



HOUSE OF COMMONS  
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES  
CANADA

## **Standing Committee on Official Languages**

---

LANG • NUMBER 133 • 1st SESSION • 42nd PARLIAMENT

---

**EVIDENCE**

**Thursday, February 21, 2019**

—  
**Chair**

**The Honourable Denis Paradis**



## Standing Committee on Official Languages

Thursday, February 21, 2019

• (1100)

[Translation]

**The Chair (Hon. Denis Paradis (Brome—Missisquoi, Lib.)):**  
Pursuant to Standing Order 108(3), we are continuing our study on the state of Canada's Francophonie.

This morning, we are pleased to welcome Guylaine Roy, Deputy Minister, Tourism, Official Languages and La Francophonie in the Department of Industry, and Charles Slowey and Denis Racine from the Department of Canadian Heritage.

Welcome Mrs. Roy. Welcome, gentlemen. We are going to proceed as we usually do.

Madam Deputy Minister, you can have about 10 minutes for your presentation. After that, we will move to comments and questions from members of the committee. The floor is yours now.

**Mrs. Guylaine F. Roy (Deputy Minister, Tourism, Official Languages and La Francophonie, Department of Industry):**  
Thank you.

Mr. Chair, members of the committee, first of all, I would like to thank you for this opportunity to discuss my team's role in addressing the challenges of the Francophonie across the country.

As you said, Mr. Chair, I am here with Charles Slowey, Assistant Deputy Minister, Citizenship, Heritage and Regions, at Canadian Heritage, and by Dennis Racine, who heads the Official Languages Branch in the same department.

[English]

To begin, I would like to emphasize the importance of your work as a parliamentary committee. Your committee contributes to the dialogue between the various federal and provincial institutions, as well as with community organizations, allowing us to better understand the issues related to the Canadian francophonie. Please be assured that my officials and I are following your work on these issues closely.

[Translation]

The Prime Minister assigned Minister Joly a strong official languages mandate, particularly as it concerns the Francophonie.

On a personal note, it is a pleasure for me to again have the opportunity to work in official languages. My first job in the federal public service—almost 33 years ago, in the mid-1980s—was actually at the Department of Justice, which, at the time, had been mandated to update the Official Languages Act. So it is a happy

coincidence for me to find myself here before you as deputy minister of official languages in 2019, the year we celebrate the 50th anniversary of the act.

My term began shortly after the announcement of the most recent action plan for official languages, which saw the Government of Canada increase its cooperation with all of its partners to strengthen official language minority communities, improve access to services, and promote a more bilingual Canada.

Since that announcement, the Prime Minister of Canada has entrusted Minister Joly with the mandate to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the Official Languages Act and to conduct a review that will lead to the modernization of the act.

I am speaking as the deputy minister for official languages and the Francophonie at a special time in the history of official languages and of the Canadian Francophonie. I am very happy to be doing so.

• (1105)

[English]

With this in mind, allow me to quickly remind you that the main vehicle for the federal government's official languages initiatives is the action plan for official languages 2018-23, which was launched on March 28, 2018, at the Mauril Bélanger school in Ottawa.

The government's commitments in this new action plan are based on three pillars: strengthening official-language minority communities, improving access to services in the minority language and promoting bilingualism across the country.

[Translation]

Supported by Budget 2018, the action plan adds an investment of almost \$500 million over five years to support official languages, while maintaining pre-existing funding. It adds financial resources to existing official languages programming as well as to new initiatives. The total investment in official languages will reach approximately \$2.7 billion over five years.

The action plan also proposes a new vision to foster the vitality of official language minority communities and to promote French and English across the country. Indeed, the Government of Canada believes that a strong Francophonie means francophones thriving in prosperous communities that allow them to live and work in French. Thus, it is a matter of investing in the organizations and institutions that ensure the vitality of these communities. The official languages support programs are the preferred tool to achieve this, and they work through both direct support to communities and bilateral federal-provincial and territorial agreements in education and services.

Following the public announcements of the action plan, therefore, the official languages branch quickly initiated dialogue sessions with organizations representing minority communities to ensure that the plan would be implemented with a “by the community, for the community” approach in mind.

For example, we have provided funding increases to all community development organizations and entered dialogues with each community to determine how to make best use of the available funds. We announced partnerships with community organizations, like la Fédération de la jeunesse canadienne-française and the English Language Arts Network, to manage a program to support cultural activities in schools. We worked closely with the community media consortium to determine how to invest new funding for community media development. Discussions with our community partners are ongoing for the implementation of the civic community school support fund, teacher recruitment strategies for francophone schools, and for bilingualism in the city of Ottawa.

[English]

With the new action plan initiatives, as well as our regular activities, the official-languages support programs are continuing their efforts to support the development of official-language communities across the country. This direct work with communities is being done in parallel with our continued collaboration with provincial and territorial governments.

For nearly 50 years, the Government of Canada has allocated financial support to provide members of official-language minority communities the opportunity to receive instruction in their mother tongue, and to offer the residents of each province or territory the opportunity to learn French or English as a second language. These agreements with the provinces and territories are governed by what we call a protocol for agreements concluded with the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada, or what we call CMEC.

An overall envelope of \$235.5 million is provided annually for the funding of provincial and territorial official-languages initiatives, which includes \$148.7 million for minority-language education and \$86.8 million for second-language learning. This funding envelope supports preschool to post-secondary initiatives across the country.

[Translation]

In addition, thanks to the funding announced in Budget 2017 and the new action plan, the Government of Canada is investing \$95 million over five years in educational and community infrastructure. The action plan is also providing nearly \$63 million

for the recruitment and retention of teachers for francophone minority schools and for French as a second language programs.

We have observed that negotiations on the memorandum of understanding with the CMEC have taken longer than expected. Given that situation, and in order to ensure the stability of funding during the negotiations, the Government of Canada has renewed its financial contribution of \$235.5 million per year to the provinces and territories until March 2020. This gives the negotiations more time.

