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# Standing Committee on Official Languages

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Chair: Mr. René Arseneault





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• (0855)

[*Translation*]

**The Chair (Mr. René Arseneault (Madawaska—Restigouche, Lib.)):** I call the meeting to order.

Welcome to meeting number 63 of the House of Commons Standing Committee on Official Languages. Pursuant to Standing Order 108(3) and the motion adopted by the committee on April 21, 2023, the committee is meeting to continue its study on increased francophone immigration to Canada.

I would like to inform the committee that all members and witnesses have completed the required connection tests prior to the meeting and that everything is working, except for one member. We'll make sure that Ms. Ashton can join us, and that she will also have the right to speak, as a full member of the committee.

I'd like to welcome the officials. First of all, we welcome Mr. Desruisseaux and Mr. Jacques from the Department of Citizenship and Immigration. They have become regulars on the committee. Mr. Jacques joins us by videoconference directly from Paris. Then we have Ms. Boyer and Ms. Boily, from the Department of Canadian Heritage. They, too, are regulars, and we appreciate their wise counsel. Thank you again for answering our questions.

Before diving into the heart of the matter, I'd just like to pass two budgets.

**Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC):** On a point of order.

**The Chair:** You have the floor, Ms. Gladu.

**Ms. Marilyn Gladu:** Excuse me, but the interpretation isn't working.

**The Chair:** Maybe I'm talking too fast.

Is the interpretation working now?

Ms. Gladu, can you hear me?

**Ms. Marilyn Gladu:** No, Mr. Chair.

[*English*]

**The Chair:** Okay, I'll speak in English. Does it work in French, though? If I speak in English, does translation—

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Mario Beaulieu (La Pointe-de-l'Île, BQ):** On a point of order, Mr. Chair. I can't hear you.

**The Chair:** We will suspend the meeting for a few moments to resolve the problem.

[*English*]

There's a technical issue here in the room, so it's not for the people who are online right now.

[*Translation*]

• (0855)

(Pause)

• (0900)

**The Chair:** We'll resume the meeting. Everything seems to be working.

Before we go any further, there are two budget requests for the committee's approval. The clerk has forwarded them to you.

**Mr. Joël Godin (Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier, CPC):** Mr. Chair, are we in camera?

**The Chair:** No, we're not. These are operating budgets for the committee itself. This includes expenses for bringing in witnesses, for example. There's one for \$16,200 and another for \$2,250. You've all received the documents.

Is there unanimous consent to adopt both budget requests?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**The Chair:** No one objects, so we have unanimous consent.

Mr. Godin, you have the floor.

**Mr. Joël Godin:** I'd like to move a motion. Would you prefer that I do it before or after the testimony?

**The Chair:** Would it be okay if we took the last 10 minutes to talk about it?

**Mr. Joël Godin:** The important thing is that I'm able to do it. I'm counting on you, Mr. Chair.

**The Chair:** Okay. I'll hear from you at 9:30 a.m.

**Mr. Joël Godin:** Okay. Noted.

**The Chair:** We've wanted these officials to testify for a long time. They're with us now, either online or in person.

**Mr. Joël Godin:** Let's hurry up then.

**The Chair:** We'll start with Mr. Desruisseaux, followed by his colleague, Mr. Jacques.

Gentlemen, you have the floor for five minutes.

**Mr. Alain Desruisseaux (Director General, Francophone Immigration Policy and Official Languages Division, Department of Citizenship and Immigration):** Thank you, Mr. Chair and members of the committee.

I would like to begin by acknowledging that I join today's meeting from the traditional unceded territory of the Anishinabe Algonquin Nation.

With regard to the study currently under way, I am pleased to tell you more about one of the seven measures proposed through the Action Plan on Official Languages 2023-28, namely the creation of the Centre for Innovation in Francophone Immigration in Dieppe, New Brunswick, including the implementation of a new grants and contributions program to support francophone immigration.

For the purpose of creating the centre and its programming, \$25 million in funding over five years will help to capitalize on the expertise of francophone minority communities and facilitate their involvement in the testing of innovative projects with key partners in order to resolve barriers to francophone immigration, particularly with regard to the promotion of the communities internationally, the identification, support and recruitment of French-speaking applicants.

The centre's activities will strengthen the francophone lens in immigration programs, which will improve program outcomes with respect to the selection and admission of French-speaking applicants. These activities will also make immigration programs more accessible in order to increase the number of French-speaking applicants selected, and will better meet the labour needs of the various sectors of the Canadian economic. Ultimately, the centre's activities will foster demographic growth and economic development in francophone minority communities.

The centre's team members are in the process of operationalizing this program in order to launch it in the fall of 2023. The department has already begun engaging with various key stakeholders to inform them of this program's opportunities.

With that, I'd be happy to answer any questions from the committee.

I now turn the floor over to Mr. Jacques.

• (0905)

**The Chair:** Go ahead, Mr. Jacques.

**Mr. Olivier Jacques (Area Director, Southern Europe and Maghreb, Department of Citizenship and Immigration):** Thank you, Mr. Chair and members of the committee.

I am pleased to present to the Standing Committee on Official Languages on Destination Canada Mobility Forum.

Destination Canada is an event promoting francophone immigration. The objective is to introduce francophone communities across Canada, and federal and provincial immigration programs to people planning to live and work in Canada.

From the first edition of the forum in Paris in 2003, there were many booths. These included those of the provinces, representatives of francophone organizations, members of the networks of the Federation of Francophone and Acadian Communities, or FCFA, and the Economic Development Network, or RDÉE Canada. A few hundred applicants were also present to meet them.

With the COVID-19 pandemic, Destination Canada went virtual, and the organizing team designed a fully online activity for Febru-

ary 2021. Without geographical border, 170,000 applicants asked to participate. After selection, 13,000 participated live to chat or videoconference with exhibitors.

With the return of face-to-face activities in 2022, we wanted to keep the advantages of virtual while returning to the in-person meetings requested by exhibitors and applicants. It was therefore a hybrid edition that took place in November 2022, again in Paris, but for the first time in Rabat, Morocco, with also three days online.

Among the 370 exhibitors present at 63 booths, I would highlight the presence of seven provincial governments and a delegation of 20 representatives of francophone communities, whose attendance was funded by Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada, or IRCC. The November 2023 edition of Destination Canada Mobility Forum will once again be hybrid: in Paris, Rabat and online. In 2024, we are planning to organize the event in sub-Saharan Africa, in Cameroon to be more precise.

I would like to point out that Destination Canada Mobility Forum is part of a set of promotional activities organized by IRCC abroad. Approximately 270 activities take place each year to promote immigration to provinces and territories other than Quebec among French-speaking applicants.

I thank you for your attention and will be happy to answer your questions.

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

We will now begin the first round of questions. Each political party has six minutes, which includes the time for questions and answers.

First of all, we're going to do another sound check with Ms. Ashton to make sure the connection is good. I therefore invite her to say a few words.

I can't hear Ms. Ashton. There still seems to be a problem. We'll do another test when it's her turn to speak.

The first question will be put by the representative of the Conservative Party, specifically the committee's first vice-chair.

Mr. Godin, you have the floor for six minutes.

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

I'd like to thank the witnesses, who are regular invitees to the committee, for being with us today.

Today, I'm pleased to address Mr. Desruisseaux and Mr. Jacques.

Mr. Desruisseaux, I'd like to ask you a very specific question.

