



HOUSE OF COMMONS  
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES  
CANADA

44th PARLIAMENT, 1st SESSION

---

# Standing Committee on Official Languages

EVIDENCE

**NUMBER 072**

Monday, October 30, 2023

---

Chair: Mr. René Arseneault





## Standing Committee on Official Languages

Monday, October 30, 2023

• (1105)

[*Translation*]

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

Welcome to the 72nd meeting of the House of Commons Standing Committee on Official Languages.

Pursuant to Standing Order 108(3) and the motion adopted by the committee on October 18, 2023, the committee is meeting to commence its study on bilingualism in the Royal Canadian Mounted Police Senior Executive Committee.

Since all of the people present in the room or on the monitor are old hands, I will not give the instructions relating to Zoom and microphones. I will simply remind you to make sure your earpiece is not too close to the microphone when you are speaking, since that would result in feedback that can damage our interpreters' hearing.

Our witnesses from the Royal Canadian Mounted Police are the Commissioner, Michael Duheme, and the Chief Human Resources Officer, Nadine Huggins.

Mr. Duheme and Ms. Huggins, I would like to welcome you for this first hour. Even though you are old hands, I will remind you of the format. There will be two rounds of questions. The first will be six minutes for each party and the second round will consist of slightly shorter times.

Let's begin the questions.

**Mr. Mario Beaulieu (La Pointe-de-l'Île, BQ):** Is there a presentation?

**The Chair:** Yes, that's right; I'm sorry.

**An hon. member:** The Chair was going a bit too fast.

**The Chair:** Thank you for reminding me, because I was getting carried away.

Before the first period of questions, we allow the witnesses five minutes, and no more. I am very strict when it comes to speaking time, because I want to let everyone have the same opportunity to be able to ask as many questions as possible, in accordance with the time allocation we have agreed on.

Mr. Duheme, you have the floor for five minutes.

**Commr Michael Duheme (Commissioner, Royal Canadian Mounted Police):** Thank you and good morning, Mr. Chair, Vice-Chairs, and members of the committee. Thank you for the invitation to be with you today to continue the discussion.

I am joined by Nadine Huggins, Chief Human Resources Officer.

The RCMP is unique in the world in that it has international, federal, provincial and municipal responsibility. It has 30,000 employees: 19,000 regular members, who are police officers, and 11,000 Public Service employees or civilian members.

The RCMP has three distinct mandates. Its first mandate is to offer front-line policing services in eight provinces and three territories, including over 150 municipalities and 600 indigenous communities. Its second mandate is to act as the federal police force, responsible for organized crime, cross-border services, national security, cybercrime, financial crime, VIP protection, international deployments, and criminal intelligence. Its third mandate is to offer specialized police services such as Air Services, laboratories, covert techniques, and several other services in sectors that support police organizations in Canada.

Being bilingual, I do not need to tell you that I believe both official languages to be a key element of our culture of inclusion. I welcome this opportunity to speak with you about the RCMP's current strategy to comply with the Official Languages Act.

Across the organization, 87.5% of employees in bilingual positions meet the requirements of their position. For Public Service employees that number is 91%, while it is 95% for civilian members and 82% for the regular members, the police officers.

[*English*]

As reported, we do face certain challenges among senior management with respect to bilingualism. I'm pleased that public service employees at the EX-01 to EX-05 levels meet their language requirements in about 98% of bilingual positions, while that percentage is unfortunately only 59% for officer-level regular members in bilingual positions.

With the organization focused on its operational mandate of ensuring public safety, we have struggled at times in ensuring our full compliance with the act, but I'm committed to improving second-language competencies across senior leadership and the entire organization.

To support this, I approved an official languages strategy, with implementation to start this fall. It is centred on four priority areas: strengthening leadership in official languages, promoting legislative compliance with the Official Languages Act, creating a culture of inclusion, and ensuring accountability, transparency, and measuring progress.

[Translation]

As part of the Strategy, we will determine compliance gaps and barriers. Executives and officer-level regular members who do not meet the bilingual requirements will undergo assessments and initiate training to ensure they will become compliant. This is happening at the highest levels, including at the deputy commissioner level.

