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Chair

The Honourable Denis Paradis

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•(0850)

[*Translation*]

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

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

This morning we are pleased to have Sylviane Lanthier, president of the Table nationale de concertation communautaire en immigration francophone.

Welcome, Mrs. Lanthier.

First, we will listen to what you have to say about the roadmap for about 10 minutes. That will be followed by a brief go-round for questions and comments. Then I will ask you to make another, shorter presentation on immigration, which will be followed by a second round of questions and comments. I hope that is fine with you.

Mrs. Lanthier, we are listening.

Mrs. Sylviane Lanthier (President, Table nationale de concertation communautaire en immigration francophone et Fédération des communautés francophones et acadienne du Canada): Mr. Chair and committee members, I want to thank you for inviting the Fédération des communautés francophones et acadienne du Canada to make this double presentation to you today.

Founded in 1975, the FCFA is the key representative organization of the 2.6 million francophones living in nine provinces and three territories across the country. The FCFA has 20 members: 12 provincial and territorial francophone representative associations and 8 national organizations representing various sectors of activity and clients. It also coordinates the Forum des leaders, an assembly of 42 organizations that are engaged in the development of francophone and Acadian communities.

In this first part, my remarks will focus on the next action plan for official languages. In the second part, following your questions, I will address the issue of francophone immigration.

Late this past summer, Graham Fraser, Commissioner of Official Languages, announced some excellent news. The results of a Nielsen poll revealed that an unprecedented 84% of Canadian across the country support bilingualism. Nearly the same percentage, 82%, feel that the 150th anniversary of confederation in 2017 should be an opportunity to promote the official languages in Canada.

It appears from these results that the official languages issue is resolved in the minds of most Canadians; it is a fait accompli. A few months ago, the Hon. Mélanie Joly (Minister of Canadian Heritage) echoed that observation by declaring that the Official Languages Act was part of a social contract established many years ago.

However, we also know that, while there is a broad consensus in society on linguistic duality, in reality, that does not always translate into adequate services or full compliance with the Official Languages Act, particularly in the area of support for francophone minority communities.

Former Prime Minister Pierre Elliott Trudeau once said, "A country, after all, is not something you build as the pharaohs built the pyramids, and then leave standing there to defy eternity. A country is something that is built every day out of certain basic shared values." Those eloquent words, quoted by President Barack Obama during his visit to Parliament last June, aptly apply to Canada's linguistic duality. Like our country, like our collective identity, we must cultivate linguistic duality as the living tree it is.

In the throne speech and in the federal budget last March, the government reiterated its commitment to protecting our two official languages. That is a positive sign. However, when you consider linguistic duality as a living tree, decisive action, specific acts, and a bold plan are needed to promote French and make it flourish in all regions of the country.

Support for our two official languages must mean more than the mere delivery of bilingual services and communications by federal institutions. The advancement of linguistic duality must go beyond simply learning a second language. We can say there is genuine linguistic duality in Canada because there are communities living in French in every province and territory, and it is on that vitality that we must build.

It is because of that vitality that Canadians who learn French as a second language have opportunities to speak that language in a variety of situations in everyday life. It is because of our communities that francophone military personnel posted to places like Comox and Kingston enjoy social and cultural activities in their language and their children have access to French-language schools. Creators in our communities, the Gabrielle Roys, Damien Robitailles, Lisa LeBlancs, and Joseph Edgars, are helping to shape this unique Canadian identity that we will be celebrating next year. The entrepreneurs, organizations, and institutions in our communities are creating jobs in French and contributing to the economic development of their region and the country as a whole.

The francophone and Acadian communities are an anchor point for linguistic duality from sea to sea to sea. In recent years, however, they have often been forgotten in government and social discourse and action on linguistic duality and official languages.

Promoting the development of prosperous, inclusive francophone communities that are able to fend for themselves and to contribute fully to the development of their region and country: that is the issue that should be central to the next government plan for official languages.

The Government of Canada can effect a considerable change for our communities by investing in three key priorities: first, francophone immigration, early childhood, and mobility; second, the offer of services and activities for francophones in all areas of their everyday lives; and, third, capacity-building for organizations and institutions involved in the economic, cultural, and social development of our communities. That is the most important message that we are sending you today.

• (0855)

Consider the first priority. As the report published by the Commissioner of Official Languages two weeks ago shows, every time parents feel they have to register their children at an English-language day care centre, not by choice but because of a lack of space elsewhere, that decision has a devastating impact on the family, the children, and the community. Conversely, the availability of those services in French helps guarantee that our children will be francophone and that our families will be able to live in French. It guarantees the vitality of our communities.

As regards the second priority, the francophonie is strong when it is expressed through activities, events, and services that reach francophones and the population as a whole in everyday life. However, there are deficiencies in many areas—education, culture, access to justice, the media, and health—and French-language services and activities are too often offered using makeshift resources in inadequate facilities. However, there is a direct relationship between the quality of life in French and the choice of francophone migrants or immigrants, or even old-stock francophones, to associate with and contribute to the francophone community.

The third priority is the development of prosperous communities that are good places to live. In the francophone minority communities, institutions and organizations created by and for the community ensure that development. Those organizations and institutions operate on financial resources that, in the vast majority of cases, have not increased in more than a decade. Over the years, they have found innovative solutions that have helped them manage at lower cost. However, with purchasing power declining every year as the cost of living increases, they now have no financial leeway.

It is essential that we increase the capacity of organizations in our communities if we want them to continue to champion the advancement of French as they currently do. We must be able to modernize or improve our infrastructure to meet the growing demand. Our media must be able to make the digital shift. Our organizations and institutions must be able to meet emerging needs.

None of what I have just said means that the next action plan for official languages must be the alpha and omega of the Canadian government's commitment to the development of our communities. In fact, full compliance with the Official Languages Act instead requires that the government use different support levers through various federal institutions, in addition to that plan. Consider, for example, the major investments in infrastructure, early childhood, and youth employment announced in the 2016 budget. The government would be taking tangible action in favour of the francophone community if it set aside a portion of those investments to respond directly and expressly to the needs of our communities for social, educational, and cultural infrastructure, day care centres, and jobs for youth in our communities. We hope your committee will adopt that recommendation as its own.

So there you have a ready-made plan to make francophone communities, as living expressions of Canada's linguistic duality, the central focus of government support measures for our two official languages. The action that should be taken is clear and obvious. The challenges were eloquently underscored during the consultations held across the country this past summer. The urgent need for action is now apparent.

Thank you. I am prepared to answer your questions.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mrs. Lanthier.

Now we will proceed with a six-minute round of questions.

We will begin with Mrs. Boucher, whom I also congratulate on her nomination as her party's official languages critic.

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher (Beauport—Côte-de-Beaupré—Île d'Orléans—Charlevoix, CPC): Good morning, Mrs. Lanthier. Welcome to the committee. I believe we have met several times over the past few years.

Everyone recognizes that linguistic duality is very important. All committee members acknowledge that fact. This is 2016, and it is increasingly important that everyone be able to speak English and French and especially that we be able to make ourselves understood and to obtain services in either language.

You have benefited from certain programs under the roadmap over the years. What program has benefited you most during that time? Have you enjoyed great successes as a result of those programs? What should be changed in order to make things, not perfect, but better?

• (0900)

Mrs. Sylviane Lanthier: Thank you for your question.

There have been examples of success from the time the first plan went into effect until the current roadmap. For example, I am thinking of what has been done in health services since the first action plans. We in the francophone communities were poorly equipped to address health needs at the time of the first action plan. The plan helped establish circumstances that enabled us to do that.

The first versions of the plan and roadmap provided financial assistance for early childhood. We note that the termination of that assistance is being strongly felt in our communities.

The roadmap and the action plan have helped give the francophone communities a boost in immigration. However, the government's approach here is not enough. That is why we say that the current challenge for the communities is to focus their energies on developing and building our infrastructure.

In recent years, we have noticed a kind of unravelling in the way the roadmap is administered. Authorities have forgotten to make our community organizations and institutions the central focus of government action. Life in French in our communities is developed through those organizations and institutions, and one of the things we are saying is that government action must be re-centred so that our community organizations, which drive the development of life in French, are central to the next roadmap.

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: Do the community organizations also receive assistance from the provincial governments?

We often hear about the federal government in this connection. Are any provincial programs for francophone communities outside Quebec being developed in cooperation with the federal government? Do you have any provincial agreements?

Earlier you mentioned the mobility of francophones across the country. I know that we in Quebec go and work in Alberta and elsewhere. Are there any interprovincial agreements designed to help the Canadian francophonie develop in cooperation with Quebec? Do you have any such agreements with Quebec? Is Quebec there to support francophones outside Quebec?

Mrs. Sylviane Lanthier: That is quite a broad question.

First, I must say that the main reason we are here before you now is to talk to you about the federal government's responsibilities.

Second, to my knowledge, the Quebec government invests approximately \$2 million a year in aid of all kinds in all francophone communities outside Quebec. Furthermore, all the provincial and territorial governments are working with their communities. However, I cannot give you any more details on that because I do not know what amounts are being allocated in each of the provinces.

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: So you get a little assistance from Quebec. That is what I wanted to know.

We often hear that francophones in Quebec are unaware of francophones outside Quebec. I hope that is not the case. People in Quebec think they are the only ones who speak French in Canada. When you sit on a committee such as the official languages committee, you realize that many francophones outside Quebec struggle every day to retain their language.

My personal issue with regard to the roadmap is French-language health services. Over the course of this committee's meetings, I have often asked where we stand on French-language health services and whether any improvements can be made. Friends in Vancouver have told me horror stories. It is all well and good to be bilingual, but when you are sick, you are sick in your mother tongue. I want to ensure that everyone can obtain care in his or her language.

Mrs. Sylviane Lanthier: I was in Alberta for the FCFA's annual meeting last weekend. One person who works in Calgary told me that one of his personal causes these days was to establish the

equivalent of a French-language health or health services centre in a building in Calgary. That has not yet been done.

Some communities definitely have French-language health care needs. If you talk to the Société Santé en français, the organization that spearheads this entire file, it will tell you there are still French-language health care needs, in mental health, for example. The struggle for French-language services provided by professionals, that is to say physicians, nurses, or other professionals, is definitely not over. There are still deficiencies virtually everywhere.

