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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 the francophone minority communities.

This morning we are pleased to have with us three representatives of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada: Stefanie Beck, Assistant Deputy Minister, Corporate Services; Jennifer Irish, Corporate Secretary; and Jean Viel, Director, Official Languages Secretariat. Welcome.

We will sit until 9:45, when Ms. Beck has to leave us, after which we will take a five-minute break and then continue the meeting.

Ms. Beck, we are listening.

Ms. Stefanie Beck (Assistant Deputy Minister, Corporate Services, Department of Citizenship and Immigration): Thank you very much.

We are very pleased to be appearing before you. This is not the first time for some of us, and that is very good.

If I understand correctly, this meeting is the last time you will be discussing francophone immigration.

Mr. Bernard Généreux (Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, CPC): We have talked about it often.

The Chair: You are constantly in our thoughts.

Ms. Stefanie Beck: We will try to answer all your questions.

We are pleased to be appearing today before the committee in connection with your study on the roadmap and immigration in the francophone minority communities.

Allow me to introduce myself. My name is Stefanie Beck, Assistant Deputy Minister, Corporate Services and Official Languages Champion at Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada. I am accompanied today by Jennifer Irish, Corporate Secretary, and Jean Viel, Director of IRCC's Official Languages Secretariat.

The committee has questions on the secretariat's role and mandate within our department, and on how its activities fit in with our obligations and priorities regarding immigration in francophone minority communities, or FMCs, and support for their development and vitality.

First of all, I would point out that, in cooperation with other federal departments, the provinces, the territories, and community stakeholders, IRCC seeks to foster a migration of permanent and temporary residents that strengthens Canada's economy, ensure newcomers' successful integration, and facilitate their participation, along with that of citizens, in fostering an integrated society.

Thus, one of IRCC's core principles is to ensure that Canada's regions, including official language minority communities, reap the economic and social benefits of immigration, including francophone immigration.

[English]

Since 2002 this commitment has been entrenched in the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act, which stipulates that IRCC must support and assist the development of official language minority communities in Canada and support the commitment of the Government of Canada to enhance the vitality of the English and French linguistic minority communities. As you know, this is in part VII of the OLA.

IRCC is determined to maintain and strengthen the vitality of francophone minority communities, or FMCs, through immigration. Since 2003 our department has undertaken initiatives to promote immigration to FMCs, and worked to position immigration strategically in the various multi-year official languages plans of the Government of Canada.

Using the funding earmarked for IRCC in the road map, the department created an official languages secretariat in 2014 with a view to helping build internal coordination and awareness of the department's official language obligations and activities, in connection with part VII of the act.

To ensure horizontal coordination of quality and strategic positioning within the department's governance structure, the official languages secretariat is located within IRCC's corporate secretariat, which reports directly to our deputy minister.

•(0855)

[Translation]

The Official Languages Secretariat has a three-pronged mandate.

First, the secretariat must ensure a strategic approach and a centralized coordination of IRCC's efforts in relation to Part VII of the Official Languages Act and the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act. It is the Human Resources Branch, however, that is charged with coordination of IRCC's activities and obligations under Parts IV, V and VI of the Official Languages Act.

Second, the secretariat supports me in my role as official languages champion as well as the department's other senior officials during awareness activities.

The secretariat's third and final key role is to manage the governance structure between IRCC and the francophone minority communities as well as that of the department's steering committee on official languages.

The secretariat also coordinates certain activities within the department, including celebrations involving the official languages. Examples include Linguistic Duality Day, National Francophone Immigration Week, and Journée de réflexion en immigration francophone [day of reflection on francophone immigration].

I would point out, however, that the secretariat is not the only entity responsible for implementing the Official Languages Act within IRCC. Just as with the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act, all sectors of the department have responsibility for applying the various parts of this act when developing their activities or policies. This is a shared responsibility. Obviously, we can also count on our legal services team to help us interpret these statutes.

Lastly, at the interdepartmental level, the Official Languages Secretariat is called upon to contribute according to the needs identified in the context of the interdepartmental coordination led by Canadian Heritage, and in particular by its coordinators network, when it comes to implementing Part VII.

[English]

If you will allow me, at this time I would like to delve into a little more detail on the role and mandate of the IRCC-FMC committee. The primary mission of the committee is to facilitate coordination amongst these essential elements: IRCC's initiatives, including the immigration pillar components of the road map for official languages; the communities' initiatives themselves; and the efforts of the other federal, provincial, territorial, and local stakeholders aimed at fostering the development of FMCs and targeting economic immigration.

To that end, we have tasked ourselves with: determining the strategic policies shared between IRCC and the communities to promote francophone immigration within the FMCs; fostering interdepartmental and intergovernmental coordination in the area of francophone immigration; mobilizing key players to improve the FMCs' reception, or welcoming capacity, and to strengthen the reception and settlement structures for French-speaking newcomers; and ensuring the social and cultural integration of French-speaking immigrants into Canadian and FMC societies.

The committee meets twice a year, and in my capacity as official languages champion I co-chair the meetings along with the chair of the National Community Table on Francophone Immigration, whom I think you have met at this meeting. As I mentioned earlier, the secretariat also maintains a dialogue with the Quebec Community Groups Network.

As you are aware, Mr. Chairman, under the Canada-Quebec agreement of 1991, the Government of Quebec has control over immigration selection and is responsible for providing settlement and integration services to all permanent residents destined for Quebec. However, this does not prevent us from maintaining a

dialogue on how to coordinate our efforts in order to better ensure the development of Quebec's English-speaking communities.

In addition to research activities on Quebec's English-speaking activities carried out in recent years by the department, the secretariat recently organized a meeting with the leaders of the QCGN in Montreal. This very positive meeting enabled us to forge closer ties with this organization, and laid the groundwork for increased co-operation, especially in the area of community engagement practices.

• (0900)

[Translation]

In closing, since its founding, the Official Languages Secretariat has helped strengthen relations with the department's various branches involved in the francophone immigration continuum in the FMCs, paving the way for ongoing dialogue and a proactive approach to implementing the Official Languages Act and the objectives of Part VII of this act.

This is notably reflected in the establishment of IRCC's priorities in connection with the Government of Canada's upcoming multi-year official languages plan.

And on that note, Mr. Chairman, we would be pleased to answer your questions.

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

We will immediately begin the round of questions.

I will start by turning the floor over to Mr. Généreux.

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

Thanks to the witnesses. I hope you are doing well.

Ms. Beck, after listening to what you just said, I think I will never in my life be a public servant. It is really complicated. It is not something simple.

Ms. Stefanie Beck: No, not at all. That is what you saw in the last meetings as well. The continuum, from start to finish, not only across the country, but throughout the immigration system, is complicated. Since it includes integration in Canada, it concerns several departments, all levels of government, and the Canadian population that is already here.

Mr. Bernard Généreux: Yes.

Personally, I am in business. If I met with the officers of the various companies I own here and there only twice every 12 months, I am not sure I would get much done in a year.

