration, and that's for the entire province. People who have visited Saskatchewan might be aware that our territory is vast, and that the francophone communities are very dispersed. It takes seven or eight hours to drive, one-way, from a community in northeastern Saskatchewan, to a community in southwestern Saskatchewan.

Given the distance, and the fact that francophone communities are very dispersed, 1.5 full-time equivalents per year is not sufficient to offer services to the immigrant population.

Our role is to work with employers, both francophone and anglophone. Since our province, and our employers, are majority anglophone, it's essential that immigrants learn English. To succeed in placing francophone workers with anglophone employers, we must make the case that the ability to offer services in French, or to work in French, represents added value.

● (0935)

We have found that employers in rural areas have little familiarity with the immigration process. It's important that we work with them, and that we help them recruit, hire and support an immigrant workforce that can work for their businesses.

It's also worth noting that Saskatchewan is interestingly diverse. While francophone immigrants are mainly of African descent, other people come to Saskatchewan, especially from India and the Philippines. As a result, our diversity is quite good. When the people mix, the employers and new immigrants go through a learning process so that the new immigrants, whose culture is different, can adapt to the workplace.

We definitely need to raise awareness, disseminate information, and offer workshops to new immigrants. We don't think the most recent roadmap contained enough funding to enable us to offer the services necessary to have an impact in the realm of immigration.

Economic integration can happen if there's support for immigrants who want to become part of the Canadian labour market, especially in Saskatchewan. There are a few things we'd like to do. First, we'd like to work more closely with temporary foreign workers, and offer them services to help them transition toward permanent residence. We'd also like to focus on international students, and encourage our colleges and universities to welcome more francophones so we can help them transition to the workforce.

We conducted certain activities in partnership with our development and employability network in Canada. We started offering virtual job fairs, and we're working more and more with Canadian embassies on pre-arrival and other services as part of the Destination Canada job fair, which will be held during the coming two weeks.

Immigrants often say that employers ask whether they have Canadian experience. So there's a shortage of employment internships. There are some programs for young people at present. I strongly support that initiative, aimed at integrating them into the workforce. Those young people are 16 to 30 years old. There are also older immigrants with very little Canadian experience, and right now, there are no opportunities to offer them employment internships aimed at helping them join the labour market.

Lastly, I think that IRCC's permanent programs need to support a francophone immigration continuum that includes economic integration of francophone immigrants. Specifically, employability is an essential stretch of the road to immigrant integration and retention. Without jobs, they won't be with us for long. The problem is that this aspect isn't getting much support. That's why we want the next roadmap to contain a component dedicated exclusively to the economic integration of francophone immigrants.

Thank you for your time.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. François Choquette): Thank you very much, Mr. Therrien.

We will now give the floor to Ms. Brouillette, of the Association des collèges et universités de la francophonie canadienne. She will address immigration.

Ms. Lynn Brouillette: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

During the summer, the provincial and territorial governments did indeed agree on a target of 5% for immigration within francophone communities. We salute the government for this renewed political will in relation to francophone immigration. However, to achieve these targets, concrete, efficient, and especially, collaborative measures, which complement each other, must be implemented and strengthened.

As Sylviane Lanthier of the FCFA recently mentioned when she appeared before your committee, considerable efforts have been devoted to four areas of intervention over the past 15 years: promotion, recruitment, intake and integration.

It's clear that Canada's francophone post-secondary institutions play an important role and contribute in various ways in these areas of intervention. They do this by working closely with organizations and stakeholders at the forefront of this realm, such as the FCFA, RDÉE Canada, Colleges and Institutes Canada, or CICan.

As I mentioned in the first part of my presentation, the categories of students who attend our Canadian francophone colleges and universities obviously include students with deep Canadian francophone roots, students who have graduated from French immersion programs, immigrants, international students, and adults who are pursuing continuing education with a view to joining the labour market. In fact, the immigrant and international student categories are experiencing considerable growth. In some of our institutions, they represent up to 20% of the student clientele.

We help promote the communities to future immigrants and prospective international students by taking part in various ÉduCanada fairs organized by the federal government in selected countries. In addition, over the last few years, we've been taking part in Destination Canada, to which reference was made earlier.

We also play an important role in welcoming and integrating immigrants. I'd like to share some numbers with you on that. There are certainly many interesting programs, that are attracting clientele. All told, our 21 colleges and universities offer 900 programs. On the anglophone side, more than 16,000 programs are offered. So you can see that the offer sizes are quite different. That's why it's important to continue to develop programs, and offer other types of programs. My reference to hundreds of programs might seem to be a large number, but it's only 7% of what's being offered in English. This gives you an idea of the orders of magnitude.

