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Chair

The Honourable Denis Paradis

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• (0850)

[English]

The Chair (Hon. Denis Paradis (Brome—Missisquoi, Lib.)): I call the meeting to order.

I would like to welcome everyone to the official languages committee.

We'll hear first from the Quebec Community Groups Network, followed by Corporation d'employabilité et de développement économique communautaire and Association des commissions scolaires anglophones du Québec.

Everyone can make a 10-minute presentation. After that, we'll go around with questions and comments from members of the committee.

Welcome, Mr. Shea.

Mr. James Shea (President, Quebec Community Groups Network): Thank you very much. I will leave my colleagues to introduce themselves.

I'm accompanied by our director general, Sylvia Martin-Laforge.

My name is Jim Shea. I am the volunteer president of the Quebec Community Groups Network.

Mr. Paradis, Mr. Nater, Mr. Choquette, and members of the committee, good morning.

The purpose of our brief time with you this morning is to provide Canada's English-speaking linguistic minority communities, the English-speaking community of Quebec, a voice in what has apparently become a study on the federal government's current and future official languages strategy.

We are pleased to be accompanied by the Community Economic Development and Employability Corporation, our leading economic development partner, and the Quebec English School Boards Association, our community's public education voice.

It is worth noting for the record that we were not proactively invited to appear before you today. We requested this time, and so I will not waste it.

On July 5, members of the committee were provided with the strategic priorities of the English-speaking community of Quebec and its high-level expectations from a multi-year official languages plan to support Canada's English linguistic minority communities. A detailed policy paper accompanied the priorities sent to you in July, and has also been provided to the committee's analyst.

These priorities and expectations were developed in consultation with the community sector, institutions, and supporting stakeholders.

We are asking for the following issues to be addressed.

Number one is changes in the way resources are channelled to our community, recognizing the challenges our community faces working within a framework that requires federal-provincial co-operation.

Number two is indexed federal support resources, adherence to service standards, and less onerous reporting requirements to ease the burden on the community sector. We are pleased to note the advances being made on two of these points by Canadian Heritage.

Number three is financing national level representation for community sector organizations and providing resources to develop and maintain sector policy expertise where gaps exist. English-speaking Quebec is trying to engage in the national discussion with both hands tied behind its back.

Number four is to create thematic inter-institutional programs and resources that address specific community needs. Communities do not function in silos and are often frustrated when dealing with governments that operate within institutional boundaries. We are pleased to hear Minister Joly indicate this will be an organizing principle in the new action plan.

Number five is investment in youth engagement and retention, and helping us build youth sector capacity through a targeted fund.

Number six is to have targeted outreach programs to cultural communities. The inherent diversity of the English-speaking community of Quebec and the multiple identities of many of its members must be accounted for by the Government of Canada, which in partnership with the community sector must assist English-speaking cultural communities faced with the challenge of being minorities within linguistic minorities.

Number seven is specific federal programs to attract and retain newcomers to our communities. We need and want Immigration, Refugees, and Citizenship Canada to fulfill its responsibilities to our community, and we believe they want to do more. Recent discussions with this department have been positive, and we hope to move more concretely forward with them soon.

Number eight is for community-based literacy to be invested in again. Literacy in general must be approached in the widest possible way, and certainly beyond workplace skill development.

Number nine is to enable federal research to support community vitality. This means not only providing adequate funding but also including the community as a real partner in research activities, while building internal community research capacity.

• (0855)

Number ten is to create a part VII implementation fund to ensure federal institutions not specifically mentioned or funded in the new plan have access to resources to fulfill their part VII commitments.

Number eleven is to centralize authority to monitor the implementation of the official languages strategy.

Let me conclude by noting that our community is not participating as an equal partner in the official languages discussion at the national level and is not receiving the resources it requires to ensure its long-term viability.

The leadership to address this inequity begins with parliamentarians like yourselves having the reflex to consult with both of Canada's official language minority communities, English and French. You must make the effort to get to know us and the unique challenges we face. Do not rely on what you think you know of the myths that surround English-speaking Quebecers. The Quebec Community Groups Network, the QCGN, is at your service to help you do this.

We look forward to answering your questions. *Merci.*

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

We will now hear from the Community Economic Development and Employability Corporation with Mr. John Buck and Mr. Grant Myers.

Mr. John Buck (Chief Executive Director, Community Economic Development and Employability Corporation): Thank you very much, Monsieur Paradis, Monsieur Boissonault, Monsieur Nater, Mr. Choquette, and members of the committee.

Thanks so much for the opportunity to be here. We're really excited to share with you our recommendations regarding the next action plan.

I'm John Buck. I'm the chief executive officer of CEDEC and I'm pleased today to be joined by my colleague Grant Myers, who is a provincial development officer at CEDEC.

On behalf of English speakers in Quebec, CEDEC works with a broad range of national, provincial, local, public, private, and civil society actors to help businesses grow and workers succeed in the communities in which they live. In fact, collaborative community economy development is at the heart of everything we do. It involves

mobilizing citizens to take full advantage of the unique linguistic, cultural, social, and economic assets of their milieu. Collaborative community economic development strengthens and expands unique community capacities and assets, makes communities more attractive and productive in an increasingly global economy, and as a result, contributes to improving the quality of life and the sustainability of these communities.

As the Secretary-General of the OECD noted in his "Report to Ministers 2016", the focus of future public policy must be centred on enhancing people's well-being. Given the important contributions that the linguistic, economic, and community dimensions of Canadians' lives make to their individual and collective well-being, CEDEC believes that community economic development should be recognized and funded as a pillar of the next action plan for official languages.

In addition, it believes that every effort should be made to link the next official languages action plan, especially its community economic development component, to the government's complementary policy priorities, such as, for example, its innovation and economic development agenda. This approach would help to ensure that Canada's official language minority communities are full participants and partners in building Canada's prosperity into the future.

Languages are more than demographic or cultural characteristics. Canada's official languages are gateways to new markets, innovative partnerships, and strategic business and labour market information. Canada's two official languages and the bilingualism and multilingualism of many of its citizens are critical economic assets that provide us with a competitive advantage in the global marketplace. Canada's two official language minority communities are major contributors to this economic advantage.

Given this reality, CEDEC and RDÉE Canada, and its members, have partnered with Employment and Social Development Canada to develop and lead the economic action network.

The network has two main objectives: to support the creation of innovative, growth-oriented companies, and to ensure the availability of skilled, productive workers. These objectives have been documented in our Canadian Plan for Economic Development of Official Language Minority Communities. The economic action network is a space for economic leaders in government and the private sector to develop innovative, practical initiatives that stimulate interprovincial partnerships and commercial opportunities for businesses. This is an unprecedented opportunity for the Government of Canada to invest in a truly national, collaborative venture that is drawing on the strengths of Canada's official language minority communities while contributing to the reinforcement of their economic future.

CEDEC supports entirely the measure proposed by RDÉE Canada to create a sizeable leveraging fund through public-private partnership to support the launch, succession, and expansion of businesses from francophone and Acadian communities. A national capital fund supporting investments in high growth, official language minority community businesses would be welcomed by both official language minority communities.

In addition, CEDEC is recommending federal investments in a dedicated fund to directly assist Quebec businesses to pursue markets in the rest of Canada, as well as assist small and medium-sized businesses across Canada to establish themselves in Quebec and operate effectively there. In this regard, it is important to note that Quebec is Canada's second-largest domestic market.

This type of commercial activity would assist companies from across Canada to better take advantage of Canada's internal markets while simultaneously contributing to the vitality of communities across the country, including OLMCs. The initiative would promote stronger economic and business ties and networks within Canada, promote bilingualism in a context-sensitive manner, and contribute to the vitality of a number of communities, including OLMCs. Successful and competitive businesses in Quebec require talented, skilled, and bilingual workers. Quebec's English-speaking communities, especially through their educational institutions, have substantially increased the rate of bilingualism among English speakers in Quebec. In 2001, the rate was 67%, up from 37% in 1971.