We have made progress in this area over the past 10 to 15 years, but that does not mean the problem is completely solved.

• (0905)

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: So that is a good subject for study.

Mrs. Sylviane Lanthier: Definitely.

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: Thank you, madam.

The Chair: Thank you, Mrs. Boucher.

Mr. Lefebvre, you have the floor.

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

Mrs. Lanthier, thank you very much for your presentation, which offers specific measures and suggestions, and thank you for coming to discuss the vitality of our communities with us.

The roadmap is a very important document, and you have raised a number of aspects of it, including early childhood. Can you tell me very briefly how the roadmap is currently providing support for early childhood across Canada?

Mrs. Sylviane Lanthier: Early childhood is not included in the present roadmap.

Mr. Paul Lefebvre: Thank you.

Now I will turn to the challenges associated with French-language child care.

I personally experienced a situation in Sudbury in which I had to put my children on a waiting list a year before they entered a francophone day care centre. Otherwise they probably would not have gotten spaces. My sister-in-law was unable to get a space for my godson.

There is also the matter of supply and demand. The demand is there, but the supply is tight. There are often not enough trained people to provide early childhood day care services.

How could the roadmap support your vision and suggestions? Day care spaces have to be created, but people also have to be trained.

Mrs. Sylviane Lanthier: Yes.

Training programs are provided in our communities. They are there, and I think more students would take them if there were more job opportunities. For example, current needs are so great that I know some untrained people who are working in day care centres and being trained on the job. As a result, the universities and colleges have adopted various models over the years to meet the needs of this clientele. However, we definitely need more day care spaces in French so that we can ensure that our children are raised in French and that we are supporting families who want to live in French. A crisis occurs whenever we fail to do that.

Mr. Paul Lefebvre: I agree with you.

With regard to demand, is it possible to gauge interest in French-language early childhood services across Canada? Can we estimate the demand?

Mrs. Sylviane Lanthier: I do not have any figures for you, but you need only look at the registration in certain French-language schools, for example. The fact that francophone schools are expanding suggests that, if day care services were available, more children would come and feed into those schools.

You cited your own case. I personally know a lot of people around me, in my community, who put their children in an anglophone day care centre because there is no francophone centre. We are losing a lot of children right now.

Mr. Paul Lefebvre: You also mentioned the cultural and community infrastructure in the communities. How is the roadmap currently supporting infrastructure in the francophone communities across the country?

Mrs. Sylviane Lanthier: I do not believe the roadmap specifically supports infrastructure.

Mr. Paul Lefebvre: Thank you.

Based on your vision and the suggestions you are making, how could the roadmap do that? There is a clear lack of infrastructure.

Mrs. Sylviane Lanthier: The roadmap could support infrastructure, and certain other departments could as well.

On this point, it is also important to realize that the action plan for official languages is an important factor in mobilizing departments that have specific responsibilities or that will be making targeted investments. However, it does not necessarily stop at that, and that should also not be an excuse for the other departments to do nothing.

With respect to infrastructure, some programs therefore may not necessarily be part of the roadmap but may have francophone aspects and could be used as a way to invest more. They must be given a format to which francophone organizations can have access, with conditions that enable them to access infrastructure programs.

For example, it will probably be somewhat difficult if a community organization wants to build or establish a day care centre, has to raise 50% of the funding in the private sector, and has only four weeks to file a funding application. So I think the reality of the communities also has to be considered in the way the programs are structured so that francophones can also get this money and so it is fairer.

Should that be in the action plan or not? That is a good question. However, the federal government also has to look into the matter. If

we do not have adequate, well-equipped infrastructure in our communities, and if we look like second-class citizens, then at some point people will go elsewhere. They do not want infrastructure that looks like rundown community centres from the 1930s, when the centre next door has just been renovated and everything there is done in English. Those are important aspects too.

● (0910)

Mr. Paul Lefebvre: You also mentioned francophone mobility. Can you give us more details on the challenges involved in francophone mobility on a national scale?

Mrs. Sylviane Lanthier: A study was recently done on youth mobility to determine, in particular, why young people move from province to province. Mobility is also an issue for newcomers.

How can we effectively promote our communities to people from other countries or provinces who come here? How can we introduce them to our organizations and the services they provide? How can we inform those francophones about where they can go and how they can live their lives in French? That is a greater concern for us.

Many organizations work to promote employment services, schools and so on. There is infrastructure, but, if people do not know about it because it has not been promoted or if the general message about linguistic duality is not strong enough, actual francophones may not know they are arriving in a community where people speak French. I meet them every day.

Mr. Paul Lefebvre: I do too.

Mrs. Sylviane Lanthier: It ultimately causes problems.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Choquette, you have the floor.

Mr. François Choquette (Drummond, NDP): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Mrs. Lanthier, thank you very much for being here today.

This is quite intense. Since we do not have a lot of time and I have a few questions to ask you, I ask you please to give me quite brief answers.

My first question concerns the new appointment of Judge Rowe to the Supreme Court. I think that appointment has been well received. The judge's curriculum vitae states that he is bilingual.

That is what we have been demanding for a long time. Yvon Godin, the former member for Acadie—Bathurst, worked very hard to table a bill on the bilingualism of Supreme Court judges, which I have re-tabled. Unfortunately, the Liberals seem to be saying they will not vote in favour of it.

What is your opinion on the subject? Should we continue to have only one policy on Supreme Court judges, or should we enact legislation requiring that bilingual judges be appointed to the Supreme Court?

Mrs. Sylviane Lanthier: We must welcome the action taken by the Liberal government, which assured us the next judges appointed would be bilingual. This is an important step in the right direction. When it was announced, we said, and we maintain, that this practice should be included in an act to ensure it continues. We also think that is important.

Mr. François Choquette: I have a question on another matter.

In his special report on Air Canada, the Commissioner of Official Languages made some recommendations on the importance of taking action now. He suggests that he be given more power so he can enter into agreements and that there be consequences if ministers and organizations fail to act on his recommendations.

What do you think about those recommendations by the Commissioner of Official Languages? Should he be given more power to ensure that organizations such as Air Canada comply with the Official Languages Act? Other organizations are in the same situation.

Mrs. Sylviane Lanthier: You wanted a quick answer, so here it is: yes.

Mr. François Choquette: Excellent.

In the past few months, or even nearly a year, I have been trying to understand the amounts the federal government invests in official languages.

There are regular expenditures, of course, and there are those associated with the roadmap. I have some nice tables here, but I am having trouble seeing which amounts are increasing and which are decreasing.

I know you work very hard at the FCFA to understand these figures. Can you understand the amounts that are invested in official languages, those that are increasing, for example, and those that are decreasing? Ultimately, what amounts are being invested to promote and defend official languages?

• (0915)

Mrs. Sylviane Lanthier: I am not sure we completely understand them all the time. It would probably be good to have information that is more comprehensible.

Mr. François Choquette: What would be your recommendation for the next action plan regarding the clarity of information on money invested in official languages?

Mrs. Sylviane Lanthier: Transparency is important for both the government and us. We do not just ask that money be invested in official languages. We want that money to be transformed into effective measures that are taken by our communities and by the government itself. If we cannot determine whether those measures are effective, we will not be able to prepare coherent midterm reports. We will not be able to take corrective action either or establish a constructive dialogue to determine how we can adjust and improve the way we do things.

Mr. François Choquette: As regards the overall governance of official languages, it is somewhat difficult to determine who is responsible for what. For example, during the study on the situation of the Translation Bureau, the bureau was said to report to Public Services and Procurement Canada, that is to the Hon. Judy Foote.

However, she never testified before the committee on the situation of the Translation Bureau. Then we wondered who was responsible for it. We put the question to the Hon. Mélanie Joly (Minister of Canadian Heritage), who told us to speak to the Minister of Public Services and Procurement.

In short, it is hard for us to know who is responsible and who will ultimately be held accountable.

Would you have anything to suggest in that regard?

Mrs. Sylviane Lanthier: In a study that we published on the Official Languages Act in 2009, we analyzed what was working well and what might be improved in that act. For it to be more coherent, we think the various parts of the act must form a whole and should be construed in relation to one another. To do that, a central government organization should be made responsible for implementing the Official Languages Act. In our view, that should be the Privy Council Office. However, if that is not possible, that responsibility could fall to the Treasury Board.

The problem with regard to Canadian Heritage, which we like very much and which is doing its job, is that the minister does not rank above other ministers. There are limits to what she can do. That is why we request that a central organization be given enough authority to breathe new life into the machinery of government as a whole.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Choquette.

Mr. Arseneault, you have the floor.

Mr. René Arseneault (Madawaska—Restigouche, Lib.): We are talking about passing the buck to the Hon. Judy Foote or to the Hon. Mélanie Joly, but could you tell us the simplest way to ensure that the allocated amounts produce results on official languages and achieve set objectives?

Mrs. Sylviane Lanthier: As I said in my presentation, we think some priorities are essential, particularly early childhood. We also think certain investments are essential, that is to say investments in community organizations. The idea is to be able to continue building the capacity of our organizations, given that it is through them that francophones are able to live in French.

We essentially think that the absolute priority for the next action plan for official languages should be to move the francophone communities back to the centre of the action. Francophones should be enabled to establish services, to build their own communities, and to be part of a living fabric that can bring French alive. That should be the main objective of the next action plan. We should determine how that can be done in health, education, and so on. We should really ask ourselves whether, by proceeding in this way, the government is investing not only in living in French, but also in the ability to live in French. We are the motor. So let us invest in the motor.

• (0920)

Mr. René Arseneault: Several organizations represent the interests of francophones across the country and in various sectors. However, it all begins with a transfer of federal funds, which are allocated to the province and then to the communities. Then there is an interplay of forces striving to determine who will manage the money and for whose benefit. How can anyone be responsible and accountable in those conditions?

In view of this confused situation resulting from Confederation and the powers of various francophone organizations in and outside Quebec, how can anyone manage all that, have a clear idea where the funding goes, and determine how to achieve objectives?

Mrs. Sylviane Lanthier: There too you are talking about federal-provincial agreements.

Mr. René Arseneault: Earlier you said control had to be given back to the communities.

