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Chair

The Honourable Denis Paradis

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• (0850)

[*Translation*]

The Chair (Hon. Denis Paradis (Brome—Missisquoi, Lib.)): Good morning, everyone.

Before we officially start the meeting, I have something I want to tell you. We had scheduled a meeting with Minister Foote on the morning of Tuesday, December 6, but she will not be able to attend. However, she could come on Tuesday afternoon, at 3:30 p.m.

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher (Beauport—Côte-de-Beaupré—Île d'Orléans—Charlevoix, CPC): I will be on duty then.

The Chair: Being in committee counts as being on duty.

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: Not any more.

Mr. René Arseneault (Madawaska—Restigouche, Lib.): That's true, it no longer counts.

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: Maybe you are available on your side, but I will have to ask our whip.

The Chair: Go ahead, Mr. Choquette.

Mr. François Choquette (Drummond, NDP): Mr. Chair, I will not be here next week in any event. However, there are colleagues to replace me. They will be available at the committee's normal time. So, if we make a change, it should be within the committee's normal time.

The Chair: Madam Clerk, can we come up with some other dates?

The Clerk of the Committee (Ms. Christine Holke): Yes, no problem.

The Chair: We will come up with some other dates so that the committee can sit at its normal time, because this seems to be complicated.

Yes, Mr. Choquette?

Mr. François Choquette: It is not possible for me, except at the committee's normal time.

The Chair: We got the message. We are going to try to see when the minister will be available at the committee's time. In any event, we want it to be before Christmas.

Go ahead, Mr. Arseneault.

Mr. René Arseneault: We have some work to do before Christmas.

The Chair: It will all work out, with the report and everything.

Mr. René Arseneault: Okay.

The Chair: I will get back to you on it.

This morning we have a briefing on accountability measures for official languages. We are pleased to welcome Hubert Lussier, Assistant Deputy Minister in the Department of Canadian Heritage, Jean-Pierre Gauthier, Director General of the Official Languages Branch, Carl Trottier, Assistant Deputy Minister at the Treasury Board Secretariat and Marc Tremblay, Executive Director of Official Languages.

Welcome, gentlemen.

We will proceed as follows. I will give the officials from Canadian Heritage 20 minutes. Then we will continue directly with the officials from the Treasury Board Secretariat for 10 minutes. There will then be a time for questions and comments.

I should point out that we have received notice that there may be bells around 10:30 a.m. If that is the case, I will be asking your permission to continue until 10:45 a.m., because 15 minutes is enough for us to get to the House to vote.

Mr. Lussier, the floor is yours.

Mr. Hubert Lussier (Assistant Deputy Minister, Citizenship, Heritage and Regions, Department of Canadian Heritage): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I will kick things off, but my colleague Jean-Pierre Gauthier will give the presentation.

It is a pleasure to be here. We fully understand that this is a technical presentation on subjects that are perhaps a little obscure in a number of ways. We are going to look under the hood of our official languages vehicle. If ideas are too technical or too abstruse, we will be happy to try and clarify things.

We will be talking about the architecture of the roadmap, a concept you are working on. Though it is far from including everything that is being done, the roadmap is the flagship carrying the current years' priorities for official languages.

We are going to be talking about coordination and governance and how they come together behind this display case, and about evaluation, a major concept for all government programs. We also want to talk about responsibility and accountability and the need to report our results to you as parliamentarians.

[*English*]

We will also speak of the way we reflect the results to Canadians in general.

I will just add one thing before asking Jean-Pierre to continue with the formal presentation. Some of the things we're going to explain reflect the state of reality as of today with respect to the road map. We've learned over the course of the first two official languages plans how to do things maybe better or how to adjust our ambitions to the reality. Sometimes, therefore, what we will explain today would have been different, had we been here eight years ago explaining the first action plan and the way we did things eight years ago.

Jean-Pierre.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jean-Pierre Gauthier (Director General, Official Languages Branch, Citizenship, Heritage and Regions, Department of Canadian Heritage): Good morning, everyone.

I propose to give you an overview of the presentation you have in your hands. In some places, I may go faster. I want to keep to the 20 minutes that I have been given in order to give you as much time as possible for questions.

Briefly, I am already on page 3 of the presentation. My colleague Hubert Lussier has already presented the first points that you see: the architecture of the initiatives, the governance structure, the evaluation, and the reporting commitments. These are the subjects that we will be spending time on in the next pages.

Basically, the components that you see are the same as those in the 2008 roadmap, but brought up to date. The structure, the aspects, that make up the governance or the accountability in general are therefore more or less the same. There will be a few little differences that I will bring to your attention at the appropriate time during the presentation.

• (0855)

[*English*]

The other thing is, the framework has been approved by the Treasury Board. We mentioned that last time, that the Treasury Board had a chance to review the whole package. It's a 44-page document actually, included in an annex to the board presentation, that highlights all that material, all these things. That's the source.

The other thing is, of course all the different partners of the road map also have their own respective governance structures for their own departments to oversee their own respective initiatives. It's kind of a building block.

[*Translation*]

The governance of the roadmap is presented as a horizontal entity. Each department also has appropriate governance structures and standards for its own initiatives. For the structure's horizontal design, we use those systems as our premise.

I am moving right away to the roadmap architecture, on page 4. It is shown as a graphic on page 5. The model is quite typical of program architectures in all departments. They all have one. This is a structure that the Treasury Board proposes to revise in the coming years. However, it is the model with which we are still working today, and it is certainly the model that we used as our basis in 2013 when we revised the entire governance structure.

On page 5, you will see that the diagram reflects the three priorities set out in the 2013 roadmap. The diagram faithfully reproduces that approach: education, immigration, and communities. Just below those headings of education, immigration, and communities, you will see text boxes containing the objectives for each group of initiatives that make up each pillar.

Right at the top, you can see the box containing the overarching objective that the roadmap seeks to achieve. Once again, the diagram is very representative of quite a classic program architecture found in all departments.

Each initiative is presented in one of the boxes with an arrowhead at the top. Each one has its logic model, its performance indicators, and its evaluation strategy. Administering each is the responsibility of the departments tasked with the various components. There is an element of complexity; basically, it looks like a set of Russian nesting dolls. I would say that is typical of horizontal initiatives in general. To keep moving quickly, I will go right away to page 6.

What does governance mean? Clearly, it relies on existing mechanisms for coordination and accountability. There is an important basic principle that is not unique to the roadmap. The intent is to give federal institutions full responsibility, to prevent the pursuit of objectives under the Official Languages Act from becoming the exclusive responsibility of one group, such as my branch, Marc's branch or any other group in the government. The obligation must belong to the entire federal government apparatus. That, moreover, is the way in which the Official Languages Act is written. Obligations are imposed on federal institutions in a concept that is quite broadly defined.

This principal is completely integrated into our governance structure and a factor when we build sub-governances with the oversight of the road map in our minds, as well as when we consider official languages issues in the federal apparatus in general.

Let me draw your attention right away to an issue that often comes up. You will doubtless have questions about it and, if so, we will do our best to provide additional clarification.

The 2008 roadmap provided for a series of expenditures for governance, for horizontal coordination, in the amount of \$29.9 million over five years. That represented more or less the funding from Canadian Heritage to coordinate and finance the general activities of the Official Languages Centre of Excellence.

Those expenditures still exist, but the choice was made to not present them explicitly in the 2013 roadmap. It was simply a desire to present the roadmap with a focus on the initiatives targeted to the general public, and to remove expenses related to the federal government's internal operations. The amounts are still there. They are still part of the effort. Nothing has changed in that respect. However, in terms of presentation, they are not shown anymore. I know that that has raised a number of questions; people often talk to us about it because they want to understand what is happening. So I thought I would point it out right away. We can come back to it later if there are additional questions.

On page 7, entitled “Roadmap Governance Structure”, you will see the reference to the committee of assistant deputy ministers on official languages (CADMOL) that meets about four times a year in two forms. It meets in plenary once a year, in November. The meeting often takes place in the week around Remembrance Day, when the House is not sitting. A dozen assistant deputy ministers from different departments come together to review official languages issues in general.