Ms. Stefanie Beck: The meeting that is held twice a year involves everyone. Otherwise, we see them and talk to them every day.

Mr. Bernard Généreux: I see.

Ms. Stefanie Beck: That is the difference between a bilateral and a multilateral meeting.

Mr. Bernard Généreux: Indeed.

We asked the analysts to develop questions because we wanted to be quite direct. As some analysts have been here for many years, they have seen the various roadmaps. We wanted to be sure we had questions that were as precise as possible for the various witnesses who came to speak during the proceedings we have held in recent months.

In its last appearance, on October 18, the Fédération des communautés francophones et acadienne du Canada had this to say:

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.

I do not know whether you have read the reports that have been prepared in the course of the committee's proceedings. When an organization such as the FCFA says something like that, when every day it verifies what is being done and coordinates many activities and all kinds of things with the organizations it represents, that is an observation I would find hard to accept if I were in your position. I do not know how you take it.

What do you think of that statement?

Ms. Stefanie Beck: I think that, given the way its representatives address the question, they are seeing only certain parts of the department at the same time. What they need in fact is a vision of everything the department does, not only in Ottawa, but across the country and around the world. For example, we have people who are posted to foreign missions and in the various regions of Canada. That is part of the whole continuum. That in fact is what I would like to talk about.

I am going to turn the floor over to Mr. Viel so he can explain the situation to you. We see everything; in fact, the purpose or role of the Official Languages Secretariat is to coordinate it all.

I turn the floor over you, Mr. Viel.

Mr. Jean Viel (Director, Official Languages Secretariat, Department of Citizenship and Immigration): Thank you.

We are essentially offering an overview of our francophone immigration activities, in addition to the description of the mandate that was included in the assistant deputy minister's speech.

We would like to take this opportunity to give you a summary of what is happening in francophone immigration from our perspective, what we are working on, and specifically what our departmental policies and programs colleagues are working on.

I think it is important to tell you from the outset that we are seeing progress. Even though the target is for 2018, we are already seeing progress. Our recent data show a promising trend in that direction. Without a doubt, we are still on track to meet that target in 2018.

• (0905)

Mr. Bernard Généreux: Pardon me, Mr. Viel.

Are you talking about the 4% or 4.5% target?

Mr. Jean Viel: Yes. That is a very good question. Let me take this opportunity to clarify this right off the bat.

Mr. Bernard Généreux: I do not remember the exact figure.

As soon as you get to 1.5% or 2%, you are halfway to meeting the target.

Mr. Jean Viel: We essentially have two targets. We have one target associated with the roadmap. It is 4% of economic immigration. That is the less important component.

Mr. Bernard Généreux: I see.

Mr. Jean Viel: We are aiming for 4% of francophone economic immigration exclusively outside Quebec.

The other target, which was set long ago, is 4.4% of total immigration, that is to say of all francophone immigration classes. Note, however, that we are still talking about francophone immigration in this case.

Mr. Bernard Généreux: Yes. Absolutely.

Mr. Jean Viel: As we are often asked, why 4% and 4.4%? Before the 4.4% target was set, a study was conducted together with the community to determine how the relative weight of the francophone minority community, which was around 4.4% at the time, could be preserved.

Mr. Bernard Généreux: Was the 4.4% figure also related to the economic aspect at the time? There is a difference between 4.4% and 4%.

Mr. Jean Viel: The 4.4% figure included, and still includes, the "economic immigration" class.

As for the 4% target, the government's decision at the time was to emphasize economic immigration by relying on the role of employers and on economic development potential. Its purpose was to focus on economic immigration in the context of the current roadmap.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

I turn the floor over to Mr. Samson.

Mr. Darrell Samson (Sackville—Preston—Chezzetcook, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thanks to our witnesses for being here today.

An official languages secretariat is impressive at first glance. You are definitely doing good work. You refer to relations with the communities, associations, and so on. That is good in theory. However, I do not think the results are there. You have been in your position since 2014, but this is 2016, and you are saying the target will be reached in 2018.

Could you help me understand how that will happen? The people who come here tell us they cannot go to Destination Canada any more. And yet, according to your remarks, that was one of the essential strategies, but that is not clear.

Moreover, as part of your strategy to achieve the 4.4% target, which you have not yet done, can you assure us you are making an effort to prevent people from limiting themselves to Vancouver, Toronto, and so on? What are you doing about the rural and urban aspect?

Lastly, as regards language, when anglophone immigrants arrive in Halifax, Nova Scotia, programs are available from International Service Learning. Do you have any language programs for francophones in Nova Scotia, for example? There are definitely allophones as well.

Mr. Jean Viel: Let us talk about the target and our confidence that we can achieve it. You have to consider one basic factor involved in hitting that target. As a result of the definition at the time, the number of francophone immigrants who settle outside Quebec is systematically underestimated. Amendments have been made to the definition of what a francophone immigrant is. So we hope that, within a few months, that will result in a much more accurate picture of the actual number of francophone immigrants who settle outside Quebec.

For the moment, our figures indicate the number is underestimated. Everyone agrees on this, even members of the community.

Mr. Darrell Samson: I agree with you.

I forgot to mention that our minister is very open to francophone immigration. So we must take advantage of this situation.

Mr. Jean Viel: As regards the urban and rural aspect, the department's approach is based mainly on settlement. The idea is to provide communities with the resources. As you know, we fund 13 francophone immigration networks. We allow them a lot of leeway to develop their strategic plans in every region. Each region, each francophone immigration network, has the leeway to develop a strategic plan adapted to its own situation. Each determines whether it needs more francophone immigrants in urban or rural areas. They determine that, and then we can react.

• (0910)

Mr. Darrell Samson: Who does that in Nova Scotia?

Mr. Jean Viel: I will not be talking about those details. You can contact the secretariat.

Mr. Darrell Samson: You say a team is doing that in Nova Scotia.

Mr. Jean Viel: There is a francophone immigration network in Nova Scotia, based in Halifax, which is very active.

Language training is outside my area of expertise. My role is to coordinate the department's activities. You should consult the language training experts.

Ms. Stefanie Beck: We offer courses across the country in both official languages, and that is regardless of the province where the people are because they are offered everywhere.

Mr. Darrell Samson: If you had to give us a number, where do we stand today? I think the figure was 1.4% last year.

You said you were confident you could reach the target. What leads you to believe that, apart from the amendments that have been made to the definition?

Mr. Jean Viel: You have me there.

We have implemented measures that will make a difference. As you know, we have reinstated a program that is now called Mobilité Francophone and that will definitely have an impact. We are seeing

considerable success in international promotion and recruitment. With your permission, I would like to take a few minutes to cover that in a little more detail. You have an interest—

Mr. Darrell Samson: You are going to talk about Destination Canada. So I agree.

Mr. Jean Viel: That is exactly where I am headed.

With Destination Canada, we are seeing increased interest among immigrants in European countries. With your permission, I will give you a few figures. We are seeing an increase in registration. At the last edition, the 2016 edition, which recently took place in Paris, 2,760 potential clients registered for the event. So there is a considerable amount of pressure.