In your opening address, you mentioned the Centre for Innovation in Francophone Immigration in Dieppe. Its creation is provided for in the action plan on official languages 2023–28. To my knowledge, the centre has been open since November 2022. What has been done since then?

You said that the official opening will take place in November 2023. That seems like a long time. It should be done faster, more effectively and more efficiently.

What's happening with this innovation centre? To my knowledge, \$12.9 million has been earmarked for it, but you're adding \$25 million for the next five years, from 2023–28.

What can you tell us about that?

● (0910)

**Mr. Alain Desruisseaux:** We opened the centre in the fall of 2022, and the platform was launched.

We immediately launched our staffing strategy to fill key positions. We chose the location, in Dieppe, and are renting space at the City of Dieppe's town hall—

**Mr. Joël Godin:** Mr. Desruisseaux, I'm sorry to interrupt you, but I'd just like you to confirm that the centre has indeed been open since November 2022.

Is that the case?

**Mr. Alain Desruisseaux:** Yes, it is.

**Mr. Joël Godin:** You're forecasting a fall 2023 launch. Is that right?

**Mr. Alain Desruisseaux:** It's a program launch.

**Mr. Joël Godin:** Right.

In the meantime, there are no activities on site, and no programs have been launched.

**Mr. Alain Desruisseaux:** Absolutely.

**Mr. Joël Godin:** What is the centre doing right now?

**Mr. Alain Desruisseaux:** I can tell you about some of the centre's achievements since it opened.

The centre has—

**Mr. Joël Godin:** I'm sorry, Mr. Desruisseaux, but our time is limited. That's not what I wanted to know.

The centre has been open since 2022, and new programs will be launched in 2023. In the meantime, the centre is preparing to implement them and is taking action on the ground, but it's hard to pinpoint how this will be done. My understanding is that there are no major activities.

**Mr. Alain Desruisseaux:** No, there are not.

I'd like to remind you that the centre isn't a service office, meaning that we don't offer direct services, and we don't handle any files.

**Mr. Joël Godin:** I understand.

Thank you, Mr. Desruisseaux.

Witnesses, I hope you don't mind. My time is limited, and I have a lot of questions.

Mr. Jacques, in your opening remarks, you talked about promotion and advertising. With all due respect, I have to say that the problem is much bigger than that. As I understand it, the problem with increased francophone immigration is the cumbersome nature of the system.

I know that certain programs have been put in place to speed things up. As I understand it, people can now register in various categories of the Destination Canada program. However, when they register in several categories, such as "francophone" and "nurse", the administrative burden is doubled. It's all very well to advertise, but if you can't keep up with demand, there's no point.

As I understand it, there's a lot of demand, especially from Africa. The problem is that we need to put mechanisms in place to speed up processing. When it comes to immigration, it takes much longer in Quebec than in the rest of Canada.

Can you explain to me what is currently being done to speed up the process and meet the needs of companies facing labour shortages? We're not developing centres of expertise so that they'll be operational in a year's time. We need answers now.

What are your observations on this subject, Mr. Jacques?

**Mr. Olivier Jacques:** Mr. Chair, one goes hand in hand with the other.

Promotion is necessary. Its purpose is to attract enough applicants to participate in our programs and meet the government's target.

The operations sector is just as important. We have to be able to meet the high demand for our services. We need to strengthen our operations. The department has therefore added resources in our offices in Africa. Since 2018, 67 new positions have been created on the African continent. We have also opened two visa offices there.

In addition, I should mention that, since the pandemic, the department has been offering ways to submit applications electronically. That way, we can spread the workload—

**Mr. Joël Godin:** I understand, Mr. Jacques, but I must interrupt you. I've got barely a minute left.

In fact, I'd like to get your comments on one particular subject. Anyone who wants to fill a store by advertising has to be able to do business there. My observation is that there is a strong demand for people to immigrate and work in Canada. The process is cumbersome, and doubly so when it comes to francophones wanting to come and work in Quebec.

How do you explain this situation?

**Mr. Olivier Jacques:** There is considerable pressure to do so, and the ministry is making efforts to reduce processing times for people who want to work, study or immigrate to Canada.

● (0915)

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

Now it's the Liberals' turn, starting with Mr. Samson. He's the first, but not the least.

Mr. Samson, you have the floor for six minutes.

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

I would like to say hello to my friends who have come to testify before us today. We're talking about extremely important issues.

Mr. Desruisseaux, my colleague Mr. Godin asked a question about the work that was done between 2022 and 2023 at the Dieppe office. I'd like you to send the committee a document outlining the activities undertaken during this period. Obviously, we don't expect this to be done today.

It's been almost eight years—so the Conservatives say—since we came to power. Back then, Mr. Généreux, Mr. Chair and I were around this table. We worked very hard to develop a strategy. If my memory serves me correctly, we hired a company to recruit abroad, in Africa and in French-speaking countries, to target immigrants who would be keen to come and work in Canada. The plan was for them to arrive at Toronto's Pearson airport. They would be welcomed at the Centre francophone du Grand Toronto. They would then be sent to communities where a group of people would help them with their employability. I'd like you to take a few minutes to help me, if necessary, if I've forgotten anything about this.

I'd like to know if any of this has come to fruition. The vision at the time was that it would become a pan-Canadian strategy if the process worked.

Did a company recruit French-speaking immigrants from outside the country and bring them to Canada? Were these immigrants welcomed in Toronto by the Centre francophone du Grand Toronto? Were they transferred to communities that would help them enter the job market?

I'd like you to help me understand, Mr. Desruisseaux.

**Mr. Alain Desruisseaux:** There's a whole network of services in place.

The francophone immigration strategy was implemented in 2018, and it focused heavily on promotion and recruitment. However, I would say that the cornerstone is the service offer in the institutions.

As for the major players on the ground, you mentioned the Centre francophone du Grand Toronto and Pearson airport in terms of providing services. However, our regional francophone immigration networks are essential in terms of coordination and support for service providers.

**Mr. Darrell Samson:** I'd like to know who's doing the promotion outside the country.

An Ontario company was hired to recruit people, who would arrive at Pearson airport and be taken over by the Centre francophone du Grand Toronto.

I'm familiar with the work done by RDÉE Canada and, in terms of employability, the Fédération des femmes acadiennes de la Nouvelle-Écosse, or FFANE, helps people get settled.

What I want to know is if there's a company in Canada that's funded to do recruitment. Who receives these people at Pearson airport? How do things work there?

**Mr. Alain Desruisseaux:** To my knowledge, no company does that. The department provides the service. We promote and support recruitment, and work closely with our partners on the ground.

I'd like to turn the floor over to my colleague Olivier Jacques, who would probably know more about past recruitment activities than I would.

**The Chair:** You have the floor, Mr. Jacques.

**Mr. Olivier Jacques:** In fact, no company is funded by the federal government to recruit immigrants and promote francophone immigration. The service funded by the federal government is a pre-departure service. Immigrants who have been selected by Canada attend an orientation session just before boarding the plane. They get help writing their résumé and preparing for what they will face when they arrive in Canada.

This service, funded by the federal government, is provided by an organization based in Rabat, Morocco. Immigration consultants also offer this service, but it's not funded by the federal government.

• (0920)

**Mr. Darrell Samson:** Thank you.

Let's say I land at Toronto Pearson International Airport. How am I going to find the place that offers services to francophones? Will someone come and meet me? Are there signs? Will someone come and talk to me, or do I have to hide in a corner?