The RCMP is focusing on preparing the leaders of tomorrow by ensuring that officers and executives are better equipped to perform leadership roles. As well, we are actively engaged in developing future leaders. We are ensuring that officers and executives meet the language requirements of their position and are supported throughout their career, in order to promote a genuinely bilingual and inclusive working environment where the use of both official languages is welcome.

• (1110)

[English]

French and English are the anchors of our diversity and inclusion. We are increasingly being asked to provide policing services in other languages as well, such as Mandarin, Hindi and Punjabi, in order to effectively meet the evolving needs of communities across the country.

All of our efforts are meant to strengthen the RCMP's ability to ensure public safety, while simultaneously improving compliance with the act.

[Translation]

Thank you, and we will be pleased to answer your questions.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Commissioner Duheme.

You gave your presentation in four minutes, which leaves even more time for members to ask their questions. Next, each of the parties will have six minutes of speaking time.

We will begin with the first vice-chair of the committee.

Joël Godin, you have the floor.

**Mr. Joël Godin (Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier, CPC):** Mr. Chair, if you say there is more time, you could give me seven minutes.

Commissioner, thank you for being here this morning. I am going to ask you my questions in rapid succession because we do not have a lot of time.

Are you familiar with the RCMP's official languages obligations?

**Commr Michael Duheme:** Yes, I am broadly familiar with them. The details are another matter, because there are so many laws.

**Mr. Joël Godin:** Starting in 1988, the Commissioner has had to ensure that the official languages are respected. In 2023, with Bill C-13, the Commissioner is no longer asked simply to ensure that the official languages are respected; he now has a duty to enforce the provisions of the Act.

What has changed for you between the version of the Official Languages Act that existed before Bill C-13 and the version that has been in force since June 2023?

**Commr Michael Duheme:** With respect to monitoring the organization, I can't answer for what happened from 1988 to today. I can tell you that the changes imposed by Treasury Board concerning positions have been brought to our attention. In two years, there is going to be an increase in the number of bilingual positions everywhere in Canada.

We have started to examine and modify our current strategy. So I am not familiar with what was done before, but since I have held the position of Commissioner, we have established a strategy for bilingualism in the organization.

**Mr. Joël Godin:** How long have you held this position?

**Commr Michael Duheme:** I have held this position since March 18 of this year.

**Mr. Joël Godin:** When the bill came into force in June, you were informed.

**Commr Michael Duheme:** Yes, we were informed. I don't believe the organization was in a good position, in terms of the processes in place, to monitor all the bilingual positions.

The strategy we are adopting is intended precisely to create a balance so that we are able to identify the positions in question and monitor them.

**Mr. Joël Godin:** So between June and today, nothing has changed in your operations.

**Commr Michael Duheme:** It is just the planning that has changed, yes.

**Mr. Joël Godin:** Have you seen the article by Daniel Leblanc that was published on October 3?

**Commr Michael Duheme:** I have seen it, since Mr. Leblanc called me.

**Mr. Joël Godin:** Is everything in that article true?

**Commr Michael Duheme:** It seems it is, since Mr. Leblanc is an accredited journalist. However, I think I could add some clarifications regarding bilingualism in the senior executive committee of the organization, if you like, when it's a good time.

**Mr. Joël Godin:** What you are saying is that everything in that article is true.

**Commr Michael Duheme:** I would have to refresh my memory. At the time I read it, however, it seemed to me to be true.

**Mr. Joël Godin:** If there had been anything false, I am sure that, being as meticulous as you are, you would have responded. Can we put it that way?

**Commr Michael Duheme:** We would have had a discussion.

**Mr. Joël Godin:** Did Treasury Board communicate with you after the article was published?

**Commr Michael Duheme:** No, but I had a conversation with the Minister, Mr. LeBlanc.

**Mr. Joël Godin:** What about Treasury Board?

The Minister is not responsible for enforcing the law. Did Mr. LeBlanc tell you that he had received instructions and had had his knuckles rapped by Treasury Board?