For the past few years, we have also been collaborating with CICan on the Canadian Immigrant Integration Program and on Planning for Canada, to help immigrants prepare before their departure, and to facilitate their social and professional integration into the communities. To ensure a personalized professional orientation service in French, the Association looks after the delivery of this service. We offer future immigrants a central access point, and work on the preparation needed for their professional and economic orientation within Canada's francophone communities. This service helps immigrants better prepare so they can better succeed economically; it does so by providing them information, advice, planning, and online support. This way, candidates can benefit from numerous services, such as access to top-flight search and information resources, and advice on considering solutions and making good decisions for themselves and the family members who will be joining them. We give them an idea of the challenges and opportunities that await them on Canadian soil. We also offer them direct connections with our educational institutions, and with professional associations, francophone immigration networks, immigrant assistance organizations, and any other organizations that can help them.

In closing, I'd like to assure you that the Association's institutional members have succeeded in adapting to the new demolinguistic reality of French-speaking Canada, and now reflect that diversity.

As I said earlier, our student constituencies include francophones with deep roots in Canada, but also, young people from exogamous and immigrant families, immersion program graduates, international students and adults who are or have been employed, speak French as a mother tongue or second language, and are pursuing continuing education.

• (0940)

Therefore, an increased federal government investment in the next Official Languages Action Plan is essential. It would be used to strengthen our colleges' and universities' capacity to implement the infrastructure needed to welcome more immigrants, international students and immersion graduates who need personalized help and special support services in our institutions. In particular, collective projects of the kind we wish to carry out would become possible thanks to such an increased investment.

Thank you for your time. It will be a pleasure to answer your questions.

• (0945)

The Vice-Chair (Mr. François Choquette): Thanks very much, Ms. Brouillette.

We will immediately begin with Mr. Généreux, for six minutes.

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

Ms. Brouillette and Mr. Therrien, thank you very much for being with us today.

Ms. Brouillette, I will continue along the lines of what you just said about immersion programs at the end of your presentation. We know these programs are very much in demand in Canadian schools.

It would probably be possible to double or even triple the number of immersion students.

You say you nonetheless have a solid clientele from these programs. When the young people finish secondary school, which ends in the twelfth grade in English Canada, do you know what percentage attend francophone colleges thereafter?

Ms. Lynn Brouillette: Well, I can give you some data on the subject. The data are from the report of the Senate Standing Committee on Official Languages. It's a very interesting report, published in the summer of 2015, concerning the immersion clientele. The report contained some very interesting recommendations.

One of the details I remember from the report is that there are 1.7 million students enrolled in anglophone schools, and more than 380,000 students enrolled in immersion programs. Based on 2014-2015 statistics, 4,000 immersion students attended our 21 colleges and universities.

Mr. Bernard Généreux: Does that seem like a lot to you?

Ms. Lynn Brouillette: No, it doesn't.

Mr. Bernard Généreux: That's what I was going to say.

Ms. Lynn Brouillette: There is still an enormous amount of work to do on that. I appreciate your question, because it's a very important aspect to remember.

Mr. Bernard Généreux: It seems to me they're a captive clientele.

Ms. Lynn Brouillette: In a sense, yes. However, on the anglophone side, there really is a wide variety of programs. As I mentioned earlier, there are 16,000 of them, compared to the 900 offered by our network of francophone colleges and universities. This shows how important it is to improve the program offering by increasing the number of programs, and how much work we still need to do on promotion, recruitment, and student success.

Mr. Bernard Généreux: Earlier, you said you receive \$17 million. Is that money from the Health Canada program alone, or is it from all the various departments that have a francophone mandate?

Ms. Lynn Brouillette: Currently, Health Canada is the main source of funding for the program offering.

Mr. Bernard Généreux: Have you estimated the additional amounts you would need to get more clients? I'm referring not only to amounts for promotion, but also for program development.

Ms. Lynn Brouillette: Yes.

In the most recent roadmap, we received \$90 million over a five-year period, to maintain and implement health programs in our 21 colleges and universities throughout Canada. We would like to obtain approximately \$130 million over five years, so we can create even more programs.