**The Chair:** Please answer in 45 seconds, Mr. Desruisseaux.

**Mr. Alain Desruisseaux:** There's an information kiosk, a welcome kiosk at Pearson. This is where connection takes place. Service is provided in French, so that new arrivals can be introduced to the service centres, service providers and immigration networks that will be available to them. We ensure that contact is made as soon as the person arrives.

Olivier Jacques mentioned the pre-departure service offered by ConnexionsFrancophones. Whether virtual or in person, we make sure that people have information on the services offered and the people to contact when they arrive, so that the networks are already in contact with the newcomers.

In the past, services were available, but clients didn't know they existed. So the kiosk is one of the key elements in making sure that communication is clear.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

**Mr. Darrell Samson:** Mr. Chair, could he provide us with—

**The Chair:** Yes, I'll take care of that at the end of the meeting.

If the witnesses want to send us any additional information, they can send it to the clerk of the committee.

The next question will be asked by the representative of the Bloc Québécois, specifically the committee's second vice-chair.

Mr. Beaulieu, you have the floor for six minutes.

**Mr. Mario Beaulieu:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'd like to thank the witnesses for being with us.

Mr. Desruisseaux, do you also have a mandate to help Quebec recruit more French-speaking immigrants?

**Mr. Alain Desruisseaux:** I'll say a few words about that, and I'll let Mr. Jacques round out my answer.

Obviously, IRCC works very closely with the Quebec government. In fact, an agreement provides a framework for this collaboration, and a joint committee meets frequently, so the dialogue is ongoing. There are also collaborations in the field to support the Quebec government's efforts.

I'll now give the floor to Mr. Jacques.

**Mr. Olivier Jacques:** Thank you, Mr. Desruisseaux.

Indeed, the Government of Canada supports all provinces and territories in their efforts to recruit foreign workers, permanent residents and immigrants. This includes Quebec. For example, if Quebec organizes a Quebec Abroad Day, IRCC will participate—if invited, of course—and will pass on information about the immigration process and talk to applicants to explain the steps they need to take before coming to Quebec.

We work directly in the field, in close collaboration, in offices such as those in Rabat, Morocco, and Dakar, Senegal. There are constant exchanges to promote study in Quebec and to support Quebec's recruitment efforts.

**Mr. Mario Beaulieu:** For your part, are your recruitment efforts devoted exclusively to francophone immigration outside Quebec?

**Mr. Olivier Jacques:** IRCC is funded to promote francophone immigration outside Quebec, in fact. That's the mandate the department has been given, and that's why we have funding. But that doesn't prevent us from supporting the recruitment efforts of all provinces, including Quebec, and from promoting studies in Quebec.

**Mr. Mario Beaulieu:** I'll continue along the same lines.

We recently learned that many temporary students are turned away in Quebec. According to a report by the Institut du Québec, the federal government has refused nearly half of the applications for study permits submitted by foreign students wishing to come to Quebec and who have been accepted by the universities and by Quebec. According to a Radio-Canada article, “the federal government has turned down nearly 72% of African applicants accepted into Quebec universities in 2021”.

What's going on here? How do you explain this? How can this be corrected?

• (0925)

**Mr. Alain Desruisseaux:** To be honest, I'd have to say that this issue goes a little beyond my area of responsibility and expertise. It's a complex issue. I can say, however, that files are analyzed on a case-by-case basis, depending on the merits of the application. The

same grid is applied to each case. To determine whether a file meets the eligibility criteria, all of it has to be reviewed. Risk criteria are determined.

**Mr. Mario Beaulieu:** Does IRCC play a role in this, that is, in the approval process?

**Mr. Alain Desruisseaux:** Yes, it does.

**Mr. Mario Beaulieu:** One explanation that has come to light is that some people fear that these people want to stay in Canada. From what we understand, increasing francophone immigration is somewhat of an objective. In any case, the situation remains rather nebulous, and this is detrimental to Quebec.

In short, you don't have any specific explanations to give us on this subject.

Is that so?

**Mr. Alain Desruisseaux:** My colleague Olivier Jacques, who is more familiar with the processing of files, could give you more details on how we do things.

**Mr. Olivier Jacques:** Thank you very much.

Every year, we issue study permits to thousands of bona fide francophone African students to come to Canada and Quebec. The approval rate for study permit applications from clients who want to come to Quebec from French-speaking African countries is comparable to that of clients who want to come to other Canadian provinces.

As to what exactly happens, I can tell you that applications are reviewed on a case-by-case basis, according to the same selection criteria, regardless of the applicant's country of origin or continent of residence. I'd say there are three main reasons why applications from Africa are more frequently refused.

**Mr. Mario Beaulieu:** The Radio-Canada article says that the average refusal rate has risen in recent years, but that it's higher in Quebec than in Ontario and British Columbia. So it's not equal in all provinces.

**The Chair:** That's a good question, but there are less than five seconds left. Perhaps you can add to your answer as other questions come up, Mr. Jacques. I think the members of the committee would like to know what these three main reasons are that you were about to give us.

Before handing over to Ms. Ashton and starting the clock, we're going to do one last test. I imagine Ms. Ashton is in her basement and has connected to her modem.

Ms. Ashton, you have the floor.

**Ms. Niki Ashton (Churchill—Keewatinook Aski, NDP):** You guessed right. We're making every effort here.

I made a speech in the House at 9:00 p.m. yesterday. I was told it went well. So I hope to be able to join you from my basement and ask questions when I have the floor as the sole representative of my party.

Is it working?

**The Chair:** I'm told it's inconclusive, that there's a technical problem.

Did you connect directly to your modem?

**Ms. Niki Ashton:** IT support told me they would send me a cable, but I never received it. I can't connect directly without it.

**The Chair:** Ms. Ashton, I'm going to interrupt you. All I can do now, as chair of the committee, is ask for the unanimous consent of the committee members so that, in your case, there is no interpretation. That's the only tool I have left. I insist on unanimous consent.

I understand the situation. However, I'm told that it's a connection problem and that there's a loss of quality because there's no direct cable connection to the modem. I'm not a technician, but that's what they tell me about reception on the interpreters' end. So it's also a question of hearing safety.

If you want to ask questions through your assistant, I can ask them for you, if you like.

• (0930)

**Ms. Niki Ashton:** That's very kind of you to suggest.

I'd just like to say that I'm in a bit of a bind. I didn't receive the cable to connect directly. However, last night I gave a speech in the House and everything went smoothly. I don't know what the technicians did. I'm not a magician. The second thing I can do, according to the technicians, is to set up right next to my modem for the WiFi network. That's what I did, even though it's really not ideal for me to participate in the meeting from my basement. However, without the cable I'm supposed to get, I can't do anything else.

Obviously, I don't want to put anyone's hearing safety at risk. I don't know what else to tell you, really. We can send you the questions, but I just wanted to say that the situation I find myself in is a bit ridiculous.

**The Chair:** I understand, Ms. Ashton, but you have to understand that there are limits to what I can and cannot do as chair. The only other option left for you to ask your questions safely was to ask for unanimous consent, but I didn't get it.

**Mr. Marc Dalton (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge, CPC):** On a point of order, Mr. Chair.

**The Chair:** I'll finish what I was saying first.

Given the current rules governing hybrid Parliament, Ms. Ashton, I can't give you the floor. It's a matter of hearing safety. I'm told there are interpretation problems.