There is also a smaller version of the committee known as the executive committee of assistant deputy ministers on official languages (EX-CADMOL). It meets another three or four times a year to deal with other matters.

There is also a forum for directors general that I head. We meet three or four times a year to consider various issues. The forum also allows colleagues from other departments to provide presentations and updates themselves. That is done regularly.

Colleagues from Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada, and from Service Canada have given presentations, as have others. Mr. Tremblay also used the forum to give a presentation about what was going on at the Treasury Board. In this director general's forum, all kinds of issues are shared and discussed. We inherited the structure from the 2008 roadmap and it was restructured in 2011. Today, we always use it in the same format.

Page 8 takes a step backwards and provides a diagram showing what I have just explained to you a little more globally. You can see CADMOL, CADMOL-EX and the DGs' forum, the three committees I was telling you about, in the three large boxes in the middle. We also establish the context, with our federal partners underneath and the Minister of Canadian Heritage and the cabinet on top.

This is a simplified diagram. There are others where we identify committees like this one. We also identify the Commissioner of Official Languages, the provinces and territories, or even the minority communities. We have not done so in this diagram, but that is not because we are taking them out or that we do not recognize them. This is just a simplified version of the governance structure.

Moving on quickly.

● (0900)

[*English*]

What do we do exactly about this at Heritage? In essence, we coordinate this whole structure quite a bit. It includes, of course, providing support to the committee structure. They meet. They have agendas, material. The material is handed out ahead of time and so forth. This is one of our roles.

We also will collect all the information from the various departments to feed the reporting that we have to do under the departmental performance result annex that we fill out as the lead department for the horizontal initiative. We collect a lot of their actual data. We ask that that data be approved by their CFO and responsible ADM. That's another thing. We collect the data. We also set up annual consultations between the CADMOL and the community organizations. That's also part of what we do in relation to the road map.

Cruising along, I'll switch to page 10. The official management of the road map is one area specifically where we are providing a very concrete service.

In essence, we collect all the data in terms of the money spent by all the departments, by initiative, as we're required to do. We then put that into an overall table every year to say how much money there was to be spent and how much money was spent in real terms. Of course, there's additional information at the end of that table in the last column to explain what was done with the funding. If there are gaps either way, it could be a plus or minus, then the department has a chance to explain exactly what happened. That's very much, in my opinion, a key reporting tool that we do every year.

Again, this is very similar to 2008 in terms of providing that kind of information. It's the responsibility of the lead department of a horizontal initiative, and it's one thing we can come back to, if you wish.

The following page presents all of these tools in the activity column that I just mentioned, with a little bit more detail in terms of who's responsible for doing it and how frequently it is done. As I mentioned at the beginning, there is one thing that's kind of new, and I'll pinpoint it in the table. If you go to the second row, second column, at the bottom there are two comments. One is, “PCH coordinates and prepares the Roadmap component of the AROL”.

This is new, because we did hear from the previous report of this committee that people weren't always well aware of the fact that money we were receiving was actually road map money. I'm talking here about the 2008 road map. We decided to include in the annual report, the one that was tabled this summer and appeared a bit earlier this fall, information about the road map inside the annual report, on part VII, to try to provide a little bit more qualitative information to the finished information we were already providing. We were trying to go a little bit further. This is something new that we're trying to develop to provide a little bit more insight as to what's going on with the road map in general.

● (0905)

[*Translation*]

I am now going to quickly move to page 12 so that I can talk about evaluation. I am going to take a step back from the presentation you have in front of you. To give you an idea, there are basically three pieces, one big one, with multiple parts, and two others that are quite easy to describe.

The multiple piece means that the 28 roadmap initiatives will be evaluated. The evaluation can be individual or combined. For example, at Heritage Canada, we carry out 10 of the 28 initiatives, but we use one single approach to evaluate those 10 components. In other words, the 10 initiatives are established and examined together.

The economic development initiative, which is also part of the roadmap, requires participation from the regional development agencies and from Industry Canada. That means five or six partners. They also do their evaluation collectively because it revolves around the same objectives. Since the performance indicators are similar, the evaluations are grouped together, which provides a better reading.

Of the 28 initiatives, I would suggest that we have a dozen evaluations that we can call “individual”. Those evaluations are carried out by each department as an integral part of its internal evaluation plan. This is the first piece of the multiple dimensions.

The second piece is the evaluation of the coordination component. So someone coordinates the roadmap, and that someone is Canadian Heritage. We distinguish this piece from the implementation of the actual roadmap initiatives in order to get a precise reading of the way in which we have carried out our coordination work. It therefore evaluates that aspect only.

The third piece is the horizontal one. We have evaluated the components and the coordination. What remains is to bring it all together into a major initiative called the roadmap. What has it done? What results did it give? This is the 2008 road map, but it will give you the idea.

This approach to evaluation is not new to the 2013 roadmap. We used the same approach as we did in 2008. The evaluation is controlled by the senior verification and evaluation managers in the various departments. Since Heritage Canada is the department charged with the horizontal evaluation, its key manager coordinates evaluation initiatives with the other departments, including timelines and data sharing. We use the data and results from the individual initiatives to feed into the horizontal evaluation.

This coordination is led by the chief audit executive in the Department of Canadian Heritage.

I will stop the description of the evaluation pages there. A lot of other questions can be asked, but I wanted to give you an overview of the components of the evaluation. We can come back to them.

I would like to make it clear that the horizontal evaluation currently underway should be finished in the spring. Please understand that, when I say finished, I also mean published. Evaluations are automatically published on departmental websites.

[English]

On page 14, you actually have the governance structure for the evaluation that's taking place. I will skip that page. If you'd like to come back to it, we can come back. It's about how the committee is structured, who leads it, and so on and so forth. That is, again, for the purpose of the evaluations themselves. I'll just skip it for now.

The other piece that we have in terms of the governance framework for the road map is the risk management strategy. It's a collective work. It's basically all the various members of the road map that brainstorm together to identify the risks that we see could threaten or affect the delivery of the road map, and mitigation strategies are being developed. An assessment of the risk is actually done, and then the mitigation strategies are developed out of that. This is done collectively. This is reviewed every year, and it is reviewed by the working level colleagues to review everything. Then, we move it up to the CADMOL, and have the ADM have a final look and approve it. That was actually in November that the last update was done, about two or three weeks ago.

The last part—and I'll do it in a minute and a half, because I'm out of time—is basically the standard reporting that we do in terms of the annual report on official languages.

As you know, the Minister of Canadian Heritage has the obligation under the act to table a report every year as to what has been done under part VII across government, and that is that report. It's essentially something that was done last summer. We have another one that's being prepared as we speak that will be tabled in the months to come, which will speak to 2015-16.

In essence, I'd like just to spend a minute on page 17 at the very bottom, on what we actually do put in the report, and then I'll stop, because I could go on for 20 minutes just on this one.

We put four things in the report.

We want to provide some information on the road map. I mentioned that already when I referred back to the table a bit earlier.

We also want to report back on the official language programs that PCH is delivering. We have a large suite of programs with secured funding for official languages, so we report on those.

We also would like to spend a little time to report official languages in our department, because Heritage is no different from any other department. We have to ensure that the Official Languages Act is well implemented in our department, and that includes language of work, language of service, and all the rest of it. The minister will speak to that a bit in the report usually.

Then we spend some time on our coordination work, trying to convince, encourage, and support other departments in their implementation of part VII of the act; that is, taking positive measures to foster the promotion of official languages and the development and vitality of minority communities. We changed that approach about four years ago, when we moved from a select 40 to pretty much everyone. We basically take 170 institutions. We coordinate the data gathering with the centre of expertise at TBS.

I guess I'll stop here, because Marc will speak in more detail as to that process. You can just assume that, whatever he is going to say with respect to parts IV, V, and VI of the act, we have the parallel process for part VII. It's actually coordinated, so we asked for the institution to only gather data once as opposed to doing it separately. We try to coordinate as best we can.

Of course, if there are questions about this, I'll be more than happy to answer.

I'll stop there.

• (0910)

[Translation]

The Chair: Thank you very much for your presentation, Mr. Gauthier.

We are now going to hear from Mr. Trottier. Or perhaps it is Mr. Tremblay?