I should reiterate that the number of programs we have represents a mere 7% of the number offered in English. That gives you an idea of the discrepancy in the offerings. The distance of the institutions is another reason it's often more difficult to attract clientele. Many anglophone colleges and universities are closer to the population, and that makes it easier to attend them. Not to mention the fact that they also offer a wide range of programs.

Consequently, we need support to implement other programs in the health and justice fields. In the justice field, we need to multiply the program offering by four so that services can be offered in both official languages.

Mr. Bernard Généreux: Could we get the report from the Senate?

You said this report includes recommendations. Which are the most important ones for your organization?

In business, we often hire people from other ridings or other countries. Mr. Therrien, you were talking about integration. Integrating people from abroad, who have little experience, is not easy. In your view, what measures would facilitate integration, particularly in minority communities, and in isolated or rural regions?

The fact that these people, from outside the area, are invited to settle in rural areas, adds to the difficulty. In Quebec as well, it's difficult to attract immigrants to the regions, because, in the large cities, they tend to settle in areas where there are people of their nationality. This creates a natural feeling of belonging and connection. So it's not easy to take them away from the major centres and into other areas.

Are you experiencing the same thing in your area?

• (0950)

Mr. Robert Therrien: Absolutely.

What makes a difference, especially in rural communities where jobs are available, are the host community, and integration into the community. The community that welcomes these new immigrants needs to familiarize itself with their interests. It must be open enough to welcome them, and accept them as they are.

But sometimes, the norms or practices of other countries are not seen as normal here. Some people have no notion of time. For example, if work begins at 8:30, you have to specify to them that it's not 9:15. You have to tell people they must phone if they won't be coming in for work, etc. There's a lot to learn and a lot to teach, and it takes time. Employers need to show some flexibility to prepare these people and accompany them during their integration. We need to invest a lot of effort to create the bond between the employer and the newly hired immigrant.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. François Choquette): Thank you very much, Mr. Therrien.

I'm sorry, Mr. Généreux, but the time available to you has elapsed.

I now give the floor to Mr. Arseneault.

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

Ms. Brouillette, you did a good job summarizing the four areas of intervention in the realm of immigration—namely, promotion, recruitment, intake and integration. I added the question of retention to that.

Several witnesses came to talk to us about promotion. They talked about minority francophone communities, and how to attract francophone immigrants to them. According to these witnesses, the promotion being done in this area outside Canada simply doesn't succeed in communicating to the rest of the world that there's a living, vibrant language in Canada called French. I'd like to hear your comments on this subject.

With respect to recruitment, I will share the negative comments we heard, such as comments on the French test that people must pass outside Canada. I won't revisit that, but let's just say that the situation is already problematic from the start.

With respect to intake, community organizations in minority communities have said they don't have sufficient funds to adequately welcome the people into the community. Often, the larger and possibly better-organized agencies say they can offer bilingual service. But they're not referring to a francophone window, and to services offered by francophones, for francophones. Lastly, with respect to integration and retention, we are told retention is already a problem. In fact, Mr. Généreux alluded to the problem indirectly.

I'd like to know what we've done best, how the federal government could help you improve the situation, and in which fields the government, in your association's view, is less effective.

Ms. Lynn Brouillette: With respect to immigration, we've implemented a pre-departure project that enables us to go to certain countries and acquaint people with francophone Canada. When we're abroad, our main work is to tell people about francophone Canada outside Quebec, in order to encourage immigrants to come to our communities. It's the initial work that needs to be done, because the knowledge isn't there. After that, we need to tell these immigrants that it's possible to live in French outside Quebec, and that there are lively, interesting communities where they can settle—communities that have a lot to offer them. It's this project, in particular, that helps us encourage immigration.

As for the colleges and universities, they can support what we, in French, call the “three Rs”: recruitment, retention and success. A lot of work will be needed to put service infrastructure in place in our post-secondary institutions for all the student clientele.

We have an immigrant clientele—they are the topic of today's discussion—but the immersion graduates who make themselves to us need help and support too. In some of our colleges and universities, there are programs or service structures known to work well.

I spoke before about collective projects. With federal assistance, we could do these types of projects Canada-wide. Thanks to our collaborative efforts, we can take what works best in the provinces and territories and apply it in a Canada-wide perspective. That's how we implement all our projects, whether they be program development or service infrastructure to benefit our colleges' and universities' clientele.

• (0955)

Mr. René Arseneault: I'm going to ask one last brief question.

Sorry, but since my time has run out, I will give the floor to Ms. Lapointe.

Ms. Linda Lapointe (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, Lib.): Hello, and welcome, Mr. Therrien.