I know that yesterday you spoke in the House of Commons and that everything was fine. However, I'm not a technician, I'm just the chair. I'm sorry. I feel bad, but that's all I can do.

Mr. Dalton, I'm listening.

**Mr. Marc Dalton:** What Ms. Ashton says, whether in English or French, will be interpreted, won't it?

**The Chair:** No. The problem is that there is no simultaneous interpretation of what she is saying at the moment.

**Mr. Marc Dalton:** Okay.

Personally, I think the sound is as good for her as it is for everyone else. I think it's also a question of members' privileges. So it's a very difficult situation.

**The Chair:** Mr. Dalton, I think everyone here agrees with you.

I'll now give the floor to Ms. Gladu.

[*English*]

**Ms. Marilyn Gladu:** Chair, all I would say is that I was refused because the quality of my sound was not good. I subsequently had to do tests with IT.

I think we have to be consistent in our rules, even though I agree that this is egregious for your privilege.

[*Translation*]

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Mr. Beaulieu, you have the floor.

**Mr. Mario Beaulieu:** I understand what Ms. Ashton is saying. What I'm proposing is that we give her time to send us her questions in writing, so that we can ask them for her a little later. I don't know if there would be unanimous consent for that.

**The Chair:** Ms. Ashton, I think that's the ideal solution. I know you're the only one here representing the New Democratic Party. I understand that. I'll hold your six minutes in reserve until the end of this meeting. I think we have unanimous consent. What I would suggest is that you send your questions to your assistant, who is here, and I'll ask them for you.

We'll move on to the next five-minute period.

Ms. Gladu, you have the floor.

[*English*]

**Ms. Marilyn Gladu:** Thank you, Chair, and thank you to the witnesses for being here today.

In terms of trying to increase the number of francophone immigrants we have, we have to address getting supply. We've heard that the maximum French population in the world is at 20%, so I think there is something to be done there. Then actually getting them into jobs once they get here, and then talking about what else we can do....

Let me start by asking whether or not... We have a weighting in the immigration system that we increased in 2017. We give them additional points if they speak French, and there has been some positive result from that. Do we need to increase that weighting more?



• (0935)

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Alain Desruisseaux:** Increasing francophone immigration admissions is at the heart of our intention. We look at all the measures, including the one you mentioned. We note that admissions have increased considerably. Our projections suggest that they will continue to increase. The target was reached last year, and there is every indication that it will be reached this year, if not exceeded. It's a measure that has paid off.

There's also the express entry program that was just put in place and has a lot of potential. It's too early to estimate the impact it will have, but we expect it to have a significant positive impact. We know that the new ensemble-based approach will give us more flexibility to support this increase in the future. I can't explain it to you myself, as it was my policy colleagues who developed this new system. We're looking at the whole package, and this new system is one of them.

As far as the action plan for official languages is concerned, the recent announcements pave the way for new, reinforced measures. The department is also looking at how the reforms in the pipeline can support it in this direction.

So it's an integrated, holistic approach that we're putting forward. I can say that francophone immigration is a top departmental priority, and it's part of all our measures.

[*English*]

**Ms. Marilyn Gladu:** That's very good. Thank you.

I also think that we increased the target to 4.4%. I believe the target really should be increased even further, as much as 20%, because we're losing ground.

The next thing I want to talk about is the credential recognition. We've heard that French teachers and medical workers who are coming are not getting their credentials recognized. Is the federal government doing anything to work on that issue?

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Alain Desruisseaux:** That's something we heard a lot during the public consultations we held last year to develop the measures in the action plan. It was a recurring concern, particularly for teachers, but it also affects several other professions. This is true for the whole country.

Discussions are under way. Obviously, this involves several departments as well as the provinces. It's really a horizontal issue. It's outside my area of responsibility, but I know that discussions are ongoing with EDSC, and the provinces and territories to see how this issue can be addressed. It's not a simple matter, unfortunately.

[*English*]

**Ms. Marilyn Gladu:** No, it's not simple.

My final two questions are for Mr. Jacques.

If you could submit to the clerk any best practices that you see from other areas in the world that we should be leveraging here in Canada, that would be great.

Then, second, I see that you're going to Cameroon for Destination Canada. This is good, because we've heard of a lot of problems there. There are not very many service centres to process people. There are people living quite long distances away. What would it take to increase the number of these Destination Canada trips and expositions in Africa?

**The Chair:** Madam Gladu, this is an excellent question, but it's beyond your five minutes. Hopefully our witnesses will be able to answer that later on.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Lalonde, you have the floor for five minutes.

**Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde (Orléans, Lib.):** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

It's a real pleasure for me to be on this committee to talk about francophone immigration, a subject that's very close to my heart. I'm proud to replace my colleague Mr. Serré.

It's important to note that, for the first time in several years, the 4.4% target has been reached. This was no miracle; it's because we've made constant efforts in recent years.

I'd like you to tell me what measures have been taken to help restore our demographic weight, or at least to reach this target. I know it's not enough, but at least our government has achieved it.

• (0940)

**Mr. Alain Desruisseaux:** It's a whole series of measures. Just think of the most recent action plan for official languages, which allocates us \$137 million. So, just in terms of investments, there's \$137 million over five years. This is in addition to the 2013-18 action plan, which invested \$29.4 million over five years, including an ongoing amount of \$5.9 million, and the 2018-23 action plan, which invested \$40.7 million over five years, including an ongoing amount of \$10 million.

Behind all this are major investments, to which are added certain programs, of course.

For example, I'm thinking of the IRCC settlement program, which has made a major contribution to certain measures.

We can also think of everything that has been done in terms of promotion. Mr. Jacques mentioned Destination Canada. That's one of the measures, but there are many other activities. A lot of awareness-raising is going on in Canada, particularly with employers. Our colleagues in the national network are doing very important work in this area.

When it comes to working with communities, the creation of the Réseaux en immigration francophone and the launch of the welcoming francophone communities initiative have been major steps forward. This initiative was cited as an example during all the public consultations, which led us, when drawing up the measures in the action plan, to focus on strengthening and expanding this initiative, which is really bearing fruit.

What's more, with the new measures, we're even more interested in what can be done to support recruitment and selection, and to involve francophone communities in this exercise. In particular, we want to bring communities into closer partnership with the designated entities involved in selection. This is a promising avenue. So that's something we're looking at.

I was also talking earlier about the programming of the Centre for Innovation in Francophone Immigration in Dieppe. A large part of this centre's objective is to create these partnerships. In terms of organizations eligible for the program, we hope to be able to put in place a fairly broad eligibility regime. We're thinking of not-for-profit organizations. I mentioned the welcoming francophone communities initiative. That's one example. The provinces, territories and municipalities are also involved.

In achieving this objective, we also want to see how certain initiatives will facilitate the transition of temporary residents to permanent resident status. We hope that the new program will enable us to do more in this direction, with the collaboration of the education community. There's a lot of potential.

I'll stop there.

**Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde:** Thank you very much.

I know that the new 2023-28 action plan, which you mentioned, includes historic investments of \$4.1 billion.

For the rest of my time, you'll excuse me for not asking any more questions. Instead, I wanted to comment on my colleague's question about the importance of helping with the workforce.

In fact, in the last 24 to 48 hours, the government has made a very important announcement about the process for recognizing the credentials of foreign-trained health care professionals and promoting physician mobility. Minister Duclos, on behalf of Minister Qualtrough, announced investments of \$78.5 million in this regard.