• (0900)

Despite this advantage, an increasing number of young, educated English speakers are leaving Quebec to pursue employment elsewhere. The next action plan should provide support to Quebec's English-speaking community so that it can play a leadership role focused on inspiring bilingual graduates and young workers to stay in Quebec and contribute to the economic growth of their communities. This initiative would mirror and complement the Quebec government's immigration strategy, which is targeting international students and encouraging them to stay and support the development of Quebec.

As you discuss and consider the next action plan for official languages, CEDEC would like to offer you the following recommendations.

First, prioritize community economic development in the next action plan for official languages. The modest economic growth

forecast for the coming years and the globalization of economic activity require that our communities build upon and take full advantage of their linguistic, economic, and community capacities and assets to remain attractive, competitive, and sustainable. Link the next official languages action plan, especially its community economic development component, to the government's complementary policy priorities—for example, its innovation and economic development agenda.

Second, increase investments in OLMCs in existing programs dedicated to economic development. Double the investment in the enabling fund that is managed by ESDC, double the investment in the economic development initiative managed by the regional economic agencies across the country, and index both of these according to inflation.

Third, invest in high-growth businesses. Create a capital fund to invest in high-growth-potential businesses in OLMCs. This fund should be community-managed and self-sustaining, with an initial investment from the Government of Canada and private partners.

Fourth, stimulate interprovincial trade, especially between Quebec and other provinces. The Government of Quebec should fund CEDEC and RDÉE Canada as intermediary organizations to assist Quebec-based businesses to recognize the commercial potential of markets in the rest of Canada and to deliver programs and services aimed at helping them reach these markets. These organizations should also better promote business opportunities in Quebec to SMEs and entrepreneurs across Canada and deliver business services to help access the Quebec market.

Fifth, address the interprovincial barriers. Ease or eliminate barriers to interprovincial trade and the recognition of professional qualifications. These barriers not only limit OLMC commerce but seriously impede labour market mobility for bilingual workers.

Sixth, focus on retaining talented youth. Support a significant campaign within the English-speaking communities of Quebec to retain talented, educated, bilingual post-secondary graduates.

Seventh, generate comprehensive labour market information.

Eighth, invest in tourism. Fund a national brand and marketing strategy for OLMC tourism.

Ninth, in terms of diversity of programs, as mentioned above, link the official languages action plan to other government programs. These important sources of investment should be equipped to actively enable and support the unique linguistic, economic, social, and cultural contributions that OLMCs can make to Canada's future dynamism and prosperity.

Finally, we recommend flexible and meaningful programming through community economic development. A community economic development approach and lens would greater enable federal and provincial collaboration in supporting local solutions to local problems.

In this regard, a community economic development approach would assist government programs in adapting and building upon local realities, capacities, and assets. Such an approach would bring much-needed flexibility and coordination to programs from different levels of government as well as economic sectors such as employment, economic development, entrepreneurship, and the social economy. It would focus the official language action plan on enhancing people's well-being through a community-led and supported process.

Thank you once again for the opportunity to share these thoughts with you. I look forward to your questions as well.

• (0905)

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

We'll go now to the Quebec English School Boards Association. We have Jennifer Maccarone and Kimberley Hamilton.

Please go ahead.

Mrs. Jennifer Maccarone (President, Quebec English School Boards Association): Thank you very much, *monsieur le président et membres du comité*, for accepting our joint English minority language community's request to appear before you this morning to discuss the federal government's current and future strategy towards official languages.

We must emphasize the importance of consultation with the English minority community in Quebec on a regular basis. Consequently, the Quebec English School Boards Association welcomes this opportunity to engage with you in an important discussion regarding the contributions, concerns, and expectations that characterize Canada's other official language minority community, English-speaking Quebecers. We're pleased to be presenting with our community partners, the Quebec Community Groups Network and the Community Economic Development and Employability Corporation.

Naturally, our focus will be on public education. The Quebec English School Boards Association represents the nine English language school boards across the province of Quebec and one special status school board. Our network comprises 340 schools and approximately 95,000 students. Those numbers, however, are deceiving. Don't let them fool you, since we must remind you that the English-speaking population in Quebec is a minority. In fact, we find ourselves in the particular situation of being a minority within a minority, and that sometimes leaves us ignored on these very important consultations.

Our community registered roughly 171,000 students in 1972. Today our records from June 2016 indicate approximately 98,000 students, including adult and vocational programs. That's almost a 50% decline in a span of 40 years, and we continue to trend down.

We attribute this loss to Bill 101 for the most part, but we are also competing with private schools and the false perception that young

Quebeckers will not learn French in our school system. In fact, we boast an 85% success rate across the province, and our students are not only completing their French mother tongue exams very well, but they're doing so with higher marks than students enrolled in the francophone public education system.

We all know that education is a cornerstone of any society as the key element for the vitality and the longevity of minority language communities, and it is clear our community is struggling to maintain our institutions and even our critical mass. As you plan your strategy, we would like for you to consider four key contributions of the Quebec English school boards.

With the vital help of the Canada-Quebec entente on minority and second-language education, our students are graduating from English public schools with the capacity to live and work in French as well as English. Our school system is a world pioneer in French language education, and it became so with the financial support of this vital agreement.

Second, our community learning centres, otherwise known as CLCs, within our language schools are crucial in supporting the stability, creativity, and co-operation of urban, rural, and suburban communities across English-speaking Quebec. In some rural communities, federal support for CLCs has made the difference between closing down a school, thereby compromising the future of that particular community, and instead building new partnerships towards an invigorated population, so we thank you for that.

Third, our English public school network, thanks to distances, low population densities, and limited resources, have become an example of innovation and invention. With 21st century learning techniques, support of distance education, e-learning, shared programs and services, exchanges with our French school boards, and partnerships with the business community and others, English public schools are adapting to the changing needs of the challenges that they face.

Our boards have developed passionate and forward-thinking programs for the inclusion of students with special needs, and our high school rates, as I mentioned earlier, currently at 85%, continue to improve, and we're very proud of that. I would be remiss if I didn't underline that these two trademarks of the English public school system would not be possible if we did not have the funding and oversight of the Government of Canada.

Our fourth point is that English public schools are contributing to, not working against, the common future for all Quebecers in our home province.

•(0910)

While there remains a tendency within Canada's majority language communities, often exploited by the media and at times aggravated by certain political figures and parties, to frame every question as a language tug-of-war, with a winner and a loser, our English schools and the communities we serve are increasingly involved in and contributing to the economic and cultural life of Quebec. Furthermore, they are contributing to the strength and the security of the French language in Quebec.

What are our concerns? Support for and interest in the vitality and the development of minority language communities has not always topped the list of priorities identified by Canadians or embraced by governments. English-speaking Quebec, in all of its diversity, is among Canada's most bilingual communities, and becoming more so every day, as we have heard recently. That is an asset for this country, but assets, as we all know, must be nurtured.

Any weakening of the level of federal support in future Canada-Quebec education accords, any lessening of the community's strong consultative role in decisions on the allocation of funds under those accords, or any structural shift that would weaken or remove federal oversight over transferred funds for minority language education in Quebec would be a real and present concern to us.

Canada's English-speaking minority community has benefited from a profound presence and a critical population mass around the city of Montreal. No doubt a dispersed francophone community across Canada has not had that luxury, and we recognize that. Nonetheless, our diverse needs are here, and they must be addressed equitably.

Based on the measure of the first official language spoken, our total population is roughly the equivalent of that of francophone Canada outside of Quebec. The needs are there, when particularly in more rural locations there are six-year-olds on buses for as long as three hours a day and students awaiting appointments with school psychologists and speech therapists for years, not months. There are still challenges in reviewing our communities and encouraging newcomers to join us.

We are looking for equitable support from our federal government as the Quebec English School Boards Association joins other community partners in addressing these challenges.

I look forward to an exchange with you.

[*Translation*]

Thank you very much for listening.

•(0915)

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you very much, Jennifer.

Thank you, to you all, for these wonderful presentations and especially for your direct recommendations.

We'll start with questions and answers, and with Bernard Généreux.

Mr. Bernard Généreux (Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you to all the witnesses for being here this morning.

