



HOUSE OF COMMONS
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES
CANADA

Standing Committee on Official Languages

LANG • NUMBER 085 • 1st SESSION • 41st PARLIAMENT

EVIDENCE

Thursday, June 13, 2013

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Chair

The Honourable Michael Chong

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•(1530)

[*Translation*]

The Chair (Hon. Michael Chong (Wellington—Halton Hills, CPC)): Welcome to the 85th meeting of the Standing Committee on Official Languages, Thursday, June 13, 2013. We are meeting today pursuant to Standing Order 108, to study the Department of Citizenship and Immigration's obligations under the Official Languages Act.

We are joined today by the Honourable Jason Kenney, Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism.

[*English*]

Also with the minister are Mr. Sylvester and Madame Prince St-Amand from the department. We welcome all of you.

Minister Kenney, you have the floor for an opening statement.

Hon. Jason Kenney (Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism): Thank you very much.

[*Translation*]

Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman and dear colleagues.

I am pleased to be here with my officials to participate in your study of the Roadmap for Official Languages in Canada.

Mr. Chairman, I would like to thank the committee members for having invited me to appear here today. As I said, I am accompanied by Peter Sylvester, the Associate Deputy Minister of Citizenship and Immigration Canada. Peter is also CIC's official languages champion — and Corinne Prince St-Amand, Director General, Integration and FCRO.

In 2006, the government — in collaboration with representatives from francophone minority communities — established a target to increase the percentage of French-speaking immigrants to those communities to 4.4% of the total number of immigrants settling in Canada outside of Quebec by 2023.

As part of the 2008-2013 Roadmap objectives, our goal was to reach an interim target of 1.8% of the total number of permanent residents settling outside Quebec by 2013. And we managed to achieve this target, two years ahead of schedule. Since 2005, the number of French-speaking permanent residents in Canada increased by almost 40%. This is a major achievement.

The significant progress we have made to date has allowed us to revise our recruitment target to 4% out of the total number of economic immigrants settling outside Quebec, to be reached by 2018, and we are confident that we will meet our original target of

4.4% by 2023 ahead of schedule. We will achieve this target as the result of an increased collaborative effort among all our federal partners, other levels of government, and stakeholders.

•(1535)

[*English*]

Chairman, as my colleagues here today are well aware, the government is in the process of implementing transformational changes to ensure the immigration system works in Canada's best interests, attracting immigrants with the skills we need, who can integrate into our labour market quickly, and work at their skill level shortly after their arrival in Canada.

We believe these improvements will have a very positive effect on Canada's official language minority communities.

Time doesn't permit me to go through all of the important changes we are making, but I'd like to focus on one key change in particular. That is the movement towards what I call the meta reform, following the example of Australia and New Zealand, with the adoption of an expression of interest system, which will subsume most of our economic immigration streams. It will allow for Canadian employers, provinces and territories, and perhaps community groups, to select skilled immigrants from a pool of pre-qualified applicants who we are confident have the human capital to integrate successfully.

Under the current federal skilled worker program, also known as the point system, applicants apply based on the objective points grid, which we've just made some significant changes to, by the way. Once they receive permanent residence—what used to be called landed immigrant status—they can choose to settle, obviously, wherever they like in Canada. That's the mobility rights.

Efforts are usually made by governments and stakeholders reactively after they arrive to try to get them to settle in an official language community. With the new expression of interest system, which we plan to have in place by the end of next year, employers and provinces will be able to more effectively recruit immigrants to official language communities across the country by directly choosing applicants with the language skills and human capital they need from the pool.

In addition, our government has increased the number of immigrants chosen by the provinces through the provincial nominee program by 500%, from about 8,000 a year to around 40,000 this year.

This is important, Chairman. In the past, my predecessors from different parties expressed great frustration at the hugely disproportionate number of immigrants who settled, often in ethnic enclaves, in the three big metropolitan areas, rather than settling in regions in Canada, including rural Canada, where there were often better employment opportunities.

I'm pleased to tell you that as a result of our shift in weight from the skilled worker program to provincial selection through these provincial nominee programs, we've seen a dramatic improvement in the geographic distribution of immigrants across Canada. There has been a tripling of immigrants to the Prairies, a doubling to Atlantic Canada, and more newcomers going to the interior of B.C. rather than the greater Vancouver region. The number of immigrants settling per annum in Toronto is down by over 25%.

I think that's all positive, and this presages where we hope to go with the expression of interest system, which we also hope will include or partner with provinces so they can select out of that pool.

This is very important because when you're trying to get a francophone immigrant to go to St. Boniface or Saint-Léonard, frankly, if they're just coming in through the old points grid, chances are they won't go to such places. But if local community groups or employers in those smaller minority language communities can recruit them out of the pool, they're much more likely to settle in such places that need demographic reinforcement.

[Translation]

Mr. Chair, I would also like to discuss another successful way that we have managed to attract more French-speaking newcomers: the Destination Canada Job Fair. We have been operating this event for almost 10 years. It has become especially popular in the past five years. Last year, in fact, there was a record high attendance for the fair in Paris and Brussels. More than 80 employers posted more than 1,000 jobs. Of more than 20,000 interested candidates, nearly 5,000 had skills employers sought and were selected to participate.

We are expecting similar success at this year's Destination Canada Job Fair, which will be held in Paris, Brussels and Tunis in November. Through the job fair, employers may hire candidates who are eligible to immigrate to Canada on a permanent basis. They may also hire temporary foreign workers in francophone minority communities if they satisfy criteria established to assist official language minority communities, or if they are unable to find French-speaking Canadians to fill positions, while ensuring the integrity of our immigration system. Of course, I must continuously emphasize that this program is based upon the principle that Canadian applicants must be considered for a job before foreign nationals.

• (1540)

[English]

This is not the entire story, Chairman. As we bring more official language minority immigrants into Canada, it's equally important that we make sure, once they get here, that they integrate into their new communities and that they succeed.

To that end, my ministry continues to focus on providing a variety of settlement services, including free language training, job search training, orientation services, mentorship programs, internship programs, and the like.

In fact, since 2006 our government has tripled settlement funding from about \$200 million a year outside of Quebec, to \$600 million this year. Quebec's funding is based on its own separate formula.

[Translation]

In recent years, we have significantly increased the number of settlement services in francophone minority communities. Between 2009 and 2012, we increased the number of points of service for French-speaking newcomers across Canada by almost 70%, from just over 100 to about 170. These are now located in 24 cities across Canada, outside Quebec.

Just recently, we released *Welcome to Canada*, a guide to help newcomers to settle in Canada. The French version of the guide can act as a map to help French-speaking immigrants settle in their new country, and can also act as a resource for communities welcoming French-speaking newcomers.

Moving forward, we remain focused on ensuring that we are serving the needs of newcomers and the communities that welcome them.

That is why, between 2008 and 2011, CIC funded more than 50 research projects focusing on access to support services for official language minority communities. This research has contributed to a better understanding of the needs of French-speaking newcomers and the challenges they face in integrating into their new communities.

I would like to pause for a minute here to point out that the federal government has a separate immigration arrangement with Quebec under the Canada-Quebec Accord. In theory, Quebec selects immigrants for that province and determines how settlement funding is distributed. I use the expression in theory because 90% of immigrants registered under Quebec's immigrant investor program settle elsewhere than Quebec, particularly in British Columbia. It would be useful to study the issue, because in our opinion it makes no sense for Quebec to be promoting an immigration program that allows permanent residents to immediately move to other provinces.

We work closely with the government of Quebec in immigration, as well as the issue of official language minorities.

[English]

The federal government has funded research that has helped us to define retention issues and the needs of English-speaking immigrants in Quebec. This research could improve the reception and integration of immigrants in official language minority communities across Canada.

Mr. Chairman, I know your committee is always looking out for the interests of official language minorities of both languages in all parts of the country. But when it comes to immigration, it gets a little tricky, because most of the power in immigration selection and settlement is devolved to the Government of Quebec. The question of attracting anglophone immigrants to Quebec or supporting them directly through settlement services is much more complex than it is in the rest of the country, where we make the selection choices and fund the services directly.

I'll start wrapping up, Mr. Chairman. The government recently unveiled a new road map for official languages. The road map identifies three pillars, with which you're very familiar. As the Prime Minister has said in the context of immigration, our official languages are a crucial anchor point between newcomers and established Canadians.

• (1545)

[Translation]

Under the Roadmap for Official Languages, the government will be investing \$149.5 million in official language initiatives related to immigration over the next five years.

Extensive research consistently shows that official language ability is one of the most effective pathways to integration into Canadian society for immigrants to Canada. By this, I mean not only economic integration, but of course social and cultural integration.

Because of this, the government is committed to promoting the benefits of Canada's official languages and investing in language training for newcomers.

