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## Standing Committee on Official Languages

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EVIDENCE

**Tuesday, June 1, 2010**

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**Chair**

**Mr. Steven Blaney**



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• (0900)

[Translation]

**The Chair (Mr. Steven Blaney (Lévis—Bellechasse, CPC)):** Good morning, everyone. Welcome to the Standing Committee on Official Languages.

[English]

This morning we are here, pursuant to Standing Order 108(3), on a study of immigration as a development tool in official language minority communities.

[Translation]

We have the pleasure of holding a very special meeting this morning at the Collège catholique Samuel-Genest. From the outset, I would first like to thank you all for agreeing to receive us at this school. Allow me, first of all, to thank the school principal, Mr. Réal Charette. When I have finished, committee members and I will be able to express our appreciation. I would also like to thank Ms. Sylvie Plouffe, administrative assistant to the principal's office at the secondary level. Thank you very much for having us, Ms. Plouffe.

There's also Ms. Diane Garneau, library technician, who offered us refreshments this morning, Ms. Dominique Roy-Buisson, teacher and librarian, and Ms. Ginette Bernier, secretary in the principal's office, who distributed coffee, juice, fruit and cookies. There are also students who agreed to prepare the room yesterday: Ms. Tracy Percy and Ms. Varlène Muka Munama, as well as Mr. Pierre Nivardi and Mr. Casey Lanthier.

I would like to inform members of some procedures. Since we are at a school, bells will ring at 9:25, 9:35 and 10:50, but don't be afraid, they aren't the bells calling you to go and vote.

**Some voices:** Oh, oh!

**The Chair:** You can stay where you are. If you want to go to the washroom, you have to ask the head of the library for the key, and that's in Room 140. If you leave the committee, I want a note from the principal.

This morning, we are holding the 19th meeting of the committee, which concerns our study on immigration, in which we are in the final stages. It is our pleasure to meet with witnesses on site here. I will introduce them to you without further ado. Ms. Francine Lanteigne is a teacher in the instruction and learning of foreign second languages. We also have the pastoral officer, Ms. Thérèse Desautels. Good morning to you. Ms. Kelly Bararu is also joining us. Thank you for agreeing to testify this morning. She

is accompanied by Ms. Andrea Santana, who is a student, and whom I thank for being here, and Mr. Miguel Cédric Tchuemboum Kouam.

So thank you for being here, Mr. Miguel. We also have Mr. Apollinaire Yengayenge, who is a parent. From the Conseil des écoles catholiques de langue française du Centre-Est, we have Ms. Monique Brûlé, Chief of Community Services and Library, who is appearing.

The committee meeting will be held over a period of approximately two hours. We normally begin with an opening address. Then each of the parliamentarians has a period of five to seven minutes to question you.

This morning, our committee is constituted like the House of Commons. The government members are on one side, including Ms. Shelley Glover, who is parliamentary secretary. I also belong to the Conservative government, and I am the chair of this committee. We also have representatives of the three opposition parties, including the committee vice-chair, Mr. Mauril Bélanger, from the Liberal Party. We also have another vice-chair, Mr. Yvon Godin, of the New Democratic Party. We also have with us Mr. Richard Nadeau and Ms. Monique Guay, from the Bloc Québécois. There you have the picture of the House of Commons. There are more than 15 committees like ours concerned with various topics, the Standing Committee on Official Languages being a standing committee instituted under the Official Languages Act.

Without further ado, we'll begin the hearing of witnesses. I am accompanied by the analyst, who takes notes in order to write the report on the study we are conducting, which will be validated by the members of this committee, and by the clerk who resolves procedural issues. This morning, as we have a large number of witnesses, I'm going to turn to her for an opinion on the period of time we are going to allot to each witness.

You've been well prepared. So you will be able to give a balanced speech that will enable committee members to question you.

Without further ado, we'll begin with Ms. Brûlé, from the Conseil des écoles catholiques de langue française du Centre-Est.

• (0905)

**Ms. Monique Brûlé (Chief, Community Services and Library, Conseil des écoles catholiques du Centre-Est):** Good morning. This morning, I'm going to provide you with an overview of the board. I have in my hand some statistics on francophone immigration within the board. Then I'm going to summarize the highlights of a consultation that we've conducted with board stakeholders.

Let's look at a picture of francophone immigration at the Conseil des écoles catholiques du Centre-Est. Twenty-five per cent of students have at least one parent who was born outside Canada. We're talking about approximately 4,194 students. In addition, 7% of students were born outside Canada, which means approximately 1,399 students.

With regard to the countries in which those students were born, the majority come from Burundi, Congo, the United States, Haiti, Lebanon, Rwanda, China and France. They are scattered across the territory. As for the dates on which those students arrived in Canada, 50% of them arrived in 2004 or later. So these are recent immigrants. If we do a calculation and distribute by school the number of students who have at least one parent who was born outside Canada, we note that 11 schools in the board would not exist without the contribution of francophone immigration. The face of the board is changing.

On the other hand, with this new face come challenges that we must meet. One of the major challenges is to welcome the students and their parents. We have to give them a good welcome. In a consultation on intake, we noted some highlights when we consulted the parents and students. I'm going to give you some information on that study. We consulted them in order to write a protocol for welcoming the students and the families of our students.

From January to March 2010, we consulted 11 groups, including two groups of students and two parents groups. The purpose of the consultations was to determine best intake practices and barriers to inclusion in the school. Here are the highlights of that consultation.

Parents and students want a personalized welcome and quick integration. Parents need information on the school system, the school and everything concerning the their children's instruction. This is often a barrier to integration. We often need a glossary to break down the educational jargon used in Ontario. We often have to deal with the various school systems—this is a new school system for students arriving in Ontario. They've left their country of origin where the school system was very different. The suggestion was often made that there should systematically be a reception committee at the board and at the school. We believe that would facilitate the reception and integration of students and their parents.

People want a reception even before school registration, when the parents or families arrive in Canada. The spoken language is often a barrier. Everyone has his or her own accent. Sometimes it's hard for people to understand each other. For the students, being welcomed by peers is more important. They want to be welcomed by other students with whom they can share the challenges and successes.

● (0910)

What often surprises newly arrived parents and students is that English is spoken in the halls because school is a francophone minority environment.

Lastly, the students mainly have to deal with a culture at school that is at times different from the one at home.

These are highlights that emerge from the consultations. The board's intake protocol will be developed and submitted to the Ministry of Education in November.

Thank you very much for listening to me.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Ms. Brûlé.

Now, on the school side, I believe you have developed a strategy. We're going to begin with Ms. Desautels.

**Ms. Thérèse Desautels (Pastoral Officer, Collège catholique Samuel-Genest):** Mr. Chairman, ladies and gentlemen, good morning and welcome to the Collège catholique Samuel-Genest. It is a great honour to welcome you here to our college.

Some 40 ethnic groups are represented among our student body. This year, we welcomed a number of newly arrived families in Canada, including Haitian families. Our school is located in an environment with highly varied social status levels. A number of students come from disadvantaged families seeking financial support.

I hold the position of pastoral officer. My role with our immigrant students is above all to welcome them, to lend an attentive ear to what they have experienced before arriving in Canada and to provide them with moral support. A number of them, youths, arrive without families. So this is one way to welcome them, to support them and to meet their needs.

The biggest problem when we meet with families and students is naturally poverty, extreme poverty, since these families arrive with nothing. Sometimes, I illustrate that need by saying that they arrive with one sock and one shoe. These families often have to live in motels near the school. This year, I saw one mother with her five children living in two bedrooms at a motel, with a little stove to cook rice on. They lived there for a number of months waiting for a community shelter so they could have housing. This is a difficult situation for the children who have to go to school.

In addition, one of the important aspects when students appear at my office is seeing what their needs are. I have a kind of general store and I try to provide newcomers with all the school supplies, that is to say paper and pencils, but right now we're dealing with USB sticks. So we have to modernize. We need locks for the lockers. I often give out a combination lock, and the students ask me how to use it. They don't know how to use it, and then I find another student to teach them. That's already contact with another student.

These young families, these youths, also lack clothing. They don't know when they arrive here in summer that there will be winter. They don't know what mittens, tuques and scarves are. So there's clothing, bedding and furniture. Sometimes families sleep on the floor, don't have mattresses. They also need food. I always try to direct them to the food banks, but they aren't always open when they get hungry. So we try to offset this problem as much as possible.

I couldn't do this job without the great cooperation of staff members. Everyone lends a hand. There are families at the college that provide help, but there are also community organizations. We have fund-raising drives that also help us offset these shortfalls.

At noon, lunches are offered in the cafeteria. Every day at lunch, some 50 students are received, and we try to direct newcomers there as well. This is a place where they eat lunch, speak with others and integrate into school life.

For young newcomers, school is their second family. It's incredible to see the number of students who stay here after school, after the bell rings at 2:30, because they have nothing to do at home. They don't have any mattresses, television, video games, and they don't know the places or the community. So they stay at school. I tell them all the time that I don't understand them: when I was finished school, I couldn't wait to go home, but for them their second family is here.

There's a major volunteer project at the Collège catholique Samuel-Genest called "Changing my community". These are volunteer initiatives organized by the kids.