Mrs. Sylviane Lanthier: Here is an example. Under the roadmap, it so happened that we responded to calls for tenders for projects and that those projects went to anglophone organizations that had proposed to provide services in French. Doing things this way does indeed deliver French-language services but does not build communities. There is a difference between the two.

We think the next action plan should look beyond the idea of providing service in French and strive to build communities. If you tell people they have to go to an anglophone centre to get French-language services, and if they are told they have to register for soccer with an anglophone organization, even if their matches are played in French, that is tantamount to telling them to go where they will experience the effects of assimilation, and they will probably decide to speak English since it will be simpler that way.

So what we—

Mr. René Arseneault: Pardon me for interrupting you, but I have only six minutes of speaking time, and I do not have much of it left.

I understand what you mean. We see this back home in New Brunswick too.

Which organizations in the community could be designated as responsible for ensuring that funding is indeed transferred to where it must count, where you have to score points to achieve those objectives?

Mrs. Sylviane Lanthier: Thank you. I understand your question.

I think the organizations representing the francophone communities are in the best position because they are horizontal, cross-sectional, and it is their mandate to see to the well-being of their community as a whole, not just the sector they work in. They are partners.

Mr. René Arseneault: Perfect.

I come from Acadie. There are many and many different types of francophone organizations in northern New Brunswick, but they are all good types.

From the federal government's standpoint, we would really like to achieve these objectives, but how do we go about it? We cannot divide up the transfers for early childhood and allocate them to one

specific organization in one province and another organization in another. How do we establish control and obtain the assurance that these resources will be managed logically and efficiently?

Which organizations are they? Have any organizations been designated? Has one organization been designated per province to speak on behalf of all the other organizations that have been grouped together? How can we do this?

Mrs. Sylviane Lanthier: Mr. Arseneault, in most provinces and territories, there is a representative organization that plays that role, that speaks in policy matters on behalf of the francophone community, and that represents the francophone community as a whole and all sectors. So if you are looking for a partner that is in a good position, you should look there.

Most communities also have strategic or community plans for understanding where the community wants to go and what its priorities are. A federal or national action plan can definitely take on different forms to meet the needs of the various sectors. In those sectors, there are partners who already exist, are identifiable, and are working toward that end.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Arseneault.

Thank you, Mrs. Lanthier.

Now we will go to the second part, and you will speak to us about immigration. After that, we will do a go-round for those who want to ask questions or make comments.

Mrs. Lanthier, we are listening.

Mrs. Sylviane Lanthier: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

As you know, we were initially supposed to appear before you in September on the matter of francophone immigration. We requested a delay because we were preparing to hold the very first meeting of the Table nationale de concertation communautaire en immigration francophone, and we wanted to be able to give you news after the fact.

The FCFA is very proud of this issue table, which took a year and a half to design. We pulled out all the stops to come up with a structure that is inclusive and representative of the situation of the communities. In addition to the provincial and territorial organizations representing the francophone communities, this organization includes representatives of all sectors concerned by francophone immigration, including economic development, health, and the colleges and universities.

Following the issue table's first meeting earlier in October, we consulted with Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada, and departmental representatives gauged the extent of our communities' knowledge of and experience with francophone immigration.

There have been some positive policy developments in recent months, such as the coming into force, on June 1st, of the Mobilité francophone component, which facilitates and accelerates the process for employers recruiting francophone applicants from abroad for certain occupational categories.

The Ministerial Conference on the Canadian Francophonie also committed to holding a francophone immigration forum, which we now know will take place in Moncton, New Brunswick, on March 31 next.

Lastly, the provincial and territorial governments agreed over the summer on a target of 5% for immigration to the francophone minority communities.

We sense a renewed political will on francophone immigration. However, that will must also result in specific, targeted measures that enable us to carry out our major francophone immigration project. I say project because, for the FCFA, immigration transcends the merely utilitarian aspect of increasing our demographic weight. The strong communities we want to build will also be inclusive, open, and modern communities made richer by their many francophone accents. We want to give, but also to receive, as may be seen from the efforts our communities made to take in Syrian refugees last winter.

The plan for society that is francophone immigration is generating a lot of energy in our communities. Considerable effort has been made over the past 15 years to develop promotional and recruitment structures and initiatives and intake and integration services by and for the francophone communities that are adapted to their situations and those of the immigrants who settle there.

There is no shortage of success stories. Our youth experience a diversified francophonie in our schools, and francophone immigrants increasingly occupy key positions in our community organizations and institutions, in which they therefore participate. National francophone immigration week, which the FCFA created in 2013 is growing every year in all regions of the country.

And yet conditions are not always conducive to our achieving successful francophone immigration, as I said earlier.

First, let us talk about international promotion. The organizations representing the communities do not have the resources to take part in events or international tours such as Destination Canada to present our communities as welcome centres that have much to offer potential immigrants. We also have no support in the area of promotional tools, despite increasing demand for such tools from Canadian embassies in Paris, Berlin, and elsewhere.

Despite the fact that the Mobilité francophone component has come into force, we are still far short of our 4.4% recruitment target and have fallen further behind in every successive year we have failed to meet that target. Express entry, which has been in force since January 1st, 2015, still does not have a francophone lens. Since 2012, the FCFA and Réseaux en immigration francophone have been asking the department for that lens, which would help us achieve real francophone immigration results.

As currently designed, the system does not favour francophone applicants. We recently provided the department with recommendations on this point which I will present to you in my conclusion.

If the federal government seriously wants to meet its francophone immigration targets, it will put a renewed recruitment strategy in place, more specifically by expanding immigration pools and source countries and by ensuring that the main recruitment systems, such as

express entry, actually promote the selection of French-speaking immigrants.

The third link in the immigration continuum is intake, settlement, and integration. In this connection, services such as Accueil francophone in Manitoba and Immigration francophone in Nova Scotia shine by the quality of their work with newcomers and the way they are established in the community.

● (0925)

However, the services simply are not available where they are required, and the support they enjoy varies from place to place. A map created by the FCFA last spring shows that there are still deficiencies in a number of locations, whether it be employment services, language training, or establishing connections with the host community. However, results on the ground show that francophone immigrants are far more integrated when they are served by francophone organizations.

Other challenges include the ineligibility for settlement services of workers recruited through Mobilité francophone, whereas the purpose of that program is clearly to retain those workers over the long term and to help them transition to permanent residency.

Furthermore, only one French-language settlement service is currently accredited for refugee intake. And yet our communities have a long tradition of supporting refugees. For example, various community stakeholders—schools, parishes, and associations—have worked over the past 20 years to take in, settle, and integrate refugees from the Democratic Republic of Congo, Burundi, and Rwanda. These efforts are most often made with little in the way of government resources or support.

I have spoken at length about the challenges and, in general, have suggested solutions. I would like to close with a few more specific recommendations, and I hope the committee will adopt them as its own.

First, with respect to promotion, we would like the government, in consultation with the communities, to develop a policy of systematic promotion of the francophone minority communities. That policy would include a budget for the purpose of involving the organizations representing the communities in events such as Destination Canada and a marketing plan adapted to various target publics such as economic immigrants and international students.

As regards recruitment, first of all we would like the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship to include a francophone immigration target when reporting to Parliament every year on immigration levels for the upcoming year. We would also like the department to include a francophone lens in the express entry program, whether it be in addition to the comprehensive ranking system of a question on the first official language spoken or an increase in the number of points awarded for knowledge of the second official language. We would also like the department to make the visa-issuing process more flexible for international students to facilitate their progress from temporary to permanent residency, for example. Lastly, we would like the government to solve the problem of unfair access to language proficiency tests, which are more costly in French and unavailable in places such as Newfoundland and Labrador and Windsor, Ontario.

As for intake, settlement, and integration, we would like the Canadian government to support our communities in offering certain settlement services to temporary workers, to support the provision of a full range of services developed by and for the communities in all regions of the country, and, lastly, to build the capacity of our communities to provide intake and settlement services to refugees in French.

The FCFA is very proud to be a prime partner of the federal government in francophone immigration. Our remarks here today are intended to be constructive, and our intention is to be part of the solution. After all, diversified francophone communities made richer by the contribution of immigration are good for us, and they are good for Canada as a whole.

Thank you.

• (0930)

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mrs. Lanthier.

We will begin the round of questions and comments with Mr. G n reux

Mr. Bernard G n reux (Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivi re-du-Loup, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Good morning, Mrs. Lanthier.

Mrs. Sylviane Lanthier: Good morning.

Mr. Bernard G n reux: Earlier you said there was no money in the roadmap for promotion. You just said as much about immigration.

How much do you think would be needed to do a good job of promoting Canada's linguistic duality and the minority communities not just to immigrants, but also within Canada?

Mrs. Sylviane Lanthier: I do not have a specific and precise answer for you as to an amount. However, I know that funding under the first roadmap was allocated to facilitate the communities' involvement in Destination Canada, for example. I also know that the documents the FCFA has prepared in the past, including maps showing where the francophone communities are located and providing a snapshot of them, were extremely appreciated by the embassies, which also helped distribute them. The embassies constantly ask us to make those kinds of maps again. I do not

think it necessarily costs a fortune. However, what I understand is that doing it would really have a significant impact for us.

Mr. Bernard G n reux: You are talking about very advanced tools, not necessarily about large-scale tools such as new websites or social media strategies. As someone said earlier, this is 2016, and people rely a lot on social media in making life choices and choosing where they want to live.

Is the FCFA on social media? The FCFA represents all associations of minority communities across Canada. Do you think all those communities are well served by social media?

Mrs. Sylviane Lanthier: You know, the FCFA website has a francophone immigration section providing detailed information on the services offered in each community and a snapshot of our communities, in addition to other information. We constantly invite people to go to the website and get informed. However, I believe you are aware of what is called discoverability on the web. In other words, so much content is offered on the web that sometimes it is difficult to find the information you are looking for.

Although social media and the web are really important tools, during national francophone week, we also conduct video conferences with the Canadian embassy during which we talk to potential immigrants around the world. We are already doing that kind of thing.

I myself have taken part in Destination Canada, and I can tell you that nothing works better than direct contact with people who are prepared to come here and to whom we can explain the difference between living in Vancouver and living in Saint-Boniface. Nothing works better than that.