[English]

Mr. Chairman, in my remarks I have tried to give you an overview of some of our most recent initiatives in immigration, of how they relate to the Official Languages Act, and of the significant progress we have made in increasing the number of immigrants in official language minority communities. I admit that there is more work to do. We remain committed to further progress and look forward to your questions and suggestions in this respect.

[Translation]

Thank you very much.

The Chair: Thank you, Minister.

Committee members now have 1 hour and 40 minutes for questions and comments.

We will begin with Mr. Godin.

Mr. Yvon Godin (Acadie—Bathurst, NDP): Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I would like to thank Minister Kenney for being with us today. The questions that will be asked during the coming discussion are very important. Knowing our colleague Mr. Kenney, we will surely obtain answers.

Mr. Chairman, I would like to let you know that motions have been tabled before the committee.

First of all, a motion has been tabled for a study to be conducted before September 30 about the closing of the Marine Rescue Sub-Centre in Quebec.

There is also another motion asking the committee to invite Ms. Donna Achimov, the CEO of the Translation Bureau, to appear before the committee between now and June 14 for a two-hour public and televised meeting about official languages in the public service.

A third motion proposes that the committee invite the Minister of Industry to speak with us about the Industry Canada report entitled *Language of Work in Federally Regulated Private Businesses in Quebec not subject to the Official Languages Act*. We plan to discuss the issue next Tuesday.

The Chair: All right.

Mr. Yvon Godin: We also have another motion which reads as follows:

That the Committee invite the Privy Council Office to appear for a two-hour meeting about official languages and the Governor in Council appointment process before June 1, 2013.

Mr. Gourde is saying that the government is in favour of this motion but that he would prefer waiting until the fall to debate it and that is what we will do. Does that suit you?

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Godin.

Mr. Yvon Godin: Minister Kenney, I must confess that something has been bothering me a great deal recently. We have immigrants who come to Canada, but we also have temporary immigrants. I think you may already know what I am going to say. In your presentation, you said that Canadians should be the first to get jobs. Do you agree with that?

Hon. Jason Kenney: I am sorry, I did not hear the question.

Mr. Yvon Godin: This is not a silent meeting, you are allowed to speak.

Hon. Jason Kenney: Pardon me.

Your question highlights a central issue, because immigrants do not come to Canada in order to obtain settlement services. They come here for economic opportunities. That is the main point. If we want to attract, for instance, francophone immigrants to New Brunswick, there have to be some jobs there.

Mr. Yvon Godin: I do not believe that you have understood the meaning of my question. I will get straight to the point.

What happens when a company in Fort McMurray has gone through all of the applications submitted to the Human Resources Canada job bank but is still looking for a rigger with five years of experience? Think about it. Such a job requires 11 weeks of training, however, and in addition, this person must speak English. That is the case here. I can provide you with a copy of a document that I have with me. You said that this came under the purview of Human Resources Canada. The applicant must speak English and that is one of the hiring criteria. Then, if you keep reading the criteria, the other spoken language must be Polish, Portuguese, Punjabi or Spanish, and not French. And the job posting goes even further, then stipulating that the people in these positions don't even have to be able to speak English. I am talking about an isolated camp located two hours north of Fort McMurray. The company offers on-site housing and there is a work schedule of 14 continuous days followed by 7 days of leave.

Is that not against the law? Because when I asked you the question, you said that this came under Human Resources Canada. When I met with Minister Finley and asked her about this issue, she told me that that did not make sense.

• (1550)

Hon. Jason Kenney: What date are you talking about?

Mr. Yvon Godin: Are you the minister responsible for bringing immigrants to Canada when there are French-Canadians who are not able to go to Alberta to work because of the fact that temporary immigrant workers are being hired?

Hon. Jason Kenney: In order to answer your question, I need to know the date of the application. Did this occur last year? Are we talking about the past?

Mr. Yvon Godin: I am talking about last year. So this took place a year ago.

Hon. Jason Kenney: This would have been legal at that time, but I am very pleased to highlight the fact that, last month, we announced that it would no longer be possible to indicate this obligation to speak non-official languages on the job notices in order to have access to the workforce.

Mr. Yvon Godin: How could that be legal when the people in my region...

[English]

Hon. Jason Kenney: I'll say that it was a technical point, just to clarify—

[Translation]

Mr. Yvon Godin: How could it be legal when people from my region have the training to work as riggers but do not get the job because they are francophone and do not speak English? When we have the skills here in Canada, how can it be legal to bring in foreign workers to do the jobs that Canadians should be doing?

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Godin.

[English]

Mr. Kenney, go ahead.

Hon. Jason Kenney: I'll say it in English just because there are some technical terms here, but basically, Mr. Godin, just take yes for

an answer. We changed the rules. We've made that illegal to do as of last month, so I know you'll be very happy with that.

[Translation]

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

Mr. Yvon Godin: I thought that my time had expired because of the way that you cut me off.

The Chair: You may continue.

Hon. Jason Kenney: We changed the rules last month. There can be no more language skill requirements in such job postings, except for Canada's two official languages.

The Chair: All right, thank you.

Mr. Yvon Godin: I have another question for the minister.

\$120 million dollars has been earmarked for the new Roadmap. Earlier, you announced that \$149.5 million had been allocated for the language training of economic immigrants. Your department already provides such training under the Immigrant Settlement and Adaptation Program for newcomers. Is this new money or is this money transferred by your department?

Hon. Jason Kenney: The money was not transferred but several departments are investing in the Roadmap. This is not new funding.

Mr. Sylvester, do you wish to add anything on this matter?

Mr. Peter Sylvester (Associate Deputy Minister, Department of Citizenship and Immigration): I will provide some clarification.

Of the \$149.5 million, \$22.5 million represented new funding.

Mr. Yvon Godin: How much?

Mr. Peter Sylvester: \$22.5 million, with \$7 million in recurrent funding and, as well, \$120 million in funding provided for language training.

Mr. Yvon Godin: The Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages said that the Roadmap represented new funding, but that is not really the case. There is some new money, but not all of it is.

Hon. Jason Kenney: A certain percentage of the funding does represent a new investment.

Mr. Peter Sylvester: The total government contribution to the Roadmap was \$1.1 billion. This amount, which was divided amongst 13 departments, included \$266 million in new funding. This has been spread over five years.

Mr. Yvon Godin: Minister Kenney, could you ask your officials to send the committee a table breaking down, per province, the amounts allocated to immigration under the former Roadmap and the one that has just been developed? I would like to know how much each province received and how much each one will receive.

Hon. Jason Kenney: We have this information and we will provide it to the committee.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Godin.

Pardon me, Mr. Kenney.

Hon. Jason Kenney: I have all of this information here, in my notes, and we would be pleased to provide it to the committee.

The Chair: Fine. Thank you.

Mr. Gourde, you have the floor.

Mr. Jacques Gourde (Lotbinière—Chutes-de-la-Chaudière, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I would like to thank Minister Kenney for being here with us today, despite his very heavy schedule.

In your presentation, you referred to the Expression of Interest system. Could you provide us with more details about this system?

• (1555)

Hon. Jason Kenney: I apologize, Mr. Gourde, could you repeat your question?

Mr. Jacques Gourde: At the beginning of your presentation, you referred to the Expression of Interest system. I would like you to provide more details about it and explain to Canadians what this new tool offers.

Hon. Jason Kenney: Yes, certainly.

It is difficult to explain the system to people who are not familiar with our former immigration system. In all honesty, the system was broken. It was not functional. We had reached the point where more than a million applicants had been waiting in our immigration programs for more than eight years.

The economic situation of new Canadians had deteriorated over the past 40 years. The rate of unemployment amongst immigrants was twice as high as that of the general population. The rate of unemployment amongst immigrants with university degrees was four times higher than that of members of the general public with university degrees. The average income of new immigrants was lower than the average Canadian income.

Fundamental reform was therefore needed. Under the grid system, we attracted too many immigrants based on their human capital. These people arrived in Canada after waiting several years, but found themselves unemployed or underemployed.

With the concept of the new Expression of...

Mr. Peter Sylvester: The Expression of Interest system.

Hon. Jason Kenney: The Expression of Interest system.

The purpose of this system is to match, to the extent possible, immigrants with employers. Indeed, our data showed us that immigrants who already had a job waiting for them when they arrived in Canada generated an income twice as high as those immigrants who arrived without an established job. New Zealand and Australia reformed their system, the idea being to create a pool.

[English]

We say “pool” in English, sorry. They're going to jump in the pool.

[Translation]

We talk about a pool of applicants. Using an online application process, these applicants indicate their skills, education, language skills, profession while specifying whether or not they are qualified. Should they meet the qualifications, we invite them to submit an official application. Over time, we will develop a pool of several hundreds of thousands of pre-qualified potential immigrants. The

provinces, communities and employers can then go through this pool to find potential immigrants that they may need.

That means that Saskatchewan, through its Provincial Nominee Program, will have access to this pool to find francophone immigrants in order to strengthen communities such as Gravelbourg, for example. The idea is to match the provinces, employers and communities with potential immigrants so that we will have a more effective and cost-effective system for immigrants.