Mr. Shea, for your information, the name of your organization was on the list for witnesses that we submitted. We're going to have to sort out why we didn't invite your... We did have an interest in your group. I'm not sure I understand what happened there.

I felt in your speech that you had a great deal of frustration. I may be wrong, but I'd like you to explain to me what you mean when you say that you had your hands tied behind your back. I don't understand exactly what you meant by that. The federal level and the provincial level have been investing in all communities across Canada. The fact that you have 11 points to eventually invest in, or at least to look for from the government, is not probably... You know that the government can't always respond to all of the needs of all communities.

I want you to share with us whether you have a priority in those 11 points. What would it be?

Mr. James Shea: Thank you for the question, Mr. Chair.

The reality is that we have clearly outlined our priorities based on community consultations. If you get a sense of frustration from the person who was delivering, I guess you would get the same sense from the frustration with respect to the action plan that we believe should be addressed. Rather than concentrate on my individual frustration, I would prefer...we have clearly identified our community needs, and we are asking for your support in allowing us to work in partnership to develop these community needs, which are representative of the communities we represent.

I should point out that Quebec Community Groups Network officially represents 51 community associations across the province, some sectoral and some regional. They have all had input into our objectives. We are here today, and we appreciate the opportunity to be here, to work toward a collaborative realization of the recognition that the English-speaking communities need and desire. We want to be recognized as a community working within communities, but we have very specific needs that we and our community partners have outlined with respect to economic development and education. We will concentrate on those, and we ask you to pay attention to what we believe our community needs. These are not things that have been pulled out of the air. They have been developed through community consultation. We know we have made these available to you.

Thank you for the question, and of course my director general will add to what I have said.

Ms. Sylvia Martin-Laforge (Director General, Quebec Community Groups Network): One of the things that we know for your consideration in looking at the road map is that the first action plan and subsequent road maps have not had quid pro quos for the work that cannot be done in Quebec. An example is immigration.

In the title of the last road map, the three pillars were immigration, education.... Immigration means the English-speaking community is not there. If we could ask one thing of your consideration around the next road map, and we will be asking the minister the same thing, it is that the activities and funding proposed within the different departments consider that in Quebec some things work better than others. When you talk about immigration, we have the same concerns as the francophones in the rest of Canada around growing or giving vitality to our community. If we can't do it through immigration because of the accords, because of Quebec, then we have to find another way.

There's a great interest in early childhood education. If that is not possible in Quebec, what's the *quid pro quo*? The frustration is not just about this, but over the past many years of action plans and then road maps and evaluations of those exercises. The evaluations are saying what the programs are giving, but the evaluations are not considering the gaps in the programming. We are telling you what the gaps in the programming are because the evaluations are just considering the programs.

• (0920)

[Translation]

Mr. Bernard Généreux: Mr. Buck, you made 10 recommendations.

Knowing that the government can't do everything and that its resources are limited, although money grows on trees for the Liberals right now—which is good news for them, but not necessarily for Canadians in general—what is your absolute priority? You have some very interesting suggestions in your program, particularly for business development.

Mr. John Buck: Thank you for your question, Mr. Généreux.

It is difficult to choose from the 10 recommendations, it's sort of like choosing the child you love best. The idea of making economic and community development a pillar in the next action plan is very important to us.

That said, in a future plan, the investment in that pillar is equally important. We can see that the current roadmap has been around since 2004. So my comments are not political in nature. We see that the money invested in the enabling fund has been stable since 2004, meaning \$12.5 million since 2004. We see that there are significant benefits from that fund.

In terms of investment, I think it's a good initiative. In connection with that, the economic development initiative has received a significant increase with the roadmap. However,

[English]

If we look at Quebec, we see that out of this \$30.5 million for the past five years, \$10.5 million is associated with Quebec. Clearly we're getting wonderful returns on that money. It makes sense to invest more money in those areas.

[Translation]

Thank you for the question, Mr. Généreux.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Buck.

Before we go to the next question, I've seen the chart that you've shown us, Mr. Shea. Is it possible to have it in colour? What we have is in black and white here, and we can hardly read it. Can you give that to the clerk of the committee so that he can make copies for us?

Mr. James Shea: We will.

The Chair: Thank you.

We'll go now with Anthony Housefather.

[Translation]

Mr. Anthony Housefather (Mount Royal, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you also for welcoming me today.

[English]

I'd like to first of all thank all of you for the work that you do every day for our community. It's very much appreciated.

When it comes to the sense of frustration, I think part of it is that I think generally speaking English-speaking Quebec feels that it's badly understood in the rest of the country—that if you're not part of the community, whether you're a part of the majority community in Quebec or part of the community in the rest of Canada, you don't understand necessarily all of the issues that have confronted the community, how much the community has changed, and how many myths are still out there about English-speaking Quebec.

For example, as I understand it, the mother tongue English-speaking population of Quebec has fallen from more than a million in 1971 to approximately 650,000 today. The number of students in the schools, as Ms. Maccarone outlined, has gone from 171,000 in 1972 to about 95,000 today.

While we have a wonderful nucleus of health care institutions around Montreal that the community built over centuries, we have issues if you're English-speaking in the Gaspé or English-speaking in the Magdalen Islands or English-speaking in most parts of Quebec, because you don't necessarily have access to a doctor close by or even a school close by, and you can be bused for many hours to go to school.

If a community has become much more bilingual and tried to change and evolve over time, it's still confronting a lot of issues with respect to retaining young people and with respect to caring for isolated seniors, and I think people don't necessarily understand that. They feel that when English-speaking Quebec comes to the table and asks for equitable funding, it sort of looks like, well, you're *gâté*. You're spoiled.

That's why I really appreciate your intervention today. What I'd like to hear from all of you, again, in terms of the priorities for the next action plan, is how we bring more English-speaking people to Quebec who could then enter our English schools. As we know, immigrants can't go to English schools in Quebec even if they're from the English-speaking community, so how do we attract other English-speaking Canadians to Quebec? How do we keep our young people in the province and how can the federal government help you all do that? Maybe we could hear from each of you on that.

• (0925)

Ms. Sylvia Martin-Laforge: I could give it a bit of an idea here.

We need to demonstrate to the rest of Canada the social capital that the English-speaking community of Quebec represents.

One of the pieces of work that was fascinating in the Townships, as one townshippier to another, is that we did a study, an academic study, around immigrant retention or immigrant attraction. Compared to the Townships, immigrant attraction and retention was much stronger in Quebec City than in the Townships.

If you go into Quebec City, there is an infrastructure. There's a hospital. There are services. They are only 2% of the population, but the population is incredibly strong, very representative on *tables de concertation*. They are within the fabric, while retaining their identity.

That was interesting for us, because in the Townships there seems to have been a loss of civic engagement. While there are a lot of volunteers, they're not attracting enough people. The conclusion of the academic research was that there was more social cohesion infrastructure in Quebec City, and therefore more attraction.

I think we could apply that to lots of places. In Montreal there is social cohesion. There is attractiveness. It attracts. I think in general we have to look attractive for other people in the rest of Canada—especially the young people, but all people—to come to Quebec, and if they come,

[Translation]

there must be jobs. We agree with CEDEC's view on that.

[English]

People will come if there are jobs. That would be my piece.

The feds need to help build the notion of social cohesion in the English-speaking community and point out our contribution to Quebec and Canadian society.

Mr. Anthony Housefather: I appreciate that.

I'd like you to intervene on the question of how we best retain our youth and bring more people to join the community.

Mr. John Buck: Absolutely, Mr. Housefather, and thank you for the question.

Your experience in our community is apparent, as is your sensitivity to the issues we face.

We've talked about the importance, as Ms. Martin-Laforge mentioned, of having jobs as a key way of making sure we're in a vibrant society and a vibrant location. We believe that the notion of creating a capital fund that would allow us to invest in official-language minority community businesses could help us enormously in this respect. This would be something that would occur in urban centres but also be distributed so that those individuals you referred to, in places like the Gaspésie, the Eastern Townships, and other places where there is a significant minority, would have an equal opportunity to create jobs and create businesses.