● (0915)

In the context of these events, we try as much as possible to integrate immigrant families through suppers, outings, meetings, exchanges and multicultural shows.

My remarks won't be much longer. I'm already at the recommendations.

Naturally, for the families, I would ask that we facilitate access to neighbourhood resources. There are resources, but the families aren't familiar with them. They arrive in a country where they know absolutely nothing.

Yesterday evening, I was imagining getting these families on board a bus and taking them on a tour of the community. We could show them the Vanier Community Service Centre, the Overbrook-Forbes Community Resource Centre, the food bank. We should tell them that they can meet people. That would be a first step in getting to know the community. They would get to know the services.

We also recommend that French courses be organized for families. In my opinion, organizations and partners should increase the profile and effectiveness of services provided. For the school, there could be training for staff members on the various mindsets. That would help promote integration and understanding. In their classes, teachers receive people from a number of ethnic groups with various mindsets. I think that, if we could increase teachers' awareness and give them training courses on the mindsets of the largest number of students, because we can't talk about all the mindsets, that would definitely help gain a better understanding of our students.

There could also be after-school activities. For example, the library could stay open and provide computers and reference books, which students don't have at home. The gymnasium could open its doors to let students play sports. Since we're keeping them longer, a snack service should be set up. We have to feed them and then see to their transportation because the school buses have left.

One of the school's big projects, which we hope will be set up in September, is the opening of a used clothing store, like a thrift store, so our families and students from disadvantaged backgrounds—which is the case of most newcomer families—can be properly dressed at low cost.

These projects naturally suppose that we can hire trained staff. So in my recommendations, I added one little word for you: "budget".

Thank you for listening to me.

**The Chair:** Thank you for your recommendations, Ms. Desautels.

Ms. Lanteigne, go ahead, please.

**Ms. Francine Lanteigne (Teacher, Collège catholique Samuel-Genest):** I'm going to agree with my colleagues Ms. Brûlé and Ms. Desautels. I won't repeat their statements; I'm going to go immediately to the recommendations. They've given testimony that I can't make any more authentic. We have stories going back many years.

First and foremost, I think we have to educate the Canadian public about immigration. Ms. Brûlé talked about a glossary. Canadian citizens must be ready to know what this is about. We're talking about immigrants, about newcomers and about various types of status. This is a jargon. Unless you're interested in it, you don't know it. So there's a visibility issue.

Second, we have to promote the implementation of sustained intake mechanisms. We're talking about budgets, but they have to be maintained. A lot of initiatives have come out of the good will and budgets associated, for example, with PAL, in our case, in education in Ontario. If that were formal, official, attached to the government, we would be promoting the added value that is education. It is a truth, not my own, that the immigrants who come to us have been invited to come here. For us, in Canada, the value that we see in it is the added value that immigrants give to education. All of them come to get an education, to which they aspire. They believe in the education provided where they settle. For us, this is the most pleasant student population. We don't need to convince them; they know why they're here.

Third, we have to make the Department of Immigration's partners more accountable for achieving intake and support results.

Lastly, I won't repeat the issue of visibility and effectiveness that Ms. Desautels has already addressed, but with regard to education, we want effectiveness and visibility by introducing a training model for instruction in what were called second languages during the Trudeau era, but today we could call them foreign languages. There's also a whole jargon that triggers all kinds of feelings. We're talking about a cultural passport, about intercultural training. We've gotten to that point.

Right now, we're taking in immigrants because we're nice, we're good, and we believe in our private values. However, there are gaps in the expression of values by the families and students we receive. We're in the third millennium. Our society today is in a new paradigm. Canada is at the top. It has everything it needs. Documents are published and very little use is made of them by the general public. I believe the federal government should distribute what it has already published. I won't name the works, but they are very valid. The Standing Committee on Official Languages has long supported them. We are part of the world of communication, of understanding and of the way of taking action in the world.

● (0920)

**The Chair:** Thank you, Ms. Lanteigne.

Mr. Apollinaire, would you like to speak?

**Mr. Apollinaire Yengayenge (Parent, Collège catholique Samuel-Genest):** Good morning.

One of the dreams of parents who leave their native countries to come and settle in Canada is to educate their children. We agree to leave our jobs, our little luxuries. We sell our cars, abandon our homes in the hope of finding a well-paid job here that will enable us to raise our children. Even in our native countries, the children are cared for by the school and by the parents who play a partnership role.

We arrive here, and the children go to school and go through a quick integration period. The parents arrive at home and their dreams are broken because they can't find a job quickly. They stay at home and wash the dishes, do the cooking and do the cleaning. The luckiest ones find odd jobs working up to 70 hours a week. Consequently, they are unable to supervise their children or follow what goes on in Canada.

Parents left to their own devices often go to community ghettos. They stay cloistered there poisoning each other's minds. They hear that, if they want to work, they should quickly accept a position as an attendant at a hospital, do this or that. Most people who come here of their own free will often arrive with very high-level diplomas, but they are unable to integrate because everything is barricaded. Barriers prevent us from gaining access to employment. Worse than that, we don't even have the information that would allow us to fight. Some parents say they're denied jobs because they aren't Canadians.

Integration training is provided at well-equipped places like the Cité collégiale. That's where I was first accepted after trying everything else. I saw that, in fact, I was lacking information that would enable me to be curious, to love Canada, to explore it, to go further and to fight like all other Canadians to find a job.

So there is the fact of arriving here and not finding these integration training structures. There's a kind of withdrawal, a lack or loss of self-confidence. We tend to forget everything we know. Our skills become obsolete because we feel they won't serve a purpose in Canada, that's not where the country is, since our friends who arrived a few years before we did still have little subsistence jobs.

People get to that point. If a person was a doctor and is doing these kinds of odd jobs, what more can I do, with only a master's degree in economics, than what he's doing? It's better to follow your own path. Destiny is determined by the way we do things because we aren't in touch with the country. We don't even follow current affairs. We don't know what is being done. We don't know Canada and its policies. We don't know the geographic dimensions, or a lot of other things. We aren't even familiar with the cultural realities.

If we want parents to integrate well, there has to be an introduction to all the ways of doing things so that their curiosity is focused on the country and its specific characteristics. This aspect is very much lacking. I'm really the result of it because I succeeded by taking well-organized integration courses that made me love Canada, without making me forget part of what I am. That's often what's lacking because they say that's how it is in Canada; you have to go about it like that. So often people feel they'll never be able to do it.

We're telling you our skills are transferable. It's this gentleness, this way of taking us from our world to the other world that makes us love Canada. My recommendation is to say how to organize integration for parents in order to assist them in orienting themselves

and in finding out, with their skills, how to integrate into the various professions in Canada. Our children, who are luckier than we are, enter school structures. They integrate quickly. They are real time travel machines.

There's an enormous gap between parents, who have become illiterate because they no longer follow current events, and their children. Their children dangle a lot of aspects in front of them, in particular the fact that we have the freedom to do this or that. They tell their fathers that they're worthless because they are no longer even able to buy a gift, whereas the other children have this or that thing. A parent becomes paralyzed and wonders whether it wouldn't be better to go back and start over.

Frankly, if people don't turn this corner, they fall into poverty. We aren't beggars. We're not looking for charity. When you organize humanitarian services, for example, we're ashamed to make use of them because we have skills that enable us to work. There's a lack of openness in the job market, but we aren't prepared to attack that job market.

I'm only asking one thing: that parents be prepared to attack the job market in Canada because this is the country we've chosen.

Thank you.

● (0925)

**The Chair:** Mr. Yengayenge, it's I who thank you for your testimony.

We're going to leave the last word in the opening addresses to our time travel machines. Ms. Santana, I believe you want to break the ice on behalf of young people, for whom we are here today.

● (0930)

**Ms. Andrea Santana (Student, Collège catholique Samuel-Genest):** Good morning, ladies and gentlemen. I'm originally from Brazil, and I arrived in Canada in May 2006, speaking neither English nor French.

Since French was closer to my mother tongue, Portuguese, it was easier to start by learning French. The school offered me a summer course so I could learn French. The school's partnership with OCISO enabled me to learn French through a volunteer teacher. During that summer course, I studied French from Monday to Friday.

I hope that access to this kind of course will be easier for newcomers, particularly for those who know neither of the official languages.

**The Chair:** Perfect. Ms. Santana, take your time, we have all the time in the world. We're listening to you; this is very interesting, and we want to understand you. This is very good. Thank you for being here.

**Ms. Andrea Santana:** The volunteer courses in the summer of 2006 hadn't finished by the time school went back. The volunteer teacher therefore continued helping me learn French after school, and she is still helping me even today. I've been helped by her for four years now.

**The Chair:** That's good.

Mr. Cédric, please tell me how I should pronounce your given name, please, because I'm having a little difficulty.

**Mr. Miguel Cédric Tchuemboum Kouam (Student, Collège catholique Samuel-Genest):** In fact, my given name is Miguel and my surname is Tchuemboum Kouam.

**The Chair:** All right, Mr. Tchuemboum Kouam, would you like to continue to give a little time...

All right, Ms. Santana, we're listening.