Mr. Jacques Gourde: According to your forecasts, which provinces will be receiving the largest number of immigrants over the next 10 years?

Hon. Jason Kenney: I would say all of the provinces, with the exception of Ontario. Immigration rates have increased over the past few years, mainly because of the expansion of Provincial Nominee Programs. As I said, immigration rates have tripled in the three prairie provinces and doubled in the four Atlantic provinces. The rate has remained stable in British Columbia. Quebec has seen a slight increase but, given that it has the power to select its own applicants, we do not get involved. In Ontario, however, we have seen a reduction of approximately 24%. In my opinion, this is not a bad thing because, beforehand, this province received approximately 60% of the immigrants. This percentage has gone down to 45%, which is an appropriate percentage for Ontario with respect to the rest of Canada.

• (1600)

Mr. Jacques Gourde: Do you have any statistics about the percentage of immigrants who say they are francophone but who are bilingual compared to the percentage of anglophone immigrants who can speak French? For instance, immigrants from France are francophone but they practically all speak English as well.

Hon. Jason Kenney: That is a good question. According to our definition, a francophone immigrant is somebody whose mother tongue or first official language is French, before English.

Do you wish to add anything to that, Mr. Sylvester?

Mr. Peter Sylvester: Yes, that is in fact the definition, Minister.

Do you want some data on this topic, Mr. Gourde?

Mr. Jacques Gourde: Yes, if that is possible, because in my opinion, the francophone immigrants who come from France nearly all speak English.

Mr. Peter Sylvester: According to the 2011 census results, 10.3% of the immigrants who come to Canada are French-speaking. Outside of Quebec, this percentage is 2%. As an aside, in New Brunswick, the rate is 12%. So this is the province with the highest percentage of French-speaking immigrants.

Mr. Jacques Gourde: Do these immigrants state that they are unilingual French or do they speak the two official languages?

Mr. Peter Sylvester: It could be a combination of the two, but according to the definition, as the minister stated, these are immigrants whose mother tongue is French or immigrants whose mother tongue is a language other than English or French, but who choose French as the first official language.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Casey, the floor is yours.

Mr. Sean Casey (Charlottetown, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Kenney, I am replacing Mr. Stéphane Dion. I am going to quote a few of his comments that have appeared in the newspapers and I would invite you to respond.

First of all, I need to give you a little bit of background.

The new Roadmap indicates that your department intends to refocus its official languages activities in order to take the modernization of the immigration system into account. Here is a comment made by Mr. Dion on this issue:

There is always the danger that the Roadmap be used as a showcase enabling the Conservative government to hide its program cutbacks. We see an example of this with the use of part of its plan to finance another government objective, an objective other than the one to promote the vitality of our official language minority communities.

Do you have a response to this issue?

Hon. Jason Kenney: By the way, I am impressed by your proficiency in French, Mr. Casey. I did not know that you were bilingual.

Mr. Sean Casey: It is a big challenge. I started learning French immediately after the election.

Hon. Jason Kenney: Congratulations.

[English]

It's always funny when we anglophones are speaking French together.

Voices: Oh, oh!

[Translation]

Hon. Jason Kenney: I was under the impression that there were no reductions in the budgets. The Roadmap is indeed one of the federal government programs that was not really affected by this. That being said, I would say that the budget cutbacks were necessary. Generally speaking, this program did not have its budget reduced, although there were some small decreases.

For example, we have a budget of several million dollars to support the Destination Canada program, which involves promotion activities in Paris, Brussels, Tunis, etc. We eliminated the travel grants for provincial, municipal and non-government organizations. We said to ourselves that if they wanted to go to Paris, it was up to them—and not the Canadian taxpayers, to cover expenses. This was a reduction of approximately \$400,000.

[English]

Would you like to add to that?

• (1605)

[Translation]

Mr. Peter Sylvester: Yes.

I would just like to complete the answer by saying that, indeed, there was probably some misunderstanding about the budget cutbacks. People were concerned we had some very good success this year with the 2012 edition.

As the minister stated, what we did cut was the money allocated for travel costs. The primary reason behind these cuts was that the employers who wish to attend this job fair, this opportunity to promote and recruit, had the means to pay for all of that. Looking ahead, with the new Roadmap, we are going to also build and even expand the Destination Canada program to include other locations where we can recruit.

[English]

Mr. Sean Casey: I want to focus in on the concern that this \$120 million and the change in emphasis is going to result in teaching the official language of the majority to economic immigrants.

Mr. Minister, you know that this subject was raised at this committee by the Commissioner of Official Languages. He expressed concern that the road map had gone through a change of name, from being a road map for linguistic duality to being a road map for official languages. He shared Mr. Dion's concern that this is exactly what would happen. His concern was that this fund for official language training would end up being spent on something other than the promotion of linguistic duality.

Hon. Jason Kenney: I'll be absolutely blunt about this. Primarily what we're talking about with economic immigration federally is outside of Quebec. I'm not saying we're abandoning Quebec, but we have an agreement with them. They choose their own immigrants. We're talking primarily about francophone minority communities outside of Quebec. With the exception of the francophone refugees, whom we select and direct to live in certain francophone minority communities like Saint Boniface, the economic francophone immigrants who choose to go outside of Quebec, in almost all cases, are going to have some proficiency, if not fluency, in English.

Let me just put it to you this way: Good luck. You can be a francophone working in Winnipeg. That's wonderful. We want you to be there. We want you to support the francophone community, hopefully working for a francophone employer, but if you don't speak English living in Winnipeg, you're going to have a hard time. Let's face it.

I think we can almost take for granted that the francophone economic immigrants going outside of Quebec already have basic English. What we really want to do is help the non French-speaking immigrants outside of Quebec to learn French. They have these 170 points of service where they can go to learn French and get French services. They provide advice, counselling and whatnot to the francophone immigrants outside of Quebec. We're doing that as well.

I think we have to be practical about this. We're not going to turn the 250,000 immigrants we get every year into developing instant fluency in both official languages. We have to be a bit realistic about it.

Mr. Sean Casey: If, as you say, we're being realistic and this isn't necessarily about linguistic duality, is the funding really aimed at majority language training as opposed to minority language training?

Hon. Jason Kenney: It's demand based. We don't aim it at English or French; we aim it at the official language the immigrants would like to learn. In most places outside of Quebec that happens to be English, although we are offering French services. I'll be honest. There's not a heck of a lot of demand in British Columbia for immigrants to learn French, but they can if they want to. We're offering it for free, and we encourage them to do it.

The Chair: Okay. Thank you very much.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Galipeau, you have the floor.

●(1610)

Mr. Royal Galipeau (Ottawa—Orléans, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I thank you, minister, for being here accompanied by your champions. I have witnessed Mr. Sylvester's work as champion for official languages in your department. I have also noted that you are a champion for official languages within government and I thank you for that.

I have noticed that, quite often, immigrants that are supposed to be French-speaking and are recruited by the Quebec immigration system get to Canada through Quebec and then end up in communities outside of Quebec. So, francophones have been recruited by the province of Quebec and end up in Toronto, leading to an increase in the number of francophones in Toronto. That is not a bad thing.

Hon. Jason Kenney: There are even some in Calgary.

Mr. Royal Galipeau: There are some in Calgary, but perhaps not as many in Fort McMurray.

The Roadmap for Canadian Linguistic Duality that your colleague, Minister James Moore, included in the 2013 Economic Action Plan is more or less equivalent or perhaps a bit more generous than the previous Roadmap. It is 40% more generous than the 2003 to 2008 Roadmap was.

This Roadmap for Linguistic Duality is now focused on immigration. How is this new focus expressed in Quebec within anglophone minority communities?

Hon. Jason Kenney: As I was saying, in the context of the Canada-Quebec Accord on immigration, we grant quite a bit of funding to Quebec for settlement services. This year, we are disbursing over \$250 million to Quebec. Quebec has the power to decide about the way in which it wants to spend this money. In fact, it does not spend all of these amounts for settlement services. That is a problem.

Also, because of the agreement, we cannot directly support settlement services for minorities in anglophone communities.

That being said, we are aware of our responsibility towards anglophone communities in Quebec. That is the reason why we subsidize certain research projects for anglophone organizations in Quebec, to the tune of \$500,000.

Under the agreement we cannot directly provide services for the settlement of anglophones in Quebec. However, we can support them a bit through these supplementary projects.

●(1615)

Mr. Royal Galipeau: For over 40 years, throughout Canada, we have seen evidence of federal funding transferred to provinces for linguistic duality being spent by the provinces for other purposes.

With respect to this agreement with the province of Quebec, is there a sunset clause?

Hon. Jason Kenney: Officially, according to the best available data, the Department of Immigration and Cultural Communities in Quebec spends approximately \$110 million per year on settlement services. However, I think that this year we are granting \$260 million to the province.