We are often told that people who come here do not understand the country they are going to live in. For example, I worked with a young girl from France who told me that, when she arrived in Winnipeg, she thought she was landing in a bilingual country. She thought that all Canadians spoke both languages. Well, no, that is not the case. The country is officially bilingual, which means that the federal government offers services in French. How do you explain to an immigrant what the offer of service in French means? You have to explain to them that it does not apply in places where francophones represent less than 5% of the population or clientele. That is how people are entitled to services in French in one place but not in another. For example, you can obtain services in French at one airport but not at another, aboard one Air Canada flight but not another. No one can understand that.

So when we talk to people before they arrive in the country, we really have to adopt a human approach. That is very important.

• (0935)

Mr. Bernard G n reux: You mentioned Destination Canada. Are you telling us we would do well to increase the number of Destination Canada events?

Mrs. Sylviane Lanthier: Destination Canada is currently held in three cities. I think we would do well to include francophone immigration in other spaces where the federal government, that is to say Canada, is likely to go and recruit people who will come and live here.

There are other countries where people speak French. The Association des collèges et universités de la francophonie canadienne, the ACUFC, has just conducted a mission to Brazil to go and speak French to young Brazilians so they can come and study in Canada. There are francophones all across Canada, but around the world as well. Many people are interested in discovering our country through the French language. That is an idea that we forget when it comes to attracting people to our country.

Mr. Bernard Généreux: I want to go back to a part of the roadmap that Mr. Arseneault talked about earlier and that inevitably concerns immigration. It involves money.

Suppose, in your craziest dreams, that the FCFA is given \$150 million tomorrow morning and that you are asked to allocate that money among all the associations in each of the provinces. What would you do differently from what the federal government is doing now?

Mrs. Sylviane Lanthier: What would we do differently?

Mr. Bernard Généreux: That is a killer question.

Mrs. Sylviane Lanthier: Yes, a killer question.

I think the most important thing we would have to do would be to determine the most fundamental effects we want to achieve with the resources we have and the money we invest. We would have to determine the best ways to spend the money to achieve our goals.

That is an interesting question, but it is so hypothetical and broad that it is difficult to answer it fully.

Mr. Bernard Généreux: That is all right. It is the craziest dreams that can change things.

Mrs. Sylviane Lanthier: What interests me most is really the impact we can have. Developing communities and community organizations: that is probably the best way to have a long-term impact. You need to have living communities for francophone communities to develop.

Mr. Bernard Généreux: As you may remember, I sat on the same committee in 2009. Unless I am mistaken, I do not remember us discussing early childhood as part of the roadmap when we were conducting analyses.

I understand that a tree is a living, evolving thing. You drew that comparison earlier. However, why are we talking more about early childhood today than we did five years ago? Perhaps we should have decided to deal with early childhood 25 or 30 years ago, since the roots of francophone culture lie in the education of young children.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Généreux.

Mr. Bernard Généreux: I did not get an answer to my question.

The Chair: We will consider it a comment. Perhaps Mrs. Lanthier can answer it later during another speaker's turn.

Now I must turn the floor over to Mr. Samson.

Mr. Darrell Samson (Sackville—Preston—Chezzetcook, Lib.): That is good; I like his question. I would like to hear Mrs. Lanthier's answer, but first I want to give my own answer. I just want her to know the cards I am holding.

In fact, it is because it is not included in section 23 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. That section does not

concern the education of children five to 18 years of age. Consequently, no money is allocated to early childhood or postsecondary education. The discussion is therefore limited to those fields, which explains why we did not discuss early childhood.

I do not know whether you want to add to that, Mrs. Lanthier. I will give you 30 seconds to do so because I have five good questions for you too.

• (0940)

Mrs. Sylviane Lanthier: In fact, I have a 25-year-old son and a 22-year-old daughter, and I can guarantee you we talked about early childhood when they were young. We had already identified that need.

Mr. Darrell Samson: Yes, we have always discussed it.

As a former director general, I can tell you that investing in francophone early childhood is probably the most important thing we can do. It supports our French-language minority schools. It enables the parents and children of exogamous families to speak French, and there are more of them now as a result of today's mobility.

In fact, 80% of students enrolled in a four-year early childhood program do not speak French when they enter the program. However, they enter French school after completing the program. It is essential to prepare them well, to begin their learning in French school, and to establish a relationship among parents, the community, and the school. There can be no doubt about that.

I questioned former Liberal minister Ken Dryden several years ago when the government had promised \$5 billion over five years for early childhood. At the time, I said exactly what you noted earlier, that, if children go to an English-language day care, they will very probably go to English-language school.

So we have to be on the leading edge. We have to ensure that, when investments are made in infrastructure or other fields, minority francophones are given more consideration before the projects in question are approved. I will not say too much about that because you alluded to it earlier.

I would briefly like to hear your comments on the new program that has replaced francophone significant benefit.

Mrs. Sylviane Lanthier: The introduction of the Mobilité francophone program was excellent news, but it cannot solve all the problems and does not meet all the needs.

It is excellent news and an excellent start, but more has to be done.

Mr. Darrell Samson: That is very good.

A little earlier you referred to the 5% target.

Mrs. Sylviane Lanthier: Yes.

Mr. Darrell Samson: A few weeks ago, our friends from Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada told us they too wanted to hit 4% or 5%, but they could only achieve 1.2%, 1.3%, or 1.4%. What is incredible is that they have a team dedicated to that. So I do not understand how that is possible.

How do you think we can make sure we achieve that 5% target? What would you put in place? What would be the best way to hit that target?

Mrs. Sylviane Lanthier: All our recommendations are tools to achieve that target.

We also realize that Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada's programs and methods are in a way being fragmented. The department must find a way to determine how it can concentrate its services and develop tools that produce real results.

There are ways of doing that, particularly through express entry and Mobilité francophone. We can put all kinds of things in place.

You can look at our recommendations; they are very specific. I think they will help you achieve the target. Otherwise, if we keep on this way, we will not hit the target. We are not on our way to achieving it.

Mr. Darrell Samson: I really like that comment. I think it is an essential point in this discussion.

You mentioned allocated funding, and that interests me. You said that the money was allocated to anglophone organizations to provide French-language services and that francophones had to contact those organizations in order to take part in and benefit from them. Unless I am mistaken, the FCFA is not seeking funding, but it is asking that the funding allocation be targeted more effectively and that the funding be transmitted to organizations that will guarantee success.

Here is a specific example. A few months ago, some representatives of the provincial preschool resource centre in Nova Scotia met with me to say it was the only francophone organization in the country not receiving money for family resources. They also told me that, over the previous three years, they had obtained money through an anglophone organization that had allocated the funds to them. The anglophones therefore control the playground. The francophone community is not allowed to get established.

I very much enjoyed the information you cited. We must take charge of ourselves and give ourselves the power and authority we need to manage our files. That does not mean that we will receive a bag of money and that the community will decide how to manage it. However, under the structure in place, the federal government can choose the programs that will meet needs. In the example I cited, the money is going to an anglophone organization in Nova Scotia that allocates 20% to administration and submits the remaining 80%. This year, the francophone organization did not even get a cent.

Perhaps we should work on finding solutions to these problems. That is a very significant example.

I will close by discussing Destination Canada.

● (0945)

The Chair: Mrs. Lanthier, do you have a brief comment to make on that subject?

Mrs. Sylviane Lanthier: The question of "by" and "for" is very important for us.

The Department of Immigration obviously handles immigration. That is its field; that is what it does, and we understand that. Our organization does not just deal with immigration. However, it is

takes an interest in the question in order to contribute to the development of francophone communities. We take in people because they want to contribute to and live in our communities. This is a society-building project, which is really very different.

When we talk to the immigration department about a similar project for society, its officials tell us they are concerned about immigration issues. Consequently, we have to make them understand and work with us so that this tool, which is immigration, is used to develop communities and a project for society. This falls somewhat outside their usual role, and I understand that. However, if we are unable to break that impasse and make it so the department becomes a support in achieving that objective, then we will go round in circles and wind up with the figures we expect and our percentages will not increase.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Samson.

Mr. Choquette, you have the floor.

Mr. Darrell Samson: We are going to put that in bold letters.

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

Before putting my questions to Mrs. Lanthier, I want to inform the committee that I have submitted the following notice of motion to the clerk:

That the Committee invite the Minister of Public Services and Procurement, the Honourable Judy Foote, as soon as possible so that she can present and explain the government's official response to the Committee's second report entitled, Study of the Translation Bureau, and that this meeting be televised.

If I have correctly understood, the motion will be debated next Thursday.

I would like to go back to Mrs. Lanthier on the subject of immigration.

I am a bit pessimistic about the situation of francophone immigration in our official language minority communities. It seems we are failing everywhere except in Alberta. The targets are being achieved in that province, but they are having trouble doing so in the other provinces. If I understand correctly, it is really hard, and I am pleased that you have presented some clear, precise and important recommendations on the subject.

I would like to go back to the "by" and the "for". You explained very clearly that there is not just immigration, but also integration, helping people enter the labour market and retaining them in our communities. Then we have to lead youth from early childhood to day care so that later on they can continue living in our communities.

You have submitted two main demands or recommendations. You had developed them the first time I met you in committee. They involved indexing next year's roadmap amounts and releasing the amounts that have not yet been invested in our communities. If I correctly understand it, those amounts have been invested, but not necessarily in our communities, in immigration, for example, in what is called the "by" and the "for". Would you add a comment on that subject?

Mrs. Sylviane Lanthier: That is exactly it.

With respect to the roadmap, we knew that the social development initiative envelope had not been entirely distributed. Now that is done.

One of the problems with francophone immigration is the "by" and the "for". In other words, in some provinces, we see anglophone organizations that have money to provide French-language services. We feel that is inconsistent with the spirit of the roadmap. The spirit of the roadmap is to help develop the francophone communities and to support implementation of the Official Languages Act in the francophone communities. It is not at all the same thing when you give money to anglophone organizations to provide French-language services. In that sense, our organization is repeating that it is important for this investment to be used to develop our francophone communities.

• (0950)

The Chair: Thank you, Mrs. Lanthier.