In doing that—and we talked about this in association with the creation of the capital fund—we would enable businesses in Quebec to gain a greater awareness of markets outside and help them to get to other parts of Canada. It would provide services to enable

businesses in other parts of Canada to be in Quebec, Canada's second-largest market.

This is not always an instinct that happens naturally, for a variety of reasons, including the unique circumstances associated with Quebec from an investment perspective, together with the somewhat different legal environment. Having another language to work with is sometimes perceived as added costs for businesses in other locations, and we don't fully recognize all the benefits associated with this. This is another measure that would help enormously with the attraction.

With respect to the students, I think there is a tremendous opportunity for us to echo some of the initiatives undertaken by the Government of Quebec such as trying, through Montréal International, to launch a \$1.3-million program that seeks to retain graduate students. This is not necessarily happening in English-speaking institutions at the moment. There is a wonderful opportunity for us to do that. It presents a sad state of affairs, sometimes, to witness the tremendous capacity and investment that goes into wonderful students who enjoy their time enormously while they are in Quebec, yet are not introduced to Quebec and are simply not asked to stay. That's all we need to do in many cases.

• (0930)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Buck.

We'll go now to François Choquette.

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

Thank you very much for your time here and for your explanation.

I was really interested in what you said about the English-speaking persons being a minority within a minority. I am from Drummond, so when I think about English-speaking people, they are from South Durham and Trenholm, which are really small communities. They are living there, doing their stuff and not doing badly, but it is tough for them. When I visit them, they tell me it's tough to access services.

When I think about schools, we have an elementary school in Drummondville, but we don't have a high school. They have to go to Richmond, so that's a signal. I don't know if there is early childhood education. That is a good question. When I think about English-speaking communities, I always think about Montreal. We always forget about the rest.

What I think we need from you also is more about the other communities. We don't hear enough about them. You talk about tourism. Drummondville is great. Come to Drummondville, please. Trenholm is great. It's beautiful there for tourism, and great for the economy. The next time you do a convention, do it in Drummondville, not in Montreal. That's the first point you need to do.

I want to hear about education. What more do you need in education? What do you think about education in a small community like mine?

[Translation]

Mrs. Jennifer Maccarone: Thank you for the question, Mr. Chair.

First of all, Drummondville needs to be showcased the most because it has the best poutine in the world. If we want to promote the city, I think that's the first attraction to be shared with the world.
[English]

Education, of course, is always going to be particular, even at this table, given the fact that it's a provincial consideration for the most part. However, I think certainly what's important for us as a consideration—you're absolutely right—is to continue to assist us in supporting our more rural communities.

It's not always just about Montreal. We represent the nine English school boards, and we are often educating our own members of our own community. It's having them understand that a minority within a minority...but even within those minorities, there are very specific challenges, especially in regions like the Gaspé area, or even Quebec City and the north shore of Montreal.

The school board I represent when I'm not wearing my president of QESBA hat is the Sir Wilfrid Laurier School Board. Our territories are huge. My school board is 35,000 square kilometres. That's the size of Belgium. We have schools that have fewer than 100 students. However, if you are part of the Eastern Shores School Board, you have some schools with fewer than ten students.

Mr. François Choquette: What can federal side do for you? How can the action plan help you?

• (0935)

Mrs. Jennifer Maccarone: It's very important for us to continue the funding with the Canada-Québec Entente. These are monies that directly support our educational institutions and allow us to support our minority communities. Of course, we would love to increase those funds, because as our communities continue to decline, the needs continue to grow. Access to services becomes even more difficult. We have a lot of challenges in getting those services out to the regions and in keeping our schools open.

As I mentioned in my presentation, our schools are not only the vitality of our communities, they are the hub of our communities. In many of those areas, although we talk about education, it's where the families go—not just the students—for their health and social services. It's where they go for their community networking. It's where they go for their sports. In some cases, it's the only place where the community can get an English book, for those of us still reading paper copies.

I would say that's primordial for us. It would be a consideration to continue to directly support our community learning centres, the CLCs. Right now, they're managed under Canada entente monies, but that would certainly be something that could be considered. These are often the lifeline and the lifeblood of those very rural communities. They allow access to distance education, access to programs and services, that they would otherwise not be eligible for or easily accessed due to their location.

Mr. François Choquette: Very interesting.

To come back to QCGN and Mr. Shea, I think it was Mr. Buck who talked about governance.

How do you see governance going on right now, and how can it be ameliorated? What I mean is that the FCFA just told us that

maybe we need to have a better system of governance. There are so many people taking decisions that we don't know who is reliable, who is in charge, where we can knock at the door and say, "Hey, what have you done?"

What can we do about the governance, in your point of view?

Mr. James Shea: I'm not sure if you're speaking about your governance or our governance. I'm going to speak about our governance from the point of view of the Quebec Community Groups Network.

We have community associations, both regional and provincial, that belong to our group. We have governance from an elected board of directors, and every community association has an elected voice within the Quebec Community Groups Network. We have a network of over 50 organizations across the province. We rely on the input from them to develop this. We believe that would allow us to position ourselves as the spokespersons for the English-speaking community of Quebec.

My director general might want me to say something else with respect to your governance, but I'm speaking in the sense that... Like Mr. Housefather and the rest of us, we have chosen. I'm a volunteer and I've chosen. I'm a resident of Quebec. I have no difficulty identifying myself as an English speaker.

[Translation]

I do so, even though I speak French.

[English]

There are *parmi nous* those who speak both languages. We are a bilingual community, but we come from a culture and an identity within Canada that allows us that opportunity to be an official language.

We are a minority language within Quebec. That in itself has its challenges, and it certainly has its challenges with respect to the Government of Quebec, but we're prepared to work with that. We don't want to be the problem. We want to be part of the solution, but we want to be engaged in that solution. Then more of us would be elected to come here to represent, as Mr. Housefather has and as you have, that point of view.

I'm sure that those of you who are MPs from Quebec have English speakers who have voted for you, in a sense. We want to participate in that. We want to be part of it. I think that's the reason we are here. We don't want to be marginalized, in a sense, and respectfully, you have allowed us to be here. I think our commitment is to be part of the solution, but we don't want to lose our identity either.

• (0940)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Shea.

Mr. James Shea: Sylvia, did you want to complement my...?

The Chair: I think your time is up now.

We'll go with Linda Lapointe.

Ms. Linda Lapointe (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, Lib.): Good morning and welcome. I'm very happy that you are with us this morning.

I'll speak to you in French, but it's okay for me. I represent Two Mountains, Saint-Eustache, Boisbriand, and Rosemère. I have the Commission scolaire Sir-Wilfrid-Laurier in my riding, in Rosemère, so I'm very happy that you are with us. I know you have a very big riding. Laval-Laurentides-Lanaudière is very big, I know. You have many challenges.

[Translation]

Earlier, we talked about the retention of young people. I have been living in the Rivière-des-Mille-Îles riding for a number of years. I previously lived in Rosemère, a bilingual city.

The anglophone minority of Deux-Montagnes now represents 20% of the population. Those people are very involved in their community.

In Rosemère, 15% of the population is anglophone. There is really a huge difference between those two cities. I live in Boisbriand and it's not the same thing as in Deux-Montagnes and Rosemère.

Let's now look at the issue of youth retention. We have talked about bilingualism. I know the Sir Wilfrid Laurier school board is working hard to ensure young people have a good command of English first, but also of French. Earlier, you talked about a high school graduation rate of 85%, I believe.

At the federal level, how do you explain that successful retention?

Mrs. Jennifer Maccarone: I will gladly tell you.

As we mentioned earlier, our schools represent the community. We care about that. We never say that we go to our children's school, we say that we go to our school.

We take that to heart. That's very important. In many cases, it's a place where families and people in the community attend events, receive health services or information on what is happening in their community or town, in the language that they are most comfortable with. A school brings people together. That's true for both anglophone minority communities in Quebec and for francophone minority communities outside Quebec. The francophone communities are growing for the simple reason that their community is important to them and the people are very engaged.