Actually, the Government of Quebec has never been very clear on the way in which it makes use of this money.

[*English*]

Mr. Royal Galipeau: These transfers exist because there is a Canada-Quebec agreement. What I'm asking is, does that agreement have a sunset?

Hon. Jason Kenney: No.

Mr. Royal Galipeau: Does it get renegotiated?

Hon. Jason Kenney: No, it does not. In fact there is an escalator clause in the agreement for the federal transfers for settlement services in Quebec that can never go down, but always goes up. Consequently, I think when the agreement started they were at about \$90 million circa 1991, and they're now at over a quarter of a billion dollars. Notionally, the Government of Quebec has the responsibility to report on how those funds are spent, but in practice there's very little information that's furnished.

Mr. Royal Galipeau: Do we have no muscle in order to enforce that?

Hon. Jason Kenney: I actually intend, Mr. Galipeau, to write the minister, my counterpart in Quebec, shortly to raise some concerns that we have around some of these issues.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Chisu.

Mr. Corneliu Chisu (Pickering—Scarborough East, CPC): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair, and thank you very much, Minister, for your great presentation. I appreciated it very much.

Actually, more than your presentation, I appreciate what you are doing for the immigration system in Canada. Why am I telling you this? In 1976, the year that I decided to immigrate to Canada, I didn't have any information and the consular officer at immigration told me, "You go to Toronto," but I wanted to go to Calgary or Edmonton. Anyway, here I am, so thank you.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Corneliu Chisu: One thing that is very important is the combination of the immigrants and the jobs that you are proposing and promoting. This is a very important thing, because an immigrant is coming from outside Canada and they cannot come to Canada after someone tells them, "Oh, you'll find a job". You are doing a service for the immigrant and also for Canadians. You are dealing with an issue and turning it into a win-win situation for both. You are applying the skills the immigrant has in areas where they're necessary in Canada.

You also were mentioning in your presentation that the provincial nominee program increased by 500%. How does this benefit the immigrants recruited by the provinces? They will stay in the provinces, but this means that they will also be served in the minority language communities. It is very important that they are not using the immigration system and then going to Toronto or somewhere else. That is happening. I can tell you that a lot of people from the Romanian community used the Quebec immigration system to come here after being all over the place and then they ended up in Toronto.

Hon. Jason Kenney: The answer is that retention of immigrants who are nominated by provinces in their provincial nominee programs is pretty good. It's very high in the west. It's over 95% in Alberta. It's lower in Atlantic Canada, where it's more in the range of 65% to 80%, depending on the eastern province. Those provinces are working on strategies to do a better job of retaining those immigrants.

In the short term we're seeing better economic outcomes for immigrants selected through the provincial nominee programs because many of them are actually selected by employers. The employer sees someone whose skills they need. They can't find those skills in the Canadian labour market, so they nominate someone from abroad who they've identified, who maybe is already working in Canada on a work permit, which very frequently happens, and then that person gets permanent residency. We are finding in the short term very strong incomes among those provincial nominees, again because of the pre-arranged employment factor for most of them.

However, I add a caveat. In the longer term, the federal skilled worker point grid immigrants overtake them in terms of income. The federal skilled workers have lower incomes in the short term, but higher in the long run, because typically you're talking about the federal skilled workers being better educated and they have what we call more flexible human capital. They might come and work as a cab driver, as our colleague Devinder Shory did for the first two or three years he was here. When their degree gets recognized, they move up into a professional category. Whereas your typical provincial nominee would be a skilled tradesperson who maybe has a very good job as a carpenter in Manitoba earning \$60,000. They're doing well, but they don't have the same growth in income in the long term.

Anyway the provincial nominee program is working pretty well. Some of the problems were it got a bit loose on the criteria and started getting into extended family reunification. We had a gong show in Saskatchewan where one Pakistani family had nominated 29 people under their extended family reunification program, many of whom couldn't speak any English. We've worked with the provinces

to shut down some of those abusive streams and to focus much more on their economic needs.

• (1620)

Mr. Corneliu Chisu: My second question is a very short question.

We have these immigrants coming to Canada and they are proficient in one of the official languages. How are we making them speak both official languages? What can we do to make them proficient in both official languages? Our goal is to have a fully bilingual country.

Hon. Jason Kenney: Yes.

First of all, in the points grid for the federal skilled workers, if they have proficiency in both English and French, they get bonus points, which gets them closer to being selected.

Second, as I mentioned, we are offering services, including free language classes, in both official languages all across the country. Yes, in an ideal utopian world, they would all have proficiency in both English and French, but let me be honest: many immigrants are struggling to master their first Canadian official language. I'm not going to criticize them for focusing on the local dominant language. I'm not going to criticize a Chinese immigrant in Vancouver for taking English language lessons. Chances are they might send their kids to French immersion, and maybe later in life they'll make an effort to learn French. We encourage them to do that and the services are there, but mastering one official language is the most important thing for their economic success in Canada.

Mr. Corneliu Chisu: Thank you very much.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Monsieur Dionne Labelle.

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre Dionne Labelle (Rivière-du-Nord, NDP): Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Good day ladies and gentlemen.

I must admit I am somewhat surprised, today, to hear the minister's comments. I came to this meeting expecting to hear about the Immigration Department's record and I have heard very harsh comments regarding Quebec. I am wondering if the Conservative government is questioning the immigration agreement with Quebec.

[English]

Hon. Jason Kenney: No.

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre Dionne Labelle: Is that clear?

Hon. Jason Kenney: Yes, that is clear.

Mr. Pierre Dionne Labelle: Thank you.

Hon. Jason Kenney: We seek transparency. It is not too much to ask.

Mr. Pierre Dionne Labelle: You know full well that is a word that has become a cliché.

Last year, out of 200,000 immigrants, you were pleased to have reached the 1.8% target. Is that correct?

Hon. Jason Kenney: That would be for francophone immigrants outside Quebec.

Mr. Pierre Dionne Labelle: Yes, that is right.

I was looking at the decline in the mother tongue population of New Brunswick. Two per cent out of 200,000, representing approximately 3,600 people. Is that the case?

Hon. Jason Kenney: You are referring to New Brunswick?

Mr. Pierre Dionne Labelle: Two per cent of 200,000 is equivalent to approximately 3,600 people.

Hon. Jason Kenney: Excuse me. The answer is yes.

Mr. Pierre Dionne Labelle: Since 2001, the decline in the number of individuals with French as a mother tongue in New Brunswick amounts to that number.

We do not know if these 3,600 people end up in francophone communities. Do you have data on that?

Hon. Jason Kenney: I have data indicating that in 2004, for instance, 68 francophone immigrants settled in New Brunswick compared to last year when 182 francophone immigrants settled there. That means a tripling in the number of francophone immigrants settled in New Brunswick since our government took office.

Mr. Pierre Dionne Labelle: With respect to the actual decline in the number of people with French as a mother tongue, which has been approximately 3,500 in 10 years, and considering the fact that there are 182 new francophones—and I am only referring to the situation in New Brunswick here—the official language minority community is still experiencing grave difficulties. Are the targets you proposed sufficient to reverse the trend and ensure that French, relative to general demographic growth, remains at the same ratio in the coming years?

Hon. Jason Kenney: Mr. Chairman, I am not aware of demographic figures for francophones in New Brunswick. I am the Minister of Immigration and, as such, I can tell you that we have seen a tripling in the number of francophone immigrants settling in New Brunswick since the current government took office. We are heading in the right direction and I hope we will continue to see an increase. That is our goal. We should not be ignoring the fact that things are headed in the right direction.

• (1625)

Mr. Pierre Dionne Labelle: In your report on Plans and Priorities tabled in Parliament, francophone immigration was not indicated as being a priority. Why?

Hon. Jason Kenney: Francophone immigration is always included within our publications and our objectives. The plan to increase francophone immigration outside of Quebec to 4.4% remains an important goal in all of our planning.

Mr. Pierre Dionne Labelle: Out of the 10 main source countries for immigration to Canada, there is not a single francophone country. Would it be advantageous for us to target certain countries as being potential sources of francophone immigrants? If francophone immigration were really a priority, could that be a solution?

Hon. Jason Kenney: In theory, yes, but the government does not decide how many immigrants come from a given country. We do not have a per country quota. Our system responds to those who apply

for citizenship. So, if more francophone immigrants coming from francophone countries make applications, we will see an increase.

The important point with respect to Destination Canada is that it is the only program formally subsidized by my department that has targeted promotional activities throughout the world. This program is specifically offered to francophone immigrants.

Mr. Pierre Dionne Labelle: Minister...

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Dionne Labelle.

We will now turn to Mr. O'Toole.

[English]

Mr. Erin O'Toole (Durham, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you very much, Minister, for your excellent remarks today.

You used the word “transformational”. That word is tossed around a lot, but I think in the last few years our immigration reforms truly are within that category and your leadership on that is appreciated.