Mr. Vandal, you have the floor for three minutes.

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

I see three immigration components: recruitment, intake, and integration.

I know that Canada is a very big country. Which of those three components currently covers the communities you represent? In what component are your communities strongest and weakest? Is it recruitment, intake, or integration?

Mrs. Sylviane Lanthier: I have a map with me that I could leave with you. It shows the situation province by province, that is to say the places where services are provided and those where they are lacking. I think it varies from province to province. We see there is no continuum of service in any province. Some provinces are better off than others. For example, Manitoba compares well with other provinces, particularly with regard to refugees. Manitoba is the only province accredited to take in refugees. That varies in the other provinces.

Mr. Dan Vandal: Does it depend on relations with the provincial government?

Mrs. Sylviane Lanthier: It may depend on relations with the provincial government. It also depends on the way the IRCC behaves with the organizations in that province. There are variations in that behaviour.

We say there should be a continuum of service in each of the provinces because, if one step is missing, then nothing works. All the steps are important.

If the committee wants to look at this province by province and see where the deficiencies are, that is possible. We can provide you with that information.

Mr. Dan Vandal: It would be good if you could send it to us.

Can you tell us a little about experiences with Syrian refugees across Canada?

Mrs. Sylviane Lanthier: As I told you, only one province really has an organization accredited to work with Syrian refugees, and that is Manitoba, which I think has taken in more than 300 francophone

refugees. They are directed to francophone communities, that is schools and so on. When the federal government launched this initiative, communities across the country pulled up their socks and really wanted to help welcome the refugees. However, the communities in each of the provinces and territories are not necessarily equipped to do so. That limits what they can do.

We also realize we have refugee-welcoming traditions that are older than the Syrian refugee situation. We also take in refugees from other countries. It would be good for us to be better equipped in each of the provinces and territories so that we could successfully integrate refugees when they arrive.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mrs. Lanthier.

Thank you, Mr. Vandal.

That brings this part of our meeting with the FCFA to an end. On behalf of committee members, I would like to thank Mrs. Lanthier for this excellent presentation.

Thank you very much, Mrs. Lanthier, for the insight you have brought to our committee.

Mrs. Sylviane Lanthier: It was my pleasure.

The Chair: We will suspend now for a few minutes before hearing from the next speaker.

• (0950)

(Pause)

• (1000)

The Chair: We are resuming our study of the roadmap and immigration in the francophone minority communities.

In the second hour, we are pleased to have Marie-Josée Groulx, Francophone Initiatives Team Leader at the New Brunswick Department of Post-Secondary Education, Training and Labour.

Welcome to our committee, Mrs. Groulx.

First, we will give you five to 10 minutes to talk about the roadmap and the plan we are considering. Then there will be a period of questions and comments. Second, we would like to hear what you have to say about francophone immigration, and we will proceed in the same way.

You may begin on the first subject, the roadmap and action plan.

Mrs. Marie-Josée Groulx (Francophone Initiatives Team Leader, New Brunswick Department of Post-Secondary Education, Training and Labour): Thank you, Mr. Chair. Good morning, everyone.

First, I should note that I am here as an official from the Department of Post-Secondary Education, Training and Labour and that I am, of course, not speaking on behalf of the Government of New Brunswick. Since I am an official, please bear in mind that I am operating within an established framework, as Mrs. Lanthier mentioned earlier. It is difficult for me to think outside that framework, but I will do my best.

First of all, I will speak about the roadmap.

Thank you for inviting me to speak today about the impact the roadmap has had on official languages in the minority communities, more particularly on New Brunswick and francophone immigration.

New Brunswick, like several other Canadian provinces, is facing a sizable demographic challenge. With an aging population, youth migration greater than that observed in other provinces, francophone migration to other provinces, and a high unemployment rate, together with labour shortages in certain rural regions and employment sectors, our province must acquire tools with which it can try to address the situation and increase its population, while striving to maintain the linguistic balance that is a very special part of New Brunswick.

As you know, New Brunswick is the only officially bilingual province in Canada. One-third of its population have French as their first language, while the remaining two-thirds have English. When you think of it, New Brunswick is in fact a microcosm of Canada.

New Brunswick passed the New Brunswick Official Languages Act in 1969 to recognize the equal status of its two linguistic communities. That act was repealed in 2002 and replaced with the Official Languages Act. Although it presents special challenges, that status is a social and cultural asset and a resource for our province to an even greater degree. Successive governments over the years have remained engaged in promoting the vitality of the two official language communities in New Brunswick.

The province also wants to continue building the privileged relationship it enjoys with Canada in the area of official languages so that it can continue improving its services to the public in both official languages and establish structural initiatives that can help achieve true equality between its two linguistic communities.

We hope the federal government will continue supporting the provinces through intergovernmental service delivery agreements, while acknowledging New Brunswick's specific status as the only officially bilingual province. New Brunswick's priority service sectors are literacy, early childhood, youth, services to seniors, health, and well-being.

The next federal official languages strategy should continue to focus on education, support for francophone immigration, health, justice, economic development, and development of the language sector. Immigration to official language minority communities was included in the last two roadmaps and is still a priority issue for the vitality of those communities.

Since my experience is mainly in the immigration field, in my presentation this morning, I will outline the impact the last two roadmaps have had on francophone immigration in New Brunswick.

The Roadmap for Canada's Linguistic Duality 2008-2013 provided that support for francophone immigration was a priority. New Brunswick greatly benefited from that first roadmap in the area of francophone immigration as a result of a record \$10 million federal government investment over five years, \$2 million a year.

With that investment, New Brunswick made serious advances in francophone immigration, in the areas of promotion, recruitment, and settlement, as well as the retention of French-speaking immigrants. As a result of that financial support, New Brunswick has managed to establish itself in the francophone immigration sector, to make potential francophone immigrants realize that there are indeed francophone communities outside Quebec, and to promote the benefits of an officially bilingual province.

This has enabled us to create settlement centres for newcomers in francophone rural regions and to provide French-language services in previously established centres. We have also supported certain activities of New Brunswick's francophone immigration network and others designed to promote the benefits of francophone immigration to New Brunswick. Last but not least, it has helped us explore less traditional source markets.

The Roadmap for Canada's Official Languages 2013-2018 has established the following two priority sectors in immigration: language training for economic immigrants and immigration to official language minority communities, including support for francophone immigration to New Brunswick.

- (1005)

Although the second roadmap also designates francophone immigration as a priority, New Brunswick was granted \$4 million for its French-language intake and settlement services, which represents a 60% cut from the amount granted under the previous roadmap and a reduction of activities funded by the federal government to promote francophone immigration to New Brunswick.

New Brunswick has tried to offset its revenue shortfall but, given the difficult financial situation, has been unable to restore funding for immigration to the level of the first roadmap.

According to the Roadmap for Canada's Official Languages 2013-2018, 170 new service points have been created for francophone immigrants in Canadian cities since 2008. Thanks in large part to funding under the first roadmap, New Brunswick has 13 service points for newcomers to the province as a whole, nine of which provide bilingual or French-language services to those newcomers.

We are definitely proud to provide these services across the province, but, as a result of federal funding cuts under the roadmap 2013-2018, three of the nine centres providing French-language services no longer receive federal funding and are funded entirely by the province. It should be noted that those three centres are located in rural areas.

I am speaking to you today on behalf of of a single province. I also recognize that New Brunswick represents only a small percentage of the population of the Canadian francophonie, but its status as an officially bilingual province makes it a unique province whose unique challenges and needs will have to be taken into account in developing the next roadmap.

I will focus more on immigration in the francophone minority communities in my second presentation. As I represent New Brunswick, please feel free to ask me questions in the language of your choice, English or French.

[English]

It's your choice.

[Translation]

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you very much for your presentation, Mrs. Groulx.

We will immediately go to the period of questions, starting with Mrs. Boucher, who is eager to ask you questions.

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: Mr. Chair, I think it is Mr. Généreux who should speak.

The Chair: All right.

Mr. Généreux, we are listening.

Mr. Bernard Généreux: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you for being here with us today, Mrs. Groulx.

As New Brunswick is the only officially bilingual province in Canada, I want to congratulate you. You are definitely an example to us all.

If I correctly understood, the funding you received under the second roadmap was 60% less than under the first one.

• (1010)

Mrs. Marie-Josée Groulx: That is correct.

Mr. Bernard Généreux: Apart from federal government budget reductions, do you know why that cut was imposed on you? I have not heard that other Canadian provinces had cuts of that size.

Do you think you have been penalized in any particular way?

Mrs. Marie-Josée Groulx: No. I think we were coddled under the first roadmap: we were allocated \$10 million. However, the fact remains that 60% is enormous. Funding for the settlement centres dropped from \$2 million to \$1 million a year.

Under the first roadmap, the province allocated funding to the settlement centres, and that money was used for recruitment. Then we submitted the invoices to the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency, which reimbursed us for those amounts.

Under the second roadmap, \$4 million was allocated directly to the settlement centres, not to the province. The settlement centres file the applications themselves, and the IRCC allocates the funding directly to them based on very stringent criteria. When the province managed the funding, we had more flexibility, and the criteria respecting the nature of the funded projects were broader.

Mr. Bernard Généreux: I see.

Do you think the difference in funding between the first and second roadmaps has had a very negative impact? When governments decide to implement programs and to allocate funding to them, they do not necessarily do so permanently. Adjustments are made. The Liberals will make some too one day or another. They cannot just give money away for the simple pleasure of giving.

In short, do you think the difference in funding between the first and second roadmaps has had a very negative impact?

Mrs. Marie-Josée Groulx: The impact has mainly been felt in the settlement centres. As I mentioned earlier, the centres in rural areas have been penalized the most. They only receive provincial funding now. We are facing financial challenges, like many provincial governments. We have less funding to allocate to them.

Mr. Bernard Généreux: However, that is a choice that you, the province or ACOA in your case, must make, is it not? It is you who decide where the money will go within the province.

Mrs. Marie-Josée Groulx: We have a sum of money and it is based on criteria.

Mr. Bernard Généreux: I see.

Mrs. Marie-Josée Groulx: So a proposal is made once a year based on criteria.

Mr. Bernard Généreux: Are you telling me that the criteria the federal government establishes for distributing the money run counter to what the regions want?