The fact that we are truly engaged is a real success of the anglophone public education system. In addition, since we are a small group, it is easier for us to opt for innovative services and programs. That's necessary. We are not funded in the same way and we are not all in the same city. Actually, we are often spread out across the vast area.

I mentioned the Sir Wilfrid Laurier school board because it has 35,000 square kilometres, but in the case of the Central Québec school board, we are talking about 400,000 square kilometres, the same size as Spain. So it's very important that those people work together and find a way to provide services.

I am an anglophone, but I don't walk around saying that. I am a Quebecker and am proud to be one. I'm also proud to be the mother of two Quebec children and I would like them to stay with me in my home for the rest of their lives. Being bilingual is important for them. It's a valuable asset. We believe in our province. That's what we teach in our schools. Perhaps it's special, but it's an asset.

[English]

We have to embrace it.

[Translation]

We have to make the most of it so that the graduates are bilingual. When you talk about Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, you can say that the Sir Wilfrid Laurier school board ranks first in the province for the ministry exams in French as a mother tongue.

[English]

Ms. Linda Lapointe: Thank you. That is much appreciated.

Mr. Buck, I have a question for you.

On innovation and economic development, you say bilingualism is an asset. Could you please explain that? How can you

[Translation]

turn it into an attraction?

What can Quebec businesses do?

You are talking about additional funding to go outside the country, but economically, how can the people from the rest of Canada come to Quebec?

There must be jobs and those people must be bilingual. It's very important for the vitality of anglophone communities, but also for the francophone communities outside Canada.

• (0945)

Mr. John Buck: Thank you, Ms. Lapointe.

Let me say that the investment fund is to encourage Quebec businesses to extend their activities outside Quebec, but within Canada. So these are national investments.

[English]

The best response I have for you is something that was prepared for us in 2013 by the Conference Board of Canada. With the support of Industry Canada at that time, RDÉE Canada and CEDEC commissioned a report called "Canada, Bilingualism and Trade". I'm pleased that all of you have it in front of you.

I'm pleased to say that it's on the desks of most people involved in official languages right now, I think because it builds the argument that talks about bilingualism being an economic advantage for us in a competitive environment. In the economy, our ability not as individuals but as a nation to engage with French-speaking countries for contractual purposes and what have you is an economic advantage. Likewise, our ability to do so in English is also an advantage.

For the first time, we believe, that is actually quantified in this report. There's actually a very solid argument that for every dollar invested in bilingualism, we see an economic return. That's very important.

The opportunity that we discuss with respect to Quebec-based businesses understanding and engaging in markets outside of Quebec is very much associated with language. I'll give you a very practical example of this close to where Madam Boucher is located.

[Translation]

It's the Chambre de commerce et d'industrie de Québec.

[English]

With the chamber, we did some work a few years ago. We worked with the insurance companies and some of the high-tech companies in the area. We asked what would be the impact on their bottom line if they were able to access English-speaking markets. The vast majority of those companies were not engaged in accessing those markets at that time.

They said they would love to, but that the one thing that was impossible for them to do was engage bilingual workers who would enable them to do that. They said that was great, but they didn't know how to do it because they couldn't find the workers. There's a very direct economic advantage to those individuals simply picking up a phone or writing an email in English to be able to access those markets elsewhere.

The consequence of that, of course.... When we talk about community economic development and this being so important, our goal is not exclusively to make that business wealthy or to make its shareholders wealthy. It is also to create the demand for those bilingual employees who are going to need to be part of a growing and expanding business. In some ways, we are stimulating the demand to sustain our communities.

The same is true if we look to the rest of Canada. I had the privilege of working in Toronto for a number of years, and I knew very well that the market I was working in, the financial industry, was reluctant to engage in the Quebec space.

CEDEC hosted a conference last March. I'm very proud of it. It was called "Doing Business in Quebec". We attracted over 200 businesses, business owners, and entrepreneurs from across the country to come to Montreal to Place Bonaventure to talk about what it is like to do business here and what the advantages are. We had groups like Investissement Québec there. We had any number of groups that were there to really accompany these businesses that were looking at this as an opportunity. Most of them told us that they never really considered Quebec because they thought they had to work exclusively in French if they were working here, and they didn't know how to do that.

[Translation]

Bilingualism is a major asset. We actually believe that it creates significant economic opportunities, not only for the anglophone community in Quebec, but for the entire country. That is why we have made that recommendation.

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

We will take a 10-minute break before the second round of questions.

• (0945)

(Pause)

• (0955)

The Chair: We are resuming the discussion.

I now invite Anthony Housefather to start the round of questions.

• (1000)

Mr. Anthony Housefather: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I would like to share my time with Ms. Lapointe.

[English]

I want to thank you again for all we've heard.

I have two specific points and questions that I'd like to get to.

On the first one, I'm coming back again to the source of frustration that Mr. Shea previously mentioned. Is part of it that you feel that the Conférence ministérielle sur la francophonie canadienne gives a lot of input into official languages and that Quebec's official language minority is not present at the table, and therefore the views of the Quebec English-speaking community are excluded in that regard, and that there has to be some way for you guys to provide input into that?

My second question relates to funding to Quebec. Quebec uses an opt-out and runs its own program in parallel to the federal system, which transfers powers to Quebec. I know one of the sources of frustration is the fact that the English-speaking community feels that monies that are supposed to be directed toward the English-speaking community do not necessarily arrive at the English-speaking community, or alternatively, that there is no provision that requires the Quebec government to provide parallel English-speaking services that the federal government would have been supposed to provide. I know the previous Conservative government started introducing this issue into its ententes.

Let me give you an example, and then I want to hear especially from Ms. Maccarone on educational funding.

I just found out recently, after complaints from many of my constituents, that the Canada student loans program allows you to go to any university in Canada and be funded with loans, including universities in Quebec. If I'm an Ontario student going to McGill, I can be funded. However, medical students from Quebec cannot be funded to go to any medical school outside of Quebec other than the University of Ottawa, which disproportionately affects English-speaking Quebecers wanting to go to medical school because we only have one, McGill University. Therefore, people going to the University of Toronto, Dalhousie University, or wherever cannot get any loans, even though it's federal money going to that program.

I'd be very happy to hear feedback from you on those two questions, maybe first on the loan issue and the educational funding and the diversion.

Mr. James Shea: Could I at least address the first part of the question? You did address it to something that I said.

Mr. Anthony Housefather: Yes, of course. Sorry.

Mr. James Shea: The positioning of the Quebec Community Groups Network is that we are a national minority language in the pan-Canadian sense and not in the Québécois sense, so if there is a frustration, the Quebec Community Groups Network wants to be recognized in the same manner as the FCFA, la Fédération des communautés francophones et acadienne du Canada, because we represent a minority language within Canada, and within Quebec, of course.

I wanted to address that question and then defer to my esteemed colleague Ms. Maccarone; who is my esteemed colleague in more ways than one.

Mrs. Jennifer Maccarone: I think your question about the funding is very important. One thing that we know we're missing is that element of accountability. That's where the concern comes from us.

Yes, there is some funding that is coming, and something perhaps particular to our province is that there is a lack of accountability. Correct me if I'm wrong, Sylvia, but approximately \$75 million comes to the province in terms of Entente Canada-Québec funding. A certain portion of that is then directed toward public education and those funds, yet we don't manage those funds. They don't come directly to our directors general or our school boards in an effort to manage and assist us in taking care of our communities. They are funnelled through the provincial government, where we know that there is no accountability for us to use the funds to the best of our ability or to dictate where those funds are going in an effort to support our community to continue to grow.

That is really a significant concern that we have.

Ms. Sylvia Martin-Laforge: If I may, I would like to double back to Mr. Choquette's question around governance.

I feel that the federal government is sometimes timid in the way it asks for accountability from Quebec in terms of language clauses, in terms of accountability on monies coming in, so each department has to figure out how in their work with Quebec they will ask for *la reddition de comptes*. That's certainly the case in education, and is certainly the case in other departments.

When there was a centralized oversight mechanism, back in the action plan days—it was the PCO at the time, the Privy Council—the horizontal framework for official languages, because of its critical nature to the federation and to Canada as a centre, was taken care of at PCO. That was the oversight.