We also have a series of service agreements with the provinces and territories. They aim to encourage and assist governments to offer services in French and English in official language minority communities. These agreements are negotiated bilaterally and federal funding is intended to be an incentive to increase the range of services offered to Canadians by provincial and territorial governments. The funding provided to provincial and territorial governments takes into consideration multiple factors, such as the constraints and characteristics of each province and every territory. It was never designed on a per capita basis or on a basis proportional to demographics.

In this regard, I could not conclude my presentation without addressing the issue of Ontario's Francophonie, particularly the issues at the Université de l'Ontario français. I would like to remind this committee that, as soon as the provincial government announced the suspension of the Université de l'Ontario français project, Minister Joly expressed her concern in a letter to her Ontario counterpart, Caroline Mulroney.

In addition, in a letter dated January 13, she took the initiative to officially reiterate that the Government of Canada has programs that support the project of the Université de l'Ontario français, based on the submission of a request for funding and a commitment from the province to cover at least 50% of the total costs. The minister added that, to the extent that such a contribution agreement would be concluded, federal programs have the flexibility to cover the startup costs of the Université de l'Ontario français in the early years of the project.

In the past, the Government of Canada has funded one-off projects in Ontario, such as the creation of the network of community colleges in the 1990s or, more recently, the Cité collégiale in Orleans and the campus of the Collège Boréal.

● (1110)

[English]

Finally, as you know, Minister Joly announced \$1.9 million to support the work to establish *Carrefour francophone du savoir et de l'innovation* in Toronto. This project could help develop closer ties between the agencies and organizations that serve the francophone community in Ontario, with 15 partners.

[Translation]

In addition to Minister Joly's interactions, federal officials working in the official languages support programs have been in touch with Ontario government officials to express our clear willingness to work collaboratively with them on the issue of the Université de l'Ontario français. In total, building on its official languages support programs, the Government of Canada has, over the years, put in place the conditions necessary for the vitality of the Canadian Francophonie and for the vitality of the official languages communities, in Ontario and elsewhere in Canada.

Thank you for your attention. I am ready to answer your questions.

**The Chair:** Thank you for giving us your presentation, Madam Deputy Minister.

We will start the period for questions and comments right away.

Mr. Clarke, you have the floor.

**Mr. Alupa Clarke (Beaumont—Limoilou, CPC):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Good morning, colleagues. Good morning, everyone.

Mrs. Roy, Mr. Racine and Mr. Slowey, I am very pleased to see you here this morning.

Madam Deputy Minister, I would like to ask you a very quick first question, because we had a little debate here a few weeks ago and I just want to clarify the situation.

In total, how much money does the action plan involve?

**Mrs. Guylaine F. Roy:** As I said in my introduction, the total amount in the action plan is \$2.7 billion over five years.

Let me just clarify that this action plan has almost \$500 million more. You know that there were action plans before the plan for 2018-2019...

**Mr. Alupa Clarke:** Does that \$2.7 billion include the recurring amounts from the Department of Canadian Heritage, to the tune of \$1 billion over five years?

**Mrs. Guylaine F. Roy:** The 2018-2023 action plan has \$2.7 billion over five years. What is new in the action plan is...

**Mr. Alupa Clarke:** Yes, but does that \$2.7 billion include the amount of \$1 billion over five years from the Department of Canadian Heritage? I am talking about recurring amounts that have nothing to do with the action plan.

**Mrs. Guylaine F. Roy:** The \$2.7 billion includes all initiatives in official languages.

**Mr. Alupa Clarke:** Great. Thank you.

You mentioned a first letter sent by Ms. Joly

**Mrs. Guylaine F. Roy:** Yes.

**Mr. Alupa Clarke:** I gathered that you were talking about a letter before the one on January 13.

**Mrs. Guylaine F. Roy:** Correct.

**Mr. Alupa Clarke:** Okay. What was that date?

**Mrs. Guylaine F. Roy:** It was a little after the Government of Ontario's decision that was announced in mid-November, around November 15 or 16, 2018.

Shortly after that decision was announced, Minister Joly indicated her concern about the Government of Ontario's decisions to Minister Mulroney in writing. I have the letter here. She also asked for a meeting with Minister Mulroney as soon as possible in order to discuss the situation.

That was Minister Joly's first letter. There was a second letter in January to get an update on the situation.

**Mr. Alupa Clarke:** What does the second letter say, exactly?

• (1115)

**Mrs. Guylaine F. Roy:** The second letter says that Minister Joly wants an update on the decision that the Government of Ontario had announced. She indicates that the Government of Canada is ready to come to the table to support the project. She says that the federal government's contribution to the university project is conditional on the province submitting a request for funding and she commits to assuming at least 50% of the entire cost.

She also says that, if such an agreement can be reached, federal programs have enough flexibility to cover the startup costs of the Université de l'Ontario français in the first years of the project. as long as the provincial contribution will come in subsequent years...

**Mr. Alupa Clarke:** Okay, that's fine. Thank you, Madam. I will move on.

**Mrs. Guylaine F. Roy:** The letter also mentions that the government has decided to invest \$1.9 million.

**Mr. Alupa Clarke:** Yes, okay. Very good. Thank you.

So we are talking about 50% of the costs. In your introduction, you talked about startup costs. What do you mean by startup costs, exactly?

**Mrs. Guylaine F. Roy:** What I mean is that, clearly, to get an university going...

**Mr. Alupa Clarke:** Do you have any kind of figure in mind?

**Mrs. Guylaine F. Roy:** The figure we are aware of is a figure that the university planning committee suggested.

**Mr. Alupa Clarke:** Which is...?

**Mrs. Guylaine F. Roy:** If I recall correctly, it was around \$84 million over 10 years. That is the figure we are aware of, as suggested by the university planning committee.

**Mr. Alupa Clarke:** So Ms. Joly is committing to 50% of the start-up costs, and nothing more. Is that right?

**Mrs. Guylaine F. Roy:** She said that we are ready to contribute 50% of the costs and that she did not limit that to the startup costs. She said that we would be ready to be flexible and, at the beginning, for the first years, to provide 100% of the funding on the condition that the province also did its share in subsequent years.