I said 2,760, but there were in fact 12,760 registrants. Pardon me.

There is keen interest among potential francophone immigrants. Our colleagues in Paris, who as you know are very dynamic, are developing other access and promotion options for potential clients. We are moving toward a world in which social media, especially Twitter, are being used as a more effective way to reach people outside Canada.

We are noticing increasing interest in Destination Canada. Generally speaking, we are seeing an increase in Canadian registration and continued involvement in Destination Canada by the provinces and territories. This means that things are looking good. We have explored new recruitment pools south of the Sahara from our office in Dakar, and I believe we are achieving some success in that area.

Mr. Darrell Samson: I know my speaking time is up, but I would like to know whether we have hired agents in the field—

The Chair: Mr. Samson, please.

Madam, with your permission—

Mr. Darrell Samson: You may answer my question.

The Chair: I will continue chairing this meeting.

Mr. Choquette, you have the floor.

Mr. Darrell Samson: Mr. Choquette will ask my question.

Mr. François Choquette (Drummond, NDP): Yes, probably.

I would like to know what financial and human resources are made available to the Official Languages Secretariat.

Mr. Jean Viel: That is a good question, and I believe it is wise to put that in context.

One of the secretariat's fundamental roles is to serve as a lever within the department, and even with other federal departments. At first glance, our budget may seem limited. However, our role is not to establish contracts or to travel across the country but rather to capitalize on the resources of the other groups within the department. So to answer your question more specifically, we have—

Mr. François Choquette: Do you have the necessary resources to play that leverage role?

• (0915)

Mr. Jean Viel: Absolutely.

Mr. François Choquette: As regards results, we had targets, and that was important.

Why are those targets important?

Because the official language minority communities are currently declining, in percentage terms, relative to the majority communities. This is having an impact on the vitality of those communities and on the pressure they are under. The 4.4% target was not set just for the fun of it: the idea was to maintain the percentage, the demographic weight of the official language minority communities. You say you have enough resources to exercise a leverage effect but that you do not know the results. I find that hard to understand in a way.

Ms. Stefanie Beck: The purpose of coordination is also to try to help others succeed. In fact, what you have to consider is the money we give under the roadmap and from our regular budgets, which we receive every year.

The secretariat is very small, but it can help with this coordination effort. You are looking at the \$26 million we spend on training every year, but we have an annual budget of \$900 million for integration in Canada. That is obviously for everyone, not just for francophone immigration. We have international missions. All these resources have the capacity and a duty to work toward the 4% target.

We are seeing the difference now; I am sure of it. We have begun to make changes to the Express Entry system. We have done more international recruiting, and we are working increasingly closely with the communities. They also have to sell themselves.

Mr. François Choquette: Express Entry nevertheless does not yet have a francophone presence.

Ms. Stefanie Beck: Yes. People who are bilingual are assigned more points.

Mr. François Choquette: Then why did an FCFA representative say, when she appeared before the committee, that Express Entry does not have a francophone presence that helps attract francophone immigrants to minority communities?

Ms. Stefanie Beck: They would like to have more points. They would like to enjoy a kind of positive discrimination. As we previously said, we cannot force people to move to a given city. If they have a job or family in one place, that is where they will go. We are working with the communities and with the francophone immigration networks, the FINs, to try to arrange that.

Mr. François Choquette: As you just mentioned, these people would like to have more points. We see that we are not reaching the targets, which are important. They were not selected at random. Their purpose is really to maintain demographic weight. So it is extremely important to meet those targets.

Have you started thinking about how to assign more points in order to increase the number of francophone immigrants?

Ms. Stefanie Beck: Absolutely. You talked about our minister earlier. That is one of the things he wants to do in the coming months. I cannot speak for him, but I know that is something he is thinking about.

Mr. François Choquette: Are you confirming for the committee that you are adding points and increasing the number of francophone immigrants?

Ms. Stefanie Beck: Yes.

Mr. François Choquette: As you mentioned, this is essential because we cannot meet the target, which was not selected at random. It was really set in order to maintain the demographic weight of our francophone communities.

Ms. Stefanie Beck: We have not yet reached the targets.

We are considering other things. For example, we know people are applying to the Express Entry pool and not necessarily considering a francophone community.

We think we may make changes to the system. Since we have their email addresses, we can send them messages as a kind of marketing tool, reminding them of the good reasons for settling in Saint-Boniface. No such system previously existed since everything was done on paper. With this new system, we will be in a better position to target francophones and thus to increase their numbers in the various provinces.

Mr. François Choquette: How much speaking time do I have left, Mr. Chair?

The Chair: You have 45 seconds left.

Mr. François Choquette: All right.

Even though you will not have time to react to this, I want to cite some remarks by the FCFA simply as a way to introduce the idea. Here is what she said on October 18:

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.

That is all the time I have, but you may of course add something to that as you answer other questions that come up.

Thank you very much.

● (0920)

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Now we will hear from Mr. Lefebvre.

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

I want to be sure I correctly understand a point about governance. To whom does the Official Languages Secretariat report? Is it directly to the minister?

Ms. Stefanie Beck: It reports to the deputy minister.

Mr. Paul Lefebvre: I see.

We talked a little about financial resources. You told us you report to the deputy minister. You work closely with the provinces and the regions. You said the regions, but I think you meant the provinces. I see that is the case.

Ontario is also facing major francophone immigration challenges. That is what the people from the Assemblée de la francophonie de l'Ontario told us when they appeared before the committee.

Am I to understand from your testimony that the 1.4% figure from 2016 will increase to 4% by 2018? Will we be able to meet that target simply because we changed the definition?

Mr. Jean Viel: That is a good question. I repeat that we are determined to reach the target; that is clear. We are satisfied it can be achieved. The change in definition is obviously part of the current picture. That error had to be corrected in the previous definition.

Mr. Paul Lefebvre: So it was a definition problem.

Mr. Jean Viel: At the time, we counted people whose mother tongue was French. As a result, native Africans, for example, who arrived here and did not have French as their mother tongue were not counted as francophones. At the time, the co-chair of the IRCC-CFSM committee was originally from Senegal and therefore, anecdotally, was not counted among the francophones. And yet he was the co-chair of that committee.

There was quite obviously a problem in identifying clients who should be considered francophones. That is why we decided to change the definition.

Mr. Paul Lefebvre: I travel a lot. Immigrants who arrive in Canada frequently pass through Pearson airport in Toronto. We know the port of entry to Canada is usually Toronto. Vancouver airport obviously serves the west and Montreal airport the east, but Toronto plays a bigger role.

I often pass through that airport, even on international trips. When I arrive, I see no signs of improvement. Bilingual signs are obviously posted indicating that you can obtain services in French, if you speak French.

Unless I have not noticed them, what efforts are you making? We talk about Pearson airport, Canada's port of entry. First of all, it is very difficult to obtain services in French at the border. Second, it is hard to inform and show new immigrants arriving in Canada that our country is bilingual. Lastly, it is a federal airport. It is regulated by the federal government, and that is very important. In my opinion, we do not make enough of an effort.