**Ms. Andrea Santana:** My first school year was a real challenge because, even though I knew the subject in my mother tongue, I couldn't express everything I was thinking. However, during the first year, a teacher helped me at school and made it a lot easier to fit in with the other students. After only one year of training, I took the provincial language proficiency test.

I'm really lucky since so many people fought for me and defended my interests like my volunteer teacher, Ms. Lanteigne, and Ms. Hortense from OCISO.

However, it's so unfortunate for other newcomers who haven't had the chance to have as complete an integration as mine. You must establish integration and official language courses and provide access to them for newcomers by hiring qualified staff.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Ms. Santana, you've given all the members of this committee a lesson. We knew at least one of the two official languages when we became members of Parliament, and some at times have trouble learning two. You've learned both and you know others. You're really a model, and I thank you very much for being here this morning.

Ms. Bararu, would you like to say a few words?

**Ms. Kelly Bararu (Student, Collège catholique Samuel-Genest):** Ladies and gentlemen, it is an honour for me to be selected to speak on the immigration issue. Thank you very much.

In my presentation, I will focus on the issues that have affected us, my family and me, and the role the school has played in this regard.

We know that immigration is what makes Canada a multicultural country. We also know that many immigrants from the four corners of the world are looking for jobs. However, I would like to draw your attention to the unemployment rate among immigrants. Most of them have a master's degree or a doctorate, like my parents, but they are often forced to redo their studies. Those studies took many years and cost a lot of money. But isn't it true that, in accepting them as immigrants, Canada expects them to make an economic contribution? However, how can they contribute to the economy when they have no jobs? This situation hurts the economy and the family. If the family is hurt, then so are the children, and those children then neglect school, which could help the family.

In another connection, I would like to talk to you about the Franco-Ontarian identity. Openness to other cultures helps eliminate ignorance from our thinking. It helps identify the differences and similarities between our culture and another. It enables us to attach ourselves to it and to recognize that we belong to a community, a whole and a specific group. I think this is how we forge an identity. Consequently, through a school and the programs it offers us, we learn, as Ms. Santana said, French, mostly, or English, and we also visit Canada. However, based on my personal experience, what I

found most disheartening when I arrived in Canada was not receiving any programs in English. That really isolated me from other students and I felt separate. Even though French is the majority language of instruction, we know that English dominates in the halls, at the secondary level in particular. So I would ask that there be at least a few English-language programs.

Thank you.

• (0935)

**The Chair:** Thank you, Ms. Bararu.

Mr. Tchuemboum Kouam, would you like to finish this series of addresses?

**Mr. Miguel Cédric Tchuemboum Kouam:** Ladies and gentlemen, thank you for this opportunity to speak today.

My presentation concerns the integration of students in the school environment. I find that the student population is growing quickly, especially at the Collège catholique Samuel-Genest. I'm going to talk mainly about the Collège catholique Samuel-Genest because that's where I arrived. I arrived in Canada last year, in September 2009.

At the school, I noticed that a lot of English was spoken. I was a bit afraid of integrating into that environment, which is essentially anglophone, as I only speak French. I therefore think that immigration can contribute a lot by leading people to speak French, particularly by bringing the young people from here together with immigrants so they can develop closer relations.

Teachers should also play an important role, particularly by encouraging these closer relations, which permit better integration and promote the emancipation of the French language. A lot of people don't speak French and it is difficult to communicate with people who want to speak only English and who are not really interested in French, or with whom a conversation started in French switches directly to English. That may be because their vocabulary is not broad enough or because they don't know the French word and switch to English. That's the way it is every time and it is not easy for francophones always to listen to something they don't understand.

Immigrants who speak only French should also be given adequate training in English so they can integrate while retaining their francophone culture. When we arrived here in Ottawa, the first thing we were told was that we wouldn't be able to get by if we didn't speak English. You either have to speak English or go to Quebec.

That's all I had to tell you.

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

We have now completed the part of our meeting where we listen to the witnesses.

We will now begin the first round of questions, starting with Mr. Mauril Bélanger, vice-chair of our committee, and, if I'm not mistaken, member for the constituency in which we find ourselves.

**Hon. Mauril Bélanger (Ottawa—Vanier, Lib.):** Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I too want to thank the school administration and Mr. Charette for welcoming us here this morning. I also want to thank the students who agreed to take part in this meeting. We'll have to reflect on what we've just heard.

My first question is for Ms. Brûlé. Ms. Brûlé, you alluded to some agreement that had been developed and would be available by the fall. If I correctly understood, you mentioned the month of November. Could we have a copy of it, if that's permitted, when that document is prepared?

• (0940)

**Ms. Monique Brûlé:** That protocol was requested by the Ontario ministry. All the francophone school boards have to develop an intake and communication protocol. That protocol must be submitted to the ministry by the end of November, I believe. Once it's accepted, I believe it will become public. It would therefore be possible to obtain a copy.

**Hon. Mauril Bélanger:** So it will be a public document.

Now I'm going to turn to the students. Kelly and Miguel both clearly said that, to integrate into the Ottawa community, schools should teach them not only French, but English as well. I don't remember whether Andrea said the same thing, but I'd like to have her comments on that subject.

Could you explain your situation to us in greater detail? How did you discover you had to speak both languages to really integrate into your community and school?

**Ms. Kelly Bararu:** I arrived in Canada in grade 6, I believe. I was attending a French-language school, but we mainly used English, and I didn't understand that language at all. Even though the students spoke French at school, outside the school, it was always in English. I spoke French, but they answered me in English. So I understood that, if I wanted to integrate into the school and have friends, I had to learn English.

**Hon. Mauril Bélanger:** What country do you come from?

**Ms. Kelly Bararu:** I left Burundi to go to Belgium. From Belgium, I came to Canada.

**Hon. Mauril Bélanger:** Thank you.

Miguel, what about you?

**Mr. Miguel Cédric Tchuemboum Kouam:** In fact, I understood that it was absolutely necessary to speak English because we only heard English in the halls. As Kelly said, when you speak French, people answer you in English. That isn't very easy. For example, if you're part of a group of people and you're only speaking French, you have to listen to what they say, but they don't speak French. It's hard to follow the conversation and to fit into the group.

Newcomers who speak French are often forced to group together. Integration therefore isn't so easy because they're always with each other, since they understand each other. There's no real contact with others. When we come here, we shouldn't remain amongst ourselves; we have to be able to do things, think like the people here and know the ideologies from here.

**Hon. Mauril Bélanger:** Miguel, what country are you from?

**Mr. Miguel Cédric Tchuemboum Kouam:** I'm from Cameroon, which is essentially bilingual, like Canada, but where the minority is anglophone.

**Hon. Mauril Bélanger:** All right.

Andrea, what do you think of that?

**Ms. Andrea Santana:** It's virtually the same as what they said. When you speak French, they answer you in English.

**Hon. Mauril Bélanger:** I'll stop you. You say that, when you speak to them in French, they answer you in English. Who is "they"?

**Ms. Andrea Santana:** Friends.

**Hon. Mauril Bélanger:** These are all the students at the school?

**Ms. Andrea Santana:** Yes, the students at the school.

Sometimes I do the same thing because sometimes I don't know the words in French. Now I'm better in English than French because I don't practise it often. It's also because of the accent. I have less of an accent in English than in French. So it bothers me less to speak in English, as a result of my accent.

So I speak English more often because I don't want to speak French so that people laugh at me.

**Hon. Mauril Bélanger:** Why do you think that—

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Bélanger. Yes, it's already over.

So we'll continue with Mr. Nadeau.

**Mr. Richard Nadeau (Gatineau, BQ):** Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Thank you very much for your testimony and the information you've given us this morning.

I'm originally from Hawkesbury, in eastern Ontario. It's a very francophone town. I taught for seven years here in Ottawa, at schools that you know: Louis-Riel, Gisèle-Lalonde and De La Salle. They're part of the same system as you. Your school is part of the Catholic system, whereas those schools are public. We occasionally cross paths during sports activities, in particular.

I was also involved in after-school activities. I organized UN debating clubs—and there's still at certain schools where we did that. At Louis-Riel, where I taught, in half of cases, the children who attended the school, or their parents, hadn't been born in Canada. So when we organized the UN club, believe me, it was a real success. People got together and it was very good.

Moreover, one point was just mentioned—and I'm pleased with the students' frankness. Even for me, as a Franco-Ontarian teacher in the environment that is Ottawa, assimilation is an issue within our walls. We mustn't conceal the fact. Some tried to cover it up, to conceal it, to say that these are statistics that can't be trusted.



This is a scourge for the survival of the French language. The students who are testifying here, who themselves were francophones as a result of the fact that French was the language used to communicate, tell us that to have friends and everyday discussions in the halls, as they say, or in activities outside the classroom, you have to speak French, or else you aren't understood. This shows the Canadian cancer—that's the term I use, which may seem tough for some. We're losing French to the benefit of English, even in our French schools.

My question is for the people who are on the floor and who, as I was, are employees of a Franco-Ontarian school board. I'm speaking to Ms. Lanteigne, among others, who is a teacher—that was my alter ego at the time. What can we do to prevent assimilation in our schools?