Mr. Carl Trottier (Assistant Deputy Minister, Governance, Planning and Policy Sector, Treasury Board Secretariat): I will start, if I may.

I am Carl Trottier, Assistant Deputy Minister, Governance, Planning and Policy Sector in the Office of the Chief Human Resources Officer. The Official Languages Centre of Excellence is part of my area of activity.

The Treasury Board Secretariat is the administrative body that supports the Treasury Board in carrying out its duties and meeting its obligation under the Official Languages Act. For example, it provides the Treasury Board with strategic advice on the major directions to take in terms of official languages under parts IV, V and VI of the act. It designs the policy instruments adopted by the Treasury Board; it monitors the performance of institutions under parts IV, V and VI of the act, and it writes the annual report to Parliament on official languages.

Marc Tremblay, the Executive Director of the Official Languages Centre of Excellence, will give our presentation today.

Thank you.

Mr. Marc Tremblay (Executive Director of Official Languages, Governance, Planning and Policy Sector, Treasury Board Secretariat): If you could please go to page 2 in our presentation, you will see a visual representation of all the constitutional texts and the legislation that govern the whole area of official languages.

We often refer to this as our house, *notre maison*. You can see there what my colleagues from Canadian Heritage have already described in situating Part VII in this whole. But, more specifically, you can see parts IV, V, VI and VIII that determine the legislative framework governing the matter that I am going to deal with today. This is the accountability framework that lies within the responsibility of the President of the Treasury Board and his department, the Treasury Board Secretariat.

The responsibilities of the Treasury Board are set out more specifically on page 3.

• (0915)

[English]

The Official Languages Act requires the President of the Treasury Board to submit an annual report to Parliament on the status of official languages programs in federal institutions on matters that pertain to the Treasury Board's legislative mandate. The report is based on information that federal institutions have provided to us about their accountability.

[Translation]

The policy on official languages, 2012, governs the reporting requirements for federal departments and institutions.

[English]

The Treasury Board's policy on official languages operationalizes the legal obligation. The requirements for monitoring and reporting mentioned in the policy on official languages make institutions responsible for keeping their information systems up to date and for monitoring their own compliance. The evaluation of the implementation of the policy and the associated policy instruments is based on reviews provided by institutions.

[Translation]

This policy framework therefore supports what my colleagues were referring to, that is, the accountability of the federal institutions themselves. The deputy heads are responsible for evaluating and overseeing the policy requirements within their own organizations.

In terms of accountability, you can see on page 5 that we have been reporting on the implementation of parts IV, V and VI of the act for a number of years. We have actually been doing so since the 1988-1989 financial year, when the President of the Treasury Board's first report was tabled. In March 2016, the President of the Treasury Board submitted the 27th report on official languages, for 2014-2015.

Every year, the Treasury Board Secretariat seeks out a subset of institutions subject to the Official Languages Act so that they can report back on official languages. This takes the form of a questionnaire with multiple-choice and open questions. In the report, the questions are grouped together in five categories: communications with and service to the public, the language of work, human resources management, governance, and finally, the monitoring of official languages programs.

All institutions subject to the act have to submit this data at least once in a three-year cycle. The number of questions has been reduced for small institutions in order to lighten their task of accountability.

The Auditor General of Canada has recognized the viability of this approach and of the collaboration between the Treasury Board Secretariat and the Department of Canadian Heritage, in an audit entitled "Required Reporting by Federal Organizations".

[English]

I'll go to page 6.

[Translation]

Here you have a visual representation. The objective today is not to go into the details of the most recent annual report for 2014-2015, but to provide the committee with the type of information we gather. It must be noted that the institutions that submitted information were instructed to send a copy directly to the Commissioner of Official Languages and to the clerks of the two parliamentary committees on official languages, this committee and the Senate committee.

So you have already seen the graphics, like the ones presented here, in the annual report for 2014-2015, submitted by the President of the Treasury Board. Requiring federal institutions to send copies of their information to the parliamentary committees and the commissioner helps with transparency and with the accountability of the deputy heads in terms of the performance of their organizations.

We now move to page 7.

[English]

The report contains a number of statistical data tables. Data is extracted from various systems for the core public administration from the positions and classification information system, and for institutions outside of the core public administration, data is extracted from the official languages information system. These are publicly available databases. This data is presented in a series of tables that include a number of bilingual positions, level of second language proficiency, and compliance with other language requirements. Data is drawn from all federal institutions and presented every year, and this allows for year over year and statistical trend analysis on key indicators going back several years, to 1978, in fact.

• (0920)

[Translation]

We now go to page 8.

[English]

Data is also presented in a series of tables that indicate the representation of francophones and anglophones over time. Information is broken down by location, by occupational category, and according to the official languages responsibilities associated with bilingual positions.

[Translation]

Finally, on page 9, the annual report also lists and reports on the distribution of federal government offices, those required to provide services in both official languages, those required to provide services in French and those required to provide services and communications in English. The number of offices and points of service was taken from the public database called Burolis at the end of the financial year.

Institutions that are subject to the Official Languages Act update Burolis themselves. So the annual report provides the President of the Treasury Board with the opportunity to account for how the Official Languages Act is applied by federal institutions.

That concludes the presentation on the various methods and sources of accountability as parts IV, V and VI of the Official Languages Act are implemented.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

We will immediately move to the time for questions and comments.

We will start with Mrs. Boucher.

The floor is yours, Mrs. Boucher

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: Good morning, gentlemen.

Thank you for being here today. This is very interesting.

Accountability is a little complicated for everyone.

We have heard a lot from organizations and witnesses who have asked us to provide better accountability. I know that it is complex. Could you explain a little how it is done?

Let's take an aspect of education that falls under provincial jurisdiction. In the memoranda of understanding that we sign with the provinces, is there a specific item that clearly explains accountability? With these kinds of agreements with the provinces, whatever they may be, is it easy or difficult to do?

I have worked for Quebec. I know that it is not always easy to get accountability when money is given to the province of Quebec, because they want to do their own thing.

Is it the same for all provinces? Are there differences in the memoranda of understanding that we sign with provinces depending on whether it is Quebec, New Brunswick or Manitoba? Are the agreements uniform?

Mr. Jean-Pierre Gauthier: We do have accountability mechanisms in education. They are written into the MOU, the overall instrument. To be precise, the clauses are 8.3 to 8.5. Basically, they say that provinces will provide us with annual reports of the financial statements, that is, the amounts spent in the financial year, and a brief statement of the progress made towards implementing their commitments in the agreement.

In principle, the agreements go in a five-year cycle. Every two years, actually in the second year and the final year, we have to have a more detailed report in which the provinces explain the progress made up until that point. Those reports are evaluated.

That flows from an action plan. When we have an agreement with a province, there is an appendix containing the action plan and a specific list of what will be done with the money they are given. From those outcomes, which are determined by each province, we are able to follow the expenditures and the progress made in respect of what they wished to do.

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: Let's say you allocate \$12 million for early childhood.

• (0925)

Mr. Jean-Pierre Gauthier: Yes.

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: Are you in a position to know, in a clear and precise way, whether that amount of \$12 million was actually used for early childhood?

Mr. Jean-Pierre Gauthier: In their report, they indicate that they have actually spent, say, \$11.5 million of the \$12 million they were allocated and they tell us why there was a discrepancy.

I have here last year's report from Ontario by way of an example. Their first commitment was to increase the number of students in French-language schools from 98,695 to 100,000. In the last report we have, for 2014-2015, the number of students is shown as 101,837. That shows, therefore, that the objective has already been met in the second year.

Ontario's report covers all the targets that it set and all the commitments it made. That is how we are able to know whether provinces are making good progress in terms of their objectives. Of course, it is possible for a province to tell us along the way that the objective was too ambitious, that it is trying to achieve it, but is not able to and that it wants to revise things. In cases like that, we talk about it.

We are always very conscious of the fact that this is exclusively provincial jurisdiction and our role is one of support. We are not there to tell them what to do, but we still have good business-like discussions with them. That allows us to monitor their use of federal funds. So we are in a position to match that with their reports on how they have spent the money we have allocated to them in each of the areas of investment.