What should we do? What do you propose so that we can do a better job of affirming bilingualism in Canada for immigrants arriving in the country?

Ms. Stefanie Beck: A new immigrant arriving at Pearson airport does not take the same path as you, who are a Canadian citizen. He goes through the first checkpoint and, at the second, finds himself among employees who of course speak English and French. Then he is directed to a specific location to obtain initial services. He is welcomed to Canada and given contacts in the anglophone, francophone, or other communities.

This kind of matching occurs at the airport, and that is where immigrants will see what the situation is.

Mr. Paul Lefebvre: That is good.

The question is whether the service is actually offered. We have to believe you because you tell us it is, but, if it is offered the way the Canada Border Services Agency does it, it is not a very strong bilingual offer.

Ms. Stefanie Beck: We have reached contribution agreements with agencies that are required to provide services in both official languages.

Mr. Paul Lefebvre: What are those agencies?

Ms. Stefanie Beck: That depends on the location of the airport. The corporation or community in the region handles that.

Mr. Paul Lefebvre: Are you saying there is a francophone immigrant host community in Toronto?

Ms. Stefanie Beck: We have 600 different contribution agreements across Canada to provide services to newcomers.

Mr. Paul Lefebvre: Who manages that?

Ms. Stefanie Beck: We manage it, the Department of Citizenship and Immigration.

Mr. Paul Lefebvre: You are providing us with new immigration facts, even though we have been talking about this for two months. This is the first time I have heard about this reception service.

Ms. Stefanie Beck: It is an integration service—

Mr. Paul Lefebvre: —that is offered when they arrive in the country, but not at the airport.

● (0925)

Ms. Stefanie Beck: Yes, it begins at the airport.

Mr. Paul Lefebvre: According to a number of witnesses we have heard from, people arrive and do not even know this is available. They leave and live in English because, in many instances, the service has not been offered to them. There is no active offer in French upon their arrival. They think that everything takes place in English in Ontario, outside Quebec.

All that to say that we have a lot of work to do. Some immigrants I know have said it is not easy to arrive in Toronto.

You are telling us it is available, but I hear the contrary. We have to do a better job, together, so that the active offer of service to newcomers is an undeniable fact, not a random occurrence.

Ms. Stefanie Beck: An audit will have to be done, and, if this is not working properly, there will have to be a follow-up.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Lefebvre.

Ms. Lapointe and Mr. Vandal will share the next time period.

Ms. Linda Lapointe (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Good morning and welcome to the witnesses.

My riding of Rivière-des-Mille-Îles is situated north of Montreal and includes Deux-Montagnes, Saint-Eustache, Boisbriand, and Rosemère. My question concerns Quebec's anglophone community.

You mentioned the 1991 Canada-Quebec Accord. So the work is being done jointly. What are the language-based immigration results? There are 40,000 to 50,000 immigrants in Quebec. The number constantly varies. What are the language figures? What action are you taking, and what efforts is the department making to address anglophone minority immigration? I want to know the figures and the efforts you are making.

Ms. Stefanie Beck: I do not think I have the figures to hand, but I can send them to you.

We met with representatives of the anglophone community, people from the Quebec Community Groups Network, two weeks ago, and they told us there were no immigration problems but rather an integration problem. How do people maintain their language once they have arrived in Quebec? People have to be able to live there and send their children to English-language schools. That is the main concern of Quebec's anglophone community.

This is in fact the contrary of the challenge we must meet in the rest of Canada, the fact that an inadequate number of francophone immigrants are arriving at Canada's door, whereas a sufficient number are arriving in Quebec.

There is another problem: there is no certainty they will stay there. This is a retention problem.

As you know, our hands are somewhat tied. We give Quebec money every year, but Quebec provides for the settlement and integration of those immigrants.

Ms. Linda Lapointe: I understand, but you cannot provide retention figures and do not know the percentage of francophones. I am very concerned by what is being observed with regard to French outside Quebec and the targets that are not being met. In the long term, the number of francophones in the country as a whole must rise in proportion to the number of anglophones. Ultimately, the federal government provides money but does not demand results.

Ms. Stefanie Beck: An audit is done every year. Under the Canada-Quebec Accord, a bilateral Canada-Quebec review is conducted every year to determine whether the objectives of the accord have been met. I know this is being done and that we have a long and detailed list of what Quebec is doing with that funding.

Ms. Linda Lapointe: I would appreciate your sending us those figures.

I am going to turn the floor over to my colleague Mr. Vandal.

Thank you very much.

Ms. Stefanie Beck: You also wanted information on retention, did you not?

Ms. Linda Lapointe: Yes.

The Chair: You can forward that information to the clerk.

Mr. Vandal, you have the floor.

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

I will ask my questions quickly as we have little time left.

I want to go back to Destination Canada.

Ms. Stefanie Beck: All right.

Mr. Dan Vandal: Does Destination Canada focus solely on francophone immigration and the official language minority communities?

[English]

Ms. Stefanie Beck: You can think of it as a big job fair. That's really what it is. It's a really big job fair that we have in Paris—

[Translation]

Mr. Dan Vandal: So it is intended for the francophone community.

Ms. Stefanie Beck: It is for people who speak French.

Mr. Dan Vandal: We know that Quebec

[English]

takes all the oxygen in the country.

[Translation]

Minority communities such as mine, Saint-Boniface–Saint-Vital, were represented at Destination Canada by a person from the World Trade Centre, which had to find funding here and there. It was really done on a shoestring, as is always the case.

Does the government pay travel, accommodation, and other expenses of the representatives of the official language minority communities taking part in Destination Canada?

Ms. Stefanie Beck: No. That provision was cancelled a few years ago.

Mr. Dan Vandal: In what year was that?

• (0930)

Ms. Stefanie Beck: I do not know. It might have been 2014, but we will have to send you that information later.

Mr. Dan Vandal: That is the key point for me.

Ms. Stefanie Beck: In fact, I should tell you something. We do not pay those expenses, but that does not mean people stay away from the event. This year, 65 representatives of provinces and municipalities attended. A minister from New Brunswick took part in the event. I think that was the second or third time she has done so.

Mr. Dan Vandal: I am talking about the community here. There were two representatives from Manitoba, but let us say they do not have the same passion as the people from the franco-Manitoban community.

Ms. Stefanie Beck: We offer the communities a lot of opportunities, and not just the days at Destination Canada. We also organize webinars and television broadcasts in which people from the communities can take part. They can submit their products or promotional documents to us, and we circulate them through the missions. We bring back our representatives so that, once they have returned from their missions, they can speak on behalf of the communities. A lot of resources are used, not just a single event.

Mr. Dan Vandal: I understand that, but the fact remains that Destination Canada is a major job fair that people can attend. Your figures—you mentioned a registration figure of 12,760—are very impressive. We have to try to get our percentage for Saint-Boniface—Saint-Vital and, in fact, for Manitoba.

Ms. Stefanie Beck: The community has to there and to have jobs to offer.

Mr. Dan Vandal: Yes.