Thank you very much.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mrs. Lalonde. Time flies.

We'll now go to Mr. Beaulieu for two and a half minutes.

**Mr. Mario Beaulieu:** I'd like to give the witness a chance to answer my question from earlier. Can he explain why the refusal rate is higher in Quebec than in other provinces, and tell us more about the refusal criteria?

• (0945)

**The Chair:** Mr. Jacques, the floor is yours.

**Mr. Olivier Jacques:** As I said earlier, it appears from our statistics that the approval rate for applications from French-speaking African countries submitted in Quebec is similar to that for applications submitted in other Canadian provinces. That said, I'd like to give you three reasons why applications from African applicants are more often refused than others.

The first reason is the frequency of fraud in acceptance letters from Canadian educational institutions and in bank documents sent. Obviously, we have no tolerance for fraud.

The second reason is the difficulty of knowing whether students are acting in good faith, meaning whether they are really going to

study in Canada. Sometimes students applying for a study permit don't want to study in Canada, but rather do something else. When this is detected by our visa officers, the application is refused.

To illustrate my point, I can tell you that we conducted a study in collaboration with the Université du Québec à Trois-Rivières to understand the situation of certain Algerian students. We realized that, of all the Algerian students attending this university and to whom we had granted a study permit, only 20% had registered for courses in the September academic session. The remaining 80% had not done what they were supposed to. This is one of the reasons for the refusals.

The third and final main reason why applicants are most often turned down is funding. Studying in Canada is a costly endeavour. It's expensive for foreign students to study in Canada, with tuition fees higher than those charged to Canadian citizens, not to mention housing costs.

These are the three main reasons for refusal.

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

While we're waiting for Ms. Ashton to reconnect to the meeting from her constituency office, hoping that the connection there is better, I'll reserve her two and a half minutes and give the floor to Mr. Godin for five minutes.

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

I heard my colleague Mrs. Lalonde say earlier that the government had reached its target of 4.4% francophone immigration. That's not going to help restore the demographic weight of francophones in Canada. There's a lot to be done, and we need to increase this target if we want to catch up. I'm not impressed by the government's achievement.

Mr. Jacques, you are the area director for southern Europe and Maghreb. Is there a director for the rest of Africa?

**Mr. Olivier Jacques:** Yes.

There's an area director for—

**Mr. Joël Godin:** That's all right, Mr. Jacques, I just wanted to make sure that someone was looking after the other part of Africa. It's very kind of you to complete the answer.

I don't know whether I should be addressing you or Mr. Desruisseaux, but would it be possible, instead of showing us the organization chart and explaining the process from top to bottom, towards the immigrant, to explain it to us from the student's point of view, as my colleague Mr. Samson alluded to earlier?

Let's put ourselves in the shoes of an immigrant student from Gabon. What's the first step he has to take before getting an answer? How long does the process take? Where is the application processed? What is the process? Can either of you give us an overview of the process, from the beginning to the good news of admission and the arrival of the French-speaking immigrant in Canada?

**Mr. Alain Desruisseaux:** I'll give the floor to Mr. Jacques.

**Mr. Olivier Jacques:** A Gabonese who wants to emigrate abroad would start by getting informed. He'd start by searching the web for information on immigration to Canada. He would find that there's a wide range of programs—

**Mr. Joël Godin:** Mr. Jacques, please be succinct in your answer. I simply want you to describe to me, in a Cartesian manner, the process followed when a citizen of Gabon submits an application for admission as a student in Canada in a French-speaking region such as Quebec, from the moment the application is received to the moment an answer is given. Then, where are the documents processed and how long does it take?

• (0950)

**Mr. Olivier Jacques:** A Gabonese applying for immigration will gather the documents and, once his application is sent, he may be drafted by the system. If he's invited to submit his application, it will be processed in less than six months so that he can immigrate outside Quebec. Once the visa has been issued and the biometric data provided, the Gabonese can register for an information session, fly to Canada to settle in Toronto, Calgary or Moncton, for example, and start looking for a job quickly. Once in Canada, he can turn to settlement services and take language courses, if necessary, to integrate properly—

**Mr. Joël Godin:** Excuse me, Mr. Jacques. As I understand your answer, it's a matter of luck. The Gabonese registers and, if he's lucky, he's drafted, as you put it. Then, if everything is in order, it takes six months. However, there is an abundance of choice. Once he's here in Canada, does he have to choose where he's going, or is that decided within those six months?

**Mr. Olivier Jacques:** Let me reassure you: it's not a matter of luck, it's a matter of criteria. Once people are in the express entry pool, those who are the most qualified and have the most points will be drafted. Once you invite someone to apply and they're approved, they can indicate where they want to go. They're free to go anywhere in Canada, except Quebec, because Quebec chooses its own immigrants.

**Mr. Joël Godin:** Okay.

In fact, what I understand is that the immigrant has to wait six months, and after that, his score allows him to be drafted, as you said, to enter the pool. Now, don't you think the criteria are too demanding? Shouldn't we make them more flexible, in an economic situation where we're constrained by a lack of manpower? I don't want to propose anything that goes against safety. I think it's a very important element for Canada. But is it just a question of security? Should the criteria be relaxed in order to speed up the process?

I'd also like to take this opportunity to ask for your comments on two article headlines in French-language newspapers concerning Quebec immigration. The English translation of the first is, "Half of

Quebec applications rejected by Ottawa", and the second, "Ottawa accused of delaying francophone immigration". Could you comment on that, please?

**The Chair:** That's an excellent question, Mr. Godin, but you're well over your time.

Ms. Kayabaga, you have the floor for five minutes.

**Ms. Arielle Kayabaga (London West, Lib.):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'd like to thank the witnesses for being here today.

The Government of Canada has invested a historic \$4 billion in the new action plan for official languages. As you know, this plan has four pillars, the first of which is francophone immigration. These investments will make a real difference in halting the decline of French in Canada, and francophone immigration is one of the ways we can do this.

Can you tell us how the investments in this action plan will help organizations on the ground to increase francophone immigration? Secondly, how will it help retain residents of francophone communities?

**Mr. Alain Desruisseaux:** Several measures have been announced in the plan, a number of which will enable the department to further integrate this priority into all its programming and policies. There will be a targeted expansion of promotion and recruitment support, and we're encouraging community involvement in these efforts.

What does this mean for communities? Increased engagement will allow them to better communicate their needs, including their workforce, to our recruitment efforts. Olivier Jacques mentioned the presence last year of a delegation of 20 community representatives at Destination Canada. This is an approach we intend to pursue.

Another important measure I should mention is the strengthening of the francophone integration pathway, which is essentially based on the "by and for francophones" model, and so in very close cooperation with our francophone immigration networks and the welcoming francophone communities initiative. It really is an essential complement to current settlement programming. It's important to have direct settlement services available and adapted in French to meet the needs of communities and, of course, newcomers.

We are pursuing two objectives: the success of our newcomers and the restoration of the francophone demographic weight, and therefore an increase in admissions. Community vitality remains a central objective, and all our measures will enable us to achieve it.

The Centre for Innovation in Francophone Immigration is a measure that will enable the development of partnerships and greater mobilization of partners. The department's efforts will also be directed towards provincial and territorial partners, who have an essential role to play. So this is an important table, and there's already a work plan in place, which we want to revitalize and strengthen with our partners. Some provinces are already very committed, and there are others we'd like to see even more so. When we look at the provincial nominee program, in recent years we've seen a very significant increase in several provinces, including some that traditionally don't prioritize francophone immigration as much as others. So there have been improvements.