We have six areas of investment for minority schools, and those same six areas apply to investments in second-language learning. So we have 12 sections for those objectives. People assure us that they have spent the money in the areas they were supposed to.

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: The provinces tell you how they spend the money, but does anyone tell the organizations about those discussions?

A number of witnesses appearing here have told us that they have no idea how the money was spent.

Mr. Hubert Lussier: I will say two things about that.

First, some provinces are more transparent than others.

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: I like hearing that.

Mr. Hubert Lussier: I won't say any more.

Second, we have to remember that, when we invest \$1 in a given area of provincial activity, it is very likely that the province itself is investing an amount far in excess of ours. That means that the one federal dollar is hard to trace when there are ten others from the province.

At the end of the day, have \$11 been invested? Or \$10 or \$12?

We rely on the reports signed by the competent provincial authorities who tell us that the federal dollar was invested where it was supposed to be.

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Mr. Samson, you have the floor.

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

I have a lot of questions to ask, but not a lot of time. So I will try to move quickly.

With all due respect to you, the school boards are telling us clearly that they are not being brought into the game. As organizations, they are covered by the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. So they should be able to enjoy a certain independence and to share their priorities with you directly. We should be able to identify direct funding for them.

I am reading the report of the Standing Senate Committee on Official Languages, published in 2005. That is 12 years ago. It is clear to me that the status quo is no longer working. I quote from one of the recommendations:

That the federal government and its partners develop a new framework for the administration of the Official Languages in Education Program...

So that should perhaps come out of the roadmap. It also recommends:

...reviewing the process of negotiation of the protocol and the involvement of the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada;

As well as:

...ensuring the direct participation of French-language school boards in the negotiation of education agreements;

Twelve years later, zero. No progress. This is a major concern. Reading on, I see that it recommends:

...separating minority-language and second-language programs in the negotiation of education protocols and agreements;

Today, 28 school boards across Canada are complaining loudly, as are their communities. Do not forget the three pillars in your roadmap: education, immigration—which is also falling short because we are not even close to the target—and communities. The educators and the communities of our world are saying:

[*English*]

“We're not in the game.”

[*Translation*]

They are not in the game. They should be in it as partners, as signatories. We need accountability. I know that you are doing good work on that, but it is my opinion that the Treasury Board sees the reports from federal institutions, as my colleague has just said, and, I gather, does not consider reports from the commissioners at all. So institutions can say what they like, but when others say that that is a problem, it should be considered in the reports.

The Fédération nationale des conseils scolaires, which represents all French-speaking school boards outside Quebec and which represents all francophone students in official language communities across Canada, says that it must be in the game. School boards want to be signatories in a tripartite model.

What is your opinion about that? Quickly, if you please.

● (0930)

Mr. Hubert Lussier: With all due respect, sir, our opinion matters little. Our efforts and actions to get the best results possible matter a lot. That is our duty. How are we managing the files? What advice are we giving to the minister? What are we doing?

First of all, as you know, we have constant conversations with the French-language school boards, as represented by the Fédération nationale des conseils scolaires. We will be meeting them in a few days—tomorrow actually—and we are perfectly up to speed on their positions. We reflect them in the discussions we have with the provinces. We also have a colleague who, as we speak, is holding discussions with the ministry of education in each province.

As you know, we hold discussions with ministries of education and school board representatives together, as much as possible. It is not always accepted by some provinces and we regret that. We have instituted mechanisms allowing three-way talks to be held in a tripartite committee. The mechanism goes back a decade or so, and allows the provinces, the French-language school boards, and ourselves from the Department of Canadian Heritage to take part in discussions on major issues.

We are going to continue to move those discussions forward with a view to involving and consulting with school boards in as rigorous a way as possible. At the end of the day, the fact remains that the agreements we sign are with provincial and territorial authorities.

Mr. Darrell Samson: Mr. Lussier, I should respectfully say that I am not talking about individuals, but about the system.

Tripartite agreements work with First Nations. You have the provinces, the federal government, and the First Nations. They are asking for the same thing. They are an institution under the charter.

I often hear that the problem is that provinces have jurisdiction in this area. I have a solution that may interest you.

Why could there not be an agreement between the feds and the Fédération nationale des conseils scolaires? That would deal with education. Then there would be a second MOU, the one that already exists, between the feds and the provinces. In that way, there would be horizontal accountability with the school boards and the provinces. There would be two MOUs: one between the feds and the school boards and the other, which already exists, between the feds and the provinces.

I am not talking about Nova Scotia. Our way worked well, but things can still be improved. Last month, I spent two days with school boards from all over Canada. They are not in the game. The status quo is no longer acceptable. As a government, it is our responsibility to take action on this. I know that it may not necessarily be the officials' responsibility. I put that to you as a recommendation. It's 2016; the time for action has come.

● (0935)

The Chair: Thank you for your suggestions, Mr. Samson.

We now move to Mr. Choquette.

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

Gentlemen, the reason you are here today is because I asked you to appear before us. You may remember that.

I must say that I'm a little disappointed with the presentation, because I wanted to know more about your accountability framework. I understand how it works in technical terms, but I do not have the figures on accountability yet.

Can you provide the committee with all the documents, databases and other public sources that include the financial results for the official languages programs? That is what we need. I understand that you cannot give us all of that today, but please do that research and forward it to the committee. That will enlighten us.

We started doing some research, but we could not find all the information, because it's complicated. We were not able to find many of the documents. I want you to send it to the committee so that we can better understand and analyze all that.

The Chair: That will be addressed to the clerk.

Mr. François Choquette: Of course, not to me directly. It will enlighten all the members of the committee.

The Chair: Very well.

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

Let's go back to the much touted accountability framework that the Commissioner of Official Languages mentioned. You have established the framework, but it is secret. The commissioner said that it not being public makes it difficult to evaluate the performance of official languages programs.

As MPs, how can we do our work if your frame of reference is not public? Why isn't it?

Mr. Jean-Pierre Gauthier: As we said earlier, the framework itself is part of a Treasury Board submission. However, the evaluations or all of its components are accessible to the government, including the horizontal evaluation and risk management strategies. The framework is the recipe, but all the content is clearly accessible.

Mr. François Choquette: What I am referring to is what the Commissioner of Official Languages said. There used to be a horizontal management framework, which was public. It was not perfect, but there was one in the first two roadmaps. Afterwards, it disappeared. It took several years to get one. You have finally developed one, but it's secret. The commissioner asks that it be made public. Those are not my words.

Mr. Hubert Lussier: We will make it public. We have permission.

Mr. François Choquette: Thank you very much; that is very good news.

I would like to talk about the reports produced by federal institutions. The Treasury Board reports take the form of questionnaires, which you referred to earlier. These are self-evaluations that are short or long. However, as you mentioned, they are not made public and generally do not contain financial information either.

Given that the assessments are not made public and that, worse yet, financial data are not necessarily present in the reports, tell me how members of Parliament, citizens or members of official language minority communities could ensure that the parts for which you are responsible are respected?

● (0940)

Mr. Marc Tremblay: Mr. Chair, first of all, I would like to make a correction. I indicated that the reports with the responses provided by the federal institutions to the questionnaire sent by the Treasury Board Secretariat are public documents. In fact, the federal institutions forward them to the clerks of parliamentary committees under policy requirements. They are also forwarded to the Commissioner of Official Languages. So those documents are fully transparent.

As to whether financial information is included, the purpose of the document is not financial accountability. Other financial planning reports are public documents and reflect the financial planning and public accountability of federal institutions.

Mr. François Choquette: Mr. Tremblay, I'm sorry to interrupt you, but time is running out. I understand your answer. Thank you very much. I'll check it out.

Is it not true that there are no official languages requirements for reports on plans and priorities and departmental performance reports?

Mr. Marc Tremblay: The policy on results has clear and precise requirements that apply to the overall financial management of institutions.

Mr. François Choquette: Do all reports from institutions include a section on accountability for official languages?

Mr. Marc Tremblay: There are no specific official language requirements. However, the reports are based on program elements. So there are several elements of the official languages program that the departments report directly. Take, for example, the Department of Canadian Heritage. This department has program elements for official languages. Reports are produced under Treasury Board policies and therefore include those particular expenses.