Mrs. Marie-Josée Groulx: Yes, and I am going to explain to you how it works.

Our centres in the francophone rural areas provide services to clients that IRCC feels are not real clients.

As Mrs. Lanthier previously mentioned, we consider international students a potentially infinite source of immigrants—

Mr. Bernard Généreux: They are a source of clients.

Mrs. Marie-Josée Groulx: Yes, they are a source of clients. The same is true of temporary workers. Temporary workers and international students cannot use the services that IRCC provides. In the province, we say that they are potential clients and that it is important to take care of them. In short, we fund the centres so they will take care of those clients.

Community colleges and the University of New Brunswick have campuses in rural areas where many international students live. They use the services at those centres that are not funded by IRCC given that there are not as many permanent residents as in the bigger centres.

Mr. Bernard Généreux: In fact, you are telling me that we are spending fortunes around the world recruiting students and people to come and settle in Canada. However, when those people are in New Brunswick, they are told they are ineligible for the programs we put in place because they are not real francophones or New Brunswickers. I do not really know what to call them.

Who determines the criteria?

Mrs. Marie-Josée Groulx: In fact, the services funded by IRCC are intended only for permanent residents. International students and temporary workers are not immigrants, but they are here on Canadian soil.

Mr. Bernard Généreux: You are required to refuse to provide them with services when they request them.

Mrs. Marie-Josée Groulx: Some centres do it and see them all the same. It depends on their workload. However, we have centres where most of the clientele consists of international students and qualified temporary workers. In short, the province funds those centres to support the services that are provided.

Ultimately, our goal is to keep them and to ensure they become permanent residents.

•(1015)

Mr. Bernard Généreux: We also make an international effort to recruit them.

Mrs. Marie-Josée Groulx: I know.

Mr. Bernard Généreux: However, when they arrive here, we do not want to provide them with services. Something seems a bit contradictory there.

I imagine there are real minority situations in certain places in New Brunswick. Compared to other provinces, for example, do you have a lot of places or communities that you feel are really in a francophone minority situation?

Mrs. Marie-Josée Groulx: It is a bit unusual because New Brunswick is officially bilingual.

Mr. Bernard Généreux: The province is officially bilingual.

I live near Rivière-du-Loup. So I am near New Brunswick, and there are nevertheless places in New Brunswick where English is used much more predominantly than French.

Mrs. Marie-Josée Groulx: It is definitely more anglophone as you head to the south of the province, but many francophones live in those communities. However, the francophone communities are mainly in the northern part of the province. These are more rural areas than those where the anglophone communities are.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Généreux.

Mr. Arseneault, you have the floor.

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

I simply want to make sure I correctly understood. So I am going to continue in the same vein as my colleague Mr. Généreux.

Federal funding was cut by 60% between the first and second roadmaps, and that is why the province is now left more or less to its own devices. From what I understand, that may not at all be enough for it to reach its francophone immigration targets. Is that correct?

Mrs. Marie-Josée Groulx: Honestly, we have hit our targets. We cannot complain about that. It is simply that we have to make choices, whether to support one centre or another in delivering French-language services, and to determine whether there is a shortfall.

I tip my hat to our settlement centres, which have been encouraged to diversify their funding sources. Many non-profit agencies tend to go to banks for financing. We have encouraged them to look for other funding sources, but that is not always possible.

We have centres that are finding it hard to meet the demand. We offer them funding and a basic increase, to the extent that is possible.

Consequently, we always have to go back to the government to request additional funding.

Mr. René Arseneault: I see.

Just to make sure I understand correctly, what are New Brunswick's francophone immigration targets?

Mrs. Marie-Josée Groulx: That was the next part of my presentation.

Our objective is for 33% of our immigrants to be economic immigrants by 2020. The target for 2015 was 17%, and we achieved 19%. The target for 2016 is 20%. Since our targets are based on schedules for the year, I cannot predict what will happen.

Mr. René Arseneault: I have a question for you.

I come from northern New Brunswick, more specifically from the riding of Madawaska—Restigouche. There are still nine settlement centres, but there previously were 12. Is that correct?

Mrs. Marie-Josée Groulx: No. There are 13 in the province as a whole, but nine of them provide services in French or in both official languages.

Mr. René Arseneault: I see.

How many are there in the northern part of the province?

Mrs. Marie-Josée Groulx: There are centres in Edmunston, Restigouche, Bathurst, and on the Acadian Peninsula.

Mr. René Arseneault: Are they multicultural centres?

Mrs. Marie-Josée Groulx: Yes.

Mr. René Arseneault: That is what I thought.

Even though New Brunswick is a microcosm of Canada from the standpoint of the percentage of francophones, its rural areas are largely francophone, which is not the case elsewhere in Canada. However, it is quite linguistically homogeneous. Consequently—and correct me if I am wrong—even if we francophones are a minority in the province, we are not in the minority in our region.

Mrs. Marie-Josée Groulx: Not at all.

Mr. René Arseneault: Which results in a dynamic somewhat contrary to what one sees in Canada.

I am going to ask you a \$150 question, since the cost of living has risen.

With regard to francophone immigration in New Brunswick, what is the first aspect of the roadmap that should be altered or improved? I am aware I am addressing the immigration question here, but it is a very important question.

Mrs. Marie-Josée Groulx: Yes, indeed.

Perhaps the budgets should be rebalanced. I admit we do not expect funding will necessarily be as high as under the first roadmap. Furthermore, we have nevertheless managed to offset the shortfall in part.

However, it is important that the regions be able to provide high-quality settlement services and that that funding—

Mr. René Arseneault: Pardon me for interrupting, but I do not have a lot of time.

Have you observed a difference in your results between the first and second roadmaps—

Mrs. Marie-Josée Groulx: Yes, but that was initially—

Mr. René Arseneault: —considering the 60% cut in federal funding?

Mrs. Marie-Josée Groulx: You have to understand that we did a lot of catching up under the first roadmap. There were not really any francophone settlement centres. Under the second roadmap, we in a way built on what we had achieved under the first. We owe our present gains in large part to the first roadmap.

The situation is a bit difficult. The immigration cycle, which runs from contact with an immigrant until the moment he or she arrives in Canada, takes approximately two years, even two and a half years. What happened in previous years thus has a direct impact on our current figures.

• (1020)

Mr. René Arseneault: You could achieve your targets even before 2020 with more funding, could you not?

Mrs. Marie-Josée Groulx: Yes, but, as Mrs. Lanthier mentioned earlier, that would also help the multicultural centres or the minority communities take part in international promotional and recruitment activities to promote themselves. It is just that there is currently less flexibility for funding reasons.

Mr. René Arseneault: Mrs. Groulx, could you tell us exactly how much you would need in New Brunswick?

Please feel free to be precise on the subject.

Mrs. Marie-Josée Groulx: I would prefer not to say. I do not think that is my role.

Mr. René Arseneault: All right, but let us take the example of the \$2 million a year over five years and the 60% cut that you have experienced. Suppose we start over again next year. What would you say?

Mrs. Marie-Josée Groulx: Yes, let us say that would involve \$1.5 million a year and an expanded mandate for the multicultural centres, as you called them. However, qualified international students and temporary workers would have to be able to use IRCC-funded services.

The Chair: Is that all right, Mr. Arseneault?

Mr. René Arseneault: Yes, thank you.

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

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

Thank you very much for coming to testify before us today, Mrs. Groulx.

We have talked at length about the roadmap, but I would like to go right to the heart of the matter, immigration.

Earlier Mrs. Lanthier said that the Mobilité francophone program was good news. However, if I correctly understood, it is intended for skilled temporary workers only. That is why she thinks it is important to have a francophone lens in that program and in the express entry program. Those are the two existing programs.

How would guaranteeing francophone immigration to your province help you?

Mrs. Marie-Josée Groulx: We have the nominee program at the provincial level. Under that program, the federal government allocates 625 basic nominations in addition to the 425 nominations under express entry. Those are provincial programs.

The federal government also has its immigration programs. In the provinces and the federal government, I think there are more than 200 different components designed to welcome immigrants to Canada. It goes without saying that it is a bit complicated.

The provinces have been saying since 2012 that express entry should include a francophone lens. However, every province also has its express entry component. We have included a francophone lens in it in New Brunswick. Consequently, there is priority processing. We omit certain selection criteria in order to encourage French-speaking immigrants to come in under express entry.

It is somewhat difficult for me to comment on what Mrs. Lanthier said. I agree with her that a francophone lens should be included in express entry, but, as I just said, every province has control over its express entry program and can create a francophone component if it so wishes.

Mr. François Choquette: So you have already gone ahead and said that the express entry program should have a francophone lens. You have already put that in place. Now all that remains is for the federal government to do it for the other provinces.

Mrs. Marie-Josée Groulx: Correct.

Mr. François Choquette: From what I understand, you are achieving your francophone immigration target. You have even exceeded it, have you not?

Mrs. Marie-Josée Groulx: Yes, last year.

Mr. François Choquette: Can you briefly explain the targets? I believe you are going to discuss them in your next presentation, but this would give us a general idea.

You have been achieving your targets since last year, but, before that, you did not.

Mrs. Marie-Josée Groulx: As I mentioned, we did not have targets.

Mr. François Choquette: You did not have targets for the province?

Mrs. Marie-Josée Groulx: There were no targets for the province.

Mr. François Choquette: However, there is nevertheless a national target of 4.4%.

Mrs. Marie-Josée Groulx: The 4.4% target applies to the 270,000 immigrants that IRCC takes in every year. Since New Brunswick is small, we only have 625 certificates. We really are a small player, but this is significant for our community.

Mr. François Choquette: Your francophone community represents virtually one-third of the population of the province.

Mrs. Marie-Josée Groulx: Yes, one-third of 750,000 inhabitants.

Mr. François Choquette: So your francophone immigration should be roughly equivalent to that percentage. Approximately one-third of immigrants to New Brunswick should be joining the francophone community, correct?

•(1025)

Mrs. Marie-Josée Groulx: Yes, in theory.

Mr. François Choquette: All right. Is that the target that you have set for yourself?

Mrs. Marie-Josée Groulx: It is the objective of achieving 33% francophone immigration by 2020.