Otherwise, language training is still very important. Measures are planned in this area. I'm talking about language training and, obviously, training in French, but also training in English to ensure that people have the necessary tools to meet the needs of the labour market.

• (0955)

**Ms. Arielle Kayabaga:** You've also partly answered my other question, which concerned the retention of French-speaking immigrants in these communities. However, I'd like to ask you a question about application processing. I'm also on the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration, and we've talked a lot about the Chinook tool, which we've heard is causing difficulties. Some people think it's discriminatory. So I'm wondering if this system puts francophone applicants at a disadvantage, and what we can do to change that.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Ms. Kayabaga. You're well over your time. Hopefully, you'll be able to get an answer in the next few questions, but just before going—

[English]

**Ms. Arielle Kayabaga:** Maybe they can table the response.

[Translation]

**The Chair:** Yes. You know that I have to keep everyone's speaking time so that everyone can ask their questions. So, if there are any unanswered questions, I would ask the witnesses to please send their answers to the clerk.

**Ms. Arielle Kayabaga:** To the question I asked, I'd like to have an answer that—

**The Chair:** Yes, Ms. Kayabaga, I can confirm that your question will be answered in writing and sent to the clerk.

**Mr. Joël Godin:** Mr. Chair, I rise on a point of order.

I agree entirely with my colleague Ms. Kayabaga. I asked a question earlier about the application process and processing times, and I'd like to know if the department can provide a reverse table for the six main categories of applicants.

**The Chair:** Mr. Desruisseaux and Mr. Jacques, is it possible to provide us with this information?

**Mr. Alain Desruisseaux:** We'll see what can be done.

**Mr. Joël Godin:** Ha, ha! You're a real politician.

**Mr. Alain Desruisseaux:** That's a question I'll pass on to my internal partners.

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

Ms. Ashton, I see you've reconnected to the meeting from your constituency office. We hope your connection is good.

**Ms. Niki Ashton:** This is the House of Commons connection. If it's not working properly, I don't know what else we can do. Fortunately, Thompson is a small town.

• (1000)

**The Chair:** Your sound is good.

I have a surprise for you: I'm giving you a block of seven and a half minutes to ask your questions, which combines your two previous rounds.

**Ms. Niki Ashton:** Great. Thank you very much.

Mr. Jacques, during the May 9 meeting, you informed us that Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada could ask private companies to open additional visa application centres. Can you explain how you determine whether the department needs to open another visa office, or in other words, what criteria you use to decide to open another visa application centre?

**Mr. Olivier Jacques:** One of the criteria we use to decide whether to open a new visa application centre is the number of applications from applicants who have to provide their biometric data. We regularly review this number, or volume. If there is an increase in volume in a certain region of the world, or in a country where we don't have a visa application centre, we will ask, in consultation with the service provider, to open a visa application centre. It's a business decision, and that's why we talk about volume. We want to make sure that it's viable for our provider to offer this service, which will be funded by the clients who have to provide their biometric data.

Security is another criterion we use. Sometimes it's not possible to open a visa application centre in a given country for security reasons, if it's dangerous to open it, or we're not in a position to do so.

So it's security and cost considerations that determine the choice.

**Ms. Niki Ashton:** I'm going to talk about the double standard when it comes to French-speaking countries. Why are efforts to recruit French-speaking immigrants disproportionately successful in some regions compared to others?

If we look at the proportion of francophones residing in the countries of origin in relation to the number of permanent residence visas granted, the number of new permanent residents from Madagascar, Gabon, Congo or Niger is 10 times lower than the number of new residents from Algeria or France. Do we have a double standard? What are the structural problems within Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada that lead to this discrepancy?

**Mr. Alain Desruisseaux:** I'll ask Mr. Jacques to answer, and I'll add to his answer if necessary.

**Mr. Olivier Jacques:** The department evaluates English-speaking and French-speaking immigrant applications in the same way and according to the same criteria, regardless of the country of origin. There's no difference in the way applications are processed and in the selection criteria applied by public servants.

I don't know the specific situation of the countries mentioned. Why are there far fewer applicants from Madagascar? I don't know the exact situation in Madagascar, but there may be fewer applicants who qualify for our immigration programs. It's also possible that our immigration programs are less well known in this country. I'm speculating here, but it may be a question of promotion and the ability of applicants to qualify for our immigration programs.

**Ms. Niki Ashton:** Thank you for those comments. It's not just Madagascar. The figures are similar in Gabon, Congo and Niger. There seems to be the same problem in several countries.

There's also the fact that the average application fee for a family of four is \$2,400 under the home child care provider program. Do you think these high fees explain why Canada has trouble attracting immigrants from less affluent countries?

• (1005)

**Mr. Olivier Jacques:** I don't have an opinion on whether the fees are too high or not. However, applicants are indeed responsible for raising the money needed for processing fees. They must also demonstrate that they have a certain amount of money at their disposal to settle in Canada. It's true that this can be a particular challenge for applicants from certain African countries, whose socio-economic conditions are not the same as elsewhere in the world. It can therefore be more difficult, in some cases, to raise this sum to immigrate.

**Ms. Niki Ashton:** Is the department making an effort to determine whether the \$2,400 amount, for example, constitutes a barrier for families, particularly from certain countries, who want to immigrate to Canada?

**Mr. Olivier Jacques:** I'm not aware of that.

**Mr. Alain Desruisseaux:** I think that goes beyond the scope of the department. It's an issue that concerns all stakeholders in Canada. In fact, immigration is a national project that concerns us all.

Does Canada offer a globally competitive position? I think we're all looking at this question in depth. In fact, it's all the conditions that make the country more or less attractive. The fact remains that Canada remains a destination of choice and is well positioned. Promotional activities remain essential to ensure that our new arrivals are fully aware of the advantages we have to offer.

**Ms. Niki Ashton:** However, an effort needs to be made to determine whether the \$2,400 fee that currently exists for the home child care provider program is a barrier for many French-speaking countries, particularly in Central Africa and Madagascar, for example.

I'd also like to ask you about the labour shortage. According to the Canadian Association of Immersion Professionals, 10,000 teachers are needed to meet the current demand for French immersion and French as a second language across Canada. We're well aware of this shortage here in Manitoba and in western Canada.

How can we solve this teacher shortage and attract the professionals we need to maintain public services, schools and day cares in French? What is the department doing to recruit teachers and early childhood educators to teach in French or French immersion?

**Mr. Alain Desruisseaux:** I'll start by answering the question, then turn to my colleagues at Canadian Heritage if they'd like to round out my answer.

I'd like to mention a measure in the action plan for official languages: the corridor for the selection and retention of French teachers in Canada. This measure targets the problem you raise, and was the subject of consensus during our public consultations. We are well aware of the importance of this problem in most of our communities.

The process will continue to consolidate measures already in place to facilitate the settlement and integration of newcomers, with an emphasis on strengthening initiatives that are already very successful, such as the welcoming francophone communities initiative.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Desruisseaux. I know it's short, but we're well over Ms. Ashton's time, as we're at eight and a half minutes.

Ms. Ashton, you can speak again later if you have any further questions.

We'll now give the floor to Marc Dalton for five minutes.

**Mr. Marc Dalton (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge, CPC):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you to the witnesses as well.