**Commr Michael Duheme:** The Minister did not tell me that. I have not had a call from Treasury Board, myself.

**Mr. Joël Godin:** According to the article, [*Translation*] "The RCMP explained that it could not provide the exact number of people who do not meet the language requirements of their position, because of confidentiality policies."

Can you explain the reasoning behind all that?

**Commr Michael Duheme:** I have to admit that I read that part of the article recently. I do not understand why the organization would have said that it is a matter of confidentiality. It is just numbers, and I am making sure I follow up. I was surprised when I read that while I was preparing for this committee meeting.

**Mr. Joël Godin:** I think the same thing as you. Is it possible to provide us with those figures?

**Commr Michael Duheme:** I undertake to make sure the figures are provided to you.

• (1115)

**Mr. Joël Godin:** Ms. Huggins, thank you for being with us. The article you quote says: [*Translation*] "... only francophones currently receive second language courses during their training in Saskatchewan. Anglophone recruits do not take French courses at this time, but that is coming."

Commissioner, how do you explain that francophones want to learn English, but anglophones do not want to learn French? Do you not think there is a gap in your organization when it comes to encouraging anglophones to learn French? After all, on our bilingual country, you understand that it is French that is in a vulnerable position.

Can you tell us a bit more on this subject?

**Commr Michael Duheme:** If I may, I am going to let Ms. Huggins say a bit more about how training works and the reason why we have put the francophone component in place before the anglophone component.

**Ms. Nadine Huggins (Chief Human Resources Officer, Royal Canadian Mounted Police):** Thank you for the question.

We put the francophone component in place to make sure we can offer service in French everywhere in Canada. There are official language minority communities everywhere in Canada and we would like to have people able to speak French in those communities.

With respect to training anglophones, we have started to plan the French learning project. However, we have policies everywhere in the organization to ensure that training is in both languages, because bilingualism also includes English. We are trying to train people in English and French. That means that everyone is entitled to training.

**Mr. Joël Godin:** However, there is really no incentive for anglophones to learn French.

**Ms. Nadine Huggins:** Certainly it is essential for anglophones...

**Mr. Joël Godin:** No. Is there a motivation program to incentivize anglophones to learn French?

**Ms. Nadine Huggins:** Yes. We offer a bilingualism bonus, to both francophones and anglophones.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Ms. Huggins.

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

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

Welcome, Commissioner, Ms. Huggins.

Commissioner, what is your plan for correcting the fact that the Royal Canadian Mounted Police has bilingual positions that are held by unilingual anglophone officers, as one of the witnesses stated on Wednesday?

**Commr Michael Duheme:** Bilingualism has presented challenges for several years because of a number of factors.

There are two different types of training that we can give members of the organization. For the police officers, taking training to achieve a certain level of second language proficiency is a challenge in itself, given the operational requirements. Sometimes, that means we have to give a bilingual position to someone who is unilingual in order to fulfil the organization's mandate, which is to ensure the safety of Canadians.

There is also the entire question of the distribution of personnel from one end of Canada to the other, as well as other factors such as the fact that people are moving less and less frequently to fill these positions.

**Mr. Angelo Iacono:** When people do not have the necessary language skills, are they hired for a certain period only, or full-time?

**Commr Michael Duheme:** They are hired full-time, on the condition that they work on achieving a certain level of proficiency in the second language.

**Mr. Angelo Iacono:** Are there new people who will be filling these bilingual positions?

**Commr Michael Duheme:** That becomes a staffing issue. It depends on the people who join the organization and the ones who want to be transferred elsewhere in the country, for example.

**Mr. Angelo Iacono:** For unilingual officers, do you require that they take French courses?

**Commr Michael Duheme:** There is no obligation for unilingual officers. Some want to upgrade their second language knowledge. People who aspire to certain positions take those courses of their own volition, but do it when they can, given that there are always operational requirements.

**Mr. Angelo Iacono:** Did you say just now that new employees were hired part-time or full-time?

**Commr Michael Duheme:** New employees are always hired full-time.

**Mr. Angelo Iacono:** Right.

Do they have an obligation, or are they subject to specific conditions? What are the criteria? You know that we increasingly need bilingual officers. Have you changed how you do things?