● (0945)

**Ms. Francine Lanteigne:** That was the purpose of my recommendations.

In my humble opinion, we can make it known categorically, across the country. We were talking about statistics. The statistics nevertheless show that demand for French in the world today has never been so great and that we won't be able to meet that demand at the rate we need.

So here we're in a minority context. We still have this minority mindset and we compare ourselves with the majority. We should view ourselves on the world stage and put our students and ourselves, as employees, in that context. I know that because I study in that field and I teach it.

To answer your question, we have to educate ourselves about what's being done today, and the French is indeed one of the most used primary languages. Mandarin and English are there. English is a commonly used language because it is the virtual language. However, in economic practice, French is also at the forefront, as are Spanish and Mandarin. So we have to make room for another mindset.

**Mr. Richard Nadeau:** Here we're talking about students' everyday lives, in the halls. How do we encourage students? When I was a teacher, when I walked the halls, they started speaking French, and when I went away, they went back to English. Mr. Nadeau was synonymous with French.

What spirit is encouraged? I'm also looking for solutions for the community.

**Ms. Francine Lanteigne:** You have to believe in it. I was here, and then I went to other work places. The generations change in a short space of time. You belong to the same generation as I do. That's not a criticism; it's an observation. The value attached to language is not the same as for our generation.

I have in my hands a list of the different statuses of language and the meaning of language. Language has different faces. At school, it's a social language; it's what's in. Soon we'll be speaking in iPod or I don't know what. No one will understand, apart from the people who speak amongst themselves. This is a fact.

What are we doing? Some students, when they see me, will speak in French, but not necessarily. They'll speak in their native language

as well. Yes, we encourage them to speak French. However, that time has passed.

You also have to know that it's better to learn a language while enriching yourself from other languages. Yes, we only hear English... I live in French; I moved so I could live in French. However, those languages don't work against each other. What's important in everyday life in the halls is to communicate in a language that can lead us all to love being here and to associate with another person in that person's language.

You asked me where I was from. That's important to know, isn't it? We're still at that point. Our vernacular is part of who we are. Where do I come from? I come from Acadia.

● (0950)

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

I come from Quebec City, where they say “photos”, not “phôtos”.

I'll hand over to Mr. Godin, our second vice-chair.

**Mr. Yvon Godin (Acadie—Bathurst, NDP):** Back home, we say “crabe”, not “crâbe”.

**Some voices:** Oh, oh!

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** It's really something being with you. First of all, it's a pleasure for me. It's definitely not easy. I come from a region outside Quebec, outside Ontario, away from here. It's as though it were outside of everything. I'm an Acadian from northeastern New Brunswick. Back home, 80% of the population is francophone. Ms. Lanteigne comes from Caraquet. It's a pleasure for me to meet you this morning, Ms. Lanteigne.

Back home in New Brunswick, one-third of the population is francophone. So the school districts had to be divided in two: the French school district and the English school district. There are always people who say that divides people, but that's not the case. That's how we've been able to save our language, because you learn French, but you catch English. You've no doubt heard that before. You learn French, you speak French in class, and you catch the other language in the hall. That's the fact of the matter. Our mandate is to see where we stand with all that and how we can go about helping you.

We are taking in immigrants here so we can increase our francophone population. We must not lose our language because we're catching English too. For you, it's in the halls; for us it's on the street, in offices, in Ottawa.

As you say, if you don't speak English, it's hard to find a job; that's the fact of the matter. You can't be a deputy minister if you don't speak English. However, you can be a deputy minister if you speak English but not French, in an officially bilingual country. It should be equal. You can be a judge on the Supreme Court of Canada if you're an anglophone, but you can't be one if you're a francophone and you don't speak English. That's the situation in our country, which we're trying to change. You have to accept the equality of the two languages. If that were the case, you would have as many chances as the others. I believe you've understood. As you said earlier, the fact that you are Canadian doesn't make it easier to get a job if you don't speak both languages.

Let's go back to your school. What could be done? It will be said that this is a provincial jurisdiction, but Ms. Desautels said a little earlier that budgets and money get a lot of things done. You can do miracles with money; you can hit peaks of \$1 billion in Toronto. You can do a lot of things with money. With money and programs, couldn't we train groups to really encourage students to speak French in the halls or to find francophone friends? And I'm not talking about artificial friends. The idea is to be able to organize so-called francophone activities and to bring people together, to have money so they can take the bus, or something else. These activities would make it possible to bring together people who can spend time together and who wouldn't feel alone.

We're talking about intake. We have to determine how we can receive the people who arrive here, how they will spend the day in class, how they can enjoy themselves in the evenings and on weekends and feel good. I'd like to know your opinion on that.

Ms. Desautels, you talked about the budget.

• (0955)

**Ms. Thérèse Desautels:** Yes. I just want to reassure you a little by saying that we've already spoken with management. According to the board's mission, students must take five streams, including the francophone stream.

With Mr. Charette, we've already established on paper that our priority will be the francophone stream at the school next year, even though the others won't be neglected. How are we going to do that? What strategy will we adopt? We haven't entirely gotten there. However, we will increase awareness—

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** Part VII of the Official Languages Act provides money to promote a community. You can obtain money to do that promotion. Do you recommend that the federal government get involved in this area and support you in this effort? This isn't to encroach on fields of provincial jurisdiction. However, with the provincial authorities, we can identify the problem in order to try to help people everywhere in the schools.

**Ms. Thérèse Desautels:** Naturally, from the moment we talk about strategy, projects and things to do, we need personnel.

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** You've no doubt heard about the Roadmap for Canada's Linguistic Duality.

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

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** Do you think the government should be involved in it?

**Ms. Thérèse Desautels:** Yes.

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

We'll now go to Ms. Shelly Glover.

**Mrs. Shelly Glover (Saint Boniface, CPC):** Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I'm happy to welcome you, and I thank you for coming to testify before our committee. We have been well received at your school.

You touched on a number of areas. I'd like to start with the students.

You talked about English and so on. I think there's one factor that has an influence in this area, and that's American culture. What kind

of music do you usually listen to? Who is your favourite singer? I'd like each of you to briefly answer those questions.

**Mr. Miguel Cédric Tchuemboum Kouam:** For me, it's Booba, a French rapper.

**Mrs. Shelly Glover:** Perfect.

Andrea?

**Ms. Andrea Santana:** I just like techno.

**Mrs. Shelly Glover:** Techno? That's it.

Kelly?

**Ms. Kelly Bararu:** For me, it's La Fouine, who's also a French rapper.

**Mrs. Shelly Glover:** That's good.

Most of the students I speak with—I have five children; I know a lot of children and I love them—are very much influenced by American music, theatre and movies. However, all that's in English.

I want to know whether, outside of school, and apart from music, you have the opportunity to visit francophone centres, to go to the theatre, watch movies, things like that. Can you name a few events in French that you take part in outside of school, whether it be sports events or anything else?

**Mr. Miguel Cédric Tchuemboum Kouam:** Not really in French. As you know, the city is mostly anglophone. I can say that I attend concerts in French, music concerts. Apart from that, I work in English. I try to speak English, but for the moment I don't speak very good English. I arrived a year ago. I'm trying to speak English, because I need to speak English to live here.

**Mrs. Shelly Glover:** Do you take part in other events in French outside the school?

Andrea?

**Ms. Andrea Santana:** No.

**Mrs. Shelly Glover:** No?

Kelly?

**Ms. Kelly Bararu:** Sometimes I go to concerts in French. Apart from that, I go to the movies to see movies in English, or things like that.

**Mrs. Shelly Glover:** I encourage you to take the opportunity. The Government of Canada is investing a historic amount of money to support events in French, particularly in the regions where the linguistic minority communities live.

I have five children, and I'm the product of immersion programs. When I was at school, we were with francophones because there was no immersion school at the time. I was part of the first immersion class in my region, in Manitoba. We had consequences at school. When we went to school with francophones, if we were caught speaking English, we got a ticket. That ticket meant we had to go see the principal. When we got a second ticket, our parents were called. The principal asked them whether they really wanted their children to attend a francophone school. With the third ticket, the parents were invited to see the principal together with the student. We were given the opportunity to leave the school. There were consequences. When I was a student, I found that harsh, but I can say that it's thanks to those consequences that I speak French today. I wanted to learn French.

I'm sharing that with you, since you really want to learn and speak French at a francophone school. It surprises me that there aren't any consequences. Are there any consequences?

• (1000)

**Ms. Francine Lanteigne:** You're talking about pedagogy. In today's teaching methods, in 2010, punishment doesn't produce the same result as it used to.

Today, we're in an era of plurality. There isn't just English and French. There's also Arabic, all the African ethnic languages and Creole. There's the recognition of language as an object of communication. So, of course, we encourage expression in French. We speak French during the classes. In the halls, we speak French as much as possible, of course. However, we don't punish the students; we don't give them tickets, and we don't send them to the principal's office. We don't do that.

**Mrs. Shelly Glover:** It's interesting to hear you interpret that as punishment. At the time, when I was young, I thought it was punishment. However, I can tell you that it's different for a parent who wants to maintain French—my children wanted to learn French. Since you want to have more French in your halls, I assume that's not viewed as punishment, depending on who's involved.

I'd like to ask you a question, Ms. Brûlé.