Ms. Stefanie Beck: It is not just a matter of being there.

Mr. Dan Vandal: I know the private sector has a role to play in this regard, but, if the Government of Canada provided funding for representatives working in the immigration field to attend, that would help us reach the 4.4% target. That is just a suggestion on my part. I often hear it said in Saint-Boniface—Saint-Vital that people cannot get there. One person from the community and two provincial representatives are not enough.

Ms. Stefanie Beck: Yes.

Mr. Dan Vandal: All right. I have my answer.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Mrs. Boucher, you have the floor.

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher (Beauport—Côte-de-Beaupré—Île d'Orléans—Charlevoix, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I will be sharing my allotted time with Mr. Doherty.

Thanks to the witnesses for being with us today.

I find your remarks a bit complicated. It is never a simple matter to deal with the departments. This is very much an immigration matter, but, in view of the massive influx of francophone refugees, do you have the capacity to integrate them to the same degree as immigrants? Immigrants choose to come to Canada, but that is not the case of refugees.

Do you use the same approach? Is a portion of the \$900 million earmarked for refugees and minority communities?

Earlier you talked about a situation at the airport. I want to say something on that subject. A Syrian arrived in Quebec, in my region of Boischatel. However, he only spoke English. Upon arriving at Montréal-Trudeau international airport, he asked to be transferred to an anglophone province, but his request was denied. I would like to know why we refuse this kind of request from people who do not really speak the majority language of a given province. Why do we refuse to allow them to go to a particular place?

It is their choice, even though they are refugees. I would like to know whether you use the same approach with immigrants and refugees. Representatives of organizations have told us this is difficult. I would like you to explain to me how it works.

[English]

Ms. Stefanie Beck: Actually, Jennifer is an expert in refugee policy.

Remember, there are two kinds of refugees. There are government-assisted refugees and privately sponsored refugees. They're different categories. In terms of funding and the \$900 million, there is funding for refugees in the same way there is funding for everybody else. Refugees, as you know, get more income support, so that money would be included in the \$900 million. The first year, we provide income support as well as the official languages training and the other integration supports that exist for everybody else.

For those who are privately sponsored, remember that they go to the location where the sponsors are. If it's a group from Saint Boniface sponsoring a refugee, that family will come to Saint Boniface and must stay there as long as they are receiving money from the private sponsors. Once the private sponsor's commitment is

finished, they can go wherever they want. They are permanent residents of Canada.

When we do government-sponsored refugees, we do not ask them where they want to go. The provinces give us targets. They say they want 2,000, 3,000, or whatever the number is. That number changed, *au fur et à mesure*, that we were bringing in the Syrian refugees last year. Quebec had a certain number. We brought in the number that Quebec wanted.

We do, very rarely, allow refugees to change their destination, but only in circumstances where, for instance, they have a close family member in Vancouver, say; we had not realized this at the time of processing; and the refugee was sent inadvertently to Montreal. If they then come and say, "My brother lives in Vancouver, and I want to be close to him," we will move them. If it's because of a medical condition that cannot be treated in whatever destination they were going to, obviously we will look to see how we can accommodate that.

• (0935)

[Translation]

I think that, out of the 25,000 refugees we took in last year, fewer than 100 had to change destinations at the last minute. That does not mean these people cannot subsequently change locations. They arrive, stay in Quebec for a year, and then go elsewhere. In the meantime, however, they have learned French, and that is in fact what we wanted.

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Mrs. Boucher.

Mr. Doherty, you have the floor.

[English]

Mr. Todd Doherty (Cariboo—Prince George, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Perhaps you could give me a couple of extra minutes, because I would like to address the questions that our honourable colleagues across the way asked about our airports and our ports. I can speak with some authority on that, and on Destination Canada as well, based on my previous role of managing airports and promoting Canada on the world stage. There are programs available. Our government invested fairly heavily in that, and previous governments did too, in the official languages program.

Our airports, our ports, and our borders are seen as the first port of entry. Many times, they are the first experience that our immigrants have here. There are considerable dollars made available in terms of our official languages, as well as the regulations they must follow. All signage must be in both official languages. There should be translators available, as well as services. The government has provided that, and it is up to every port and airport or point of entry to have them there.

In terms of Destination Canada and the funds that are available, I also attended many events for the promotion of Canada on the world stage, and it does fall, as Ms. Beck said, to the communities and the provinces to show up to these events. There are funds made available for those communities to attend them and to promote Canada as a great place to work, live, play, invest, and learn. Those were the five pillars that we would always do, and funds were made available for that. Can we do a better job? Can Canada do a better job? Absolutely, and at that point, I'll lead into my question.

To answer your question, if you guys have any further questions on that, I can probably answer them offline. As a manager of an airport and an executive in airport and aviation who served and actually promoted Canada on the world stage—

An hon. member: Which airport?

Mr. Todd Doherty: I served for a number of them, but I worked in Vancouver. I managed Prince George Airport and the Edmonton International Airport, and then I worked as a consultant and promoted Canada, working together with the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade. It was about promoting Canada on the world stage in terms of opportunities for Canada and making Canada competitive. I served on a number of panels as well about how we can make Canada more competitive in different ways.

Ms. Stefanie Beck: Can we hire you?

Voices: Oh, oh!

Mr. Todd Doherty: After this gig, maybe.

A number of programs are there, but the challenge we have in small communities and in Canada as a whole is that we have to make it known. We don't communicate very well within ourselves as to what's available, and I think there can be more resources. If Canada truly wants to be competitive, there are things we could do differently.

On that note, Ms. Beck, I am in a rural community. It's one of the largest rural ridings in Canada. I'm in a western province, in Cariboo—Prince George, where we are seeing more and more francophone immigrants, specifically from the African countries. I'm a new MP, but the services that are available in small rural Canadian communities outside of central Canada are few and far between. I'm wondering if there is a rural Canada plan outside of central Canada, and if there are things we can do, maybe at this committee. This is the first time I've appeared here, but I can tell you that my office has been inundated. I know that the small communities—

• (0940)

The Chair: Can you ask a question, please?

Mr. Todd Doherty: I am. The small communities have been working tirelessly to do it since 1960, but they're always trying to find funds. Is there more we can do?

Also, my offer is to Ms. Irish, and hopefully the minister, to come out to my riding, because I can line up the meetings. You need to see what a rural Canadian community outside of central Canada is faced with all the time with our francophone immigrants. Is there more we can do? Are there services that I am not aware of that we can provide and tap into?

Ms. Stefanie Beck: I would agree that there is always more we can do. The way we encourage communities to create the welcoming environment is through.... We have programs, obviously, and money available. We do a call for proposals, not necessarily annually but regularly. Indeed, we did a big one last year, whereby the communities say they are prepared to offer these services, and they need, as you know, the array: education, languages, day care, and medical facilities. These are all things that all of us need, frankly. We provide funding to the organization that will ensure the coordination of all of those things and make sure that the newcomers get access to all of those services in the language of their choice.

Mr. Todd Doherty: If I can, I have just a final comment—

The Chair: Sorry, Todd.