In other words, we normally split the costs 50-50. But Minister Joly made it known that, to make things easier for the Government of Ontario, we were ready to put in 100%

**Mr. Alupa Clarke:** Of the 50%.

**Mrs. Guylaine F. Roy:** No, 100%

**Mr. Alupa Clarke:** Yes, 100%, but...

**Mrs. Guylaine F. Roy:** On the condition that the province commits to cover 100% of the costs in subsequent years.

**Mr. Alupa Clarke:** Right.

We know that 50% of \$80 million is \$40 million. You are telling me that, if there are costs other than the start-up costs, you would absorb them too, because you would be paying 100% of the costs for the first four years.

**Mrs. Guylaine F. Roy:** What I am saying is that the figure going round at the moment is the figure that the planning committee released. That is around \$84 million over 10 years.

**Mr. Alupa Clarke:** What I am saying is that Ms. Joly is ready to absorb all costs in excess of \$40 million in the first four years. Is that right?

**Mrs. Guylaine F. Roy:** What we need is for the Government of Ontario to make an official request to us and provide us with the costs that have been established. As far as the federal government is concerned, we know that the figure going round is \$84 million.

**Mr. Alupa Clarke:** However, you know that the figure is not serious. It is going around in the media. So, following Ms. Joly's very eloquent letter of January 13, did you, as a dedicated senior official—our public service in Canada is very good—initiate any kind of procedure with Ms. Mulroney's deputy ministers in order to get the true data? We do not want to end up with a white elephant.

So, after the letter, did you, personally, make a call, send an email or a letter, or do anything else?

**Mrs. Guylaine F. Roy:** I am really happy that you asked that question. It lets me clarify the facts.

So, let us go back to November 2018. I have referred to two letters from Ms. Joly. I think that Minister Joly has spoken to Minister Mulroney, but I was not party to those discussions.

**Mr. Alupa Clarke:** That is not important. We want to know what you did. You, personally.

**Mrs. Guylaine F. Roy:** Okay, let us go back to the beginning of November 2018. I have mentioned that, in education, there are federal-provincial envelopes of \$235 million per year. However, in addition to that, each year, official languages officials in Canadian Heritage put out calls for proposals in education to the provinces and territories. This is a usual process. So we...

**Mr. Alupa Clarke:** Right, that is the usual process. I am not talking about the usual process.

**Mrs. Guylaine F. Roy:** Let me continue.

At the beginning of November, we set up that communication with all the education ministries in the provinces and territories. In mid-November, we became aware of the Government of Ontario's decision. So my program people communicated directly with the officials in the Ontario Ministry of Education to tell them that they had issued a call for proposals and that they were ready to receive a proposal from them. They also told them not to forget that they had to apply by the deadline of December 17.

When December 17 came around, Ontario announced some projects, but not the projects for...

**Mr. Alupa Clarke:** Madam, I am sorry to...

• (1120)

**The Chair:** Mr. Clarke, your time is up, and I would actually like to hear Mrs. Roy's answer.

**Mrs. Guylaine F. Roy:** So, December 17 came around. We received submissions. Ontario submitted projects in education, but nothing to do with the Université de l'Ontario français. So my program officials reminded the Government of Ontario officials that they could not see any project submitted for the university. They told them that we were ready to receive a submission from them, even though the deadline had passed.

Towards the end of December or at the beginning of January, my officials communicated with them again, saying that they were still ready to consider a project from them for the Université de l'Ontario français. The Ontario officials replied that they did not intend to submit a funding request. It was very clear on their part.

**Mr. Alupa Clarke:** Did they reply by telephone or by email?

**Mrs. Guylaine F. Roy:** I do not know how they replied, but it was very clear.

**Mr. Alupa Clarke:** Mr. Chair, could we ask for some evidence of that? It is very important.

Ms. Roy, if this is true, it is wonderful; you have done good work.

**The Chair:** I have no objection.

Madam Deputy Minister, could you provide us with the communications on this matter?

**Mrs. Guylaine F. Roy:** Certainly, it would be my pleasure.

I can also assure you that, all through the process, we showed that we were ready to collaborate. We had the money on the table. It was good that we had issued a call for proposals. We were ready. We reminded the Government of Ontario officials, but they deferred to their government's decision. They were very clear with my officials; they would not be submitting a project.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much.

Thank you, Mr. Clarke.

The floor now goes to Mr. Rioux.

**Mr. Jean Rioux (Saint-Jean, Lib.):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Good morning, Mrs. Roy.

**Mrs. Guylaine F. Roy:** Good morning.

**Mr. Jean Rioux:** Here we are in action central. Let's talk about the relationship.

In your speaking notes, you wrote: "My term began shortly after the announcement of the most recent Action Plan for Official Languages, which saw the Government of Canada increase its cooperation with all of its partners..." We have to think that that is not working with Ontario, at least when it comes to the Université de l'Ontario français.

Could you tell me about the state of the relationship with the officials? I ask you that because, on February 7, 2019, we met with George Zegarac, deputy minister in Ontario's Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities, and we asked him if there had been any negotiations with the Government of Canada. His answer was that, as he saw it, there had been none. This morning, you are telling us that you have communicated with officials in Ontario. So how was that relationship? In terms of the offer, was the relationship in good faith? We must also remember an important thing that Mr. Zegarac told us, which was that there is a need for a francophone university in Toronto. He said that the ministry had studied the matter and that the need was real.

As we have seen, the minister made an offer so that the project could proceed. Is it your feeling that people were negotiating in good faith or that they were just listening to you, and nothing more?

**Mrs. Guylaine F. Roy:** My assumption is always that all officials—the ones I work with, anyway—want to do good work and to serve their governments well. That is my premise. Just now, that gentleman said that the federal public service is one of the best.