Mr. François Choquette: There isn't much time left.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Tremblay.

We'll now turn to Ms. Lapointe.

Mr. François Choquette: I have finished. The rest will be for another time.

Ms. Linda Lapointe (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, Lib.): Good morning, I'm pleased that you are here with us this morning. I have so many questions for you.

Mr. Tremblay, are the reports Mr. Choquette is talking about available? Would we be able to ask the clerk and researchers to obtain those reports?

Mr. Marc Tremblay: Absolutely.

Ms. Linda Lapointe: Okay. I have other questions for you.

On page 5 of the famous report that you presented to us, it deals with the language of work of public servants. On page 6, there's a graph showing that meetings are often or almost always bilingual.

Have you administered this type of questionnaire to each province?

Mr. Marc Tremblay: The departments—

Ms. Linda Lapointe: That's too long, it means no.

Mr. Marc Tremblay: The departments report on the regions designated bilingual. In terms of the language of work, the province is not—

Ms. Linda Lapointe: Let me continue.

Mr. Marc Tremblay: —relevant.

Ms. Linda Lapointe: Page 7 deals with bilingualism. What are your requirements for public servants to be bilingual? I know there's a rating system, A, B, C, or E for exemption. In your view, what does it mean for an official to be considered bilingual?

Mr. Marc Tremblay: It depends on the Treasury Board policies and the tests administered by the Public Service Commission.

Ms. Linda Lapointe: What is it? Is it B? Is it C?

Mr. Marc Tremblay: It's different. Being bilingual means having the language skills required for the position.

Ms. Linda Lapointe: Okay.

For instance, when you hold meetings, you say that they are bilingual. That's not indicated by province. You cannot tell me based on what—

Mr. Marc Tremblay: It's indicated by regions designated bilingual.

Ms. Linda Lapointe: A little further on, it says that, in 2015, there were 75,000 public servants who met the requirements of bilingualism. Even further on, it says that there are 181,000 public servants in all regions. Is that right?

Mr. Marc Tremblay: I have indicated that the data are from the 2014-15 report. I'm not in a position to give any details on accountability from the previous round. However, I can tell you that some 95% of incumbents of bilingual positions meet the language requirements of their current position.

Ms. Linda Lapointe: You're telling me that you cannot tell me which officials—

Mr. Marc Tremblay: I'm here to talk about accountability in general. We were asked to come and talk to you about that.

Ms. Linda Lapointe: You are with the Treasury Board Secretariat.

Mr. Marc Tremblay: I'll be able to forward the answers to your specific questions later.

Ms. Linda Lapointe: Please. I would really like that.

Mr. Lussier, I am on pages 12 and 13 of your report. You have worked hard on this. With all those tools, do you really feel that we are promoting both official languages across Canada?

• (0945)

Mr. Hubert Lussier: If you had specific questions, I could tell you where we're making progress and where we're doing less. That said, I think our investments are yielding results overall.

Ms. Linda Lapointe: Okay.

Can you tell us how many people at Canadian Heritage are preparing the horizontal evaluation and overseeing what is being done on the ground?

Mr. Jean-Pierre Gauthier: Yes, absolutely. We can tell you later which teams carry out the various evaluations.

Ms. Linda Lapointe: Yes. I would like to know how many people are assigned to implementation, evaluation, supervision, and so on.

Mr. Jean-Pierre Gauthier: We can certainly give you those details later.

Ms. Linda Lapointe: Could you tell me how many people are working on this and ensuring that it's actually implemented.

Mr. Hubert Lussier: I'd like to add an important point.

At Canadian Heritage, there is a team that reports to Mr. Gauthier. Those people have feelers in several departments that work with them. Members of the roadmap and other departments have coordinators working with them.

Ms. Linda Lapointe: Okay. It's important to include them.

Mr. Lussier, I think you've been at Canadian Heritage for a long time.

Mr. Hubert Lussier: Yes.

Ms. Linda Lapointe: It's been a number of years. So you've seen a number of things over the years.

Would it not be better for a single organization, such as Canadian Heritage or the Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages, to coordinate all official languages departments and tools?

Mr. Hubert Lussier: The best way to answer your question is to refer you to what my colleague, Mr. Gauthier, explained about the committee of assistant deputy ministers on official languages.

It is important to note that this committee coordinates the roadmap, but it does more than that. Many of the issues being discussed at the committee and at the forum of directors general, which Mr. Gauthier mentioned, are beyond the scope of the roadmap. That's where the coordination of all official languages happens.

Ms. Linda Lapointe: You haven't answered whether it would be better to have a single organization in charge of that.

Mr. Hubert Lussier: I will still exercise my right of reservation, since I am here as a public servant. I am here to talk about facts, not to give my opinions.

Ms. Linda Lapointe: The goal is to ensure that people can get as many government responses as possible in English and French, no matter where they are in Canada.

You can't tell me what would be better, in your opinion.

Mr. Jean-Pierre Gauthier: Perhaps I can give you a couple of considerations that might shed some light for you.

Ms. Linda Lapointe: Yes.

Mr. Jean-Pierre Gauthier: Depending on the structure of the legislation, all federal institutions must be accountable for official languages under their mandate. It is a way of ensuring that everyone is aware, but also responsible and accountable when it comes to official languages. That's something valuable that we do not want to lose.

This is what we often hear from civil society partners or community organizations that realize the importance of being able to connect with a department in both official languages.

We do not want it to be centralized. However, that is a challenge for us in terms of coordination. The 170 federal institutions on our lists for official languages all have roles on a sliding scale. They do not all have the same potential and the same opportunities to promote English and French or to ensure the development of official language minority communities.

We still have to find mechanisms to have those people interact and give the same guidelines. That is how the committee structure that Mr. Lussier mentioned is useful and valuable in bringing those together so that everyone can discuss them. This is how we are organized at the moment.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We continue with Mr. Lefebvre and Mr. Vandal, who will be sharing their time.

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

Mr. Gauthier, at the beginning of your presentation, you talked about \$29.9 million over five years for your operating budget as part of the roadmap.

Is that right?

Does page 8 of your presentation show that the \$29.9 million is being used to administer the roadmap for all those teams?

Mr. Jean-Pierre Gauthier: Those resources are earmarked for the official languages branch for the coordination I mentioned earlier. That sort of affects committees, for example. They are also used to support the Treasury Board's Official Languages Centre of Excellence, which also performs those functions. I would have a hard time pointing it out exactly on the graph, but those resources do exist in departments.

• (0950)

Mr. Paul Lefebvre: Could you give us a better—

Mr. Jean-Pierre Gauthier: A description?

Mr. Paul Lefebvre: Yes. We have that, but we are talking about accountability. It says that the expenditures are at \$30 million over five years, so \$6 million a year, but we're having a hard time seeing where the resources are going.

Mr. Jean-Pierre Gauthier: Okay. That's not a problem.

Mr. Paul Lefebvre: Could you provide us with a detailed map showing where the resources are going?

Mr. Jean-Pierre Gauthier: We will provide you with the breakdown in a document.

Mr. Paul Lefebvre: Thank you.

The Commissioner of Official Languages said that, in some provinces, access to French-language education was a major challenge. We often hear that parents in British Columbia and Alberta have to stand in line to enrol their children in schools. They know that, if they do not enrol them in kindergarten, they will no longer be able to access education in French.

We're talking about accountability. There is a budget and there are also rights under the charter, as my colleague said.

If there are more requests in some areas, should we not try to address them rather than wait and say that there's nothing we can do, that it is the province's responsibility and just wash our hands of it?

We have obligations toward those people who, under the charter, have the right to access education in French.

Mr. Hubert Lussier: I want to clarify that the line-ups to which you are referring is mainly for the learning of French as a second language, where the question of rights does not exist.

In terms of access to the French-language education system, we've worked hard on it, particularly in a dialogue with the provinces. The recruitment of students and rights holders is one of the six areas in which we expect the provinces to invest.

Unfortunately, and this is particularly the case in British Columbia, some provinces are not as generous as others in terms of their policies on access to the French-language system.

Mr. Paul Lefebvre: What can the federal government do?

You are saying that the rights holders have trouble with the provinces.

Is that what you're telling me?