Some of the statistics were quite startling to me and I'd like to probe a little further. Three times more to western Canada is understandable with the economic opportunities there, two times more to eastern Canada, but Ontario is down by one-quarter.

Is it the department's sense that this is almost entirely attributable to the economic malaise in Ontario?

Hon. Jason Kenney: That's a factor. It certainly played a role. I think it's primarily attributable, frankly, to our decision to reduce the number of immigrants selected according to the federal skilled worker program and shift those positions, as it were, over to the provincial nominee programs.

Basically, Mr. Chairman, the provincial nominee program was a tiny pilot project about seven or eight years ago. There were only a couple of thousand people arriving in that program. It was started mainly in Manitoba, but then other provinces started to see this as a very valuable tool where they could work with employers to select qualified immigrants. The western and Atlantic provinces got quite excited about this, and they asked for more and more spots to be allocated for the selection of immigrants.

Our government was quite happy to accommodate them. I mentioned the positive results we've seen from that program. The Ontario government for whatever reason chose not to participate in any meaningful way in the provincial nominee program. They basically said, “We don't need this. We've relied in the past on the federal skilled worker program”. The train left the station on the provincial nominee program without Ontario being on board in any serious way. That's really what's responsible for the shift in immigration patterns. In addition, economic patterns have a lot to do with it.

This is not just a question of primary immigration but also secondary. Ontario has net secondary immigration. That is to say, a lot of people who come and settle in the GTA, for example, then move to the west, particularly to Alberta, which has very large secondary immigration. Quebec has a certain amount, but a lot of Ontario immigrants end up moving west.

• (1630)

The Chair: We have a point of order from Monsieur Godin.

[Translation]

Mr. Yvon Godin: With respect to immigrants arriving in Toronto and Alberta, is this related to official languages?

The Chair: I have given committee members great latitude to ask questions of the witnesses and the minister and to give them an opportunity to respond. I have also given you this latitude at other meetings.

Mr. Yvon Godin: You have done it at other meetings, but not today.

The Chair: I will be giving Mr. O'Toole the same latitude today as well.

[English]

I've always given members a great deal of latitude in asking witnesses questions and the answers that are received. If the questions or answers are even tangentially related to the matter at hand, I've always allowed them. We believe in free speech and free expression in this country. We're all adults and can handle questions and answers.

I'm going to allow Mr. O'Toole and Mr. Kenney to continue with their line of questions and answers.

Mr. Yvon Godin: I appreciate that and I will remember your ruling. Thank you.

The Chair: I've ruled similarly, Mr. Godin, in the past. In fact, most of the time when these issues have been raised, they've been raised by government members, and I've always ruled in favour of giving members of the opposition that latitude. What's good for the goose is good for the gander, so I'm going to allow Mr. O'Toole and Mr. Kenney to continue.

Mr. O'Toole, you have the floor.

Mr. Erin O'Toole: Thank you, Mr. Chair. If my friend Mr. Godin had just been a tad more patient, but maybe he's following the lead of his leader.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Erin O'Toole: My second question was, after laying that groundwork in Ontario, Minister... I know specifically a group involved with Maison de la Francophonie in Toronto, and—Mr. Dionne Labelle touched on this—there immigrants from several French African countries coming to Canada who are targeting and actually living in Toronto. So there are primary French speakers.

I'm wondering what role your department has in supporting centres like la Maison in Toronto, which provides a range of basic health information, access to justice, that sort of thing.

Hon. Jason Kenney: We fund about 170 points of service is what we call them. They are typically non-profit organizations. I don't

know about that particular group, but they are groups like it. They provide services to francophone immigrants, and these are outside of Quebec. I think this is a pretty clear indication of our commitment to support francophone immigrants outside Quebec.

Let me use that to segue back to the last question I received. The question was why we aren't doing more to increase francophone immigration from francophone countries. I pointed out that we don't choose how many immigrants come from a particular country. It's really a demand-driven immigration system. I don't sit down at the beginning of the year and say that we're going to take 10,000 from India and 20,000 from France. It doesn't work that way.

The only program we have currently that deliberately promotes Canada as a destination for immigration is *destination Canada*. It is done specifically in francophone countries—France, Belgium, and Tunisia—but it's also regional.

I'm pleased to announce to you, colleagues, that we are also going to be expanding a very important program that we developed in 2006 called the Canadian immigration integration project. This is pre-arrival orientation for selected economic immigrants. It's a two-day free seminar and personalized counselling after they have been selected for immigration but before they have arrived here, when they're wrapping up their affairs back home. This is helping them line up jobs in Canada, find housing, apply in advance for credential recognition for the professional licences. We now have it available to about 80% of our economic immigrants and are about to launch a pilot for this out of Paris to help serve our selected francophone immigrants coming to Canada.

Corinne, do you want to add something?

Ms. Corinne Prince St-Amand (Director General, Integration and Foreign Credentials Referral Office, Department of Citizenship and Immigration): Sure. Thank you.

The pilot is for this fiscal year, 2013-14. It will be run by the Association of Canadian Community Colleges. As Mr. Kenney has said, it will be available in Paris and in Brussels for individuals of francophone descent wishing to come to Canada and to settle in official language minority communities outside of Quebec.

• (1635)

The Chair: Okay. Thank you very much.

We'll now go to Madame Michaud.

[Translation]

Ms. Éline Michaud (Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier, NDP): Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Thank you, Mr. Kenney, for specifying that you were not trying to renegotiate the immigration agreement between the federal government and the Government of Quebec. Your colleagues' comments seem strangely similar to a questioning and challenging of the way in which Quebec exercises its prerogatives with respect to immigration, resulting from this negotiated agreement. Quite honestly, in the same vein, I believe Quebecers would have a great deal to say about the way in which this government exercises its prerogatives and uses Quebecers' taxes. I am pleased that you added that additional information because I was quite concerned.

Now, I would like to quickly get back to the system for expression of interest that should be implemented shortly. Can you tell me whether the list that is to be prepared, including a pool of candidates, will only contain the names of long-term immigrants, in other words people who will become permanent residents and then citizens? Would that also apply to temporary foreign workers?

Hon. Jason Kenney: No, temporary workers can submit their applications to be included within this pool, but all selected individuals within the pool will obtain permanent residency.

Ms. Éline Michaud: Very well.

So, we don't expect them to leave the country after a certain number of months, once their contract ends. Is that correct?

Hon. Jason Kenney: Yes, that is correct.

Ms. Éline Michaud: Perfect. I was somewhat worried, but I believe that is a good thing.

In the new Roadmap mention is made of concrete objectives and recruitment targets in the area of immigration. Would it be possible to send these objectives and targets to the Standing Committee on Official Languages before the end of the session, in other words by June 21?

Hon. Jason Kenney: Yes.

Ms. Éline Michaud: Thank you very much.

In November 2010, the Standing Committee on Official Languages produced a report on immigration. This report contained several important recommendations for the department and, of course, for the minister. Has CIC retained some of these recommendations?

Hon. Jason Kenney: Yes.

Ms. Éline Michaud: Which ones?

Hon. Jason Kenney: I do not have the report here with me, but a formal response was given. Right?

I am told a formal reply was given.

Ms. Éline Michaud: Aside from a response stating that you were making a note of it, I would like to know whether or not some recommendations were really implemented within the department.

Hon. Jason Kenney: I am sorry, but I do not have all of the recommendations before me. I know that, globally, we said that we were already acting on the recommendations. I do not believe there are any major gaps between the recommendations of the committee and actions already undertaken by the government.

Mr. Peter Sylvester: Perhaps I could add to that, Mr. Chairman.

There were, among other things, some recommendations on governance. In designing the new Roadmap, we worked quite closely with several stakeholders, including the FCFA, to see whether we could, based on those recommendations, develop a strategy in the new Roadmap that would respond to some of those recommendations. We have done that, and we have a new Roadmap that is based, for example, on a new system of governance. Greater emphasis will be put on cooperation and pursuing endeavours among various levels of government and the communities.

There was also the matter of data collection, so that when we get to the end of the new Roadmap, we can actually measure the effectiveness of this strategy. Under the new Roadmap, for example, there is a new focus on research and data collection. Those are just a few examples of how we have applied the recommendations.

Ms. Éline Michaud: Thank you very much.

Earlier, my colleague, Mr. Dionne Labelle, was critical of the fact that of the top 10 source countries for immigration to Canada, not one of them is French-speaking. I could name them if you want to check, but I don't have time for that now. If you combine that with the fact that there has already been \$500,000 in cuts to the current Roadmap for activities such as the settlement and integration of French-speaking immigrants, how do these cuts I have just referred to actually help us to meet our targets for francophone immigration to minority official language communities?

• (1640)

Hon. Jason Kenney: There are no cuts. On the contrary, our government...

Ms. Éline Michaud: But the amount is \$500,000 lower...

Hon. Jason Kenney: If I might answer...