I think there should be given some consideration to regaining that oversight in a very special spot in the Government of Canada, where there would be clout. There's no question that other departments see PCO as the clout place. Down the road, if somebody else asks about the *Conférence ministérielle*, I would be happy to answer that question as well.

● (1005)

The Chair: Go ahead, Madame Lapointe.

Ms. Linda Lapointe: Thank you very much.

I have another kind of question. How do you know there is a healthy community? Can you measure it, Mr. Shea?

Mr. James Shea: Thank you for the question. I guess we can demonstrate it. We can demonstrate that through the activities we participate in and support and engage in across the province.

I'm not going to speak from an economic development or from the education perspective, but from a realistic participatory.... There are communities across Quebec where people engage in community. They engage in community organizations, just as they may engage in school support or in parishes or churches and whatnot. Our

organization can demonstrate healthy communities across the province.

I guess if I were to speak for them, which is my responsibility, our member organizations require the same input, the same support as minority language groups, as we aspire to look for at the provincial level, so it's a matter of ensuring the proper funding.

It might sound like a lot to provide \$120,000, for example, to a regional organization. I can speak to that because I was president of one for a period of time. There are challenges of maintaining identity with respect to funding. Maintaining visibility and an office and all of that comes tremendously from the volunteer component.

To answer your question, you demonstrate that through volunteerism. The English-speaking community has demonstrated across the province its ability to participate, if you want to, in community activities that are not identifiable as anglophone, as English-speaking activities, as well. I think that's the concept of community vitality that we aspire to. It's to participate in community vitality at the local level as part of that community.

Ms. Linda Lapointe: Thank you very much. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We will now turn to Mrs. Boucher.

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher (Beauport—Côte-de-Beaupré—Île d'Orléans—Charlevoix, CPC): Good morning.

I'm very pleased that you are here with us today.

I just want you to know that you have all been on our list of witnesses submitted at the very outset of our work. In my opinion, as you said before, you've been part of the solution for a long time.

In 2016, bilingualism should be in our DNA. I try to speak English, but when I have more personal questions, of course I ask them in French. I'm always interested in that.

Mr. Shea, earlier in your brief, I noticed something that caught my attention. You said that “the ESCQ is able to participate as an equal at the national official languages table”. I understand that you were not there.

Can you explain why you were not at that table? I think the official languages are English and French. Have you previously been invited as an equal at the national table?

● (1010)

Mr. James Shea: I can't speak to the past, but it is important for us to be a partner. Being a partner is like a marriage. We participate as best as possible.

For us, it's about participating as an anglophone minority, even if we encourage anglophones to communicate in French as well. We want to seize all the opportunities of being at the national table.

[English]

We're here today, and we appreciate that opportunity to be able to do it. If you sense the frustration, I guess it's a struggle. It's our goal to be.... I guess respect has to be earned and not just deferred automatically. I hope that we have earned that respect from you today.

[Translation]

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: You have all my respect.

Mr. James Shea: Thank you.

Perhaps our director general wants to make other comments.

[English]

Ms. Sylvia Martin-Laforge: May I perhaps double back now to the skew in the system that doesn't always allow us to be at the national table? I'll give you a real example.

There is a Canada-provincial services agreement in each of the provinces, and each province works with their provincial folks to sit at a table and talk about the Canada-Manitoba, Canada-Ontario, Canada-Quebec services agreement. We are not at that table.

I go back to the ministerial conference of *la francophonie*. We are poster children for francophiles. As you can see, we're speaking French, but we do not sit at

[Translation]

at the Ministerial Conference on the Canadian Francophonie, because the ministers of each province and territory with responsibility for the francophonie sit down with the representatives from Quebec.

Quebec does not recognize us as a minority.

[English]

I can give you a real example. When Minister Moore a few years ago asked about the participation of Quebec in the road map and asked for the province to give some examples of how the English-speaking community could be supported by the road map, the response from the government at the time was that there was no need because the English-speaking community was not a minority, so you know there's a skew in the system.

[Translation]

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: So Quebec does not recognize you.

[English]

Ms. Sylvia Martin-Laforge: No, we're not recognized by Quebec as a minority language, and I understand why. There are laws and whatever, but the mechanics of it don't have to go so deeply as to when the feds ask to give out money.

I'll give you the example here that in other provinces, services agreements for very small populations are in the millions of dollars a year. In Quebec the services agreement is \$400,000 a year. Where is that money discussed and divvied up? It's *à la conférence ministérielle de la francophonie*, and we're not at that table.

That's why we wanted to come and visit you so badly. We are not at many tables. We have to be at the tables to share our experiences,

and we have to demonstrate what we need. We are not at many tables, and we have so many gaps in our policy capacity.

[Translation]

For instance, we don't have a French-language association of jurists.

[English]

We're getting one soon. We didn't have one before. We don't have an immigration component. There are so many places where we are not heard that we are going to come scratching at your door any time we can so you can hear us, because we don't get heard that often.

[Translation]

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: My understanding is that you are not recognized by Quebec. So it's much more difficult for you, whoever you are, to sit at the table and to be heard.

That's unbelievable. I'm shocked. However, you are a group that works very hard, in both the Quebec City area and the Montreal area. Perhaps it's less so the case in the regions, such as Charlevoix, where I'm from.

Do I have time to ask another question?

• (1015)

The Chair: You have no more time.

We'll go to Paul Lefebvre.

[English]

Mr. Paul Lefebvre (Sudbury, Lib.): Thank you for being here.

You touched, Madam Maccarone, upon early childhood education. We've had a lot of presentations from other organizations across Canada in minority situations, and they talked a lot about their need to be assisted and provided with some help with respect to early childhood education in the minority language. I know you mentioned it very quickly in your remarks.

The federal government will be investing in early childhood education, and I'm sure they are or will be, but I know we've been hearing a lot about it. How would that look in Quebec and how would that assist? I know there are the *garderies* in Quebec, and the province is very involved. If there were investments in early childhood education, how would that be for you in Quebec?

Mrs. Jennifer Maccarone: One of the new priorities of the provincial government in Quebec is, of course, investment in early childhood education, so one of the changes that we've recently seen in our schools across the province is school starting at four years old. We are bringing our children into our school system earlier. That is wonderful news for us because it gives us an opportunity to work on our graduation rates, and we understand that early intervention is very important, but this could certainly be translated to our day care systems, whether it's a day care system that is merged into our schools....

From a minority community perspective, it does give us an opportunity to assist in the growth of our communities, so funding that would help us to support that by attaching them to our schools would be welcome.

As we mentioned, it's not only Bill 101 that has created the minority situation that we're facing now and why we continue to decline. We often have to refuse many of our francophone counterparts who would like to have access to our schools, but regrettably can't, because of the law. This gives us an opportunity to capitalize on the families who don't understand that we are actually offering a premier education.

The nine English school boards in the province of Quebec are all in the top 10 in the province, out of the 72 school boards. If we can get them in earlier by working in partnership with our day cares through support from our minority communities, it would be great for the regions, especially the rural regions, because it gives them access as well to services in mostly disadvantaged areas. This would be of great assistance to those families and give them access to early education, which we know has a significant impact on our graduation rates.

Mr. Paul Lefebvre: Thank you.

[Translation]

Mr. Arseneault, the floor is yours.

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

How much time do I still have?

The Chair: You have four minutes.

[English]

Mr. René Arseneault: *Merci.*

My first question will be to Ms. Jennifer Maccarone. You said at the beginning of your introduction that you'd like to see a more equitable approach. When you said that, was that in the context of the province of Quebec or the context of Canada's minorities?

Mrs. Jennifer Maccarone: That would be in the context of the English minority within the province of Quebec.

I would reflect the position and the statements that Madam Martin-Laforge was just saying, that certainly it is not equitable and there's a lack of accountability in that we're not sure where our funds are going. Are we able to distribute those funds so that we can actually have a say in how we're supporting our community?

I would go back to what Madame Lapointe was saying earlier. How do you know when your community is strong? It's when it's growing. We're not growing. While we might be internally strong of spirit and strong of culture and community, we're not in a position of strength because we're not growing, and part of that is because we're maybe not managing our funds the way we should be internally to assist ourselves.