Mr. Hubert Lussier: No. The issue for rights holders is that some school boards want parents who are not considered to be rights holders by the province to be able to enrol their children in school. This is the case in British Columbia and elsewhere, including the Yukon.

Mr. Paul Lefebvre: So my question is what can be done.

The Chair: Mr. Lefebvre, can we go to Mr. Vandal right away?

Mr. Paul Lefebvre: Yes, thank you.

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

There are many details in your reports. I will read the primary objective:

Canadians live and thrive in both official languages and recognize the importance of French and English for Canada's national identity, development and prosperity.

After two roadmaps—and I think there was a strategic plan before—has this major objective been achieved in official language minority communities?

Mr. Jean-Pierre Gauthier: I would say no, in the sense that this goal represents an ideal state. There is always work to be done to make progress, but we are pleased to see that progress is being made and is accumulating.

I don't think that's really disputed. When they take the time to reflect on it, people recognize that, in the past 10 years, 15 years or whatever period they look at, progress has been made.

More work needs to be done for the objective to be achieved. There will always be gaps, new situations that will require intervention, support, and so on. The goal itself has been deliberately established as an ideal that continues to be pursued.

Mr. Dan Vandal: Absolutely.

[*English*]

Better is always possible.

[*Translation*]

In fact, the situation is improving.

I have another question. Before the roadmap was created, the federal government invested in education, immigration and communities. What value does the roadmap add?

Mr. Hubert Lussier: The added value of our plan is to ensure that several departments have to step up with specific objectives. The exercise we are undertaking today will help shed some light on priority initiatives, including in health, economic development and education.

I would like to add to my colleague's answer to your first question. We are seeing progress in second-language education. There are 40% more immersion students today than 10 years ago. We hope that progress is the result of the roadmap. The rights holders recruitment rate in minority schools—although it is very difficult to check—has gone up, which was one of the main objectives.

Surveys have provided us with the results for Canadians' approval rate for official languages policies; they are encouraging.

• (0955)

The Chair: We'll give the floor to Mr. Nater.

[*English*]

Mr. John Nater (Perth—Wellington, CPC): I'm going to start with Mr. Tremblay from the Treasury Board.

I want to follow up around page 6 of the presentation. I might have missed it, but where were these numbers gathered from, the number of bilingual meetings, the active offer by phone?

Mr. Marc Tremblay: Those are taken from the reviews submitted by federal institutions. They answer a series of questions, including those, and how you do on respecting the right of public servants to meetings in both official languages.

Mr. John Nater: On the numbers here, for example, bilingual meetings, "4", "Almost never", does that mean there are four departments that almost never have meetings that are bilingual?

Mr. Marc Tremblay: It would be 4% who have answered that, and it would have come with an explanation, presumably because this is an office in a unilingual region where there is no right or obligation to conduct bilingual meetings.

Mr. John Nater: Okay, but now the numbers don't seem to be adding up, because we have an *n* of 53, so you're saying there are only 53 departments—

Mr. Marc Tremblay: We give percentages and numbers, yes.

Mr. John Nater: But the number is 53, so is that 53 departments?

Mr. Marc Tremblay: Right, that have reported on that question, in this—

Mr. John Nater: So then the remainder of the departments listed in the Financial Administration Act weren't reviewed for this?

Mr. Marc Tremblay: That's right.

Mr. John Nater: Why?

Mr. Marc Tremblay: Because we review once on a cycle of three years.

Mr. John Nater: I think that's unfortunate.

I want to move on to the concept of performance pay and at-risk pay. Do you know of any examples where senior executives did not receive their performance or at-risk pay because of failures to comply with the Official Languages Act?

Mr. Marc Tremblay: I don't have that information.

Mr. John Nater: Could you provide that information?

Mr. Marc Tremblay: The Treasury Board Secretariat does not have that information.

Mr. John Nater: Okay.

Do you have any thoughts or comments on the bilingualism bonus, and whether Treasury Board has done any review of the value for money of having a bilingualism bonus?

Mr. Marc Tremblay: That would be in the realm that our colleague, Mr. Lussier, was discussing earlier, of opinions of public servants on public policy issues.

Mr. John Nater: No, but I'm asking has the Treasury Board undertaken any studies of that value for money? We spend money on the bilingualism bonus. Is there value for money for that?

Mr. Marc Tremblay: The Treasury Board Secretariat has not done so.

Mr. John Nater: Okay. Again, I think that's unfortunate.

On the management accountability framework, MAF, as we used to affectionately refer to it from my days at Treasury Board, does it take any active measurement of the Official Languages Act and how it's implemented within departments?

Mr. Marc Tremblay: MAF does cover official language components, yes.

Mr. John Nater: Generally, how is MAF seen, or how has MAF undertaken the studies of the respective departments with regard to which departments are doing exceptionally well under MAF in terms of official languages and which departments are doing exceptionally poorly, the opportunity for improvement, for example?

Mr. Marc Tremblay: I'd have to come back to you on the results of—

Mr. John Nater: Perhaps you could provide us with the government-wide results of the MAF specifically as it relates to official languages and where it's taken into account.

The next question is about bilingual offices versus unilingual offices. I want to look specifically at the province of Quebec. Again, there are a large number of unilingual offices. Do you have any numbers or reassurances that you can provide to the committee for the official language minority communities, specifically the English-speaking minority in Quebec? Are those communities represented in Quebec when they need the services of government?

Mr. Marc Tremblay: The official languages regulations provide the assurances that you're asking about. They implement the constitutional and legislative right to obtain services in the minority language, and they determine which of our offices are required to offer services in French, services in English, or bilingual services.

Mr. John Nater: Are the official language minority communities happy? Is there no concern with the availability of services in Quebec then?

Mr. Marc Tremblay: There have been for some time questions about the scope and application of the regulations, and as you may be aware, the President of Treasury Board recently announced that there will be a review of those regulations. That review has started.

• (1000)

Mr. John Nater: On that page as well, we talked a little bit about the number of routes that are unilingual and bilingual in terms of Air Canada and VIA Rail, for example.

Would you be able to provide us with a breakdown of which of those routes are Air Canada routes and which of those routes are other types of routes, whether they're trains or whatever?

Mr. Marc Tremblay: Yes, I can provide that, but not right now.

Mr. John Nater: Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, John.

We'll go now to Mr. Arseneault.

[*Translation*]

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

Good morning.

Mr. Trottier or Mr. Tremblay—I don't know who I have to talk to—simply to dispel some doubts about the famous framework we were talking about earlier and to which my colleague Mr. Choquette referred, will you forward it to the clerk?

Mr. Lussier, I'm sorry, is that what you are going to do?

Mr. Hubert Lussier: Yes.

Mr. René Arseneault: Great, Mr. Lussier. Thank you.

My questions are in line with the comments made by my colleagues Mr. Samson and Mr. Lefebvre. Let's stick to education, shall we?

We are aware of the government's obligations under the charter, as described particularly in section 16. We know—you know them better than I do, Mr. Lussier—what our obligations are under the Official Languages Act, particularly under part VII, quoted earlier by my colleague Mr. Vandal. I add to these obligations respect for provincial jurisdictions. So that's the mess we are in.

Let me remind you of the short charter subsection 16(3) on official languages:

Nothing in this Charter limits the authority of Parliament or a legislature to advance the equality of status or use of English and French.

In education, some provinces collaborate less than others. What can you do with the flexibility provided by subsection 16(3) of the charter to achieve the goal set out in the Official Languages Act?

Mr. Jean-Pierre Gauthier: We have a number of possibilities. To spare you too many details, I would say that we are trying to influence rather than coerce, rather than exercise authority that is questionable from a constitutional point of view.

I fully understand the subsection you have read. If we refer to the Official Languages Act, a section in part VII calls upon us to respect the jurisdiction of the provinces as part of the implementation of our commitment. Beyond this constraint-based approach and the exercise of any authority, I think we are very successful in convincing the provinces, in working with them, in supporting them in their progress and in promoting them, as well as in supporting civil society, including community organizations, to build and advance their demands in order to convince a larger number and to improve the situation.

In the last 10, 15 and 20 years—the 1982 charter, which is a little over 30 years old—progress has been phenomenal in terms of the number of school boards, schools and places in official language minority schools.