Mr. Desruisseaux, the Réseau de développement économique et d'employabilité states that there is a mismatch between the country's real labour needs and the profiles of selected candidates. What is the source of this problem and, in your opinion, what corrective measures need to be taken?

**Mr. Alain Desruisseaux:** It essentially concerns our selection policies, which articulate a set of criteria that guide our choices. There has been a great deal of progress over the years in terms of matching labour needs with applicant profiles. We note that, on the whole, economic immigration programs are successful and work well.

There are challenges. The match isn't always perfect, but we understand that the economy is evolving, as are labour market needs. Round tables are in place, which are essential for keeping an eye on changing needs. This involves all stakeholders. When the immigration levels plan is drawn up, all partners are consulted. So—

• (1010)

**Mr. Marc Dalton:** I'm going to have to interrupt you, as I don't have much time.

A witness told us at the last meeting that 90% of immigrants don't work in their field of expertise. Yet these people who come here are the cream of the crop in their countries. This situation is maddening, frustrating and discouraging. It's a loss for their country and a waste for us in Canada. I'd like to hear your comments on this.

**Mr. Alain Desruisseaux:** I think communication is crucial. When promoting Canada as a destination of choice, it's important that information about the opportunities available is clear, the aim being to manage expectations. Efforts are made to clarify the challenges, difficulties and opportunities. However, our candidates also have a duty to inform themselves.

Credential recognition was mentioned earlier. It's certainly a persistent challenge that affects a number of candidates.

**Mr. Marc Dalton:** Let me give you a more specific example. In Canada, there are 20,000 doctors and over 30,000 nurses who don't work in the health care field. That's a real loss for us, given the shortage of doctors. These figures apply to Canada as a whole, but can you tell us if the situation is the same for francophone and francophile immigrants?

**Mr. Alain Desruisseaux:** Unfortunately, I don't have any detailed information that would enable me to distinguish French-speaking candidates from others who might be faced with such a situation. It's a little beyond the scope of my responsibilities, but—

**Mr. Marc Dalton:** Excuse me, but I only have a few seconds at my disposal.

Doesn't the fact that skilled immigrants can't enter our professional communities discourage them from coming here? Doesn't that encourage them to immigrate elsewhere?

**Mr. Alain Desruisseaux:** We bring in large numbers of skilled workers, and many skilled workers dream of coming here. Despite the obstacles—

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Desruisseaux. I have to be fair to everyone.

I'll now give the floor to Mr. Iacono for five minutes.

• (1015)

**Mr. Angelo Iacono (Alfred-Pellan, Lib.):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'd also like to thank the witnesses for being here this morning.

Mr. Jacques, can you tell us where Canada's largest francophone immigration pool is located, and what measures the government is taking to promote our country to the francophone populations in this pool?

**Mr. Olivier Jacques:** The country with the largest French-speaking immigration pool outside Quebec is Cameroon, in Africa, which had significant numbers in 2022, but also in 2023.

What are we doing to promote Canada to Cameroon's French-speaking population? First, there are marketing activities. In particular, we've bought advertising on Google to promote immigration to Canada to those who might be interested in Cameroon and other French-speaking countries.

Next, we began organizing virtual and in-person sessions to promote immigration to Canada, during which we talk about the immigration process and French-speaking communities outside Quebec to interested candidates.

Finally, there's the Destination Canada Mobility Forum event. As I said, this is an annual forum in which people can also participate online. There are candidates from Cameroon who attend to get information and decide if they're interested in immigrating to Canada.

**Mr. Angelo Iacono:** You only mentioned Cameroon. Can you mention a second country?

**Mr. Olivier Jacques:** For the first few months of 2023, the top five countries of origin for French-speaking permanent residents were Cameroon, France, Morocco, Algeria and Congo. That gives you an idea.

**Mr. Angelo Iacono:** Thank you.

Mr. Desruisseaux, can you tell us about the collaboration between the federal government and other levels of government on francophone immigration? How could we work better with other levels of government to increase francophone immigration?

**Mr. Alain Desruisseaux:** This work is already under way. We work well together. We want to mobilize our partners more. Some partners are very committed.

**Mr. Angelo Iacono:** Could you tell us which ones are very committed and which ones aren't?

**Mr. Alain Desruisseaux:** I can tell you that the Ontario and New Brunswick governments are very committed, and we have other partners—

**Mr. Angelo Iacono:** What about the Quebec government?

**Mr. Alain Desruisseaux:** The Quebec government is very committed, of course. I don't talk about it as much because we're mainly talking about francophone immigration outside Quebec, but we have a very good working relationship with the Quebec government.

In the agreements we're negotiating with the Ontario and New Brunswick governments, there have long been annexes concerning francophone immigration. This is something we're looking at with other governments as well, to apply a francophone lens from the outset, and to better promote the economic opportunities associated with francophone immigration. These discussions are already well under way with several partners. I won't point the finger at anyone, but I can say that some stakeholders aren't very interested in francophone immigration in general. That said, they're doing more and more, so we're making good progress.

A federal-provincial working group on francophone immigration outside Quebec is already in place, and I mentioned earlier that we intend to revitalize it a little. We're also looking at governance, an area of great interest to our counterparts at the Ministers' Council on the Canadian Francophonie. We're going to want to ensure close communication between the various working groups, since this is an objective that involves all stakeholders. This is a very horizontal issue, and the contribution of the provinces and territories will be essential. So there's no doubt that collaboration is critical.

• (1020)

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Desruisseaux and Mr. Iacono.

Mr. Beaulieu, you have the floor for two and a half minutes.

**Mr. Mario Beaulieu:** Earlier, you said that the rate of refusal of temporary permits to African students was due to the fact that African students make more fraudulent applications for study permits than other applicants. They're applying for a study permit when they're actually applying for something else. Did I understand correctly?

**Mr. Olivier Jacques:** Yes. I mentioned three reasons for this refusal rate: the high number of fraudulent applications, insufficient funds and the genuine intention to study in Canada, what we call good faith.

**Mr. Mario Beaulieu:** Did you say that there are more cases of fraud among African students who apply?

**Mr. Olivier Jacques:** That's not what I said. I don't have the figures to know whether, of all the students in the world, it's African students who make the most fraudulent applications. What I did say was that there are regular cases of fraudulent applications from African students. However, this is also the case in other parts of the world.

**Mr. Mario Beaulieu:** You say we're rejecting more applications from African students.

**Mr. Olivier Jacques:** That's one of the reasons why there are more rejections.

**Mr. Mario Beaulieu:** That's not clear.

I told you about a Radio-Canada article that mentions a study by the Institut du Québec. According to this study, the refusal rate in Quebec is higher than in other provinces, such as Ontario or British Columbia. But you're telling us this isn't true. Can you send the committee some figures on this?

**Mr. Olivier Jacques:** Yes, we could send you some figures. However, we'd have to agree on the wording of exactly what you want. Of course, we'd be happy to provide you with statistics to that effect.

**Mr. Mario Beaulieu:** Okay, you can send us that.

My other question—

**The Chair:** You have five seconds left, Mr. Beaulieu.

**Mr. Mario Beaulieu:** In that case, I'd like to thank the witnesses for their testimony.

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

Ms. Ashton, you have the floor for two and a half minutes.

**Ms. Niki Ashton:** Mr. Jacques, you said that Cameroon is currently the main source of francophone immigrants. Our country wants to welcome immigrants, and there's a great deal of interest in Canada. People come here, but on the other hand, the government refuses to increase diplomatic services in Yaoundé, Cameroon, and prefers to entrust consular services in Dakar with the processing of applications from Cameroon and several other countries.