**The Chair:** That will be for your next turn, Ms. Glover. Time is already up. Thank you very much.

We'll continue with Mr. D'Amours.

**Mr. Jean-Claude D'Amours (Madawaska—Restigouche, Lib.):** Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I want to thank the witnesses for being here. I also want to thank the students. Their testimony was very interesting to hear. Lastly, I want to thank the school principal, Mr. Charest, who I've learned is from my home town, Edmunston, in northern New Brunswick. Ms. Lanteigne is also from northern New Brunswick. It's interesting to see that we can meet so far away.

I'm going to focus on the students and on Mr. Yengayenge, that is on the parents and students. I'd like to know whether your parents spoke English when they arrived in Canada.

**Mr. Miguel Cédric Tchuemboum Kouam:** Mine didn't; they spoke French.

**Mr. Jean-Claude D'Amours:** If I correctly understood Mr. Yengayenge, the work situation was hard for your parents, for all three of you, when they arrived in Canada.

**Ms. Andrea Santana:** Yes.

**Ms. Kelly Bararu:** Yes.

**Mr. Miguel Cédric Tchuemboum Kouam:** It's only been a year, but yes.

**Mr. Jean-Claude D'Amours:** Listening to Ms. Desautels earlier, then you, as a parent, and you, the students, I wondered whether the work situation of your parents affected you in your everyday life.

I understand how students can mainly speak English in the halls. Does that affect your integration? We've talked a lot about integration: that of students, that of parents. Does that affect you in your integration as a newcomer in a community where your mother tongue is far from the first language spoken? Does it affect you personally or has it not had any influence?

**Mr. Miguel Cédric Tchuemboum Kouam:** I would say it affects us. When I was in Cameroon, I spoke French. My parents worked, my father was a teacher, a teacher at a lycée—the equivalent of high school in the French school system. My mother was a primary school teacher.

When we arrived in Canada, my father was asked for his marks from “terminale”—that's the last year of high school in Cameroon. He's been a teacher for 25 years. He wonders how he's going to be able to prove it, so he can enter a program to become a teacher again here. So he'll be going to Cameroon soon, and he wonders whether he'll be coming back here because it's difficult.

We arrived a year ago, and he hasn't worked the entire year. We've lived off resources from Cameroon. We had a better life there than here. He really wonders whether he will come back here because it's not really worth it to come back here and to do nothing, or to wind up with a job that doesn't correspond to his skills. He prefers to go back and live and work there in order to support us from there.

Something should be done about recognizing our parents' credentials and work experience.

• (1005)

**Mr. Jean-Claude D'Amours:** I don't know how much time I have left.

**The Chair:** You have one minute left.

**Mr. Jean-Claude D'Amours:** Before even speaking French in the halls, I think problem number 1 starts with the family. When I was listening to all three of you earlier, and you too, Mr. Apollinaire—please allow me to call you that; it's easier to pronounce—my fear was that the promised land would become a real hell for some families.

Mr. Apollinaire, earlier you mentioned that parents were forced to work odd jobs and work 70 hours a week so they could perhaps support their families. That raises question marks in our minds.

In my constituency, I helped advance a project called Carrefour d'immigration rurale, the purpose of which is to promote the integration of francophone newcomers into rural areas. From what you're saying, the urban reality is the same in Ontario, and perhaps even worse, but I can understand that there are similarities between the two.

At some point, I would like to come back to you, Mr. Apollinaire, although I know my time is almost up. In fact, you have to start at square one. If we can't help you integrate—let's forget the language aspect—if we can't give you the tools for successful integration, you definitely won't be able to have a good life here and that will have an impact, psychological or otherwise, on the children you bring with you.

**The Chair:** Mr. Apollinaire, you may have the opportunity to answer that in the next rounds.

Thank you, Mr. D'Amours.

Ms. Guay.

**Ms. Monique Guay (Rivière-du-Nord, BQ):** Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Thanks to my colleague from Acadia.

I'm a Quebecker and it affects me to see how hard it is for you, as francophones, to integrate here. It's definitely very different in Quebec. However, we have the same problem regarding the immigration of qualified people.

In my constituency, there's a couple who arrived from Iran and who are both nuclear medicine experts—that's not nothing. I helped them complete their forms to enter Quebec. These people had to work in the emergency ward at the hospital in my constituency for two years before they could work in nuclear medicine. So we lost two good years with these people who could immediately have operated in their field upon arrival. They spoke very good French. They spoke a number of languages, four or five. So you're entirely right, Mr. Apollinaire, that we have to try to solve this problem as soon as possible.

You young people, I find you quite fantastic.

Andrea, I sense you're very emotional, but that comes from your Latin American blood, as a Brazilian.

I hope you can continue in French. I can understand the problems in the halls of the school. I can understand how that goes; I know it's hard to integrate. First, you come from another country. Second, you try to make friends, and there is rejection.

As francophones, you have chosen to learn French. Are there any initiatives at school for anglophones to make an effort to learn French, so they can mix with you? Why is it that it would be solely up to you to do it? I know you're in the minority, but it might be interesting for them to learn another language as well. English isn't the only language.

Are any efforts being made in that direction at the school? Ms. Lanteigne could answer me on that point, but I'd like to know the students' opinions as well.

●(1010)

**Ms. Francine Lanteigne:** As we're at a francophone school; the students who attend it all speak French, with a few exceptions. In that case, the students are allophones.

Yes, all kinds of activities are planned. The services provided for the reception of newly arrived students include intensive support, partial support and tutoring. So, at the same time, there's the opportunity to earn credits, intensively and partially integrated, for one, two, three or four courses. The students who take those courses earn their credits. Andrea, for example, was very proud, as she said yesterday, that she had met the requirements for her high school diploma in four years, including the language requirements, to earn her high school diploma in four years.

This isn't necessarily our biggest priority, but the first purpose of our funding is to fund teachers who will handle the adjustment, teach the curriculum and ensure that the language and cultural support adjustment is done. That's where Ms. Desautels' budget comes into play. There is a protocol, and the board is working very hard to make our efforts more visible. We have activities, but we carry them out on a volunteer basis. It's not because we're good, but because we lack staff.

Have I answered your question?

**Ms. Monique Guay:** Yes, that answers it.

**Ms. Andrea Santana:** That's why the students prefer to speak English. Speaking English is like a fashion. The students speak French. Some perhaps don't practise it often and forget words, but they all know how to speak French. However, when it comes to speaking, it's fashion that takes over.

**Ms. Monique Guay:** That means they probably have to speak English at home.

**A voice:** Not necessarily.

**Ms. Andrea Santana:** It's also possible that they speak another language.

**Ms. Thérèse Desautels:** I won't examine the conscience of the City of Ottawa, but it should not be forgotten that we're in Ottawa, a bilingual city on paper, but not in actual fact. When our young people leave here, it's all well and good to teach them French, but they're going to be served in English. I challenge you to find a French film in Ottawa. You have to go to Gatineau.

Don't forget that we have newcomers who barely have the resources to clothe and feed themselves. I would be surprised if they spent \$20 to go see a movie, or \$40 to go see a show. I think the money is used to meet essential needs.

Don't forget we're in Ottawa. Even though I speak French to the person who has to serve me, the answer I get is, "I don't speak French."

**The Chair:** Thank you, Ms. Guay.

We'll continue with Mr. Weston.

**Mr. John Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country, CPC):** I also congratulate the principal, Mr. Charette, the teachers and students.

It's obvious the students are studying well here since they speak as quickly as Ms. Lanteigne, their teacher.

It's good that there are teachers from New Brunswick. I'm a bit disappointed there aren't any from British Columbia, but perhaps that will be the case next time.

The students' stories are very interesting. I thank you for them. I have three children who attend a French immersion school in British Columbia, in West Vancouver, in the constituency I represent.

We often talk about nation-building in this committee. We are individuals, but together we are the Canadian nation. What effect does it have on non-francophones to hear you speak French? We just said we have to speak English from time to time. However, in British Columbia, in Alberta, in Ottawa, which are cities where many people don't speak French, what effect does the use of French have? I think our nation has a lot of values, and most of the people here today have this value of saving the French language and contributing to its vitality. How does your use of French and your love for the French language influence other people who don't speak French? I think that will influence the next generations in the Canadian nation.

Do the students want to answer?

• (1015)

**Ms. Kelly Bararu:** When people from British Columbia hear us speak French, it may encourage them to try to understand French, since, as you said, we are one nation. We really have to be able to understand each other in English and in French. However, that will take time, and, frankly, without lying, I believe that French is harder to learn than English.

**Mr. Miguel Cédric Tchuemboum Kouam:** I must say we're lucky to be able to speak French—and also to be able to speak French and English, but especially to speak good French, since it's difficult.

When I go to the store, I ask people whether they speak French, and I often see they look downcast, sorry. They would like to be able to speak French, but they don't have that opportunity. They would like to, but they can't. They don't have the time, or it's too late for them to learn French.

I think some anglophones would really like to speak French and be bilingual because they're affected by seeing someone speak French and English. Anglophones could also learn French well and become bilingual. If we write a report, we'll see that there are more francophones who speak English than anglophones who speak French.