Huge progress has been made, especially through support, the power of influence and the ability to convince the provinces to move forward. It is not only a matter for the federal government, but for society as a whole, including official language minority communities. It is true that challenges went all the way to the Supreme Court and also helped settle major issues. So it's a combination of approaches.

The preferred tool in our toolkit is a set of incentives available to the provinces, with financial participation from the federal government in order to have those rights recognized and enforced.

Mr. Hubert Lussier: I would like to add one point, namely the court challenges program, which will be reinstated. For a number of years, it has survived in the form of the language rights support program, which has been used by many school boards to advance the interpretation of rights, including the one for section 23 of the charter.

Mr. René Arseneault: Mr. Lussier, I know you are reluctant to give us your opinion, but I consider you an expert on official languages. If I had to go to court and bring an expert on the matter, it would be you. Everyone would recognize you as such because of your years of experience. Could your office, or someone on your team—you lead a large team—look at a way to respect provincial jurisdictions while doing stuff even more quickly?

Personally, I am part of an invisible minority, I am not from Quebec, I am a francophone outside Quebec. Francophone minorities outside Quebec are the ones who suffer and pay the price. This is a tremendous tragedy and the effects are multiplying. When you cannot get things done, the effects are felt over a number of years, whether in terms of birth rate, or even for children who will never be able to attend a French school in grade 1. It is devastating.

Has your office studied some way, by using the sections of the charter and of the Official Languages Act, to thread your way into respecting provincial jurisdictions in order to act more quickly? Is there a way to do so, and do we have the means for it?

•(1005)

Mr. Jean-Pierre Gauthier: In fact, the position we're taking now is to respect—

Mr. René Arseneault: I get that; you do not use coercion.

Mr. Jean-Pierre Gauthier: We respect the exclusive jurisdiction of the provinces over education. Right now, we cannot allow ourselves to intervene in a top-down way, so we are going back to our incentive approach. That's the school of thought we have long been following in terms of language rights, particularly in education.

Mr. Hubert Lussier: It hasn't stopped us from doing things that the provinces did not always like. The creation of the tripartite committee I mentioned was a hard sell, as they say.

We had to convince the provinces, which were very reluctant, to sit down with us—from the Department of Canadian Heritage—and with the school boards, to discuss common issues.

That has led to joint projects, which I think have advanced the objective you have stated. We have funded, often through the Fédération nationale des conseils scolaires francophones, projects in which some provinces have partnered to explore some avenues: how to improve recruitment and promotion campaigns to find parents who are rights holders, develop early childhood programs and the whole issue of cultural support, which was largely designed in these discussions.

We are still in discussions today. I do not want to say anything different from Mr. Gauthier, but we are constantly reflecting on how to support progress. Some of the suggestions we get from school boards complicate our lives. Mr. Samson's question is constantly before us. We are giving it some thought. We must respect the jurisdiction of the provinces. At the same time, however, I will not hide the fact that we are looking for solutions or mechanisms for new architectural arrangements through which school boards may be more involved in making decisions.

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

Mr. Arseneault: Thank you very much.

The Chair: We'll take a break for a few minutes and then continue. Mrs. Boucher and Mr. Choquette will be the first two members to ask questions after the break.

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_____ (Pause) _____

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•(1015)

The Chair: We'll resume the meeting right away.

I'll turn the floor over to Mrs. Boucher.

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

Good morning, everyone. I have a number of questions.

I think your job is quite difficult. It is true that this seems complex for organizations. We do not always understand the numbers and we get mixed up, because we hear little or nothing about accountability.

We've talked a lot about education, and about protocols with the provinces. I submit a point raised by Mr. Choquette; for once, I agree with him. As a member of this committee, I have a great deal of difficulty understanding why the organizations or witnesses appearing before us often do not have access to those numbers. We're having trouble receiving them. I realize that, with the Treasury Board, it is even more difficult to get an overview of what is being done in terms of official languages.

On page 3, you explain the Treasury Board's responsibilities and duties in relation to official languages in terms of general direction and coordination. As the Treasury Board, do you know which departments are more problematic than others? You must know that.

Canadian Heritage is responsible for official languages, but there is also Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada, Health Canada, and Environment and Climate Change Canada. Which of those departments are less likely to meet or will not meet their bilingualism goals?

Mr. Marc Tremblay: Departments and federal institutions report separately on their performance according to the requirements of Treasury Board policies. So it is possible to check each one's data.

Clearly, the president's report deals with the application of the act as a whole, for horizontal coordination, and provides the overall picture of the institutions. However, for all the data in the 14 or 15 statistical graphs, there are department-specific data that can be examined.

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: Could those graphs be given to the committee for reference?

Right now, we are working on immigration. We have heard a lot about immigration matters. If we had more data, we would have a fuller picture of the departments that are more problematic than others in terms of official languages. That would help us a lot in our work.

•(1020)

Mr. Marc Tremblay: It might be helpful for you to tell us which data you need. Otherwise, we would have to provide you with hundreds and thousands of pages of documents or reports for the 200 federal institutions.

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: Right. We can discuss it later. It would be interesting to get this information from the Treasury Board. It would give us a good picture of the departments that are more problematic.

I'll come back to Mr. Lussier and Mr. Gauthier.

I was the parliamentary secretary for official languages 10 years ago. I see now that, even after all this time, we are still having the same discussions, even though things have improved.

How can we ensure that we don't have this discussion anymore? How can we, at the federal level, make it clear, with your help, that both official languages are essential to Canada's vitality, period?

We also need to make clear the importance of the vitality of linguistic minorities. I'm from Quebec. When you're from Quebec, you have the impression that you're fighting. However, it's important to look at the situation in the other provinces with francophone residents. Mr. Samson, Mr. Lefebvre, Mr. Arseneault, Mr. Vandal and Mr. Boissonnault's situations come to mind. They are in francophone minorities. So they are fighting even more than we can in Quebec, or at least to the same extent as the anglophone minority in Quebec.

How can we make people understand how important the vitality of our francophone communities is?

Mr. Hubert Lussier: I don't want to sound pessimistic, but I think it will always be necessary to do support and clarification work with the various departments.

I speak from experience because I haven't always been immersed in official languages. I did other things in my life. When you're at Health Canada, Industry Canada or another department, you think

your mandate is health or economic development, and you're fully committed to it. It isn't obvious to everyone that health and economic development also has a dimension related to official languages.

We are all—every one of us around this table—responsible for this work. If the young public servant who comes to a department with an economic, social or other vocation does not come from a minority community or was not immersed in that environment, he or she will not know. That young public servant could, at some point, become a director or director general.

This is our role, and we are putting structures in place for this. I think that proselytizing will constantly be required.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Lussier.

We will start a three-minute round of questions with Mr. Choquette.

Mr. François Choquette: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I will try to be brief because three minutes isn't long.

I would like to come back to what you just said, Mr. Lussier, about the importance of all departments. Coordinating all of this is your responsibility, at the Treasury Board and within Canadian Heritage. I think if you had an official languages requirement for reports on plans and priorities, for instance, that would help you greatly. It could lead them to think for themselves.

Have you ever thought about that in your meetings with CADMOL, for instance? Why are there no specific requirements in departmental reports, plans and priorities or performance reports?

Mr. Jean-Pierre Gauthier: We're talking about a very specific discussion; we're talking about the reports as such. At this level, we are going to discuss transparency among ourselves. We look at our accountability, we present these instruments, and that leads to a discussion. The format requirements for the reports, which must be included, and so on, are clearly within the purview of the Treasury Board.

Mr. François Choquette: That's right.

Have you done any reflection, research or studies on this?

Mr. Marc Tremblay: Some colleagues at the Treasury Board Secretariat are responsible for the Centre of Excellence for Evaluation. New policies on results are being developed and will be in place soon.

As for accountability to parliamentarians for spending, there is a question of the effective presentation of information. This information applies to all federal programming, which gives a picture of the results for all federal programs at a level of detail that is intended for all of these programs.

•(1025)

Mr. François Choquette: Mr. Tremblay, I would like to support the remarks of John Nater, who said that requesting triennial studies was foolish. This should be done annually.