We'll go to Mr. Arseneault.

[*Translation*]

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

Thanks to the witnesses for being here with us today.

I am looking at the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act and its objectives. Obviously, these objectives are central to those you have to achieve.

Paragraphs 3(1)(a), (b), (c), and (d) state the exact direction IRCC must take. Allow me to read a few of them:

(a) to permit Canada to pursue the maximum social, cultural and economic benefits of immigration;

(b) to enrich and strengthen the social and cultural fabric of Canadian society, while respecting the federal, bilingual and multicultural character of Canada;

(b.1) to support and assist the development of minority official languages communities in Canada;

For transcription purposes, I am at subsection 3(1) in the part entitled "Objectives and Application".

I am from New Brunswick. I am part of an invisible minority because I am an old-stock North American. After 200 years of anglophones and francophones living together, we in New Brunswick came to the conclusion that the only way to protect minorities and the social fabric was to ensure that there was a duality in the most important government spheres such as education and health. I am not talking about a duality in the sense that bilingualism equals duality, but a duality in administration.

Do you know what I am talking about?

Ms. Stefanie Beck: Yes, absolutely.

Mr. René Arseneault: Then I will be able to ask my question more quickly.

I apologize in advance. My questions will be direct and straightforward because I only have six minutes.

Ms. Stefanie Beck: I cannot guarantee that I can answer them.

Mr. René Arseneault: To preserve Canada's social fabric and distinctive characteristic, its two official languages, should we not have that kind of duality? I think the present situation is a total failure, in any case as it pertains to francophone minorities. The objective is valid, but I do not think we have achieved it.

Do you agree with me that we could do a better job of preserving the minorities living in majority communities if the IRCC had an entirely independent office based on the concept of "by and for" the communities?

Ms. Stefanie Beck: That would be one option.

We have been talking about it for nearly an hour. We are concerned with immigration. We can bring in people who will go and settle in these francophone communities. To preserve what you just explained, we need all levels of government to cooperate. Of course, we are not responsible for education or health. We can bring in people who will be able to live in this kind of society.

Mr. René Arseneault: I know you are promoting awareness. I cited the example of duality, and I told you how well that is working in New Brunswick.

After 200 years of anglophones and francophones living together, we came to the conclusion that we could not preserve the social fabric except by having a duality, that is to say a francophone leader who thinks for the francophone minority and an anglophone leader who does the same for the anglophone majority. That was the purpose of my question. I am not talking about giving the department more money, but about creating an independent secretariat with a leader who thinks in terms of getting things done "by and for" the minorities in majority settings.

I am also thinking of the anglophone minorities in Quebec. Organizations that represent them came and testified before us. They have the same problem as I do in New Brunswick, outside Quebec. That is what I am asking. Do you think it would be more effective if an independent secretariat like that dealt with minorities living in majority settings?

It is impossible to manage 600 integration organizations and all the departments. As my colleague Mr. Généreux told me, his business would not do well if he had to manage that many organizations. He would have to shut down before the end of the year. I am talking about efficiency and achieving objectives, what the act requires you to do.

• (0945)

Ms. Stefanie Beck: Yes, I believe that is a good option, and I will discuss it with the deputy minister.

Mr. René Arseneault: I have a sub-question for you. Are there any better options?

Ms. Stefanie Beck: In fact, we would like to take advantage of the energy that exists across the country, including on this committee, to establish a real action plan.

Mr. René Arseneault: But, madam, the energy is drowned out in a Canada from sea to sea.

Ms. Stefanie Beck: Yes, perhaps.

Mr. René Arseneault: I repeat: we have more than 200 years' experience in this area in New Brunswick. Is there a better option than the one I am proposing to you?

Ms. Stefanie Beck: We can discuss it in Moncton next spring.

Mr. René Arseneault: But I am asking you the question right now.

Ms. Stefanie Beck: In fact, it is New Brunswick that will be managing the program of the meeting.

Mr. René Arseneault: New Brunswick's objectives for the francophonie are much more—

Ms. Stefanie Beck: Yes, and the province has many good practices that are working very well.

Mr. René Arseneault: We have champions in those areas.

Whatever the case may be, do you think this is an appropriate option to consider?

Ms. Stefanie Beck: If it works, the answer is yes. The proof is in the results.

Mr. René Arseneault: Since I have a minute left, I will ask you the following question.

How do we go about managing 600 integration organizations in Canada? That seems impossible to me.

Ms. Stefanie Beck: No, it is not impossible. We have the necessary budget and resources. We also have an audit system.

[English]

and we have an online portal for grants and contributions.

[Translation]

It has worked for many years, and the services have been delivered.

Mr. René Arseneault: Pardon me, but I must interrupt you because I have only 30 seconds left.

Earlier you talked about definitions. You mentioned that a francophile whose mother tongue was not French was not considered a francophone. That somewhat distorts the statistics. Is a person whose mother tongue is Wolof but who speaks English considered an anglophone?

Ms. Stefanie Beck: That is probably the case, by default.

Mr. René Arseneault: Do you understand what I mean when I talk about duality?

Ms. Stefanie Beck: Yes.

Mr. René Arseneault: We are immediately included in the anglophone majority.

Ms. Stefanie Beck: That is why we want to change not only the definition, but also the ways of measuring everything. We have to be able to allocate money to the right place since many people are considered anglophones.

Mr. René Arseneault: Do you see how easy it is to fall into the anglophone majority?

Ms. Stefanie Beck: Yes.

Mr. René Arseneault: This is structural assimilation. I simply want your organization to be aware of that.

Ms. Stefanie Beck: I have spent most of the years of my life in a minority setting and therefore clearly understand the situation.

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

Thank you very much, Ms. Beck. I know you have to leave us.

We will suspend for a few minutes.

Mr. Choquette, you have the floor.

Mr. François Choquette: Why are you suspending the meeting, Mr. Chair?

The Chair: Mr. Choquette, we are simply taking a brief five-minute break, and then we will resume with our other two witnesses, Ms. Irish and Mr. Viel.

Thank you, Ms. Beck.

● (0945)

(Pause)

● (0955)

The Chair: I now call the meeting back to order.

I would note that I had a newspaper article distributed to you. It is for your personal information. It is not an official committee document. I simply wanted to draw your attention to the article.

We will continue with Mrs. Boucher, who has five minutes.

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

We are talking extensively about immigration. What the witnesses are telling us today is very interesting. I have a lot of questions. So I will begin.

The provinces and territories show enormous openness to francophone immigration. We have heard a great deal about many francophones who are beginning to arrive in the territories, including Yukon.

At their last meeting, the first ministers agreed to request that the federal government revise its francophone immigration target upward. Has Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada reacted to that request? If so, in what way? Have you shared that information with the members?

Mr. Jean Viel: As you know, and as we indicated earlier, we already have two targets: one of 4% and the other 4.4%. We have indeed received a suggestion from the provinces and territories that they be increased or that another target be set. However, I am not sure establishing another target is the most productive option to consider.