We collaborate with everyone we work with, from provinces, territories or community organizations. At our end, we took the shot. We had a call for projects on the table and we let our colleagues know that an opportunity existed. Officials work for their government and reflect the decisions of that government. We reached out to them, we made some calls and we let them know that an opportunity existed. As they told you when they met you, I believe, they support their own government and the decisions were made by that government.

• (1125)

**Mr. Jean Rioux:** If I understand correctly, there was no openness on the part of the officials from the Government of Ontario when you were negotiating with them.

**Mrs. Guylaine F. Roy:** I feel that the position of the officials reflected their government's decision. The role of public servants is to support their government. They did not have the necessary authority to submit a funding request under the program.

**Mr. Jean Rioux:** If I understand correctly, there was no good faith negotiation, because there was no will to pursue this project, despite the offers made by the federal government.

**Mrs. Guylaine F. Roy:** The offer was there, but I go back once more to the fact that the position of officials reflects their government's decision. I feel that their position was clear.

**Mr. Jean Rioux:** Okay.

That's all from me, Mr. Chair.

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

**Mr. François Choquette (Drummond, NDP):** Mrs. Roy, thank you very much for joining us. I think that we are starting to see things more clearly.

In the good old Action Plan for Official Languages 2018-2023, have you allocated any funds in any column for the Université de l'Ontario français? Where is the money? Which category will that money come out of eventually?

**Mrs. Guylaine F. Roy:** First, I want to make it clear that a proposal involving a post-secondary institution must come from the province.

**Mr. François Choquette:** I understand, but I would just like to know whether you have allocated or anticipated any funds in the action plan to support the Université de l'Ontario français. Yes or no.

It's a simple question.

**Mrs. Guylaine F. Roy:** So here is a simple answer. The action plan includes programs that can support a project like the Université de l'Ontario français.

**Mr. François Choquette:** Which programs are those?

**Mrs. Guylaine F. Roy:** There are programs that support communities and infrastructure. There are also programs that support programs.

We are able to support projects, but a project must be submitted by a province.

**Mr. François Choquette:** I understand that a province has to submit projects and I will get back to that later. But I would like to know whether, under Part VII of the act, you have considered using your spending authority to fund the Université de l'Ontario français. Has that possibility occurred to you? Have you analyzed it?

**Mrs. Guylaine F. Roy:** When you say spending authority...

**Mr. François Choquette:** You have spending authority, under Part VII of the Official Languages Act.

Is that something you have analyzed? Can you check with your officials and provide the committee with your answer? I see that you do not know whether or not it has been done.

**Mrs. Guylaine F. Roy:** Here is another simple answer. The amounts I mentioned are from funds for official languages. In Part VII, which you have mentioned, it says that the minister is responsible for supporting official language minority communities. Our support for the communities is reflected in the action plan. The plan includes a number of programs. If we were to receive a request from the Government of Ontario, we could consider it.

**Mr. François Choquette:** There was an article whose title translates as "Francophone university: Joly refutes comments from Ontario deputy ministers". It says that officials—I do not know if it includes you specifically—were mandated to contact them each week, by telephone or by email.

Did you have a meeting last week?

**Mrs. Guylaine F. Roy:** Let me go back to what I was saying once again.

In November, when we became aware of the Government of Ontario's decision, we had a call for proposals in place. The officials in my department that run the program immediately communicated with the officials from the Government of Ontario to tell them specifically that we had called for proposals and that they were ready to talk to them about it and consider an application.

**Mr. François Choquette:** Who is talking to whom?

**Mrs. Guylaine F. Roy:** The managers of the official language programs.

**Mr. François Choquette:** So not a deputy minister.

**Mrs. Guylaine F. Roy:** The person with whom my employee spoke was an assistant deputy minister in the Government of Ontario. But it is not...

**Mr. François Choquette:** In the Department of Canadian Heritage, who talks with the Ontario Government people?

• (1130)

**Mrs. Guylaine F. Roy:** Go ahead, Mr. Racine.

**Mr. Denis Racine (Director General, Official Languages Branch, Department of Canadian Heritage):** It is the staff in the Official Languages Branch. As part of the federal-provincial relationship, we talk to the provincial representatives for the initiatives in education or teaching.

**Mr. François Choquette:** Forgive me for interrupting you, Mr. Racine. But since this is a crisis and a unique situation, should the communications not come from higher up? Should they not come from you, the deputy ministers?

**Mrs. Guylaine F. Roy:** The first thing I would say to that is that no one is higher up than my minister.

**Mr. François Choquette:** Yes.

**Mrs. Guylaine F. Roy:** After the decision, my minister said clearly that she was very concerned and that she would like to meet with them.

**Mr. François Choquette:** The minister did not meet Ms. Mulroney face to face.

**Mrs. Guylaine F. Roy:** In her first letter, she asked for a meeting with her.

**Mr. François Choquette:** Yes.

**Mrs. Guylaine F. Roy:** That was a first letter.

**Mr. François Choquette:** What was the answer? Was there one?

**Mrs. Guylaine F. Roy:** I am not aware if Ms. Mulroney provided a written response, but as I understand it, there were conversations between the ministers.

**Mr. François Choquette:** There were telephone conversations between the two ministers.

**Mrs. Guylaine F. Roy:** However, I was not present during those conversations.

**Mr. François Choquette:** Okay, but did you personally have conversations with the people in the ministry, with Marie-Lison Fougère and George Zegarac, who came to see us two weeks ago?

**Mrs. Guylaine F. Roy:** In managing the program, my officials communicated clearly with the Government of Ontario officials on a number of occasions. I supported my minister very actively, as you can see with all the interactions we had and with all the work we did in connection with the \$1.9 million to help the university.

I had very frequent reports on what was happening. We were clearly very active. We called and communicated with the two deputy ministers. We talked about education, but also about francophone affairs. It was clear that those officials had no mandate from their minister to...

**Mr. François Choquette:** I understand, but the FCFA, the AFO and everyone involved are asking the federal government to show some leadership.