Tables on your website show all data under horizontal initiatives. However, the sources to be consulted are not indicated for the total amount of investment for the program in question. When it published the annual report, Canadian Heritage says it does not have the data.

Let's talk about horizontal initiatives. Basically, we see that the total indicated for certain initiatives—notably those that fall within the official languages support programs—does not represent the total expenditure. Then, we see that there are others, but we cannot find them. It's similar to what we were saying earlier.

What should we do to improve this, so that we have the full picture for people working in official language communities?

Mr. Jean-Pierre Gauthier: That's a very good question. We've had the opportunity to talk about it a few times already.

I'd like to go back to official languages support programs. Part of the funding for these programs is associated with the roadmap, and part of their historical funding precedes even the 2003 action plan, which isn't reflected in the roadmap total. It's a bit protracted, and we hope to be able to clarify this because it unnecessarily complicates the discussions.

There are also activities related to official languages that are not captured. Think about Radio-Canada/CBC. It isn't in the roadmap, but doesn't it play a role? The Translation Bureau isn't in the roadmap, either, except for the Language Portal of Canada.

So we decided in the roadmap to present a set of initiatives devoted to official languages. It's important, but there are also a lot of things that are done with regard to official languages in other programs of general application, and it is very difficult to extract this information.

The purpose of this cautionary note is, basically, to keep those things in mind. There is a pesky technicality for official languages support programs, but we have to live with that. As for the federal system as a whole, there are other things that are related to official languages that are not part of the roadmap.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Samson, you have three minutes.

Mr. Darrell Samson: You talked about the tripartite committee, which includes communities, school boards and ministries. I served as chair on the tripartite committee a few years ago. There is no question that it was an extremely difficult task. However, it was also a great victory, which enabled us to work together, to create links, and so on. It was all really positive.

Let's move on now to the provinces. The tripartite committee exists at the national level, but at the provincial level, in which provinces are school boards not part of this tripartite entity?

I was involved in Nova Scotia, although some people didn't agree.

Could you name the provinces?

Mr. Hubert Lussier: Obviously, we're talking about a committee that involves provinces where there is education in French in a minority setting. Quebec is not part of it, by definition.

I don't remember—

Mr. Jean-Pierre Gauthier: We should check who is a member.

Mr. Darrell Samson: Who are they?

Mr. Jean-Pierre Gauthier: I could send you the list of current members.

Mr. Darrell Samson: I would appreciate it.

Mr. Jean-Pierre Gauthier: It could answer your question very specifically.

Mr. Darrell Samson: Thank you.

Mr. Tremblay, if I've understood correctly, reports from federal institutions do not mention official languages.

Is that correct?

You said this earlier.

Mr. Marc Tremblay: No. There are various reports, including the Annual Report on Official Languages from the Treasury Board President, which deals with official languages. With respect to reporting requirements for plans and priorities, departmental reports are not subject to specific language requirements, but refer to programs, initiatives, and expenditure outlines by federal institutions.

Mr. Darrell Samson: Mr. Tremblay, don't you think that it would be an advantage to add this category?

Mr. Marc Tremblay: You asked for my opinion as—

Mr. Darrell Samson: Yes.

Mr. Marc Tremblay: I have no opinion on that.

Mr. Darrell Samson: You don't have an opinion, but I'll give you mine.

Some hon. members: Ha, ha!

Mr. Darrell Samson: As Mr. Lussier mentioned earlier, if you work at Health Canada or another department, you don't necessarily think about official languages. However, if you, at the Treasury Board Secretariat, adopt this requirement, you will force people to meet their official languages obligations. You are the ones responsible for ensuring that it's done.

What a good way to proceed! No more status quo. A new change will apply tomorrow morning, and things may change.

Don't you think it would be beneficial for your department to have that information?

● (1030)

Mr. Marc Tremblay: I believe that the information we need to respond to the legal requirement to table an annual report on the implementation of parts IV, V and VI is sufficient. We have been able to sustain such a relationship for many years.

Mr. Darrell Samson: When we want to improve things, we do not just meet the requirements, but we try to exceed them to ensure greater success. If we want people in the departments to be more aware of these issues and request it in the reports, we will see an improvement. I suggest that you share it with your colleagues so that it can be done. I will also mention it to the minister.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Samson.

Mrs. Boucher, you have time to ask a question.

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: Yes, and I will ask the question that I asked earlier, Mr. Tremblay. It is simple.

I never demand anything, but I will now. I would like you to draw up a list for the committee—I don't want a 100-page list or anything—of the departments that are causing a problem with bilingualism and that you assign a percentage to how much they are not doing their job.

Mr. Marc Tremblay: The committee clerk already has this information. The annual reports and reviews by each department are sent to the clerk by the federal institutions concerned.

The Chair: Mrs. Boucher, we will check this with the clerk.

We will now move on to Mr. Lefebvre, who will have three minutes.

Mr. Paul Lefebvre: Mr. Chair, there is something unique to the Standing Committee on Official Languages, especially on this side of the table. There is Mr. Boissonnault from Alberta, Mr. Vandal from Manitoba, Mr. Samson from Nova Scotia, Mr. Arseneault from New Brunswick, and me from Ontario. I don't know when the last time was that this committee had five people from five different provinces, and from minority communities.

There is some concern, but we also see that there is an opportunity here. In a few years, the Official Languages Act will be 50 years old. It was passed in 1969. We talked about the influence it had. I often say that I'm a product of the Official Languages Act. I don't think I could have done my bachelor's degree in law at the University of Ottawa in a minority situation had it not been for the Official Languages Act. The act encouraged the provinces to create such programs.

Fifty years after the Official Languages Act was adopted, this issue is still being addressed using an approach that involves influence, especially among the provinces. My colleague Mr. Samson said that perhaps we should change course and influence the provinces, especially with respect to education and immigration. This could be done through tripartite agreements. We all agree here that things can be improved, but they aren't moving forward the way they should.

We can continue to use influence. However, in the next action plan that we are working on and that will be in our next report, I suggest that we start looking at things from a different perspective, that is, through tripartite agreements between the federal government, the provinces and the communities.

Mr. Jean-Pierre Gauthier: As we said this afternoon, we are thinking about this issue and discussing it. We are advising the minister on how to position ourselves with us.

A tripartite agreement means that there is a third party. I'm talking about the provinces and territories, which have their say. This also needs to be clarified. Since mid-October or early November, we have consulted informally with provinces and territories, as well as with school boards. We are asking them questions to understand the situation.

Let me reassure you: we are really listening and thinking about all this.

Mr. Paul Lefebvre: That's excellent.

In some provinces, I repeat that there are people who want to learn French. The federal government, which promotes the Official Languages Act across the country, is not really involved, perhaps because it does not want to overstep its jurisdiction.

There are people in minority communities who want to learn French and have the right to do so, but we do not rush to give them this opportunity. This is a great opportunity. It's time now, 50 years after the adoption of the Official Languages Act, to move on to something else and ensure that everyone who wants to learn French across the country can do so.

• (1035)

Mr. Jean-Pierre Gauthier: I can tell you that this is a comment we heard repeatedly during the round table consultations this summer. We have taken note of it. We are in the process of reflecting on the proposals to be made to the minister for her next action plan. It's clearly something we've heard as well.

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

Mr. Tremblay, I don't want to go back to the Treasury Board Secretariat's hesitation about testifying before us today, but I want to remind you of something.

Mrs. Boucher asked you two or three times to give us a list of problematic institutions. You sent our committee the annual report and all kinds of documents, but I'm asking you to send the committee what Mrs. Boucher asked for. Please send it to the clerk as quickly as possible.

Mr. Fayçal El-Khoury (Laval—Les Îles, Lib.): To support your request, I would like us to set a deadline, be it in two or three weeks, or a month, to fulfill Mrs. Boucher's request. Could you set a date?

The Chair: Mr. Tremblay, you have two weeks to provide the committee with the documents that Mrs. Boucher requested.

Mr. René Arseneault: As a reminder, this document is to provide a list of problematic institutions, right?

The Chair: Yes, that's it.

Thank you all for your presentations.

This ends today's meeting.

(The meeting is adjourned.)

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