Mr. François Choquette: By 2020. So you are getting there.

With regard to that objective, is the federal government aware you are the only officially bilingual province? Is it aware in the efforts it makes, or are you perceived as a province like all the others?

Mrs. Marie-Josée Groulx: No, we have quite a privileged relationship with IRCC in that respect. We work very well with the federal government to achieve our targets. I can tell you we work a lot with Canada's foreign embassies in francophone markets. They are always there to support us in our efforts if we want to go and recruit on site.

Even though we are a drop of water in the large bucket of immigration across Canada, as I said, it works quite well in this regard and we are quite privileged.

Mr. François Choquette: In closing, I would like to discuss Destination Canada.

Earlier Ms. Lanthier said it was important to take part in Destination Canada in order to recruit francophone immigrants where they live and to ensure they understand the circumstances in which they will arrive. This is not necessarily a bilingual country from sea to sea. Communities are different from one province to the next, even though the country is officially bilingual.

What is the extent of your participation in this kind of event? How are you consulted as part of Destination Canada's activities?

Mrs. Marie-Josée Groulx: We have taken part in Destination Canada every year since the event was introduced. I think this is the 13th edition this year. New Brunswick has always attended. In recent years, we have also chosen to support those of our communities that wanted to go to Destination Canada with us, and we offer them financial support for that purpose. It is still the best recruitment tool we have for attracting people to Canada.

Having said that, I want to make a comment. Francophone immigrants wishing to come and live in Canada are not necessarily motivated, first of all, by the idea of being able to speak French. They want to come to Canada because they want to learn English. We often tell them that the struggle for the survival of French is not their cause, that it is a situation specific to Canada. We really have to be careful here.

In giving my sales pitch, if I told people to mount the barricades and fight for language rights, that would not really be appealing. That is really not what interests them. They want to come here because they like North American culture or because they want their children to be bilingual. Those who want to live in a francophone setting will settle in Quebec. Those who want to live outside Quebec

want to learn English. I often explain the situation to them. When they tell me they want to go and settle in Moncton, I ask them whether they speak English. They answer that they do not but that they will learn it when they get there. I tell them that will not work because they will not be able to find a job.

We have to take into consideration this idea that they want to come and work in Canada to learn English. It does not work like that. First of all, if they are unable to sell themselves to an employer, they will not find a job. That is the challenge.

Consequently, the task is mainly to go and recruit people who are already bilingual, who already speak English and French from the outset, and to bring them to Canada and not necessarily to focus solely on people who only speak French. Otherwise they will find it hard to fit into most communities.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Groulx.

Ms. Lapointe, you have six minutes, but you may share your speaking time with Mr. Arseneault, if he has any further questions. You may do as you wish.

Ms. Linda Lapointe (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, Lib.): All right, thank you, Mr. Chair. My colleague may speak if a question comes up.

Good morning and welcome. This is very interesting.

Earlier you said you had a target of 17% francophone immigration in 2015 and that you had achieved 19%. This year your target is 20%.

How did you manage to surpass your target? What means did you use?

Mrs. Marie-Josée Groulx: We established an increased presence in the francophone markets. We used social media and made online presentations. In short, we were extremely present.

We also relaxed the rules to promote the retention of international students who found jobs after completing their studies at a francophone post-secondary educational institution in New Brunswick. If they have been in New Brunswick for four or five years, have found a job, and want to stay, we make their lives a bit easier to encourage them to do just that. That is what made it possible for us to reach and even surpass our target.

We involve employers. Since we are talking about economic immigration, it is important for immigrants to be attached to the labour market, hence the interest of employers. We have managed to achieve and exceed our targets by working with employers and encouraging them to hire francophone immigrants.

•(1030)

Ms. Linda Lapointe: So you mainly intervene with students and economic immigration.

A little earlier you mentioned that one-third of New Brunswick's 750,000 inhabitants are francophone. Did I correctly understand that your immigration target is 625 immigrants a year?

Mrs. Marie-Josée Groulx: No. We have 625 nomination certificates a year.

Ms. Linda Lapointe: I see.

Mrs. Marie-Josée Groulx: In fact, including the additional 425 express entries, that makes a total of 1,050 immigrants. Our base is 625 nomination certificates a year, and the target corresponds to that number.

Since we exercise no control over federal programs, you will understand why it is extremely difficult to set targets for programs not under our jurisdiction. Our target is therefore based on the provincial programs over which the province exercises control.

Ms. Linda Lapointe: Thank you.

What is the retention rate based on the number of people you have managed to attract to New Brunswick? We have often heard that immigrants tend to move from province to province. Do you have an idea of the number of immigrants you have managed to retain in the province?

Mrs. Marie-Josée Groulx: We determine the number of immigrants who settle in the province based on language. First we establish the total number of immigrants, and we are currently working on a breakdown of the number of immigrants by language. The preliminary data seem to indicate that the retention rate is higher for francophone immigrants than for other immigrants, those who are anglophone, let us say, for our purposes.

Ms. Linda Lapointe: It will be interesting to determine those numbers too, all the more so since you are making a big effort to attract these immigrants to the province.

I was speaking quietly with my colleague who represents rural areas where there seems to be a significant need for workers. You mentioned that the francophone communities were largely located in rural areas and that there seems to be a big shortage of workers in those areas. Have you targeted those people?

Mrs. Marie-Josée Groulx: Yes, we are working with the employers in all regions of New Brunswick.

This past June, the federal government announced it would implement an immigration pilot project for Atlantic Canada in 2017. That project will help employers experiencing chronic labour shortages to recruit francophone immigrants. However, before implementing the project, we will have to make the local population aware that these immigrant workers will be arriving.

We have approached the Groupe Savoie, which is a major New Brunswick employer. It is situated in Saint-Quentin, a small community in northern New Brunswick of no more than 2,000 inhabitants. The business, which has between 650 and 750 workers, began slowly hiring immigrants to avoid triggering a negative reaction by local workers to the hiring of foreign workers. The integration process has gone well. However, the business is not ready to bring 25 immigrant families into Saint-Quentin tomorrow. First, those families will have no place to live, and, second, that might cause quite a significant culture shock in the community. In small rural communities, it is important to work with employers on virtually a case-by-case basis and work one on one to increase awareness.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Lapointe.

Given the hour, I will have to shorten the time allotted to committee members. We have already discussed the immigration file indirectly.

Mrs. Marie-Josée Groulx: Virtually all my points have been addressed.

The Chair: You may proceed with your presentation on immigration. I imagine you would like to raise some additional issues. However, I ask committee members to limit themselves to three minutes during the next round of questions.

Ms. Groulx, please go ahead on the subject of immigration.

Mrs. Marie-Josée Groulx: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you once again for the opportunity to speak to the committee this morning.

My second presentation concerns the state of francophone immigration in New Brunswick and will address the issue of challenges and opportunities. I will speak about economic immigrants first and then address the refugee question.

The global francophone market theoretically offers enormous recruitment opportunities since, according to the Organisation internationale de la francophonie, there are an estimated 200 million francophones around the world, including 72 million people who speak some French.

In reality, it is not always easy to attract these francophones and francophiles to New Brunswick. As I mentioned in my previous remarks, New Brunswick is the only officially bilingual province in Canada. That status makes our province a perfect place for future immigrants to live, work, and raise a family. That aspect is all the more interesting for francophone immigrants because most of them want to come to Canada to improve their English and give their children a chance to become bilingual. Despite that advantage, New Brunswick must work hard to promote itself and to make potential francophone immigrants realize that there are other provinces besides Quebec and that Montreal, Toronto and Vancouver are not all we have in Canada.

In addition to its particular linguistic situation, New Brunswick is largely rural and has no major urban centres like those found in most other provinces. That characteristic appeals to some people, whereas others who prefer large cities will definitely not choose to settle in New Brunswick. New Brunswick has made major advances in francophone immigration in recent years, partly as a result of the funding received under the first and second roadmaps. That funding enabled the province to promote itself in several markets as a top destination for francophone immigrants, to offer high-quality intake services in French across the province, and to develop excellent working relations with Canadian embassies abroad for francophone promotion purposes.

As is the case in many provinces, the francophone community in New Brunswick, which is called the Acadian community, is very vocal and active. With the support of that community and of the Réseau en immigration francophone du Nouveau-Brunswick, the provincial government has established an action plan to promote francophone immigration with a target of attracting 33% francophone economic immigrants by 2020. This is an ambitious but necessary objective to maintain the linguistic balance in Canada's only officially bilingual province.

To achieve that objective, we obviously had to acquire relevant and effective tools and hope the federal government would do the same. Pursuant to its action plan, the province established new partnerships and strengthened existing ones, developed a component solely for francophone immigrants through its provincial nominee program, worked in partnership with its school and post-secondary institutions on recruitment to offer a continuum of service to families interested in relocating to New Brunswick, facilitated immigration for international students once their studies were completed, and gave settlement centres a chance to promote their services and regions as part of promotional activities such as Destination Canada and Canada Week.

We have developed and implemented Destination Acadie, which is a recruitment activity involving stakeholders in immigration, tourism, economic development, studies, the francophone community, and culture, together with the other Atlantic provinces.

During that time, the federal government cancelled the francophone significant benefit program and subsequently replaced it with the Mobilité francophone program. This kind of tool is very important because it encourages Canadian employers to hire foreign francophone workers without going through the usual onerous and costly procedures. Most of these temporary workers subsequently become permanent residents, thus helping to maintain linguistic minority communities.

However, these temporary workers do not have access to settlement services subsidized by the federal government until they have been granted permanent residency, which in itself is nonsensical because we are banking on their transition to permanent residency. The situation is the same for international students. Although the federal government has authority to issue study permits, students do not have access to services offered at settlement centres funded by the federal government, which is also nonsensical in itself since we are banking on their transition to permanent residency.

Most settlement centres in New Brunswick nevertheless provide support to international students and temporary workers since we believe they are some of the best immigration candidates in our province. Express entry has been without a francophone component since it was launched in January 2015, despite repeated demands by francophone communities across Canada and various provinces.

New Brunswick has taken the initiative of giving its express entry component a francophone aspect by omitting certain selection criteria to encourage the entry of French-speaking immigrants to New Brunswick.