• (1120)

**Commr Michael Duheme:** It is done by recruiting, for one thing, and Ms. Huggins and I have discussed the importance of recruiting more bilingual people in order to fill the positions and prepare the organization for the change that is coming in two years, when the number of positions will increase in several detachments.

**Mr. Angelo Iacono:** Can you explain the hiring process to the committee?

**Commr Michael Duheme:** Are you talking about the process for entering the organization? I am going to let Ms. Huggins explain it very briefly, because we could spend one hour on that.

**Ms. Nadine Huggins:** Some of our employees handle attracting people to our organization so they will apply. Our preselection process enables us to ensure that the people are able to perform the necessary work.

We always try to get a certain number of bilingual graduates from Depot. We have also started increasing the number of bilingual classes. Normally, there are two a year, but we have already arranged to have three this year. We are planning to increase that number.

We have bilingual personnel and francophone personnel. Some people decide to join the anglophone personnel, even if they are bilingual or francophone.

**Mr. Angelo Iacono:** Since March 18, when you were made aware of the changes or procedures relating to bilingualism requirements, do you deal with candidates who are applying in the same way as before?

**Ms. Nadine Huggins:** We follow the same process for everyone.

**Mr. Angelo Iacono:** So the process has not changed when it comes to bilingualism.

**Ms. Nadine Huggins:** No.

**Mr. Angelo Iacono:** Right.

Do you go looking for candidates or do you just deal with the candidates who apply?

**Commr Michael Duheme:** There is a recruitment strategy in place. I would point out that fewer and fewer people are interested in working in policing. The pool of candidates is therefore smaller than it was, and this has an effect on bilingualism among the troops.

However, I can tell you that according to the recent figures I have seen, in Montreal, a lot of people want to become members of the RCMP. What we want to do is try to fill the vacuum that has been created over the years.

**The Chair:** Mr. Iacono, your speaking time is up.

The next round of questions will begin with the second vice-chair of the committee.

Mr. Beaulieu, you have the floor.

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

Thank you for being here, Commissioner.

Does the RCMP have to follow the Official Languages Act?

**Commr Michael Duheme:** Yes, we have to follow the Official Languages Act. However, in the environment we find ourselves in at present, there is a gap, in terms of bilingualism, between senior managers and new employees. That gap has grown over the years and that is exactly what we are trying to correct with the plan we are proposing.

**Mr. Mario Beaulieu:** Should the RCMP not set an example for following the Act? If not, does that mean that the Official Languages Act is less important than other laws?

The RCMP has not been following the Official Languages Act for years and years now.

**Commr Michael Duheme:** I would say that for all the positions we are trying to staff in the organization, we are looking first and foremost for bilingual candidates. Sometimes the candidates available for key positions, for which we need expertise in a certain field, have not had the opportunity to learn French or a second language. That is what puts us in this position.

**Mr. Mario Beaulieu:** What I don't understand is that even in the Radio-Canada article, it says that you hire unilingual anglophones who hold senior ranking positions but are not taking French training. They do not speak a word of French and are also not taking training.

It seems to me that there could be minimum requirements for these people to take French courses. The exceptions for specialist positions should account for a tiny minority.

• (1125)

**Commr Michael Duheme:** I would like to clarify some details regarding our senior executive committee. It is composed of ten people. I can assure you that of those ten people, four have a valid profile, two are in the process of renewing their profile, which has expired, and three do not have a valid profile. Of those three positions, one is in British Columbia and the other is in Alberta. Formerly, those two positions did not have to be bilingual, since they were in anglophone environments.

Given the change to the Act and relating to assistant deputy ministers and persons with equivalent rank, those two provinces present a challenge, since they are the ones with the largest number of members.

**Mr. Mario Beaulieu:** What is complicated is that the bilingualism problem does not affect only the senior ranks; it seems to exist everywhere in the organization, whose culture does not respect French.

In 2016, we learned in the media that 16,000 RCMP positions required English, 19,000 were bilingual, and 19,000 required knowledge of French. However, in 2019, all 21,134 regular members of the RCMP held positions designated as not requiring knowledge of French. Some of those positions required knowledge of English, but no positions required knowledge of French, which does not suggest that the RCMP intends to follow the Act.