Would it be important to increase consular services in Cameroon, given that this is a priority immigrant pool for Canada?

**Mr. Olivier Jacques:** In 2022, Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada opened a visa office in Yaoundé, Cameroon, with two employees, two Canadian diplomats. This recognizes the importance of this potential recruitment pool for Canada. The office will promote francophone immigration. It will also print visas and place them in passports.

The processing of applications from Cameroon, which are electronic applications, can be divided between different offices. Some applications can be processed by our colleagues in Dakar. To be more equitable, the department can also take advantage of its network to process applications in parallel, which would bring processing times down to the global average. Adding resources in Cameroon would not have a direct impact on speeding up the processing of applications.

**Ms. Niki Ashton:** Thank you for this information.

Given the ambitious targets that Canada has set for itself, two people seem to me to be insufficient. We want to make sure we have the capacity to accommodate these people in our offices.

Is that—

• (1025)

**The Chair:** Ms. Ashton, I'm sorry to interrupt you, but your time is up and there's not much time left before we have to move on to Mr. Godin's motion.

As chair of the committee, I don't usually ask questions, but today I'm going to.

Mr. Jacques, the members have asked you many questions. Can you send written answers to the committee? Often, the questions are short, but time is short. What's more, I sometimes have to interrupt members or witnesses, because I have to ensure that the time allotted to committee members is respected.

You mentioned the three main reasons why applications from French-speaking Africa are rejected: fraud, bad faith and lack of funds. With regard to bad faith, you said that 80% of applicants who should have studied at the Université du Québec à Trois-Rivières had done something else. As for the lack of funds, you said that people didn't have enough money to stay in Canada. I'd like you to provide the committee with the details of those three main reasons. Obviously, if there are others, the committee would like to know about them.

In particular, I'd like more details on this fraud, what it is exactly, and how to confirm it. As for bad faith, how did you determine that only 20% of students really came to study, but the rest didn't come to study or were doing something else? Anyway, you understand what I'm asking. I'd like you to provide the committee with all the information in this regard.

In addition, in response to a question from Mr. Godin, you gave the example of a Gabonese who applies for immigration, but this example could apply to anyone from any French-speaking African country. When that person enters the system, they can be "drafted", which is the term you used, if memory serves. When it comes to hockey, I know what "being drafted" means, but I'm not sure what it means when it comes to immigration. Can you explain it to me and tell me what it means? Who is more likely to be drafted or not? I'd like you to send your answers to the committee.

Finally, having heard the answers given to the various questions posed by members, I have come to the conclusion that there seems to be a lack of points of service where French-speaking Africans can apply and express their desire to come to Canada. Where in French-speaking Africa do you think services related to immigrant applications should be improved? You mentioned Madagascar, but you said you didn't know the situation there very well. It's a long way from our usual offices.

Those are the questions I'd like to have answered in writing. Have I made myself clear or would you like me to repeat them?

**Mr. Olivier Jacques:** I'll consult my colleagues in the department, and we'll try to answer the questions that have been raised.

**The Chair:** That's fine, thank you very much.

I'd like to thank all the witnesses for their patience. They can stay here if they wish.

For its part, the committee will now move on to Mr. Godin's motion. I now give him the floor.

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

I, too, would like to thank the witnesses for their participation and presence.

I think everyone has received the text of the motion, which is simply intended to contribute to the report on increased francophone immigration to Canada. One of the key players is the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship.

I will read the motion in its entirety.

That, in relation to the study on increased francophone immigration to Canada, the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship be invited to appear for a full hour.

I think he's the conductor. I also think that the officials do an excellent job on political directives. When you're a minister, you have to imbue the machine with philosophy. I think it's important for the committee to hear the minister's testimony.

**The Chair:** Great.

Before opening the debate on the motion, I'd like to put things in context. We had talked about holding five meetings for this study, and today is the second.

**Mr. Joël Godin:** Mr. Chair, on a point of order, it's not "five meetings", it's "a minimum of five meetings".

**The Chair:** That's right. Thank you for the correction.

So we've held two meetings out of a minimum of five. I'd now like to remind committee members of what's planned between now and next week. Last week, we decided unanimously that there would be no meeting next Tuesday, because of the votes and everything else going on in the House. Next Friday, the Commissioner of Official Languages will testify before the committee for one hour. We'll also be hearing from the two witnesses whose attendance has been continually postponed due to technical breakdowns, votes and so on.

There you have it. We'll now move on to Mr. Godin's motion. Go ahead, Mr. Godin.

• (1030)

**Mr. Joël Godin:** You'll understand that my motion doesn't specify that we have to table the report before the end of the session. I'm very comfortable with the fact that it can be tabled next fall. However, before we conclude this study, I would like to hear the minister's testimony.

**The Chair:** Perfect. I just wanted everyone to be on the same page and know where we are and where we're going.

Ms. Ashton, you have the floor.

**Ms. Niki Ashton:** I agree with the motion. I too think we'll have to continue in September. I wonder what the procedure is for adding meetings given that our original motion was for "a minimum of five meetings".

**The Chair:** I imagine that, once we've reached the end of the five meetings, the committee will have to consider the need to hear from other witnesses, of whom we've had quite a list after all. The clerk invites the witnesses to come based on the priorities that each of the political parties has provided and on the distribution of political parties in the House of Commons. There is still time to hear these witnesses, and I'm glad Mr. Godin pointed out that we don't have to conclude this study before the summer.

So that takes some pressure off the committee's shoulders in terms of the minimum three meetings that remain. So let's just get on with it. At the end of next week, we'll see where we stand. If we hold four meetings before the summer, we'll come back for the fifth in September and see what happens next. That's my suggestion.

Mr. Généreux, you have the floor.

**Mr. Bernard Généreux (Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, CPC):** I've just woken up: I was convinced that our meeting was ending at half past, whereas it normally ends at quarter to, if I'm not mistaken. I would have liked to have had the floor earlier to ask the witnesses questions, knowing that we only had a motion to discuss afterwards.



**The Chair:** Since you've just woken up, I would remind you that Mr. Godin wanted to propose his motion, and asked us when the best time would be to do so. I suggested half past. In the end, it only took five minutes to debate it, which we couldn't have anticipated. That's why the witnesses left at half past.

**Mr. Darrell Samson:** I must say, Mr. Généreux, that my two and a half minutes of speaking time has also been cut. I was ready.

**Mr. Joël Godin:** Mr. Chair, I simply wanted to lighten the load for my colleague from Nova Scotia, considering that he's having more difficulty speaking today.

**The Chair:** We do hope our colleague's teeth are fine. Before adjourning—

• (1035)

**The Clerk of the Committee (Ms. Audrée Dallaire):** Excuse me, Mr. Chair, but does the motion carry?

**The Chair:** Excuse me, Madam Clerk. Thank you for bringing me back to order and waking me up too.

After checking, I see that none of the committee members are opposed to Mr. Godin's motion.

(Motion agreed to)

**The Chair:** I would like to remind everyone that there will be no meeting next Tuesday, as we decided unanimously not to hold one. Next Friday, the Commissioner of Official Languages will be here for an hour. After that, the two witnesses whose appearance we've postponed three times, the poor people, will come and share their knowledge with us. I hope there will be more meetings the following week.

The meeting is adjourned.

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