●(1035)

The Atlantic provinces were granted a pilot project for immigration to Atlantic Canada. The project was announced in summer 2016 and will be implemented in early 2017. Its purpose is to help employers who are experiencing chronic labour shortages and are unable to recruit locally. The Government of New Brunswick has indicated that a francophone lens will also be applied to this new program.

The large-scale arrival of refugees in early 2016 is a situation we cannot disregard. New Brunswick is proud to have taken part in that national effort by taking in more than 1,500 refugees. It is hard to imagine and understand what those refugees went through before arriving in Canada.

Our first objective was therefore to provide them with a safe environment and offer children of school and pre-school age a high-quality learning environment as soon as possible.

Our second objective was to teach them one of Canada's two official languages. Obviously, since our refugee intake centres are located in more anglophone communities, the vast majority of refugees chose to learn in English.

It is important to note that a dozen refugee families were directed to more rural francophone regions and experienced mixed integration success. Some families decided to go to other regions of New Brunswick where they found a larger concentration of people sharing the same culture. Despite that fact, 20% of refugee children of school age today attend francophone schools in New Brunswick.

Since federal regulations provide that newcomers may learn only one of the official languages free of charge, we are facing a major challenge. Some parents are unable to help their children with their homework, resources to provide assistance with homework in the schools are limited, and resources are also limited in the settlement centres because IRCC has been slow to provide promised financial assistance and inflexible about the possibility of learning a second official language.

Obviously, 2016 has been an extraordinary year requiring an extraordinary response to the refugee situation. In an ideal world, the provinces would have had more time to manage that situation and take the necessary measures to ensure a better linguistic distribution of refugees. However, the refugees are now permanent residents and, as such, have access to a series of services that will enable them to access training that will help them find jobs. Language learning is still the main barrier to successful integration and access to employment.

We are delighted because 20% of Syrian newcomers of working age have now found part-time or full-time employment. We are also pleased because there is no doubt that their arrival in our province has helped generate demographic growth in New Brunswick in 2016, a first since 2012. Lastly, we are delighted because their children are the New Brunswickers and Acadians of tomorrow. We are proud of that.

Thank you.

●(1040)

The Chair: Thank you very much, Ms. Groulx.

Ms. Boucher, you have the floor.

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: Good morning, Ms. Groulx, and welcome to our committee.

It is refreshing to hear you speak. You have both feet on the ground and therefore help us see things differently.

Earlier you talked about Destination Canada, in Paris, and about the fact that people wanted to come to Canada to learn English. This is the first time we have heard about that. Do you know whether other provinces say the same thing when they use Destination Canada? Are the departments of other provinces making a joint effort to understand that Canada is being represented as a place where people speak only English?

We have two official languages in Canada, and it is important, especially when we go to Paris, to be able to tell the French that we also speak French in provinces other than Quebec.

Mrs. Marie-Josée Groulx: That is being done.

I believe Canada's embassy in Paris is responsible for 13 francophone countries. Since it does a lot of promotion for the francophone communities outside Quebec, much is therefore being done internationally to promote minority francophone communities. It is definitely different to hear that from someone who is in the same situation rather than from a woman who works at Canada's embassy in Paris.

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: Definitely.

Mrs. Marie-Josée Groulx: We are seeing a difference.

As I told you earlier, we have started making web presentations. This is 2016, and we are therefore trying to use today's tools. However, that is not the same thing as meeting someone in person. The people we meet over the web will often come to an information session later.

New Brunswick is very active in international markets because we know we must promote ourselves. Many people, even in Canada, think there are no other provinces than Quebec, and it is a shock for them to discover that there is something else. So it is important to establish ourselves. We have established a presence everywhere in the francophone and anglophone markets. We have to say we have two linguistic communities.

Is it important for communities to promote themselves at events such as Destination Canada? Yes, definitely, because that provides more information. You have to understand that the people who want to immigrate to Canada receive a lot of information. They absorb more and more, but they can only retain part of it. Even if we tell them several times that they must know English, sometimes that is not necessarily what sticks in their minds. They remember that it is cold in winter more than they retain information on language learning.

•(1045)

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Groulx.

Mr. Arseneault, you have three minutes.

Mr. René Arseneault: Thank you, Ms. Groulx. This is good information.

First, congratulations on the 20% of refugee children who will be attending French schools. I imagine all kinds of logistical arrangements must be made to organize homework supervision and all that. That must be incredible. I have a daughter-in-law who taught some of them in Moncton so I have some idea how that works.

I would like to go back to the immigrant question. Refugees are a specific topic. It was a good move for our Canadian government to take in 25,000 or 26,000 refugees. Incidentally, New Brunswick is the Canadian province that took in the most immigrants on a pro rata basis. We can pat ourselves on the back. That was thanks to Minister Landry, in particular, and her leadership.

Having said that, I want to go back to the issue of economic immigrants. They are the ones who want to come and work here, settle here, and stay here. How do we retain them when we send them to rural regions, particularly northern New Brunswick? Do you have any statistics indicating whether they are staying, settling, and really putting down roots?

Mrs. Marie-Josée Groulx: First of all, I must say we do not send them to the rural regions. It is they who decide where they want to go and settle in New Brunswick. Those who go and settle in the rural areas have found jobs in advance. All the studies show that tool no. 1 for retention is employment. As a general rule, when they have a job, they tend to stay permanently or at least stay much longer.

Mr. René Arseneault: Tool no. 1 is employment. That is what we need to hear.

In that regard, is there a strategy for attracting these immigrants when we are in Paris or elsewhere in the world? When New Brunswick promotes itself to attract immigrants, does this strategy include telling them where in New Brunswick the most jobs can be found in a given field?

Mrs. Marie-Josée Groulx: Yes. You have to understand that Destination Canada is first and foremost a job fair. We arrive there with job offers from New Brunswick employers and to explain the situation to them. New Brunswick employers often come to Destination Canada with us. The same is true for the other provinces: Canadian employers go to Destination Canada with provincial representatives to sell their jobs.

It is first of all a job fair. That does not mean, however, that the jobs are in French. We understand that the important thing for entrepreneurs is results. Generally speaking, whether a person speaks English or French makes absolutely no difference to them. Consequently, it is really important to promote the francophonie outside Quebec and to encourage employers to consider employing francophone labour.

In northern New Brunswick, Groupe Westco, Nadeau Poultry Farm Ltd., and Groupe Savoie are francophone employers that employ francophone labour. Consequently, they are more interested in recruiting francophone workers. However, what all IT employers are really interested in knowing is whether an employee can code. They do not really care about language. It is really important to promote the benefit of having an employee who will ultimately become bilingual.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Ms. Groulx.

Ms. Boucher, you have two minutes.

Then Mr. Samson will have two minutes and that will complete the round of questions.

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: Good morning, once again.

You have talked about a number of things. This is the first time we have heard about Canada Week. I had never heard of it. I do not know whether the other committee members had heard of it either.

Can you tell me what Canada Week is?

Mrs. Marie-Josée Groulx: I think it was the fifth or sixth edition of Canada Week this year. The event is held in Paris and Lyon during the last week of June. It is not just about immigration. There is a post-secondary education component and a component for doing business in Canada. The embassy communicates with the provinces about it. We have to pay a certain amount to take part in it, but it is a relatively small amount. Last year, I think it cost us \$5,000 for our immigration team and two of our post-secondary educational institutions to take part. Ultimately, people go there to promote Canada and all it has to offer.

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: So Canada Week is a good way to start recruiting francophones.

Mrs. Marie-Josée Groulx: Yes.

Last year, New Brunswick and Ontario were the only two provinces represented for immigration. The other provinces decided not to attend or did not have the necessary funding. Only two provinces took part in Canada Week.

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: Have you seen any results since the event?

Mrs. Marie-Josée Groulx: Yes. We see results every time we take part in a mission. If we did not get results, we would not go back.

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: I am glad to hear that.

Canada Week is news to me. I hope we hear more about it because you say very few of the provinces take part in it. Perhaps it is a tool that the present government should look at with the embassy since we have a very good ambassador in Paris, Lawrence Cannon. I am sure he will understand all that.

• (1050)

The Chair: Thank you for your kind comment about Mr. Cannon, who is a friend of us all.

The last speaker is Mr. Samson, who has the floor for two minutes.

Mr. Darrell Samson: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I will make a comment and then ask an important question.

With respect to Destination Canada, when you say you engage in promotion, that is what distinguishes the francophone communities

outside Quebec from Quebec. Francophone immigrants who come to Canada and want to live in French go to Quebec. Those who want to live in French but also want to learn the other official language, which is English, will settle in the other provinces.

I went to our Destination Canada event and I know the field. You have to do promotional work around the world and inform people that the offerings in Quebec are in French but that people can also learn English elsewhere since you learn French and catch English. It is automatic. It is very important to say that.

You raised an interesting point, and I would like you to take a minute to explain it to us at greater length. Your target is 33% francophone Immigration. I find that quite interesting because the francophone population of New Brunswick represents about 33% of the total population. That is what you are going after in order to avoid assimilation. I like that figure. You cite a figure of 20% who attend French-language schools. Am I to conclude that of the 33% of immigrants who arrive, 20% will attend French language schools, or is your objective to have 33% of immigrants attending those schools?

Mrs. Marie-Josée Groulx: The 20% figure I cited earlier concerns refugees. We do not really have any control in that case. The federal government has sent them to us and the provincial government has a support role to play in that regard. We do not have a choice. The 20% figure refers to refugee children, those who arrived without being able to speak English or French and who were allophones.

Mr. Darrell Samson: Do you have any idea of the number of francophone immigrants? If 33% or 20% arrived tomorrow, would they all go to French-language schools?

Mrs. Marie-Josée Groulx: Francophone immigrants go to francophone schools because the Official Languages Act in New Brunswick provides that persons who have previously been educated in French must continue their studies in French.

Mr. Darrell Samson: I see.

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

Thank you, Ms. Groulx.

That brings today's meeting to an end.

On behalf of committee members, I thank you for the excellent presentation that you made. I apologize, but some committee members must leave to attend other meetings elsewhere.

We will adjourn until Thursday.

Thank you, everyone.

The meeting is adjourned.

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