Ms. Éline Michaud: ... compared to the old Roadmap.

Hon. Jason Kenney: There are no cuts. Our government has increased the federal funding available for settlement services, including francophone services, by 300%. So that's an increase outside Quebec. The amount has gone from \$200 million to \$600 million. There are no cuts under the Roadmap to services specifically targeting minority language communities, except for a few hundred thousand dollars for corporate and provincial travel costs to Paris.

[English]

I don't think that in this fiscal environment we should be paying for people's junkets to Paris, quite frankly.

The Chair: Madam Amblar.

Mrs. Stella Amblar (Mississauga South, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you, Minister Kenney and department officials, for being with us today. We appreciate your time. I am not a regular member of this committee but I certainly picked an interesting day to substitute for my friend, Mr. Trottier. I'm very pleased to be here.

As I think you know, Minister, I'm a first generation Canadian. Both my parents emigrated from Italy in the 1950s. My mother came in 1950 when she was six years old. My father came in 1956 when he was 15 after being separated from his father for four years, until they could afford to bring my father and two of his younger brothers to Canada.

I would say that both of my parents learned English fairly easily, probably because they were young.

I'm wondering if you have any idea whether age has an impact on how quickly new immigrants learn whatever language they're immersed in.

Hon. Jason Kenney: To be honest with you, we don't have very good data on that. There are a lot of studies—about which I'm not an expert—on learning languages and language proficiency. As it relates to the free language services that we provide, this is called language instruction for newcomers to Canada, or LINC. It's a program that we fund out of that envelope of \$600 million in settlement services. It's typically provided by non-profit community service organizations.

To be honest with you, because it's delivered often by small non-profits, we don't have a lot of data about outcomes, but we're working on that. That's been a weakness in the system. We are developing a new framework for reporting so that we can actually track the progress that we're making. We don't want to be spending tax dollars on these programs if we're not actually getting a good result from them.

I would say as a supplementary comment that typically, but not exclusively, the clients for those language classes are not the primary economic immigrants, but are dependants or refugees, because by definition, most of the primary economic immigrants have already demonstrated a high level of English or French language proficiency. It's often their spouses and refugees who have a steeper hill to climb in terms of language proficiency.

Mrs. Stella Ambler: Right. Actually that was one of my questions about the language training. I know that we've tripled the settlement funding and that part of that is obviously for language training. Even though my parents and grandparents weren't considered economic immigrants—I don't know if we had that term back then—I have one grandmother who worked at a dry cleaner's for 40 years so her English is excellent. She's 92 years old now, and I speak English with my 92-year-old grandmother, sadly.

Hon. Jason Kenney: Nonna.

• (1645)

Mrs. Stella Ambler: Nonna, that's right.

My other grandmother worked in the home, so her English was never very good. I used to speak Italian with her.

So the factors are obviously age and whether you work in an environment.

Hon. Jason Kenney: Yes.

We are supporting a program called HIPPY, home instruction for parents of pre-school youngsters, where we send settlement workers into homes to do visits on a weekly basis, often with moms who might be stuck there, maybe living in an ethnic enclave, not having

many social opportunities to speak English or French. We send workers into their homes. It's not mandatory; it's if they want to participate. We also have online language instruction as well, which again is trying to reach those folks who might be more stuck at home.

Mrs. Stella Ambler: That's excellent. Would that be minority or

—

Hon. Jason Kenney: Both English and French.

Mrs. Stella Ambler: English and French. Wonderful.

Thank you, Minister.

The Chair: Thank you.

Monsieur Dubé.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Matthew Dubé (Chambly—Borduas, NDP): Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Thank you for joining us here today, Minister.

I would like to ask you a few questions about a very specific issue. I know that my colleague, Mr. Claude Gravelle, has already spoken to you about it. It has to do with the Northern Ontario Francophone Immigration Support Network. It's a program that was coordinated by Sudbury's Contact interculturel francophone. Its funding was recently denied by your department. There is a great deal of concern over the lack of clarity of the assessment criteria and the impact this will have, because the program is temporarily going to be managed from Ottawa.

Given the economic opportunities in northern Ontario nowadays and the strong francophone community there, could you clarify those criteria?

In addition, could you explain to us how you are going to make sure this does not adversely affect northern Ontario?

Hon. Jason Kenney: Because those questions are a bit technical, I am going to ask Corinne to answer.

Ms. Corinne Prince St-Amand: In the case of one of our 13 networks, the one from Sudbury to which you are referring, a contribution agreement has not yet been signed. In the department, I am not responsible for those agreements, but I do know, based on what my colleague has said, that there are still some things that need to be clarified before the contribution agreement is signed. With your permission, we could provide a more detailed description of the status of that contribution agreement.

Mr. Matthew Dubé: That's fine, and I am sure my colleague...

Hon. Jason Kenney: I can discuss this in general terms.

When it comes to the criteria we base our decisions on, departments use a point system to assess the quality of an organization's positions and performance over time. This has to be done fairly and objectively.

Frankly, we cannot accept all of the applications. However, for each application they get from an organization, officials do an analysis using a point system.

Mr. Matthew Dubé: Thank you.

I am sure you are going to follow up on this, but I am also sure my colleague, Mr. Gravelle, is going to take it up with you again.

There is also the issue of points of service and service levels. Points of service are starting to be closed in the Atlantic Region. There is, so to speak, a reduction of service and a certain centralization.

Have you done any studies to determine how this will affect minority francophone communities, particularly in those regions?

Hon. Jason Kenney: No, we have not done any studies. Are you talking about CIC offices?

• (1650)

Mr. Matthew Dubé: Yes.

Hon. Jason Kenney: Obviously, in connection with the recent budget cuts, we had to come up with some administrative efficiencies. So we closed a certain number of local offices, but frankly, most of them were very small. They had a staff of only one to three people and provided no direct service. Maintaining all kinds of small offices providing very little service was not efficient.

I have just been to Moncton where I visited the Multicultural Association of the Greater Moncton Area, MAGMA. That organization has received four times more funding from our department for settlement services, including services for francophones. Its staff and services have greatly increased. In my opinion, that is much more important than having two officials, in an office, doing precious little for clients.

Mr. Matthew Dubé: Thank you, Minister.

However, under the Official Languages Act, do you not have an obligation to do an impact assessment in communities where there is a language minority? What you are saying may be true, but doesn't the act require you to do those assessments?

Hon. Jason Kenney: We have not closed offices in minority language communities. The decision did not affect official languages. It was a matter of efficiency. We have also downsized our Vancouver office. It was not a language issue.

Mr. Matthew Dubé: Would you be able to provide this committee, by June 21, with a list of centres that have been closed?

Hon. Jason Kenney: They are not centres, they are CIC offices.

Mr. Matthew Dubé: Could you provide us with that list?

Hon. Jason Kenney: Yes.

Mr. Matthew Dubé: Thank you.

My colleague, Mr. Godin, asked you some questions about language requirements for job offers for temporary foreign workers. You said that from now on, it would be illegal to post criteria relating to languages other than official languages. However that doesn't mean that there will be a requirement relating to one language or the other. For example, a francophone from Mr. Godin's riding who wanted to go and work in Fort McMurray might not be any more qualified if those languages were excluded.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Dubé.

Minister, you have the floor.

Hon. Jason Kenney: It is up to the employer. We cannot dictate to private sector employers whom they should hire nor whether they should be bilingual, francophone or anglophone. We are talking about the labour market in the private sector. However, since last month, they can no longer post or publish a job offer that requires a non-official language.

Mr. Matthew Dubé: All right, thank you.

[*English*]

The Chair: Monsieur Gourde.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jacques Gourde: Thank you Mr. Chair.

Minister Kenney, as Quebecker, I would like to hear more from you on the Canada-Quebec Accord on Immigration.

Would it be preferable to maintain the status quo, or is there room for improvement in order to deal with the new immigration reality we will see in the next 5, 10 or 15 years?

Hon. Jason Kenney: We do not intend to propose changes to the agreement. Moreover, we would like to raise some issues with the Government of Quebec concerning their selection of immigrants which, in my opinion, does not correspond with the principles of the agreement.

On this topic, I would like to put a question to our NDP colleague who represents a riding in Quebec and who has just raised certain concerns. Is he comfortable with the following:

In Quebec there is the Investor Program. Each year Quebec accepts approximately 4,000 permanent residents through this program. According to all the data we have, including data provided by the Government of Quebec, out of these immigrants, over 90% of those selected by Quebec do not stay in the province. They do not live in Quebec and they do not even pass through the province. In fact, 90% of those immigrants settle outside of Quebec.

In short, I am simply raising the point that the authority to select economic immigrants through the agreement is intended for immigrants in Quebec. In fact, it is not up to Quebec to select immigrants for Vancouver or Toronto.

I think there is some skimming going on in the program, whereby Quebec is taking the money of immigrant investors and using it, but the British Columbia taxpayers must pay the price for the social services provided to immigrants selected by Quebec.