**Ms. Andrea Santana:** Sometimes the francophones at my work speak to me in English, even though I know they speak French. I can hear the accent and know whether they're anglophone or francophone. They never ask me if I speak French, and I can't say anything because I don't want to repeat myself. So I continue in English, but I understand that they would feel better if they could speak French. And yet they don't ask me whether I speak French. I find that really sad because I could help them more in French. They choose to speak English, thinking that everyone speaks English. A number of people speak French at my work. Sometimes they know

some words and can express themselves. It's just that people don't think to ask me if I speak French.

**The Chair:** Be quick; I'll adjust my watch.

**Mr. John Weston:** That's very interesting, and I really understand these things you're concerned about. The Canadian government is investing a lot in the recognition of foreign credentials, so I believe that will improve.

How do you think it affects anglophones, those who don't speak French, when you speak French? Is that something that will build the Canadian nation? This is a young nation, and we need your help in order to enhance the vitality—

• (1020)

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, Mr. Weston. You'll have more time later.

We'll continue with Mr. Godin to complete our second round.

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** Andrea, earlier you said you were lucky to have a volunteer teacher—I believe it was Ms. Lanteigne who helped you. Could you give me some more details on that subject? Was that an existing program, or is this a matter of people who give their own time to help newcomers?

**Ms. Andrea Santana:** It's not really a program; it's just a summer course, a partnership between the school and OCISO. After that summer course, the volunteer teacher really wanted to help me. It wasn't through school: it was she and I who, on a volunteer basis, studied French, grammar and so on.

So she has taken the time to help me, right up to the present. No one's paying her to do it.

**Ms. Francine Lanteigne:** To put this context, I'd like to point out that OCISO is an Ottawa organization that takes in immigrants of all languages. Our school board was one of the first to promote a partnership with community organizations that take in immigrants. This organization has hired multicultural officers who speak the various languages of the students at our schools. It was through that officer that this was done. The families who arrive here have different needs and the profiles of our students have to be taken into account.

In Andrea's case, it was April or May. As she was at school during the day, we had to find her someone who could help her after classroom hours because she didn't want to miss any courses, which constitutes complete integration. We provide help based on the student's profile.

You asked whether it was done easily and automatically. No, it requires hours and hours of research; it's case by case. That's where we can't make it, despite our efforts. This isn't to praise our board, but it is very sensitive to needs. The problem lies in the quantity; we can't meet the demand.

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** Andrea had this opportunity.

Have the others had it as well?

**Ms. Francine Lanteigne:** They didn't have the same needs.

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** They didn't have the same needs. So it's based on needs.

**Ms. Andrea Santana:** My sister, another girl who was Cuban and I all attended the summer courses.

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** I "got", or rather I "have" another question—pardon me, I'm speaking Acadian. Acadia is a bit different; we have our own little words. We live in a little place there, at the other end, on the edge of the Bay of Chaleur.

What is your attachment to the francophonie? You live in a crazy world where everyone speaks English. It's virtual: iPods, iPads and all that. What's your attachment to French? You're young; you're going to start a family; you're definitely thinking about the future. Would you like your children to speak French and to maintain your French?

**Mr. Miguel Cédric Tchuemboum Kouam:** I would, yes. The French language is very diversified. You can use it in a number of ways to say the same thing.

**The Chair:** It's like in politics.

**Some voices:** Oh, oh!

**Mr. Miguel Cédric Tchuemboum Kouam:** That's what I like about the French language. When I go to the theatre, it's funnier in French than in English. I really like the French language, and I grew up with it.

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** It's more a language of love, isn't it?

**Some voices:** Oh, oh!

**Ms. Andrea Santana:** I want my children to speak French too. I love reading and I read a lot of books in French.

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** And you, Kelly?

**Ms. Kelly Bararu:** I grew up in French, my parents speak French, so my children will definitely speak French. I find it easier to speak and read in French. I read in English, but I often have to deduce what the author is trying to say, whereas I understand immediately in French.

• (1025)

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** I simply want to say thank you to you because this is somewhat our fear: we don't want to lose our French, and we don't want future generations to lose it. So, with you, it will continue.

Now I'm speaking to you as a parent. A number of adults who come here with families, like you, have previously carried on really incredible occupations. We often take a taxi and discover that the driver is a doctor, a lawyer or an engineer. I'm not saying that driving a taxi isn't a good occupation, but you need fewer qualifications to do it than to be a doctor or a specialist. Do you sense any openness on the government's part to recognizing your credentials, or is that taking a long time?

**Mr. Apollinaire Yengayenge:** I don't really know whether there's any openness on the government's part. The government has a policy, but when we arrive here, it's not to do a deal with the government. We have to take care of everyday life: occupations, teaching, hospitals, health, banks, law firms, universities, etc.

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** There are politicians too.

**Mr. Apollinaire Yengayenge:** We also know that, apart from the government, there are unions. There's the College of Nurses, the College of Physicians, the college of this and the college of that.

Who isn't unionized? What isn't barricaded? At the same time, the fact is that the Hôpital Montfort, which is expanding, needs qualified nurses. We have some nurses who are qualified, and we have qualified physicians.

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** Some people still wait 30 hours to see a doctor.

**Mr. Apollinaire Yengayenge:** Absolutely. The first thing that scandalized me after I'd arrived in Canada was when I went to the Hôpital Montfort with a child who had a toothache, and the waiting line in emergency was eight hours long. Then I saw a poster stating that, if people felt ill, they should stay home. This was because of a fever. You should stay home. So when do you go to the hospital? When you go feet first?

**Some voices:** Oh, oh!

**The Chair:** Welcome to Canada!

**Mr. Apollinaire Yengayenge:** It's true; it scandalized me. That's the system; we clearly see that the country has a number of facets. There are a number of gears, and the government's will—

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** We have leadership.

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

On the subject of credential recognition, Miguel, you said that your parents were teachers at the primary and secondary level respectively? Have they found a job in Canada?

**Mr. Miguel Cédric Tchuemboum Kouam:** As I told you, my father would have had to go to university for two more years to get recognition, and he was asked to submit his marks from his last year in high school, when he has been a teacher for 25 years.

**The Chair:** All right, thank you.

Ms. Zarac.

**Mrs. Lise Zarac (LaSalle—Émard, Lib.):** Thank you very much for this invitation today. What we're hearing is very interesting. So I'm very pleased to be here. Once again, thank you very much.

There are so many questions that come to mind that I don't exactly know where to start. Ms. Desautels, you mentioned that Ottawa is a bilingual city on paper, and, incidentally, I would add that Canada is also a bilingual country on paper only, unfortunately.

With that, I'd like to talk to the students. The parents of two of them already knew French when they arrived here. In your case, Andrea, your parents knew neither English nor French. I see that you have integrated very well; you speak very good French. How did it go with your parents?

**Ms. Andrea Santana:** My parents are divorced. I came here with my mother, and my father stayed in Brazil. Today my mother can get by in English, but she doesn't master it as my sisters and I do. So she doesn't really speak a lot of English or French.

**Mrs. Lise Zarac:** Can you say what might have helped her more? At some point, since she spoke neither English nor French, was that very difficult for you to bear? I suppose that, at times, you felt like the parent rather than the child. I would like you to talk a little about that with us.

**Ms. Andrea Santana:** My mother wanted us to learn French. She taught Portuguese. Even though she didn't speak French, she at least wanted us to read books and to consult dictionaries. So it was she who made the decision. For her, it was really hard because she still needed me or my sisters to translate things. I made the calls for her.

She also sees a lot of Portuguese friends. So she doesn't practise her English. She only speaks Portuguese. That's why she's never made any progress. She doesn't want us to speak English together. But I would like us to do it so she can improve her English, but she doesn't want to; she wants to keep the tradition of speaking Portuguese. She doesn't want to mix the two, English and Portuguese. She wants to keep Portuguese.

• (1030)

**Mrs. Lise Zarac:** Has she taken any of the courses that are offered to her by Citizenship and Immigration Canada?

**Ms. Andrea Santana:** Yes, she has taken some courses. However, it's really hard for an adult to learn a language. It was quite difficult for me, but my 10-year-old sister speaks French perfectly.

**Mrs. Lise Zarac:** Was she able to attend all the courses, or did she have to go and work at some point?

**Ms. Andrea Santana:** She took courses during the day and she worked in the evenings.

**Mrs. Lise Zarac:** She did both at the same time. Thank you.

I'm going to do like my colleague; I'm going to call you Mr. Apollinaire. I won't say your family name, unfortunately, even though I'd like to.

You mentioned that the primary reason for immigrating to Canada was to give your children a better quality of life. However, I believe there's a heavy price to pay for the parents, isn't there?

You also mentioned that people weren't given enough information. What would you have liked to know before immigrating to Canada? Who would have responded to your needs better when you arrived?

**Mr. Apollinaire Yengayenge:** It's simply that we have an ideal picture of the country before immigrating. We believe that, as soon as we arrive at the airport, the carpet will be rolled out for us and we'll have a job. There's really nothing that prepares a newcomer for landing here. It's surprising to arrive here. I think there should be a lot more integration courses for those who choose to immigrate, as soon as they arrive here. Those courses should be given by people who are very familiar with our culture and who can orient us and tell us what's different from back home and what we have to do here.