**Mrs. Guylaine F. Roy:** Yes.

**Mr. François Choquette:** We can see that you are making an effort, but it might be said that you are not going as far as you can. You send letters, but you do not pick up the telephone yourselves. There is leadership, but it might be said that it does not go as far as it could.

You deputy ministers should be contacting Ontario's deputy ministers at least once every two weeks to tell them that your offer is serious. I understand that the request must come from Ontario and that the officials may not have the mandate. The fact remains that, in your work, and certainly in Minister Joly's, because you get your direction from her, you have to demonstrate strong leadership.

**Mrs. Guylaine F. Roy:** My answer to that is that Minister Joly has demonstrated very strong leadership. As soon as the decision was made, she was clear on her position. She immediately wrote to Minister Mulroney to ask for a formal meeting in clear terms. I am not aware whether she received a reply to her first letter.

**Mr. François Choquette:** It would be incredible if she did not reply. That is unacceptable.

**Mrs. Guylaine F. Roy:** I am talking about the minister.

First, I think that the ministers did talk to each other. You said that there were no telephone calls, but they did speak to each other. I was not there during those conversations.

Second, in her second letter in January, Ms. Joly explained to Minister Mulroney that the federal government was able to go up to 50% and, if it could help, we would provide money for the first years.

The federal government's leadership in this matter is very clear. We showed that very clearly by putting \$1.9 million on the table. I can tell you that my officials worked tirelessly on the matter and I followed it very closely. Nevertheless, the request has to come from the provincial government, because education is a provincial responsibility.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Choquette.

Mr. Arseneault, the floor is yours.

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

I would like to thank all the witnesses, Mr. Racine, Mr. Slowey and Mrs. Roy.



Unlike my colleague, Mr. Choquette, I don't have the impression that the government and your department are doing very little. I don't have much experience as a politician. I became a politician in 2015. However, I have never seen a department—and I'm talking here of the federal government; I'm not referring to any party in particular—be as proactive on an issue. You were almost on your knees. Your testimony today, the media, the videos and the reports confirm this. I have never seen a department as proactive as yours. I think that, when it comes to official languages, the government machinery has done more than its part. It even proposed funding the first few years, even if that meant the Ontario government would have to commit to doing its part. There is an expression in Acadia—and I think it's Franco-Acadian—that says that you can lead a horse to water, but you can't make it drink. I won't make an analogy between Doug Ford and a horse, even though I'm sorely tempted to do so.

• (1135)

**Mr. Joël Godin (Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier, CPC):** I didn't think we were in a zoo.

**Mr. René Arseneault:** That's what happened. I haven't learned anything new. We have already heard what is being said and discussed today. A department contacts a province with which it has a bilateral agreement, kneels before it and simply asks it to send a confirmation fax so that it can then send it funds. It even says it can adapt, show all the flexibility it can offer so that, during the first two years, the province can carry out the construction, and it says that for the rest it must assume its share, up to 50¢ on the dollar. That is what I understand and that is what I have heard in the media. I didn't learn anything new this morning.

In addition, I note that you are being diplomatic when you say that the officials of the province in question were muzzled, that they had to follow the government's agenda. It was not a lack of good faith on the part of Ontario officials: it was their government's position.

That said, after January, was there a little bit of openness? Has the Ontario government come forward or have the links, the radar, the telephone cable, and so on been cut off?

**Mrs. Guylaine F. Roy:** Minister Joly wrote to Minister Mulroney in January, but I don't know if she replied. Government of Ontario officials have made it very clear that they did not have a mandate to make a request and, therefore, it would not be done. They were very clear. Minister Joly wrote a letter, and I don't know if there was follow-up on that.

**Mr. René Arseneault:** I don't like bringing up the topic of my next question, but I can't resist. I'm hearing all kinds of theories, including that the federal government could contribute to the entire construction of this Franco-Ontarian university. I'm hearing comments about this, some for and some against.

Is that possible? Have you considered this possibility?

**Mrs. Guylaine F. Roy:** I'll go back to the comment I made earlier. Education is a provincial responsibility.

**Mr. René Arseneault:** I know.

**Mrs. Guylaine F. Roy:** The federal government respects provincial jurisdiction and it is clear that education comes under provincial jurisdiction. As I understand from the testimony of my colleagues you met a few weeks ago, the Government of Ontario has done some analysis and planning work on the university. These

people have done their job, given that education is a provincial responsibility. The legislation was created and is still in force. The province has the planning information, which is what this university could look like. The federal government's contribution is 50% but, as I said, educational institutions across the country are under provincial jurisdiction.

**Mr. René Arseneault:** Basically, what I understand, is that we are trapped by the Ontario government's lack of willingness. It doesn't want this university, period. That's the only conclusion we can draw. Am I right to believe that?

**Mrs. Guylaine F. Roy:** Once again, I would like to point out that education is the province's responsibility and that the province has done some analysis and planning. It questioned whether there should be such a university. It also introduced a bill, which has been adopted. There is now legislation on the Université de l'Ontario français. This issue is under its jurisdiction. We are ready to help, cooperate and support the project, but at a proportion of 50%, given that we are talking about provincial jurisdiction.

**Mr. René Arseneault:** I don't have any more questions.

Thank you very much, Mrs. Roy.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Arseneault.

We will now continue with Mr. Ouellette.

**Mr. Robert-Falcon Ouellette (Winnipeg Centre, Lib.):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I would like to thank the witnesses for being here today.

I want to talk about education and ask you some questions that are specific to the action plan. I am interested in second-language learning, especially French. For example, in Manitoba, 70,000 people know French and English. In my riding alone, there are 6,395 people who speak French and English.

A lot of money is spent on second-language learning in bilingual schools, but we are seeing that once children leave these schools, they don't have much support. They lose their knowledge of French as they become adults. It's a loss of resources, but also a loss of knowledge. Unfortunately, it weakens our capacity to be more open to the world.

I would like to know what the action plan provides to remedy this situation. Under the previous government, Canadian Youth for French was founded by Justin Morrow, an English-speaking student and football player at Université Laval. However, this organization no longer exists. Are there other measures that could be taken to address the loss of ability to learn French or the difficulty in maintaining it?