I'd like to ask you a question about early childhood.

Earlier, you said that there's a shortage of infrastructure, and that, in some places, there are waiting lists. If young children don't attend a francophone day care like their parents want, will those children continue their educations in English, or in French?

Mr. Robert Therrien: Some of these young children will definitely continue their education in English. Day care is where children are prepared for regular school. I don't have the figures in front of me, but it's been observed that when children are in an anglophone day care, they continue their education in the anglophone system because of that.

Ms. Linda Lapointe: Thank you.

I have a brief question for Ms. Brouillette.

It's thought that francophone immersion tends to make students want to study in French at the college and university levels. But a shortage of francophone teachers has been reported. Is this a problem you face? Are you able to meet the francophone schools' needs in this regard? Have you ever thought of doing exchanges with Quebec, where there are a lot of francophone teachers?

Ms. Lynn Brouillette: We're considering it. There's a shortage of immersion teachers, and French teachers in our schools. It's a problematic situation. We are indeed in touch with Quebec to see how we might help our schools find francophone teachers. We are working on that with the ACPI—the Canadian association of immersion teachers.

We are working with France toward this objective. There are many trained teachers in France who do not have a job. The unemployment rate for teachers in France is high. We have projects to encourage people from Quebec and France to come teach in our schools.

Ms. Linda Lapointe: Have you quantified your teacher shortage?

Ms. Lynn Brouillette: No. The schools themselves should be able to answer that. We hear of the shortage anecdotally. Our colleges and universities, which often have close relationships with schools, are quite aware of the problem.

Our network of 21 colleges and universities has nine faculties of education. We would like to increase the cohorts of students so that more teachers can be trained, because there's a major shortage at the moment.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. François Choquette): Thank you very much, Ms. Brouillette.

We will now move on to Mr. Samson.

After that, we'll have a bit of time for a series of three-minute questions.

Mr. Darrell Samson (Sackville—Preston—Chezzetcook, Lib.): I have 20 minutes, do I not?

The Vice-Chair (Mr. François Choquette): Not quite, Mr. Samson. You have six.

Mr. Darrell Samson: Mr. Therrien and Ms. Brouillette, thank you for being with us today. I'm happy to see you both.

Mr. Therrien, I don't think we've formally met. I really appreciated your presentations.

I will start with you, Mr. Therrien. If I understand correctly, your region has achieved the target of 2.4% or 4.4%. Could you confirm that?

• (1000)

Mr. Robert Therrien: According to the most recent figures available to me, 2.4% is the percentage of francophone immigrants who have settled in the province in recent years.

Mr. Darrell Samson: I'm very happy to hear that. Congratulations; that's considerably higher than the percentages we're seeing elsewhere in the country.

You also said that there's been a 25% increase in the number of students enrolled in francophone schools. That's very impressive. Could you briefly tell me about your winning strategy?

Mr. Robert Therrien: In my opinion, the winning strategy is to work with employers, encourage them to hire francophone immigrants, and make it easier for them to hire them. I'm referring to an anglophone employer clientele, which we need to convince that hiring francophones is good for business.

We need to work with immigrants in the community as a whole. As I said earlier, it takes an entire community to help them integrate, and to work with them on intake, settlement, education, legal services, and other services. The more they integrate, the more likely they are to remain.

Mr. Darrell Samson: I very much agree.

If you have an action plan or document on the subject, could you send it to us? We would like to have it, because your francophone community is one of the country's leaders in immigrant recruitment. We'd like to know your secret. I very much agree that the connection between immigration and employability is strong. You've been doing it from the start. You recruit and welcome people, and use other methods. Before we move on to the next witness, I have a question for you about the census.

We've returned to a longer-form census, and we're working on the questions for the next census. If I understand correctly, certain questions are missing because, for the moment, it is not possible to identify the true number of francophones and bilingual people in the provinces. No precise questions on the subject are asked. Do you have any comments about the census?

Mr. Robert Therrien: It's true. The census data do not provide an overall picture of the people who speak or know French in Canada, because the issue is always mother tongue. The real issue should be bilingualism.

Having lived in a rural community during the first 40 years of my life, I know that the family member chosen to fill out the questionnaire can sometimes make a difference. Essentially, no true portrait of the population that understands and speaks French in Canada exists.

Mr. Darrell Samson: Thank you.

If you have any suggestions, or questions to ask on the subject, this would be the time.

My next question will be for Ms. Brouillette.