I'm telling you that sincerely because I've made two attempts at immigration. I went back to the other country. My children were here, and they had to go back twice. We arrived in Quebec City in 2005. I followed them in 2006, and I stayed four months. Then, finding myself with nothing, I went back to take my position at the university, like what the father of Miguel Tchuemboum Kouam will be doing.

Then I came back. My wife was already here in Ottawa to take the courses she needed at the University of Ottawa. I also saw that I had no opportunities. I went back, but I ultimately realized you can't live that way, separated from your family. So I made the decision to come back. Once back here, I told myself that I had to achieve something.

I started something at the University of Ottawa; I saw that wasn't working. I wanted to do a doctorate. Where was that leading? I had three degrees: one in theology, a second one in history and a third in computer science, in documents, in electronic document management. So three degrees were enough for me; I was versatile. I really liked to work. I had followed my path on the outside. I haven't just lived in Burundi; I also lived in France for at least seven years, in total.

When I arrived here, I really felt an attachment at the Cité collégiale. The programs developed there show us how to live in Canada. They tell us about Canada; they present Canada to us and its economic realities, consumer habits, credit card-related problems. We're shown tricks that enable us to manage both our time and our finances, and we're shown how to talk to employers. That opened my eyes, and, once I'd finished, I was taken right away.

I figured that parents had to be well prepared. What we lacked, ultimately, was knowing how to enter the workforce.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Ms. Zarac.

Now we'll continue with Ms. Boucher.

**Mrs. Sylvie Boucher (Beauport—Limoilou, CPC):** Thank you for having us, but thank you in particular for this magnificent lesson in life.

We're often in our bubble on Parliament Hill, and we don't see beyond what goes on there. I have a number of questions.

I come from Quebec, and I'm a member of Parliament there. In the Quebec City region, apart from Laval University, it's in my constituency, Beauport—Limoilou, that there is the largest pool of immigrants. They come from everywhere. I often hear what you're telling us.

First, I'd like to know how many languages you speak relatively fluently.

• (1035)

**Mr. Miguel Cédric Tchuemboum Kouam:** The only language I speak fluently is French.

**Ms. Andrea Santana:** And you?

**Ms. Kelly Bararu:** I speak French.

**Mrs. Sylvie Boucher:** You, the young people of today, are much more open to the world. You have the Internet now, which was not the case for us at the time.

When you're an immigrant and you arrive in a country where there are a number of languages, in this case two official languages, English and French... When I arrived in Ottawa, I only knew three words: "yes", "no" and "toaster". I spoke no English. I did a deal with my anglophone co-workers: I spoke English to them, but I demanded that they speak French to me. What we said to each other wasn't always brilliant, but now when we speak, we manage to do it in both languages. I've always seen the ability to speak a number of languages as an advantage. It was an opening onto the world for me.

I would like you to tell me how Canada is presented to you in your country in a way that would make you come and settle here. The question is mainly for you, Mr. Apollinaire.

**Mr. Apollinaire Yengayenge:** We mainly came to Canada for my wife. Canada is an ideal country. It's a country of peace, of course, where children are properly educated. So we essentially came for the children's education. I didn't know Canada. I knew Europe, but I had no illusions: France is definitely more closed to foreigners than Canada when it comes to the workforce. I know today that Canada is a country that respects qualifications. No one cares where you come from or who you are. They respect competence, and that's very important for me.

It's true that Canada was sold to me as an ideal country. Of course, we didn't know what we were going to discover. So I discovered, gradually, through integration, that there was no difference between an immigrant and a Canadian. Here in Ottawa, if you come from any other province, you have the same chance of getting a job as an immigrant from a country in Africa or Europe, in particular. Other factors being equal, you have the same chances, and that's very important.

**Mrs. Sylvie Boucher:** Do I have any time left, Mr. Chairman?

**The Chair:** You have one minute left, Ms. Boucher.

**Mrs. Sylvie Boucher:** I'd like to tell the students that they got my attention.

You're here by choice or because your parents came here, but I see that integration was quite difficult.

Today, what is your relationship with the francophone community here, which is in the minority? Do you have any frequent contact with it?

**Mr. Miguel Cédric Tchuemboum Kouam:** That depends what you mean it.

**Mrs. Sylvie Boucher:** Outside of school, do you have any groups of francophone friends? Do you have any contact with the community that welcomed you to Ottawa? You have the school, but outside that do you have any contact with francophone minorities?

•(1040)

**Mr. Miguel Cédric Tchuemboum Kouam:** I speak French with my friends. I always speak French, even with those who speak English and French. I'd really like to speak better English, but I still speak French with them.

**The Chair:** That won't take long.

Thank you very much, Ms. Boucher.

We'll complete the third round with Mr. Nadeau.

**Mr. Richard Nadeau:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Miguel Cédric said something earlier that troubled me but that I understand. I've never been in this kind of situation, and this is the first time I've heard these kinds of remarks. You said you were waiting for money from Cameroon to give you a better quality of life here as a result of work problems. This is an upside down world for me; I have always heard the contrary. I have Haitian friends who send money to their families in Haiti because the economy is weaker there. There's work to do.

As you say so well, Canada mustn't dangle things in front of newcomers, but rather tell the truth right off the bat. The issue of

credential recognition is a provincial jurisdiction. You know that, in Canada, the provinces and federal government have different jurisdictions. There are all kinds of criteria that must be known and that are complicated; we get lost in them as well, but we have to make them known in order to give people a chance to know what they should expect before they arrive.

I have a question. I know this is a hot topic in French-speaking Ontario. I lived in Saskatchewan for six and a half years. I went there to fight for Fransaskois schools management. What helped us a great deal with the Fransaskois is that they agreed to allow the public and Catholic school sectors to join forces to house Saskatchewan's French-language schools. There are two systems for funding schools in Ontario. I'm not saying it's a sin, but it's a fact. There are two systems. If there were only one, wouldn't that be a greater help with regard to funding, just as that helped us when I was in Saskatchewan?

Ms. Brûlé, you who work at the school board, where do you stand on this issue? Is this a possibility or are the two systems still very much divided?

**Ms. Monique Brûlé:** I don't believe that would improve matters with regard to the integration of francophone immigrants. I'll give you an example. Here at the Conseil des écoles catholiques du Centre-Est, we work a lot with the public school board; we have joint initiatives. So even though we have two school systems, that doesn't prevent a high degree of cooperation between the two boards. I don't think that would improve matters with regard to the integration of immigrants.

**Mr. Richard Nadeau:** You're talking about the integration of newcomers, but, in financial terms, wouldn't it be better to have a single system instead of two? Have there been any studies on this subject? Cash is king; we know that. Have any studies been conducted, or is this a taboo subject that isn't touched upon?

**Ms. Monique Brûlé:** I can't state a position on that question. It's beyond my competence.

**Mr. Richard Nadeau:** All right, I understand.

Mr. Yengayenge, earlier you talked about the issue of parents who have family and financial responsibilities. I suppose you have children at school here, or at least that you have children in the school system. To your knowledge, within the parents association, for example, either at Samuel-Genest or elsewhere, or at the school commission, is there a way for immigrant parents to hold a forum to say whether it's necessary to improve the situation—I'm still talking about solutions—to talk about their situation and about their difficulties? Is there a forum for that, a way for parents to step forward?



**Mr. Apollinaire Yengayenge:** I believe the Collège catholique Samuel-Genest offers that possibility. This school, which my children attend, seeks a partnership with parents. I know that. It's obvious. However, the parents are always isolated at home and have no information, despite what the Canadian education system offers. They know nothing and have become illiterate in all senses of that word. They can't follow current affairs, and don't even know how the schools are organized. How can they be motivated to come? Parents must acquire a whole set of information before becoming real partners. Today, the Collège catholique Samuel-Genest is playing alone, and I don't know whether any supervision is possible when the children are between the parents and the school. There must be problems after school; that's for certain. I'm not going to discuss them. There are even problems in certain families where the children and parents don't agree.

• (1045)

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

We'll now begin our fourth and final round. We are going to cut it short, since the bus that is to take us back is waiting for us. However, I would like to mention to committee members and to parliamentarians that, if possible, we would like to take a picture at the end of the session to immortalize this meeting. I must tell you I'm very proud I insisted on getting the budget that allowed us to hold this meeting here, my colleagues and I.

[English]

We still have one last round to go.

Ms. O'Neill-Gordon, I would invite you to start it up with a three-minute round. Thank you.

**Mrs. Tilly O'Neill-Gordon (Miramichi, CPC):** Mr. Chair, as an educator, a former teacher, I certainly can relate to the challenges that —

[Translation]

**The Chair:** Pardon me, Ms. O'Neill-Gordon.

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** I have a point of order. Perhaps we should explain to those who don't understand enough English how the translation system works.

**The Chair:** It's channel 0 for the floor. You can hear the speeches in both languages. Channel 1 is reserved for English and channel 2 for French. I take this opportunity to thank the people assigned to translation and those reporting to the clerk. They do very good team work.

With that, Ms. O'Neill-Gordon, go ahead please.

[English]

Let's start again.