• (1140)

**Mrs. Guylaine F. Roy:** The action plan includes measures in the field of education and learning. I talked about the issue of education and what is being done with the provinces and territories. I also talked about one-time projects for the provinces and territories. As I mentioned, there are community and school infrastructure programs.

Close to \$63 million was also added to the action plan funds for the recruitment and retention of both first- and second-language teachers.

There is insufficient mention that the action plan contains more specific initiatives. In response to your question, the action plan contains a new initiative for a few million dollars. These are scholarships to facilitate post-secondary learning of French.

There are also the existing Explore and Odyssey programs. These are exchange programs that allow young people to learn another language in another province. There are also programs for—

**Mr. Robert-Falcon Ouellette:** Those are small programs.

For example, the Université de Saint-Boniface is a French-language school. There's also the University of Manitoba, which is an English-language school. I learned French 22 years ago.

**Mrs. Guylaine F. Roy:** Your French is very good.

**Mr. Robert-Falcon Ouellette:** Thank you, that's kind.

I often feel very lacking or threatened by other francophones who speak French extremely well, especially in writing. People sometimes tell me that I have a funny accent, which makes me feel that my French isn't good enough, and I'm not the only one to feel that way.

I find that there isn't anywhere you can feel comfortable practising in French, whether at a university or elsewhere. If you attend a French-language university and make a few mistakes, you are criticized. I remember what was happening in this regard at the Université Laval, which was formerly a Jesuit university.

There isn't really a university where you can feel comfortable using a second language, sometimes English, and doing your work in both languages. I find it unfortunate that there isn't a place in this country where people can continue to learn a second language without having to go to Quebec and receive a scholarship that would benefit only one person. We need a university where people could continue to speak both languages at the post-secondary level.

**Mr. Denis Racine:** Canada has a fairly well-established network of French-language colleges and universities that offer settings where people can really learn French and live in French on a daily basis, and where it is promoted.

With regard to programs, under the latest education protocol from 2013 to 2018, the government provided Manitoba with \$5.5 million over five years for French second-language instruction.

There are also initiatives that support very important organizations that promote French as a second language, including Canadian Parents for French. This organization plays a very important role across Canada with initiatives aimed at giving people the chance to practise in the other official language.

Lastly, the action plan has an initiative under development. It's a language learning tool that will be developed in the next few years. It will give all Canadians the opportunity to learn the second language using Canadian content. It will be accessible to the general public and will allow people to learn and measure their learning at their own pace. It will be totally free, without user fees. This is an initiative of the action plan.

•(1145)

**Mr. Robert-Falcon Ouellette:** Mr. Chair, I have one last question, if I may.

**The Chair:** Go ahead, Mr. Ouellette.

**Mr. Robert-Falcon Ouellette:** I would like to know what the bilingualism and “trilingualism” plan is for indigenous communities. The federal government is responsible for several schools on indigenous reserves and fully funds them.

Are there ways for people who want to learn English, French and an indigenous language to do so? It's a tough question and probably isn't asked very often. Most of the time, it's about the duality of French and English in Canada, but there are still other peoples across the country.

**Mrs. Guylaine F. Roy:** I would first like to clarify my answer to your first question.

In the action plan, scholarships for anglophone students enrolled in post-secondary programs in French are endowed with \$12.6 million over four years. It's a new program to help anglophone students enrolled in post-secondary programs who want to learn French. That's just a clarification in response to your first question.

With regard to your question about support for indigenous languages, I'm sure you're well aware of the introduction of Minister Rodriguez's bill. Since these are issues related rather to the learning of indigenous languages, this is more of a matter for Mr. Rodriguez.

**Mr. Robert-Falcon Ouellette:** Actually, I wanted to know if there are any programs for learning French. I understand that indigenous schools on reserves don't really offer music or visual arts classes. When there do, they are often given in a gym. I know that funding for these courses has been increased, but I wonder if it would be beneficial for an indigenous person out west to also have the opportunity to learn one of the two official languages, whether it is English, although that's probably already done, but also French.

In my case, it has allowed me to talk more with francophones from Quebec and has enriched my culture. It has been very beneficial in my life and even in my work.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Ouellette.

I have to give the floor to someone else.

**Mr. Robert-Falcon Ouellette:** I know, I'm sorry. These are open-ended questions, and I like that.

**The Chair:** Mr. Godin, you have the floor.

**Mr. Joël Godin:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

It's always interesting to see Mr. Ouellette's passion. It's perfectly legitimate and to his credit.

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

Mrs. Roy, you said at the outset that you came from the Department of Justice and that you are now responsible for official languages at the Department of Industry. You are no doubt happy to be here today, because things are changing at the Department of Justice these days. I'm happy for you.

In your opening remarks, you said that the action plan for official languages 2018-2023 aims to promote French and English across the country. Could you give us your own definition of the word “promote”?

**Mrs. Guylaine F. Roy:** Again, I think I would relate this to the minister's responsibilities under Part VII of the Official Languages Act. I don't have the exact wording in front of me; however, Part VII gives a specific role to the minister responsible, namely, to promote and support official language minority communities. Action plans are the concrete tool used by the current government and that have been used by other governments as well. They are intended to support communities and promote bilingualism. It is with this in mind that the government has implemented the action plan I mentioned.

It's really related to Minister Joly's responsibilities under Part VII of the Official Languages Act.

• (1150)

**Mr. Joël Godin:** You're telling me that promotion is related to the minister's work.

You also mentioned that the action plan is based on three pillars: strengthening official language minority communities, improving access to services in the minority languages, and promoting bilingualism across the country. These are the three elements found in the famous action plan that was tabled on March 28, 2018.

Where in this plan do you indicate that your role is to help the provinces build universities for linguistic minorities?

**Mrs. Guylaine F. Roy:** As I said earlier, we have several tools in the action plan that are related to education. I'll start with the federal-provincial agreements. There is an annual amount of \$235.5 million that is governed by a protocol and is paid to the provinces and territories.