The best way to help somebody is to teach them how to take care of themselves. We need to be given some of that independence to be able to do that, as happens outside of Quebec for our francophone minority communities that have that privilege and that right, and yet we do not.

[Translation]

Mr. René Arseneault: I have another question. I admit that I favour a particular community, which I think is quite vibrant in the anglophone minority. I'm talking about the one in the very urban areas in the province of Quebec. I'm thinking of Montreal, for example. I'm biased, I apologize.

Let me share my viewpoint. I come from the Maritime provinces, New Brunswick, from an extremely rural area. I'm very familiar with the challenges of minorities in majority settings. I know what you mean. I agree with everything you're saying. It affects me.

I live in northern New Brunswick, on the south side of Chaleur Bay. The Gaspé peninsula is on the other side. I'm thinking of New Richmond, for example.

I'm jumping all over the place, but let me come back to Mr. Shea's first statement.

● (1020)

[English]

It was to work in partnership with our community to develop intergovernmental collaboration to ensure federal funds are targeted so our communities hit their mark.

[Translation]

That's what the francophone communities outside Quebec have told us. The community services provided by and for the minority in a majority setting are what matters most.

Mr. Shea, are the anglophone minority communities in rural areas in Quebec telling you something different from what the Montreal communities are telling you, for instance?

[English]

Mr. James Shea: The answer is yes.

Mr. René Arseneault: How can the road map respond to that?

Mr. James Shea: You know, it depends on the regions.

I happen to come from the Pontiac region, which is very different from coming from *la Gaspésie* or neighbouring areas, but the reality is that within some communities, our resources are provided by the Province of Ontario. We have to ensure that our resources are provided, whether that be health care, education, community support, or whatnot within the context of our being residents of the province of Quebec.

I was president of a regional association, and you have those challenges within communities. We talk about community. Other people might have a different perspective of community, because it might be the village of Chelsea or it might be the village of Shawville within my community, but from a regional perspective, you try to speak of a greater community where you want to have an identity. That identity means coming together, just as we are doing here today, to try to be the solutions within our community and to demonstrate a common front so that we're no longer working in silos. We have to work with one another.

We also recognize that with, for example, *participation dans Centraide* or whatnot, we have to participate in regional activities as part of the English-speaking community that supports food banks, health services, and whatever else. Part of the challenge for us is, to use an expression, to lift ourselves up with our own bootstraps as well to engage in that community.

That's the challenge that we have in our own communities, rather than giving up. We should not hesitate to be involved in community just because we are English-speaking Quebecers.

[Translation]

We have the right to participate in our community. We can choose to speak in French or in English.

[English]

I think we need federal support to encourage those activities that allow us to maintain that identity.

You know, English speakers are not just people who come from England, for example, or Ireland, or whatnot. The reality is that we have a significant previous immigrant population. We have francophones who chose to speak English, and we consider them part of the English-speaking community. It's their choice to participate as part of the English-speaking community.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Shea.

We'll go now to John Nater.

Mr. John Nater (Perth—Wellington, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair, and if I do have any time at the end of my questions, then Mr. Clarke would like to ask some questions.

I have three questions. I'm going to ask them all at once and give you an opportunity to choose who will answer which ones.

Thank you again for this document. It will be very helpful when we're making our recommendations.

I want to talk very briefly about indexing federal support resources. We've heard different requests for different funding amounts. On the indexing side of things, do you want to see that indexed to inflation or indexed to a specific amount of an increase each year? That's my first question: how you would like to see that indexed?

The second question is for Mr. Buck. You mentioned inter-provincial barriers, and specifically the concept of professional qualifications. We've heard that from other witnesses again. You might want to give us examples of some of the challenges there from an English-speaking minority perspective.

Finally, Madame Boucher asked me to ask a question on the concept of not being recognized by the Quebec government. What are some options for the federal government to formally or informally recognize your group in the discussions we have at the federal level?

Those are my three questions, and you can choose who goes first.

•(1025)

Ms. Sylvia Martin-Laforge: My partner suggested I answer the first round on indexation. I'm going to give you an example, and this

is probably the same for each of the provinces. Each province is allocated, in terms of Canadian Heritage, some money to work within the province. That's very important in Quebec as well, and that number hasn't changed for years.

Should we index those groups that are already in the pot, or should we consider new groups to come in the pot? I'm not sure that indexation would be used the same way. Certainly in the English speaking community of Quebec, we recognize that we need more diversity within the groups that are receiving Canadian Heritage money. That's number one.

I can tell you what the community groups network did. We just put in a five-year application. We indexed 1.3% a year, which is about the cost of living now. Are we going to get that? I don't know.

The other piece around indexation is very important for Quebec. To give us a level playing field, we would need money for our groups that are doing national representation. I will give you at least one example, the English Language Arts Network. When we come to see you, in terms of the capacity for our organization, whether it be in early childhood education, whether it be in immigration, or whether it be in arts, we have no national capacity.

The only group that receives money from the national pot is the Quebec Community Groups Network. That is a barrier to the advancement of the vitality of the community, because we have lots of grass roots organizations giving lots of good services to the community, but we need a national perspective so that we can come and talk to you. That's around the indexation and money.

Mr. John Buck: Thank you for your question regarding interprovincial barriers. I'm going to defer to my colleague Grant, who is our expert on this, to provide you with some good details.

Mr. Grant Myers (Provincial Development Officer, Community Economic Development and Employability Corporation): Thank you. My comments will be quick because I appreciate that time is limited.

You asked for examples in terms of professional qualifications. I can give you several, but I'll give you a few quick examples. For engineering, there are different standards for different provinces, Quebec included. One has to take an exam to work in Ontario, so that your P.Eng. is recognized.

Nursing is another example. There's one system in the rest of the country. There is one qualification exam for the rest of the country, and in fact for the rest of North America. Quebec has a different system. If you're a nurse and you're qualified in Ontario, there's no guarantee that those qualifications will be recognized in Quebec.

Of course, there are the construction trades. That's probably the famous example. I hear it all the time. Workers from the rest of Canada complain that they can't work in Quebec because they don't have the qualifications, while Quebec workers—and this is where it's interesting—seem to have more access to the construction trade jobs in the rest of the country.

There are numerous examples, but without a national integration for many professional qualifications, it's just very difficult to see that kind of labour mobility that we want to see to build a strong economy and a strong bilingual economy in the whole country.

[Translation]

The Chair: Mr. Clarke, you can ask a short question.

Mr. Alupa Clarke (Beauport—Limoilou, CPC): Good morning, members of the committee and witnesses.

I'm very pleased to be here because the two solitudes live in me. I'm half anglophone and half francophone. My father is the biggest francophile in New Brunswick, and his MP could confirm it.

I would like to address the Quebec Community Groups Network.

On page 5 of your document, you are comparing the English-speaking minority communities in the regions in Quebec and those in Ontario, but there is a danger when you are comparing with francophones in Ontario. The anglophones in Quebec have institutional sovereignty in terms of education, from daycare to university, health care—from dressings to surgery—and government services. You have provisions that even let you speak English in the National Assembly. Conversely, in Ontario, francophones don't always have hospitals or francophone universities.

Do you have anything to say about that? In my view, it is a sort of flawed comparison, because the context is not the same at all.

• (1030)

Ms. Sylvia Martin-Laforge: Having worked in Ontario for almost 20 years and having worked on French-language education with the ministry, I can talk about the comparison between the anglophones in Quebec and Franco-Ontarians.

We have to compare a declining community with a developing one. We have to compare a government that sees the Franco-Ontarian community as a catalyst,

[English]

as an investment, giving them the rights to have their own licence plates—small things—and allowing the enrichment of the Franco-Ontarian culture by giving them services *en langue française*, the French Language Services Act, and an ombudsman and all of that.

They have come from 1917—everybody who is a Franco-Ontarian knows about 1917—to now, to not to be a threat, not to be a nuisance, but to be an incredible advantage.