**Mrs. Tilly O'Neill-Gordon:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

As a former teacher, I certainly can relate to the challenges educators face each day, and in this situation, I understand even more the challenges that you're being faced with. I have to say that your compassion and love for your job is obvious. As I always say, that's one thing teachers must have and it has to be out front, and it's very obvious in this situation.

To the students, I have to say how much I admire you. I am coming from a bilingual province and I have taken French courses on several occasions, but I'm not nearly up to par with where you are, so you certainly need to be congratulated on a job well done.

Mr. Yengayenge, you mentioned that it would be important for us to better prepare you to enter the workforce. I'm wondering if you could give us some recommendations that we could take back on what way we could do this.

[Translation]

**Mr. Apollinaire Yengayenge:** The first thing I can say, and which is very important, is that the academic qualifications of newcomers are not questioned. This is often the difficult cultural difference. These qualifications are much more related to culture. We don't operate in the same way as Canadians. We don't manage time in the same way. As a result of a number of factors, we are different, and the qualified parents who come here simply need to be introduced to Canadian values, whether it's in the education system, the culture, the economy or in the way of communicating, among other things.

As you know, we come from a country marked by a colonial power in which hierarchy, obedience and order prevailed. We parents experienced that. The schools operate in the same way. Often you can see that even our children have experienced that hierarchy, as a result of which, under that authority, creativity, imagination and resourcefulness have been completely inhibited.

When immigrants arrive here, you give them the opportunity to do internships. They benefit from this kind of learning. Employers, on the other hand, expect them to show they deserve the position for which they're doing the internship.

Opportunities are often lost, simply as a result of a lack of understanding and misunderstandings. Sometimes we're told that we aren't francophones simply because we consider it impolite to ask the employer to repeat what he has said. He then feels that someone sent him a person who is supposed to be a francophone but who in fact is not. For example, if some asks us: "Quand est-ce que vous rentrez?", for us, "rentrez" means to go home, and not to go to the office. We're dealing with all these cultural adjustments.

We don't even know how to promote ourselves in situations where we have the same qualifications as others. Young immigrant students who attend the Cité collégiale are the living proof of that. They sell themselves less in the workforce than native-born Canadians do, despite their technical qualifications, and even if they occasionally have better marks than them. Employers are surprised when a prize-winner from a school they know are not that good at selling themselves. It's not their academic qualifications that are in question; it's much more their way of being, their attitudes and their demeanour.

• (1050)

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, Mr. Apollinaire and Ms. O'Neill-Gordon.

Mr. Bélanger.

**Hon. Mauril Bélanger:** Thank you.

I have three minutes and three messages.

The first message is for the students and those who are at the back, the others who have been so patient all this time.

We committee members are going to try to prepare a report. We would like to do it by the end of June, at least based on what we've heard to date, regarding the importance of immigration for the official language minority communities, like our community here in Ontario.

If some of you would like to send us comments on what you've heard this morning or on anything else, you should do it quite soon, even this week. I have an e-mail address that you can note down, if you're interested: lang@parl.gc.ca. If we receive your comments this week, there is a good chance they can be distributed to us and be considered in the study and in our report which will be prepared soon.

The second message concerns the bricks. I promised my colleagues to explain why they are here.

Earlier the principal gave me some bricks. These are bricks that come from my home village. I come from mid-northern Ontario, from a small village called Mattawa. These are some bricks from the hospital that has just been demolished. There was a big dispute. Some people wanted to prevent the demolition of the hospital, which couldn't be saved, to prevent the construction of a school at that location, hoping that the school would be built somewhere else. I took part in the dispute a bit.

**Some voices:** Oh, oh!

**Hon. Mauril Bélanger:** It's been settled. The hospital is demolished, but the compromise—because we often make them—is that one of the walls of the former hospital has been preserved and will be incorporated in the new school. That school will be part of the Conseil scolaire catholique Franco-Nord. The school will be under construction shortly and will be ready for next year.

So these are two bricks from the former hospital that I proudly accept, sir. Thank you very much.

**Some voices:** Bravo!

**Hon. Mauril Bélanger:** As for the third message, I want to thank my colleagues for agreeing to the suggestion that we come and sit at a school. It's not just for what we've gotten out of it here this morning. What we've heard about real-life problems facing newcomers must again become central what we'll be studying and recommending. It's also so you students can see politicians from all parties, Conservatives, Liberals, New Democrats and Bloc Québécois, working together. You'll notice that we haven't hurled any insults at each other.

**The Chair:** Or bricks.

**Hon. Mauril Bélanger:** We haven't fought; we're going to do that afterwards.

**Some voices:** Oh, oh!

**Hon. Mauril Bélanger:** Based on my personal conviction—I'm not necessarily speaking for all my colleagues—I find it deplorable that the image that people have of the Parliament of Canada is limited to the oral question period. I think that's the worst example

we can offer of the people who work for the welfare of their fellow citizens.

What you've seen today is what I often experience in Parliament. It's not like the oral question period. We do a job in which we listen to people, we ask questions in an attempt to gain a clear understanding, in order to make recommendations that might improve the living conditions of our fellow citizens.

Thank you for being attentive and for seeing another example of people who, even though they have different opinions on the essential aspects of things, can work together for everyone's greater well-being.

Thank you.

**Some voices:** Bravo!

● (1055)

**The Chair:** You never know, Mr. Bélanger, perhaps your successor is in this room today.

**Hon. Mauril Bélanger:** I would ask that person to be patient.

**Some voices:** Oh, oh!

**The Chair:** Now we'll go to Mr. Godin.

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** In this spirit of cooperation, one of the members didn't have a chance to ask a question. I'd like to let Mr. Généreux speak on my time.

I'm very generous, Mr. Généreux.

**The Chair:** Go ahead.

**Mr. Bernard Généreux (Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, CPC):** I thank Mr. Godin. This is really very kind of him.

I noticed some very interesting little things this morning. The first is that the richest person in this room is Andrea. She probably doesn't know it, but the fact that she is trilingual is an absolutely incredible asset.

I invite her to continue her efforts to learn English and French. You already speak very good French; I haven't heard you in English, but I suppose it's comparable since you speak English with everyone in the halls.

**Some voices:** Oh, oh!

**Mr. Bernard Généreux:** I invite you to continue your effort and I invite the others to do so as well. This is really an example, and it's extraordinarily important. You don't realize it at your age, but you do as you get older, like us. At some point, you approach your past due date.

It's important that you understand that languages are Canada's greatest source of wealth. You're no doubt proud of your language, and you, Cédric and Kelly, showed that this morning. You are proud to be francophones in Canada, and I beg you to continue being proud of your language because you have no reason to envy anyone. You should be extremely proud of who you are and what you have. I'm not just speaking to you, but to all the others who are here today as well. You have a love for your language, and it shows. You're here at no one else's expense; you are here because you are who you are, and you're right to be that and to continue to be so.

I definitely have confidence in the youth of today. Obviously, with all the technological means that we have, iPods, cellular telephones, BlackBerries... Kelly, if you sent me an e-mail, I probably wouldn't understand what was written because that's a fourth language. In fact, my daughter sends me e-mails and I don't always understand what she says.

I'd like to ask the young people a question, but I know I don't have much time I have left. Ms. Lanteigne, I'd like you to go back over what you said in your recommendations. The first one is that the Canadian public should be educated about immigration. That's also related to what Mr. Apollinaire—I'm going to call you that too—said, that, in Canada, to be sure we properly integrate the people who come here, we must make sure they have the best possible education. Education happens at all levels. When facing the unknown, we often find it hard to have confidence, so I believe that confidence in each other is the main and most important thing. In your opinion, which of the few recommendations you've made is the most important, the one that should be implemented as soon as possible?

I'm going to stop talking and leave the floor to you because others haven't had the time to speak. I'd like to close by inviting you, Ms. Lanteigne, to forward the specific details of your recommendations to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration in writing. There are some very interesting points there.

I leave the floor to you.

**Ms. Francine Lanteigne:** Thank you, sir; it's a pleasure to hear that. This is the result of years of work. I was supported by my bosses and put a lot of time into it.

There's one recommendation that we can't rule out—my family has been saying it for too long—and that's the recommendation that the public should be educated. I'm not saying that in a pejorative manner. I feel like saying “the Canadian people”, but I would say that, as Canadian citizens, we are living in the media era, and I could see the media distributing the entire series of recommendations. I spend my time saying I would like to hire a journalist to cover such and such a subject, but I can't do that. There are journalists here at the school. My principal very strongly suggested this project to me; so a series of articles has been published. There should be a forum. We shouldn't be forced to search for information; it would be “in your face”, if you'll pardon the expression.

● (1100)

**The Chair:** Ms. Lanteigne, pardon me, but it is my unpleasant duty to interrupt you. I invite you to forward your thoughts in writing not only to the Department of Citizenship and Immigration, but also to our committee, at the e-mail address that was given to you. The time allotted to us is now up.

This ends the meeting. I want to thank you. I believe this meeting may well go down in the annals of the Collège catholique Samuel-Genest, and in the history of our committee as well.

We're going to adjourn the meeting, and then I invite members, witnesses, the clerk and the analyst for an official photograph to immortalize this meeting.

Thank you very much, and bravo, everyone.

The meeting is adjourned.

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