**Mr. Joël Godin:** Do they aim to promote the language?

**Mrs. Guylaine F. Roy:** I'm talking about education.

**Mr. Joël Godin:** Where does the money related to bilateral agreements and intended for education go? The word “education”, like the word “promotion”, has a very broad meaning. In concrete terms, what is being done to ensure that citizens have access to this money?

**Mrs. Guylaine F. Roy:** I'm happy you asked me that question because, in the negotiations on the next protocol on education, we are looking—

**Mr. Joël Godin:** I'm sorry, Mrs. Roy, but I don't want to know what you are going to do; I want to know what you have done.

**Mrs. Guylaine F. Roy:** Yes, indeed. We are investing \$235.5 million a year. In the context of federal-provincial agreements, projects are presented by the provinces.

**Mr. Joël Godin:** In concrete terms, could you name a project or educational tool that has been implemented to help—

**Mrs. Guylaine F. Roy:** Yes, absolutely.

**Mr. Joël Godin:** —but without giving me too many details, because my time is very limited, unfortunately?

**Mrs. Guylaine F. Roy:** Before turning things over to my friend Mr. Racine, who will be able to give you concrete examples, I want

to point out that, in negotiating the new protocol, the purpose is precisely to obtain greater transparency from the provinces and territories regarding how exactly education funds are used. We are in negotiations, and this is something we are looking for more specifically.

**Mr. Joël Godin:** You want transparency, but you also want to invest in the concrete and infrastructure of universities. With regard to what we have seen recently in Ontario, I sincerely believe that this is political opportunism. The government has been in power for three years now, but because one fine day, a provincial premier gets carried away and decides to go right instead of left, the minister raises her hands and says she wants to support the French fact in Ontario, that it's important, and so on.

What I want to know, Mrs. Roy, is whether this is political opportunism.

**The Chair:** I think we'll move on to the next speaker. We only have a few minutes left. Two speakers have given their names. They will have three minutes each left.

**Mr. Joël Godin:** I accept your decision, Mr. Chair.

**The Chair:** I will consider that a comment.

**Mr. Joël Godin:** You may consider it as you wish.

**The Chair:** Mr. Rioux, you have the floor for three minutes.

**Mr. Jean Rioux:** If I understand correctly, my colleague Mr. Godin supports his colleague Mr. Blaney, who is criticizing us for investing \$1.9 million to maintain a fundamental value—

**Mr. Joël Godin:** Mr. Chair, that, too, is a comment.

**Mr. Jean Rioux:** —of the country, namely, bilingualism.

I want to come back to bilateral agreements. It is said that it is within these agreements that priorities are set. There is the old agreement, but I would like to know whether the Université de l'Ontario français is included in the new one, which you mentioned.

Do you have a say or is it only the province that determines the priorities?

**Mrs. Guylaine F. Roy:** Here's how it works with federal-provincial envelopes. The provinces must tell the federal government what they will do with the \$235.5 million allocated under these agreements. Before submitting their proposals, they are required to provide us with so-called action plans. What we want is for them to consult with communities in an appropriate way before submitting their action plans to us. This first mechanism was present in the existing agreement with Ontario, but the Université de l'Ontario français was not.

With the second mechanism, I mentioned the files for which bids were requested for one-time projects. Again, we did not see that the government had submitted a project for the Université de l'Ontario français.

• (1155)

**Mr. Jean Rioux:** As someone said earlier, it does not seem that standing up for Ontario's francophone minority is a priority for their government.

We have mentioned accountability. You say that we must make sure that the government consults organizations. But in the tours that we have been on, representatives of minority francophone communities have all told us that they have not been consulted and that, in their provinces, they are the poor cousins in terms of education.

In the next protocol, are we going to increase accountability in order to make sure that, across the country, minorities do not see themselves as poor cousins in terms of education?

**Mrs. Guylaine F. Roy:** The education protocol expired at the end of March 2018. In the negotiations underway, two things are very important for us. The first is appropriate consultation with the people on the front lines. We have also heard the comment you have heard. For us, the most important thing is that proposals should meet the front-line needs. We want more clarity about the appropriate consultations that the provinces and territories are conducting with those involved.

The second, very important, thing for us is accountability, transparency. We would like to know more clearly how federal money is used on the ground. Those two factors are very important for us in the negotiations with the province and territories.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, Mr. Rioux.

Mr. Choquette, the floor is yours for three minutes.

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

Mrs. Roy, have you considered the possibility of going to court to challenge the decision to put an end to the planned Université de l'Ontario français, and to transfer the Office of the French Language Services Commissioner to the Office of the Ombudsman?

**Mrs. Guylaine F. Roy:** As you know, the court challenges program was...

**Mr. François Choquette:** Have your department and Minister Joly considered the possibility of becoming involved in that challenge?

**Mrs. Guylaine F. Roy:** The way in which the court challenges program works...

**Mr. François Choquette:** I am sorry, but I am very familiar with the program. That was not why I asked my question. I want to know whether your department has considered the possibility of being part of a potential court challenge.

**Mrs. Guylaine F. Roy:** It is still important to explain that the court challenges program involves a group of experts that studies requests for support for legal proceedings on official languages.

**Mr. François Choquette:** Yes.

**Mrs. Guylaine F. Roy:** The program is open.

**Mr. François Choquette:** Yes.

**Mrs. Guylaine F. Roy:** If an organization comes before the group and asks to be funded...

**Mr. François Choquette:** In other words, you have not looked at that possibility yet.

**Mrs. Guylaine F. Roy:** ...we will have to see what happens.

**Mr. François Choquette:** Okay.

Now I would like to know when those famous weekly telephone meetings started and whether they are still taking place.

**Mrs. Guylaine F. Roy:** The answer now is what we have committed to do, which is to provide a chronology of what we have done. That's the first thing.