I must congratulate you, because people need to understand that section 23 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, which provides support for public schools that teach children ages five through 18, does not refer to colleges, universities, or day care centres. This has therefore been a major problem.

I acknowledge that the Fédération nationale des conseils scolaires francophones—that is, the national federation of French school boards—and the Table nationale sur l'éducation—the national education roundtable—are developing a more precise picture of this challenge throughout the country.

If we don't get the children when they're youngest, and we don't convince those who are finishing their studies at francophone schools to pursue their post-secondary studies in French, that's a problem. You've done exceptional work on this, and I thank you for it.

I'd like you to give us a few examples of collective projects. In minority communities, based on the situation, one must find ways and means, and one must be innovative and creative. It's really important to have strategies to ensure the projects are successful. You were talking about collective projects. Could you give us a few examples of that? I'm very interested in that. I know you do good work.

Ms. Lynn Brouillette: I would also like to talk about the continuum. After that, I will provide concrete examples.

A bit earlier, the importance for young people to start in the francophone system in early childhood was mentioned, because it's well known that every time there's a sensitive transition, many of the children are lost.

We're the last link in the chain that constitutes this continuum. That's why we also work on the question of day care with RDÉE Canada and the Commission nationale des parents francophones. Our institutions train the people who work in day cares. That's why we also work with the Commission nationale des parents francophones on the continuum question. This has to be seen as a whole, because it's very important. It's the route that needs to be promoted to the community.

•(1005)

Mr. Darrell Samson: I'm happy you brought up this aspect. If French programs were implemented for all students nationwide, the number of students in our schools would double or triple.

Could you give us a few examples of matched projects?

Ms. Lynn Brouillette: There are two major components to our collective projects: program creation and offer; and the development

of support services for promotion, recruitment and retention in our institutions.

Given where the institutions are at, we are no longer considering developing programs exclusively for their respective territories, whether it be the Université de Moncton, the Université de Saint-Boniface, or the Collège Éducacentre in Vancouver. We've been working together since 2003. It's an important aspect of our model.

The fact that our association has achieved a certain maturity means that when we develop programs, we gather at the table, notify the people of the needs we have, determine whether there are other needs, and work on developing a program together. It's always from a nationwide perspective. That's what makes our network strong. Even though the provinces have jurisdiction, it's always developed in such a way that it's available throughout Canada.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. François Choquette): Many thanks, Ms. Brouillette and Mr. Samson.

We must now begin the last series of questions and answers.

You each have three minutes.

We'll begin with Mr. Lefebvre,

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

Ms. Brouillette, you mentioned an interesting point about teachers. In Sudbury, many people get a degree from the faculty of education at Laurentian University, but there are no jobs there. That's what one of my staffers, who got a degree from that faculty, has confirmed to me. Nowadays, you have to go to Quebec or France. The people who have acquired training might not want to move.

We have very good programs—in Ontario, there's the University of Ottawa, and Laurentian University in Sudbury—and we have graduates from those programs.

As far as our current system is concerned, what, in your opinion, is the challenge to be met?

Ms. Lynn Brouillette: Incidentally, I'm a graduate of Laurentian's faculty of education, and I also have a degree from the University of Ottawa.

My understanding is that the challenge is mainly about immersion teachers, and teachers who teach French. I think the shortage is biggest there. At least that's what people in the jurisdiction are saying.

Some people say there are fewer jobs, but as someone who had a career in education, I would say the situation appears mainly to be affecting urban areas. This is because people tend to want to settle near where their school or faculty was located.

By way of illustration, the shortage might be less serious in Sudbury. In Foleyet, Smooth Rock Falls, or the southern part of the province, such teachers are in great need. It's a question of mobility, and of whether one is prepared to travel to secure employment.

Mr. Paul Lefebvre: Thank you. I wanted to ensure this point was clarified.

As far as post-secondary infrastructure is concerned, what challenges are your members facing?

Ms. Lynn Brouillette: That's an excellent question. I'm happy to have the opportunity to talk about it.

In the coming years, we could implement services if we receive significant funding. There's extraordinary potential on the immersion side, for example. Indeed, many people can adopt a linguistically dual lifestyle, and represent the way we want ourselves, and our country, to be.

There's enormous investment in immersion schools, but after that, the students are forgotten. If few students study in French at the post-secondary level, and they only pursue such studies 10 to 15 years later, it should not be surprising that more than half of them say they are no longer bilingual at that stage.