We are busy creating tools. We are taking action to achieve results. We know the current targets are major challenges. Our minister has moreover acknowledged that the targets are a challenge. Rather than set a new target, we are focusing our energies on delivering programs, and I would like to provide some additional information on that subject. Mr. Chair, with your permission, I would like to react to a question that was asked earlier.

We have conducted audits, and the budget cuts to Destination Canada were made in the 2012-2013 fiscal year. A great deal of attention has been focused on this initiative, which is being masterfully carried out by our colleagues in Paris. However, we must be aware that, in addition to Destination Canada, which is essentially a major job fair, our Paris colleagues also organize webinars and information sessions. It is important to consider that the same Paris colleagues—and this is not well known—have organized 75 information sessions in Europe, in France, Belgium, Switzerland, and Spain. They have met 4,100 persons, potential

clients, to make them aware of the possibility of immigrating to the francophone minority communities.

● (1000)

The Chair: You mention your Paris colleagues. Are they IRCC employees who are at the embassy?

Mr. Jean Viel: They are departmental colleagues who are at the Canadian embassy in Paris. We have teams in several embassies. Our embassy in Paris is one of the largest. We also have good teams in place in Dakar and Tunis.

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: I see.

You mentioned new programs and tools. We are at the federal level. I imagine you have agreements with the provinces and territories. When you discuss francophone immigration, are some provinces more reluctant than others to address this question?

Mr. Jean Viel: I think there are leaders in the provinces and territories.

It is common knowledge that New Brunswick is a true leader. Ontario also shows considerable interest in that regard. Traditionally, Manitoba has also always been very much involved.

We also see new players increasingly emerging in the provinces and territories. We see that authorities in the provinces and territories are generally very much engaged. It will be interesting to see how that comes together at the next forum, which will focus on francophone immigration and will be held in Moncton in March.

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: All right.

I think Mr. Généreux would like to ask a question.

Mr. Bernard Généreux: Mr. Chair, may I speak?

The Chair: You have the floor.

Mr. Bernard Généreux: Private businesses obviously attend each of the Destination Canada fairs. How are those businesses selected? Do most of them come from urban centres? Do some come from rural areas?

Mr. Jean Viel: Part of my answer will be somewhat anecdotal, and I apologize for that. Perhaps we can send you more factual information at a later date.

Businesses from all sectors attend Destination Canada. We often make the mistake of automatically speaking about francophone businesses. The event is open to all businesses, whether they are in rural or urban areas. We saw businesses from the west, for example, attend Destination Canada a few years ago to hire truck drivers and heavy equipment mechanical specialists.

Mr. Bernard Généreux: However, the event is not attended by 3,000 businesses. How is the selection made?

Mr. Jean Viel: It is simple. We have to know whether they have job offers for potential francophone immigrants? If that is the case, they are welcome.

Mr. Bernard Généreux: Is it as simple as that?

Mr. Jean Viel: It has to be based in large part on job offers. Employment is not a new idea for anyone here.

Mr. Bernard Généreux: Mr. Viel, you come from Rivière-du-Loup. So I have a conflict of interest with you.

I did not know it, but I am the member for the riding where Mr. Viel was born.

You are familiar with businesses from your part of the country, such as Premier Tech, Aliments Asta, in Saint-Alexandre, and duBreton, in Rivière-du-Loup. They bring in immigrants, particularly from Colombia and the Philippines, to fill pork processing positions. They are having trouble finding employees.

Would those businesses be welcome at these fairs? We want to go after people who speak French, but they are forced to hire people who do not speak a word of it. I cannot remember what language they speak, but translators are required in order to train them.

Mr. Jean Viel: You are obviously talking about immigration to Quebec.

Mr. Bernard Généreux: Yes.

Mr. Jean Viel: I am far from being an expert on the immigration program in Quebec, but, from what I know, Quebec has its own recruitment missions abroad to recruit the necessary manpower.

Mr. Bernard Généreux: Is it nevertheless possible for Quebec businesses to attend Destination Canada?

Mr. Jean Viel: As I told you, Quebec has control over—

Mr. Bernard Généreux: Does Quebec take part in the missions when Destination Canada—

Mr. Jean Viel: There is obviously close cooperation between Quebec's office and colleagues from our department at the Canadian embassy in Paris.

Mr. Bernard Généreux: I see.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Mr. Choquette, you have the floor.

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

I believe I have three minutes.

Just before asking my questions, I would like to table a notice of motion. I believe you have it before you. It could be debated at greater length next week. It reads as follows:

That the Committee ask the Minister of Public Services and Procurement Canada, the Honourable Judy Foote, to delay the implementation of the Translation Bureau's new procurement system for interpretation services until the Committee has heard from the Canadian chapter of the International Association of Conference Interpreters (AICC Canada) and the Minister of Public Services and Procurement Canada on this issue.

I know that many of you met the representatives of AICC Canada, the International Association of Conference Interpreters, who explained to us that the new procurement system was really a problem. It is currently delayed between phases, but it may be introduced in January, when we will not be here since we will be in our ridings.

I think it would be good for the committee to consider the possibility of exercising a little pressure so that we can have at least one meeting with the minister, particularly following the Phoenix

pay system scandal. If you do not have that opportunity, we should call the AICC Canada people to find out what this is about. They have asked to appear before the committee. We know that will not be possible until January or February. Consequently, the introduction of the new system should be delayed until we have met and heard them so they can explain their concerns to us.

Mr. Chair, I know not everyone has had the time to meet them in order to understand why this motion is very important, but I am tabling it and leaving it up to you to call them so that we can meet with them. Then, next week, we can debate this motion with my colleagues' consent. Does the committee agree to this way of proceeding?

• (1005)

The Chair: Mr. Choquette, you are still within the three-minute period allotted to you, but I would like to tell committee members that I am waiting for confirmation from Minister Foote, who should be appearing before us on December 6. It would therefore be appropriate to postpone consideration of your motion.

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: Talking about motions, I wonder when we plan to work on the report?

The Chair: The dates for work on the report are already scheduled.

I ask the witnesses to pardon us for discussing these routine matters.

Mr. François Choquette: Mr. Chair, if my colleagues are in agreement, perhaps we could adjourn a little earlier to discuss the date of Ms. Foote's appearance.

Mr. René Arseneault: I unfortunately have to attend another committee meeting immediately after this one. I have only 15 minutes between the two meetings.

Mr. François Choquette: I am talking about finishing earlier, not extending the meeting.

The Chair: We want to hear two other committee members, Mr. Lefebvre and Mr. Samson, who will have three minutes each. Then we will discuss this matter.

Mr. François Choquette: So I assume my three-minute period is over.

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

My question is for Ms. Irish.

A little earlier my colleague referred to the importance of the social and economic fabric and, of course, of linguistic duality. What do you understand of that matter? What are your comments on those issues?

Ms. Jennifer Irish (Corporate Secretary, Department of Citizenship and Immigration): They are part of the responsibilities set forth in the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act. This is one of the most important principles, and the department applies it throughout the immigrant promotion and selection process.