**Mr. François Choquette:** Okay.

**Mrs. Guylaine F. Roy:** The second thing is that the Ontario government officials were really very clear.

**Mr. François Choquette:** Yes.

**Mrs. Guylaine F. Roy:** They said clearly that they did not intend to submit a funding application.

**Mr. François Choquette:** I understand, Mrs. Roy, and forgive me for insisting. But according to Jérémy Ghio, Ms. Joly asked her officials to hold weekly telephone meetings with their Ontario counterparts.

Did those weekly meetings take place and, if so, starting when? When did they end? Would you please send that information to the committee?

• (1200)

**Mrs. Guylaine F. Roy:** I can assure you that we have made every effort to communicate with the Government of Ontario officials. As I also mentioned earlier, Minister Joly wrote a letter, as recently as January. However, I am not aware of any subsequent response to this letter.

**Mr. François Choquette:** Yes.

**Mrs. Guylaine F. Roy:** The letter clearly stated our intentions. In terms of the public service, public servants have made it clear that they do not have a mandate—

**Mr. François Choquette:** In January or February, did federal officials call their Ontario counterparts about the Université de l'Ontario français file?

**Mr. Denis Racine:** We are in regular contact with the province of Ontario, not only about the university, but also as part of our federal-provincial co-operation on teaching French as a first or second language. Communication is therefore ongoing. Ontario has every opportunity to raise the university issue on a regular basis through these—

**Mr. François Choquette:** Yes, but what do you tell them, given that they don't want to present a project? What do you tell them when you call them every week?

**Mr. Denis Racine:** For our part, we told the province what we needed to and were able to say, that the financial assistance is available, that there is a way to move ahead, that there is a door and that the door is open. We have been very clear with our provincial counterparts. The ball is now in their court. It is up to them to seize the opportunity, follow up and present us with a project. We can then study the project together and move it forward.

The offer was really made in a clear way to the public servants and to the politicians. Unfortunately—or fortunately, if you prefer—it is now up to Ontario to take the next step and respond to this offer. We are still waiting for that answer.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Choquette.

I would just like to add that some members of the committee would like to have copies of Minister Joly's two letters, if possible. You can give them to the clerk to add to our file.

**Mrs. Guylaine F. Roy:** Absolutely.

**The Chair:** You are the last witnesses appearing before us in this study.

I wanted to thank you for the insight you provided to the members of the committee on this issue. I think we will be able to prepare a more complete report thanks to you. On behalf of all members of the committee, thank you for your appearance and your presentation.

We will now suspend the meeting for a few minutes.

*[Proceedings continue in camera]*

---





Published under the authority of the Speaker of  
the House of Commons

---

### SPEAKER'S PERMISSION

---

The proceedings of the House of Commons and its Committees are hereby made available to provide greater public access. The parliamentary privilege of the House of Commons to control the publication and broadcast of the proceedings of the House of Commons and its Committees is nonetheless reserved. All copyrights therein are also reserved.

Reproduction of the proceedings of the House of Commons and its Committees, in whole or in part and in any medium, is hereby permitted provided that the reproduction is accurate and is not presented as official. This permission does not extend to reproduction, distribution or use for commercial purpose of financial gain. Reproduction or use outside this permission or without authorization may be treated as copyright infringement in accordance with the *Copyright Act*. Authorization may be obtained on written application to the Office of the Speaker of the House of Commons.

Reproduction in accordance with this permission does not constitute publication under the authority of the House of Commons. The absolute privilege that applies to the proceedings of the House of Commons does not extend to these permitted reproductions. Where a reproduction includes briefs to a Committee of the House of Commons, authorization for reproduction may be required from the authors in accordance with the *Copyright Act*.

Nothing in this permission abrogates or derogates from the privileges, powers, immunities and rights of the House of Commons and its Committees. For greater certainty, this permission does not affect the prohibition against impeaching or questioning the proceedings of the House of Commons in courts or otherwise. The House of Commons retains the right and privilege to find users in contempt of Parliament if a reproduction or use is not in accordance with this permission.

---

Also available on the House of Commons website at the following address: <http://www.ourcommons.ca>

Publié en conformité de l'autorité  
du Président de la Chambre des communes

---

### PERMISSION DU PRÉSIDENT

---

Les délibérations de la Chambre des communes et de ses comités sont mises à la disposition du public pour mieux le renseigner. La Chambre conserve néanmoins son privilège parlementaire de contrôler la publication et la diffusion des délibérations et elle possède tous les droits d'auteur sur celles-ci.

Il est permis de reproduire les délibérations de la Chambre et de ses comités, en tout ou en partie, sur n'importe quel support, pourvu que la reproduction soit exacte et qu'elle ne soit pas présentée comme version officielle. Il n'est toutefois pas permis de reproduire, de distribuer ou d'utiliser les délibérations à des fins commerciales visant la réalisation d'un profit financier. Toute reproduction ou utilisation non permise ou non formellement autorisée peut être considérée comme une violation du droit d'auteur aux termes de la *Loi sur le droit d'auteur*. Une autorisation formelle peut être obtenue sur présentation d'une demande écrite au Bureau du Président de la Chambre.

La reproduction conforme à la présente permission ne constitue pas une publication sous l'autorité de la Chambre. Le privilège absolu qui s'applique aux délibérations de la Chambre ne s'étend pas aux reproductions permises. Lorsqu'une reproduction comprend des mémoires présentés à un comité de la Chambre, il peut être nécessaire d'obtenir de leurs auteurs l'autorisation de les reproduire, conformément à la *Loi sur le droit d'auteur*.

La présente permission ne porte pas atteinte aux privilèges, pouvoirs, immunités et droits de la Chambre et de ses comités. Il est entendu que cette permission ne touche pas l'interdiction de contester ou de mettre en cause les délibérations de la Chambre devant les tribunaux ou autrement. La Chambre conserve le droit et le privilège de déclarer l'utilisateur coupable d'outrage au Parlement lorsque la reproduction ou l'utilisation n'est pas conforme à la présente permission.

---

Aussi disponible sur le site Web de la Chambre des communes à l'adresse suivante : <http://www.noscommunes.ca>