Our network would be able to help them. We could offer them more programs that might interest them. We already have a nice range of programs. We have nearly 1,000 French programs in the jurisdiction. But there need to be incentives for these people to enrol in our programs. There are very good universities in many communities, but the people who want to study in French at the post-secondary level have to travel. A person who wants to study law will have to go to Moncton or Ottawa.

• (1010)

The Vice-Chair (Mr. François Choquette): Thanks very much, Ms. Brouillette.

Thanks very much, Mr. Lefebvre.

We now give the floor to Mrs. Boucher, who has three minutes.

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

I had two or three questions, but I'll continue on the topic of infrastructure, because I want to understand that situation properly.

Communities want infrastructure, and we've heard a lot about that. Immersion schools are built, and then, after 15 years or so, the clientele is lost. The infrastructure ends up being used for only a short time.

When you request money for infrastructure, is it for long-term projects? How will it help you if, as you say, immersion is dropped after 15 years? That's what I have a hard time understanding.

Ms. Lynn Brouillette: When I speak of infrastructure, I'm not referring to buildings. I'm referring to the service infrastructure in our colleges and universities.

Simon Fraser University, which is one of our members and offers some French programming in Vancouver, is an example. The university has put a very interesting program in place for clients who come to them from an immersion context.

That's the kind of structure I'm talking about. The service infrastructure. Bear in mind that people who studied in immersion schools often feel uncomfortable about their second language proficiency, even though 18% of them consider themselves bilingual. They are somewhat insecure. They wonder whether their French is good enough to enable them to study in French at the post-secondary level. You can see that there's a lot of promotion to be

done. In addition, there needs to be the capacity to take in these students and provide them support services. Since our clientele at the college and university levels are very diverse, we need that support infrastructure.

The University of Ottawa has also implemented an extraordinary program to take in immersion students. The additional services made available to these students help them with their efforts. They are support services.

At Simon Fraser, a community-based program, whose name I've forgotten, was put in place. The linguistic duality I dream about, means knowing not just a language, but a community. It means being interested in that community, and loving it.

So it's more than simply knowledge of the language. That's how we see the Canada of our dreams. That's what we're talking about. We want an immersion program, and we also want to provide support for people who graduate from those programs. It's not just a question of language; it's a question of love for the people you've been living with all your life. That, to me, is the social contract.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. François Choquette): Thank you very much, Ms. Brouillette and Mrs. Boucher.

We have little time remaining, but if the committee will permit, I will nonetheless take two minutes to talk about the roadmap.

Ms. Brouillette, the Réseau national de formation en justice, a francophone legal education network, has been around since 2014. I think it's an excellent initiative. In fact, the Commissioner of Official Languages has worked very hard on access to French in universities. He tabled a report on the subject in 2013.

The Minister of Canadian Heritage, who was here last week, said that she has started work on implementing the recommendations. I don't know whether you were consulted, or if you eventually will be, but, with respect to access to justice in both official languages throughout the country, what recommendations or applications do you hope will be proposed? What help do you hope to get from the federal government, and from the Honourable Mélanie Joly, Minister of Canadian Heritage?

Ms. Lynn Brouillette: Thank you very much for asking that question, Mr. Choquette. I haven't had much opportunity to talk about the justice field, and you're giving me the opportunity to return to it.

A study done by the Department of Justice has shown that we need to train four times more professionals in the justice field. Equitable access to services doesn't just mean equitable access to the courts. It also means equitable access to the justice system. That includes not only lawyers and judges, but also police officers, correctional officers, and other people who gravitate around the justice system.

It's a field we hope to develop. We want to build on the successes we achieved in the health field, while keeping a Canada-wide perspective. The network we've assembled includes nine of our institutions, but there are also external groups like the Association des juristes d'expression française du Nouveau-Brunswick, which provides language training. They are members of the network managed by our association.

We would like to grow this network considerably, to better meet the needs of justiciables, who are vulnerable people. The reason we've addressed the justice and health fields first is that an individual who needs health care or is dealing with the justice system is in a very vulnerable position. In such situations, people want to express themselves in their language. When people are experiencing mental health problems, or problems with the justice system, they want to speak in the language with which they are most comfortable.

•(1015)

The Vice-Chair (Mr. François Choquette): I'd like to express this committee's gratitude to Ms. Brouillette, the Association des collèges et universités de la francophonie canadienne, and Robert Therrien of the Conseil économique et coopératif de la Saskatchewan. Your testimony has been very helpful and beneficial to the committee. We thank you for it.

The meeting is adjourned.

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