We could talk for a long time about how our community institutions are in decline because the government has centralized everything. We have lost our governance boards at our hospitals, and they have wanted to take away our capacity to have elected commissioners. I can let my colleagues talk about that.

There is a centralization in Quebec that is incredibly detrimental to any minority community, whether it be francophone, anglophone, or ethnocultural. That is the demise of a minority community, and that's what we're fighting.

[Translation]

Mr. Alupa Clarke: That's interesting. I would say that, in Ontario, from a political and discursive perspective, francophones are favoured within a sort of diversity that people like to promote. Although that's not the case in Quebec and you're not at the forefront of a diversity policy that is actively promoted, you still have a very

strong institutional foundation, which is not necessarily the case of francophones in Ontario.

[English]

Ms. Sylvia Martin-Laforge: We'll have to come back to that.

[Translation]

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

Mr. Choquette, you have five minutes.

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

[English]

I want to come back to accountability. Mr. Arseneault was speaking about the fact that for the French-speaking community there was a problem about *le par et le pour*. I wonder about your perspective.

Do you have any problems with that fact, and if so, what would you say to the government so that they would understand that it's so important that services be offered *par et pour* the community?

Who would want to answer that?

Ms. Sylvia Martin-Laforge: I think they are pointing to me.

I know *le par et pour*.

[Translation]

The “by and for” is very important for the communities outside Quebec.

[English]

I think it goes back to your question and your remarks a few minutes ago. *Le par et pour* in Quebec is not the same as *le par et pour* elsewhere in the rest of Canada. Our institutions have become bilingual. We have integrated. Our institutions are not

[Translation]

by and for us, the English-speaking community.

[English]

Our institutions are

[Translation]

by and for the Quebeckers.

[English]

If you go to the Jewish General, you can get service in English or in French. The institutions of the English-speaking community are more and more integrated into the fabric of Quebec.

What we need for *le par et pour* is to be sure that the services that we should be able to give, train our youth to give, in English and in French can be continued. We need to have the governance of our institutions, so we worry when, for example—and the QESBA can speak to this—the jobs in our institutions are not taken, are not offered to English-speaking Quebeckers. You will all understand that in the rest of Canada when the francophones speak of *le par et pour*, it's because the governance of their institutions is by the francophones. They don't give over their governance to the anglophones.

You can have bilingual people working in your institution, but the governance of the institution is by the English-speaking community or by people in the English-speaking community who understand very clearly what it is to be in a minority language community.

I think that *le par et pour* is as important for us,

[Translation]

but that is defined differently,

[English]

it's a different demonstration, perhaps, than in the rest of Canada.

•(1035)

Mr. François Choquette: You said that in the national point of view, only the QCGN receives funds, and there are no other national groups for the English community, if I understand.

Ms. Sylvia Martin-Laforge: To be fair, we have probably two other sectors that receive national funds. CEDEC would be one, and the health care...what am I trying to say?

A voice: Community Health and Social Services Network.

Ms. Sylvia Martin-Laforge: Community Health and Social Services from Health Canada would be the other. There are no other capable organizations to do policy work in the sectors.

Mr. John Buck: If I may just pick up on that, it's a very good question. "By and for" is an important concept, and we acknowledge it. I'm proud today to be wearing my

[Translation]

"Francophonie économique canadienne" tie

[English]

that I was happy to receive from the

[Translation]

Conseil de développement économique de l'Alberta, last week, when I attended the 2016 Gala des Lauriers de la PME in Edmonton. Mr. Boissonnault is very familiar with that event.

[English]

Can we talk about linguistic minority community identity? "By and for" is about all of us. This linguistic identity that exists unites us in ways that I think are innovative and important. I want to highlight that in the text I shared with you, and in all the material that you have, you have a reference to our Canadian Plan for Economic Development of Official Language Minority Communities. Our economic interests across the country unite us. When we talk about "by and for", we're not talking about one linguistic community based on language, whether English or French; we're talking about a group united across the country. It's an important concept, and I think it's what allows us, when we look at "by and for", to use resources that are available through the current action plan to engage the majority communities in many of the places we're in.

On Mr. Arseneault's question about the circumstances in a place like the Gaspé, we have nine offices in Quebec, one office in New Carlisle. We've spent \$150,000 or so over the past four years working on something called the revitalization project.

[Translation]

It covers the entire Gaspé region.

[English]

We've engaged over \$4 million of economic activity from municipalities, the private sector, and the province to invest in that area. That notion for us comes back to our concept of what community is about, and in many ways it's difficult for us to isolate that, uniquely based on language.

[Translation]

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

We still have not heard from Mr. Samson today.

Mr. Samson, go ahead.

Mr. Darrell Samson (Sackville—Preston—Chezzetcook, Lib.): I didn't think I would make it.

The Chair: Mr. Samson, you have two or three minutes.

Mr. Darrell Samson: That's fine.

[English]

Thank you.

Thank you very much for being here today. I really appreciated and enjoyed the conversation about some of the challenges you face as a former superintendent of all the French schools in Nova Scotia. With the minority status, of course, I know there are a lot of similarities and differences.

I would have to agree with my colleague, Mr. Clarke, that it's not ideal to be comparing. It's looking at the challenges in your community, especially if you are going to compare with Ontario. Throw in Nova Scotia and see where you get in the comparison. It's a lot worse, because of the support in Ontario.

I'd like to basically understand child care better, so some of my questions will be focused on education. If I get an extra second I'll go to economic development, but in terms of education and child care, when the kids arrive at your English schools, do they already speak English? In Nova Scotia, for example, 80% of the kids who arrive in French schools do not speak French.

I'm trying to understand if there's any funding that you receive to support your community in child care.

•(1040)

Mrs. Jennifer Maccarone: I would say that in the anglophone sector, most of our students arrive already speaking English, but that's the majority, because we do have a strong francophone community that frequents our schools. It depends on what region you're in.

For example, in the region of Joliette in Quebec, a significant portion of your population will actually be francophone, and they will often come to school not speaking any English, so we have maybe the reverse situation compared with Nova Scotia. However, the majority of our students do arrive already fluent in English.

We do focus, however, on ensuring that our students become as bilingual as possible. In terms of early childhood education, a priority for us would be to ensure that before the students come to the public school system, whether they start school at grade four or come to our schools earlier via the day care system, they would be bilingual. That would be a priority for us.

Most of our schools in the anglophone sector are offering 50/50 in terms of francophone and anglophone curriculum within the school system. That's not only important to your school boards as a basic school regulation for curriculum in courses, it's what the community is requesting, because these are decisions that are locally based. It's the governing boards at each of your schools that vote on what your subject time allocation will be.

I can't see that it would be any different if we're moving toward early childhood education. If that was something that would be destined to be managed by.... As Sylvia mentioned earlier, we're talking about accountability, and the reality is that within the Quebec education framework system, we don't have our own group to manage our own requirements and our own needs. Within the education ministerial responsibilities, there is no anglophone group. There is no particular distribution area for us where we can say that these are the things that we need, but that would be something that would be very important for us. It would allow us to not only improve our success rates but also improve the level of bilingualism that we've set as a priority for us in the province.

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Before we wrap up, I would like to make two announcements.

First, let me point out that we will be finishing Thursday's meeting at 10:15 a.m. We will go back to the schedule for the committee's work on Tuesday, when we come back. So we will hear from the first panel in the first hour on Tuesday, when we are back, and we will talk about the committee's work in the second hour.

The second announcement sort of has to do with Brome-Missisquoi. There's a statue of Lieutenant Colonel George Harold Baker just in front of the House of Commons, in the lobby.

[*English*]

Mr. Baker was a member of Parliament for Brome many, many years ago, because he died about a hundred years ago. Colonel Baker was a member of Parliament while going to war at the same time.

[*Translation*]

Today, the Brome historical society has a small display in front of the lieutenant colonel in the lobby, just in front of the House. I invite you all to go pay tribute to the lieutenant colonel who died 100 years ago and who was a remarkable MP for the riding of Brome.

Thank you very much, everyone. We had some fine presentations and a great discussion with the members of the committee. I hope you will come back to see us. You are welcome.

The meeting is adjourned.

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