Mr. Darrell Samson: What is your opinion of linguistic duality?

What is your understanding of the expression "social and economic fabric"?

I would like to know your personal opinion on that subject.

Ms. Jennifer Irish: I think Canada's linguistic duality is very important. It is an aspect that the secretariat celebrates every year at various events. Linguistic duality is also part of our promotional role and represents Canada's social fabric, which is an important part of our activities and of the goal we pursue.

Mr. Darrell Samson: Mr. Viel, would you like to add a few words on the subject?

Mr. Jean Viel: As regards commitment to and awareness of linguistic duality within the department, I would simply note that the department recently sent an invitation to northern Quebec artist Elisapie Isaac. She made an extremely stimulating presentation on the richness and importance of our official languages, which, in her case, also included the Innu languages.

The Official Languages Secretariat has made a commitment in this regard and is determined to increase awareness throughout the department, with the help of our official languages champion, Assistant Deputy Minister Stefanie Beck, of the importance of linguistic duality and official languages and of the way they align with the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act and the Official Languages Act.

• (1010)

Mr. Darrell Samson: How many people in your sector deal with the francophone immigration file all day long?

Ms. Jennifer Irish: Within the department?

Mr. Jean Viel: Are you talking about the department or my team?

Mr. Darrell Samson: First let us talk about your team.

Mr. Jean Viel: Let us start with my team. That is a good idea. There are four of us. Obviously, quality counts above all.

Mr. Darrell Samson: Of course. You deal only with francophone immigration—

Mr. Jean Viel: Yes, 100% of the time, and even more.

Mr. Darrell Samson: —in minority communities?

Mr. Jean Viel: Yes, and that in fact represents more than 100% of our time.

Ms. Jennifer Irish: The important point to emphasize is that the Official Languages Secretariat plays a coordination role in this area. It capitalizes on the resources of other sectors in the department that have responsibilities more directly related to immigration and other activities involved in the department's annual plan.

Mr. Darrell Samson: Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Mr. Lefebvre, you have the floor.

Mr. Paul Lefebvre: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Viel, you told us that more than 600 organizations across the country could help you take in newcomers.

There is no need to do this today, but would you please provide us with a list of those organizations?

The Chair: Would you please send that document to the committee clerk?

Mr. Paul Lefebvre: That will give us a clearer idea of how things work.

You have a four-person team. As you say, quality counts, not quantity, but I find it hard to understand the situation, particularly as regards these 600 organizations.

Mr. Jean Viel: I understand, but I will clarify one point. Several branches in the department are in fact responsible for settlement and integration management and follow-up with those 600 organizations. Our role at the Official Languages Secretariat is to coordinate colleagues in those branches and to make them aware of the importance of francophone immigration in an integration services delivery context.

Mr. Paul Lefebvre: On this next point, I will turn to Ms. Irish.

I have learned that a particular perspective has been adopted for decision-making purposes. That is the case, for example, for LGBTQ individuals and women.

Is a lens, a special approach, being used in the case of minority francophones?

Mr. Jean Viel: In fact, if there were none in the department for francophone immigration, Destination Canada would not exist. That program does not exist outside the francophone sphere.

Mr. Paul Lefebvre: If that is the case for Destination Canada, so be it, but what about other decisions made within your department?

I am not just talking about your unit, Mr. Viel, but about the department in general.

When decisions are made, the reality of LGBTQ individuals and women is taken into account, but is the actual situation of minority francophones also considered?

Ms. Jennifer Irish: No group has that specific responsibility since that is the objective of many programs.

[*English*]

For example, there is a part of the department that deals with Destination Canada in the international region. The different selection programs are each situated in different directors general. For example, we talked about Express Entry and Mobilité francophone. There are student programs through International Experience Canada. The department drives the objective, targets that the minister has committed to through these different vehicles. Our secretariat must then make sure that's a coherent response.

Remember, this is about promotion and selection. A key part of this is also retention. That's where the secretariat works with communities and also with provinces, which, to come back to the question, choose their own objectives. The extent to which that's *immigration francophone* is really up to those who are there to—

[*Translation*]

Mr. Paul Lefebvre: I have one final question, Mr. Chair.

If you no longer use the mother tongue variable, what variable do you use to enumerate francophone immigrants?

Mr. Jean Viel: The spoken language.

Mr. Paul Lefebvre: I see.

An inclusive definition of the "francophonie" was also developed in Ontario in 2009.

Should the federal government, the provinces, and the territories have a harmonized definition of that term?

Mr. Jean Viel: I suppose that might be one of the elements that could be discussed at the federal-provincial/territorial forum that will be held in Moncton next March.

• (1015)

Mr. Paul Lefebvre: Ontario has an inclusive definition, but not all provinces have the same definition.

Mr. Jean Viel: That is up to them.

Mr. Paul Lefebvre: So there is a very different system across the country.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

This brings our meeting with the witnesses to an end.

Now we will take a few minutes to discuss committee business. I know all of you have organized your schedules in anticipation of the meeting adjourning at 10:15.

Ms. Irish and Mr. Viel, thank you very much for appearing before the committee and answering our questions.

The meeting is still public.

I would like to offer a brief reminder about our schedule. On Tuesday, November 29, we will hear from representatives of the Department of Canadian Heritage on accountability. On December 1, we will begin consideration of the report. On Tuesday, December 6, we will theoretically hear from Minister Judy Foote over one hour and will then continue drafting the report. On December 8, the meeting will also focus on the drafting of the report. At that point, it should be coming to an end.

We will therefore take an hour to hear from Minister Foote. Are we all agreed? I see that is the case. We suggested that date to the minister, and I am waiting for confirmation that she will be here, but I think that should work.

Mrs. Boucher, you have the floor.

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: As the committee has done an exhaustive job on immigration, I want to ensure the report is perfect. With all the work we have done, we have no right to do otherwise. I personally do not want us to add witnesses and dates without first seeing the report. We have a deadline and we are not the ones who set it.

The Chair: I agree. I think we have to meet that deadline, Mrs. Boucher. We also agreed to meet with Ms. Foote before Christmas, particularly in view of the notice of motion that Mr. Choquette tabled. I said we would take an hour to hear from Ms. Foote. From what I can see, we will have enough time to prepare a very good report.

Mr. Généreux, you have the floor.

Mr. Bernard Généreux: I have a question for the analysts. Were the answers we received today and the questions we put to the witnesses satisfactory?

Ms. Lucie Lecomte (Committee Researcher): I would say that, for the purpose of fleshing out the entire report, the answers contrast with the testimony from the representatives of the official language minority communities. Obviously, the first version you receive will not reflect today's meeting. That testimony, which is very important, will have to be integrated.

Mr. Bernard Généreux: I see.

Mr. Chair, with your permission, I would like to congratulate Mr. Arseneault for his interesting proposal concerning duality and the clarification that he provided on what is going on in New Brunswick. The situation in that province could also be applied to the other Canadian provinces. It would be interesting to explore his duality proposal further.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Généreux.

We will see you next Tuesday.

The meeting is adjourned.

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