What I am saying is that we support the Canada-Quebec Accord relating to immigration. This agreement exists so that Quebec can choose immigrants who will boost the number of francophones in Quebec. This is not about taking money from Chinese millionaires so that they settle in Vancouver.

I personally would like to raise our concern over the way the Government of Quebec manages this program. In fact, it is not up to the taxpayers of Ontario and British Columbia to bear the costs to support these immigrants, while Quebec cashes in.

•(1655)

Mr. Jacques Gourde: When an immigrant is authorized to come to Canada, to what extent can you ask the person to stay in one given province? The person is after all free to settle where he or she wishes in Canada.

Hon. Jason Kenney: That is the challenge. Under the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, there are mobility rights, so a person cannot be forced to live in a given province.

That being said, I intend to request investigations to counter fraud in cooperation with the Canada Border Services Agency. For example, if a person fills out Quebec's Investor Program form and indicates their intention to reside in Quebec, but then it later becomes clear that the person never had such intentions, then goes straight to Vancouver without even going to Quebec, that would be fraud. A message must be sent to the promoter of this program, particularly in Asia and the Middle East.

[English]

They take big commissions. I'm sure the NDP would be really happy to know that this program is making millionaires out of some immigration consultants and lawyers through big upfront commissions. By the way, most of that money is offshore; it's not being taxed by Canada. We are sending a message to those guys who, frankly, I think are knowingly facilitating a form of immigration fraud that the gig is up. We are going after them. We are going to take enforcement action against the promoters who are coaching people to make an application for Quebec so that they can get into Canada without any intention of living in that province.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Minister, and Monsieur Gourde.

Monsieur Godin.

[Translation]

Mr. Yvon Godin: Thank you Mr. Chair.

I will try to understand the situation.

Minister Kenney, a little earlier you said that no offices were closed. However, in the May 4, 2012 issue of the newspaper *L'Acadie Nouvelle*, we can read the following:

The Société Nationale de l'Acadie is concerned by the cutbacks announced in the Department of Citizenship and Immigration Canada.

The federal government recently made the significant changes to the administrative structure of Citizenship and Immigration Canada. The CIC offices in the Atlantic provinces, including those in Moncton, St. John's and Charlottetown, will be closed, and personnel will be downsized in those in St. John's and Halifax.

In addition, the federal government confirms that the Atlantic administrative region will be merged with that of Quebec. Therefore the regional office that was in Halifax will from now on be in Montreal.

So, is all of that false?

Hon. Jason Kenney: No, not at all.

Perhaps this misunderstanding was due to the way I expressed myself in French, but a few moments ago, when I answered Mr. Dubé, I clearly said that there had been closures of CIC administrative offices. I believe I said that clearly. I said that I would provide the committee with a list of these closures. Perhaps you were not listening to what I said?

Mr. Yvon Godin: No, I was listening just fine. You said that there are only three people in the offices.

Hon. Jason Kenney: Clearly the error was due to my French.

Mr. Yvon Godin: You said there were only three people in the offices, which is not a lot, and that they were not doing the job. I can tell you that they were doing their job very well. We were in communication with these offices for a number of years. At one point, we could no longer even talk to the people in these offices. Everything was redirected to Ottawa at the time of the closure.

Mr. Kenney, to be honest, you cannot even imagine how much these offices helped us, even if it was minimal, as you say.

Hon. Jason Kenney: I understand.

Mr. Chair, it was necessary to close certain administrative offices not only in the Atlantic regions, but in all regions of the country. For example, there were many more office closures out west.

There is a deficit. Savings need to be made somewhere, and one of the ways was to centralize certain services.

•(1700)

Mr. Yvon Godin: A little earlier, you said that there had not been any cutbacks. Unless my French is not very good either, you said that it was more of a question of trips to Paris. However, in New Brunswick, an agreement was signed with the federal government in order to grant an amount of \$10 million for the New Brunswick francophone immigration support program between 2008 and 2013. Fredericton is in charge of managing these funds.

The program has just been renewed by Ottawa for the period of 2013 to 2018, but with only \$4 million, which is a reduction of \$1.2 million per year. A flight to Paris is expensive. Organizations in our province are saying that it is an unfortunate decision, because these centres were starting to show results even if the number of francophone immigrants fell below the objectives. The government is so proud to announce that they injected money into the Roadmap for Canada's Linguistic Duality, but that is not what we see on the ground.

Hon. Jason Kenney: Mr. Godin, you are mistaken.

I am not personally familiar with the details of these subsidies, so I will ask Mr. Sylvester to answer.

Mr. Yvon Godin: I would like the department to send this information to the committee. I still believe there has been a reduction. It went from \$10 million down to \$4 million. That is a hefty amount!

Hon. Jason Kenney: You are not looking for an answer from us.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Sylvester, please go ahead.

Mr. Peter Sylvester: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Some clarifications should be made in that regard. In fact, I already did so in a letter to the editor following concerns which had been raised with regard to potential reductions.

First, it is important to specify that the program which was administered by ACOA is being extended through fiscal 2013-2014. What this means is that the significant amount of investment which was made in the newcomers' centres and integration services will continue through this year.

After fiscal 2013-2014, the torch will be passed to the Department of Citizenship and Immigration. We will spend, and I already pointed this out in the letter, the same amount we did under the former Roadmap, namely \$4 million on the newcomers' centres and integration services, so we will do so under the current Roadmap. Therefore, there really isn't any change with regard to the level of investment.

I would also add that under the Roadmap's new approach, there will be some advantages which will be very beneficial for New Brunswick. Amongst other things, New Brunswick will be able to take money out of the national pot and out of the national strategy for its centre. Of the \$24.5 million amount which will be spent, for example, on recruitment under Destination Canada, we will be able to expand that recruitment. New Brunswick will also benefit from these opportunities.

In short, the fact is that there really will be no reduction in expenditures as compared to those under the former Roadmap.

[English]

The Chair: Merci.

Madam O'Neill Gordon.

Mrs. Tilly O'Neill Gordon (Miramichi, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you, Minister, for being here. As you probably figured out, I'm just subbing today; I'm not usually a member of this committee, but I'm happy to be here the day that you are here. I guess it's the luck of the Irish in my being here. I want to thank you for being here with such a busy schedule.

I just want to refer to what you said about immigrants more and more coming to the east. I see that regularly in the Miramichi. People are settling there, and very comfortably. I have regular rapport with our community college and other colleges in New Brunswick. Recently there have been more and more immigrants studying at their schools. Regularly, every year, I participate in multicultural events that are going on in the Miramichi, and more people are attending each year.

You mentioned that the destination Canada job fair has become especially more popular in the last five years. I'm wondering if you could elaborate on what you attribute that to.

Hon. Jason Kenney: At destination Canada?

Mrs. Tilly O'Neill Gordon: Yes.

Hon. Jason Kenney: Well, it's had a lot of media attention and a certain amount of buzz. In fact, we partner with a major French magazine called *L'Express*, which does a cover story every year on Canada and all the opportunities of working and living here. We're one of the only countries that actually does these promotional activities in France and Europe specifically targeted at francophone immigrants.

You know about the unemployment in Europe. Youth unemployment in France is well over 20%. In southern Europe, youth unemployment is in the area of 40%. A lot of young Europeans in particular are looking for opportunities to move elsewhere. They hear about the incredibly strong economy in Canada and they're attracted not only by the beauty of our country but also by the economic opportunities. I think the interest in visiting or immigrating to Canada is increasing, and that's why we get more and more attention there. By the way, Ms. O'Neill Gordon, it's not just through our destination Canada projects in France, Brussels, and Tunisia, but also in other areas.

I was in Ireland in October. I know your constituents of Irish descent would be interested to know, as would those of Mr. O'Toole—we'll get the Irish ghetto going on over here—that I was in Ireland with Canadian employers in October. There were 9,000 mainly young Irish lined up at a job fair, run largely by Canadian employers, to pursue opportunities to immigrate to Canada.

I know in this place we talk a lot about our imperfections, and Lord knows we have a few, but when you get away from this country, you see how people are clamouring to get to this place. We should all be proud of that fact.

● (1705)

Mrs. Tilly O'Neill Gordon: And I want to take this opportunity now to congratulate and thank Mr. Sylvester for writing that letter and retracting it, because I did have constituents who were concerned about the first article, and it did make a difference when it was made clear as to what really was happening.

The other question I had was that the "Roadmap for Canada's Official Languages 2013-2018: Education, Immigration, Communities" has earmarked \$120 million over a period of five years for language training for economic immigrants. I'm just wondering how these funds will be distributed and who will be responsible for providing the language training.

Hon. Jason Kenney: The funds are distributed on a per capita basis per province now. That didn't used to be the case. We try on an annual basis to adjust the investment in settlement services by province so that it is the equivalent of about \$2,900 per immigrant, and then it's actually spent by non-profit organizations—we call them service providing organizations—with which we have contribution agreements that are arrived at following a request for proposals process. Basically, once every three years we put out a request for proposals. We say that we have this chunk of money and we'd like to receive proposals on providing language training and other services to immigrants. Non-profit organizations submit their applications. Our officials then score those proposals, often based on historic performance, and then they make the funding decisions. I don't interfere in that. They make the funding decisions, although I do, of course, have final sign-off, and then we monitor the performance.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Madam O'Neill Gordon.

Mr. Casey.

Mr. Sean Casey: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

After hearing some of the questions from my colleagues from the NDP, I'm very, very tempted to ask you about the closure of the CIC office in Charlottetown, and to explain to you how devastating it has been. I do hope that at some point I will be able to get you to listen to me on that.

Today, I have an obligation to carry out my marching orders issued by Mr. Dion.

Minister, you don't need me to tell you that under the Official Languages Act and under the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act, your department has certain positive obligations with respect to official language minority communities.

Now we have a road map. The title has changed from emphasizing linguistic duality to different wording. We know that the financial commitment under the old road map and the new road map has gone up really only because of this \$120-million fund, which you admitted today is demand-based, and will likely very well be used for purposes other than promoting the languages of the minority.

I guess my question for you is, do you not see that this is not only not fulfilling the role you are statutorily obliged to fulfill, but it is actually taking away from it, given the change in emphasis and the fact that the funding that is in there now, based on your frank admission, is likely to be used to teach people the language of the majority?

• (1710)

Hon. Jason Kenney: I think there's a misunderstanding implicit in your question, and I'm sorry if I contributed to that.

Earlier when I said that the language services are demand-driven, I meant that globally. That relates to the overall framework of these things. We try to provide services where they are requested in the official language in which they are requested.

Having said that, we have dedicated a specific amount of funds in my ministry, \$30 million, to provide services in French for French-speaking immigrants. We have some very specific projects in that regard. For example, in St. Boniface we have African francophone refugees who we settled there, and we have a contribution agreement with a local francophone service-providing organization to help those francophone immigrants in French. We do that sort of thing all across the country. There are specific dedicated minority language services in addition to which we write into many of our contribution agreements a requirement that they offer services in the minority language in that area. If you are an immigrant in Vancouver and you want to learn French—you already have English but you want to learn French—you can go into one of the service groups that we fund and ask for services in French.

Is there anything else I can add to that?

[Translation]

Ms. Corinne Prince St-Amand: No. It's clear.

[English]

Hon. Jason Kenney: We do dedicate money, but at the end of day.... The bottom line is that if a whole bunch of people in Calgary, immigrants, suddenly decide they want to learn French rather than English, we'll give those services to them.

Mr. Sean Casey: You candidly indicated in the first round of questions, though, that you fully expect that people who go to Calgary are going to be looking to learn English—

Hon. Jason Kenney: Yes.

Mr. Sean Casey: —and this \$120 million is there to help them learn English.

Hon. Jason Kenney: No, the \$600 million is overall there to help people learn the languages they want, find jobs, and stuff like that. There is \$30 million set aside as a part of our contribution that's specifically for minority language services.

Did you want to add something?

Ms. Corinne Prince St-Amand: Also, when you started your question, Mr. Casey, you mentioned specifically the \$120 million. That is a carve-out of the broader settlement envelope that Minister Kenney has been speaking about. Under the *feuille de route*, it will be used to support language training for economic migrants, both English and French. It follows what the minister has said.

The Chair: Mr. Sylvester.

Mr. Peter Sylvester: If I may also comment, to build on something the minister said earlier, Mr. Casey, there's a nuance here which I think is really important to understand. It's something that the minister adverted to earlier in his comments in the first round. It is that the premise we're working on as we build momentum towards the second road map is one that is focused increasingly on economic immigration, as Corinne has said.

Now, it is a little bit counterintuitive, but we've proposed an approach that various stakeholders, including the FCFA, Fédération des communautés francophones et acadienne, have approved of, which is one where you would see francophone immigrants, that is, those whose mother tongue is French or whose first official language is French, immigrate into largely anglophone communities.

Their ticket to integration, in a way, if I can use that expression, and retention is through employment. So it's important for them to get language instruction, not necessarily always in French, as usually they're quite capable in French, but English language instruction is really important to retaining francophone immigrants in minority francophone communities. That's the counterintuitive part. So a large portion of that \$120 million that's for language training is—

• (1715)

Hon. Jason Kenney: Yes. Sorry. I hope you don't think we're hogging time, but I'll go back to my Winnipeg example.

Let's say you're a west African francophone refugee and we decide that you're going to live in St. Boniface. That's great for the francophone community in that they have another francophone family that's going to contribute to the cultural life of their francophone community, but you know what? You're likely not going to stay in Winnipeg if you don't speak English, because you can't get a good job. So to retain that person in St. Boniface, helping them learn English only makes sense.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

[Translation]

To conclude, I give the floor to Mr. Dionne Labelle.

Mr. Pierre Dionne Labelle: Minister, with all due respect, I have to say I did not like the way you described the \$600,000 budget cuts to Destination Canada. You said it was for trips. The way you talked about it gave the impression that they were frivolous trips to Paris, like the inappropriate spending by senators. It was not the case.

When she appeared before this committee, Ms. Kenny—whom I respect—said this about the \$600,000 cuts. She summarized the situation regarding this program that sought to bring people to recruit workers in Europe, particularly in Paris. Here is what she said:

It is one of the only tools we have and it has just been taken away from us, even though the government says there is a target. [...] the target remains the same, except that we no longer have the means to reach that target. It is therefore very difficult for us to reach it [...]

Could you specify what you think about these cuts? You seem to minimize them, as if that money had been used in vain or frivolously.

[English]

Hon. Jason Kenney: Well, probably you are drawing that inference from my use of the word “junkets”, and I apologize if I'm using it in the sense that is frequently used by your party. The other day the NDP's immigration critic referred to the Prime Minister's trip to the G-7 summit as a junket. So if the Prime Minister going to represent Canada at an international summit is a junket, then I think that's defined as a business trip. That seems to be your definition.

In any event, governing is about making choices. You can't balance a budget without realizing some reductions in spending. The reductions in spending that we're experiencing in Canada are a tiny fraction of what they are in countries like France, and if we can't realize spending cuts by reducing subsidies to travel to conferences in Paris, then I don't know where we can find economies.

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre Dionne Labelle: I was deploring the cut, but my comment was more about the style than the substance.

It is also the case regarding the Canada-Quebec Accord on Immigration. I found that earlier you used a rather paternalistic tone. You said two things, which were that Quebec was taking millionaires' money and that they then went to Vancouver.

Hon. Jason Kenney: You are right.

Mr. Pierre Dionne Labelle: Then, you shifted a bit. You said there were organized Asian networks that bring in...

Hon. Jason Kenney: They are Canadian, not Asian.

Mr. Pierre Dionne Labelle: They bring millionaires to Quebec, who then go to Vancouver. Mr. Gourde raised the issue of labour mobility, which is a fact.

You said you intend to go after the people who do that. What do you mean by that exactly?

Hon. Jason Kenney: If someone states that they intend to live in a province, but in reality never intended to, it is fraud. We need to start enforcing the law.

I am a bit surprised to hear a New Democrat say that we should ignore a system that allows Canadian lawyers and consultants to make huge profits by encouraging people to apply to immigrate to Quebec when they do not intend to live there.

Mr. Pierre Dionne Labelle: You suppose there is a criminal intent behind that.

Hon. Jason Kenney: Yes, of course. It is a crime. We are talking about fraud.

[English]

It's a crime to fill out an immigration form expressing the intention to go to one place when you never had that intention. It's called misrepresentation. It's a form of fraud. Of course, there are sanctions in Canadian law for that.

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre Dionne Labelle: You are therefore focusing on fraudsters and not the Province of Quebec and the management of its program. Is that correct?

Hon. Jason Kenney: No. I will also share our concerns with Quebec...

Mr. Pierre Dionne Labelle: There must be fraud elsewhere in Canada.

Hon. Jason Kenney: I will share with Quebec our concerns about the fact that 90% of the people who participate in Quebec's Immigrant Investor Program do not settle in Quebec. I am shocked that the New Democratic Party is not concerned about the fact that millionaires are giving money to consultants to be able to live in Quebec when, in reality, they do not intend to do so.

It is really bizarre.

●(1720)

Mr. Pierre Dionne Labelle: Minister, what worries me most is the paternalism you are showing.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Dionne Labelle.

Our time is up.

[English]

Hon. Jason Kenney: I'd like to thank the member for the last exchange. It was very helpful.

The Chair: Thank you, Minister Kenney for your testimony. It was very helpful and detailed. Thank you to your officials, as well, for coming along.

I thank all members of the committee for participating in today's hearing.

Without further ado, this meeting is adjourned.

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