Normally, when jobs require knowledge of French, it means that the people supervising them will have to know French. However, everything seems to have been arranged so that it is not necessary to speak French in the RCMP.

**Commr Michael Duheme:** I was reared by anglophone parents in a francophone community. I think of myself as having been spoiled, to have become bilingual at a very young age, and I do not hesitate to promote French in the organization. I encourage people who aspire to climb the ranks in the organization to learn French.

**Mr. Mario Beaulieu:** Those are good intentions, but are you committed to there being positions designated as requiring knowledge of French?

**Commr Michael Duheme:** I believe there are in Quebec.

**Mr. Mario Beaulieu:** There are not even any in Quebec.

I know a former officer who works with an association of former RCMP officers and really believes that French is laughed at in the RCMP. He makes complaints and gets no response. It is difficult to understand why no position requires knowledge of French in Quebec.

**Commr Michael Duheme:** I am going to do some checking. There are unilingual anglophone positions in Canada and I do not understand why there would not be unilingual francophone positions in Quebec. I undertake to have this question followed up.

**Mr. Mario Beaulieu:** Right.

The other thing is training. Before, there might have been training in French. Now, there no longer is. Training is now bilingual, and that has been criticized.

Stéphanie Chouinard, a political scientist at the Military College of Canada, said that in bilingual situations, francophones are always at a disadvantage, as we can see everywhere. Can you therefore commit to going back to having training in French?

**Commr Michael Duheme:** Yes, it is very important to go back to having training in French. We have to offer training in the language chosen by the individual.

**Mr. Mario Beaulieu:** I am not talking about bilingual training, here.

**Commr Michael Duheme:** Yes, we are talking about training in French. In fact, we are increasing the number of francophone personnel at Depot. Historically, throughout the organization, courses in French have always presented a challenge, one that we want to meet today.

**Mr. Mario Beaulieu:** If there is no training in French for francophones, there will be no respect for French. I have spoken with Roméo Dallaire, who told me it was the same in the army: if a unit did not have 80 to 90% francophone members, English was the language that dominated.

**Commr Michael Duheme:** When I was in Manitoba, I visited the St-Pierre-Jolys detachment and that was the first time I encountered a detachment where the conversation took place entirely in French.

**The Chair:** Bravo!

That is all the time we have, Mr. Beaulieu.

We will now go to Manitoba.

Ms. Ashton, you have the floor for six minutes.

**Ms. Niki Ashton (Churchill—Keewatinook Aski, NDP):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

First, Commissioner, we appreciate your promise to provide us with the exact number of people who do not meet the language requirements of their position. Because that had been raised by one of my colleagues, we were disappointed by the news, as published in the media, that you could not do that for confidentiality reasons. I am glad you recognize how essential it is to have that information.

Could you tell us the percentage of bilingual positions, unilingual French positions and unilingual English positions in the RCMP?

• (1130)

**Commr Michael Duheme:** I am going to ask Ms. Huggins to help me with some of the percentages. In the RCMP, 87.5% of the individuals who have a bilingual position meet the language criteria. That represents about 652 positions.

I don't know whether we have the statistics for unilingual positions, so I am going to ask Ms. Huggins. However, if we do not have the answer now, I will be glad to provide that information later.

**The Chair:** Ms. Ashton, I am stopping the clock for long enough to remind the witnesses that they can submit any additional information to our clerk, who will forward it to the committee members.

**Commr Michael Duheme:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** Ms. Ashton, you may continue.

**Ms. Niki Ashton:** Thank you. Yes, we would like to receive that information.

[English]

As the member of Parliament for northern Manitoba, I'm very concerned about the temporary closures of RCMP detachments here in our region, in Snow Lake and in Cranberry Portage. Communities in our region fear that these will be permanent closures.

In response, the RCMP has made reference to challenges when it comes to recruitment.

[Translation]

We are hearing about challenges relating to francophone and bilingual positions now. This is not the fault of Canadians who expect to receive services from the RCMP. The RCMP has an obligation to provide those services and to follow the laws, in this case the Official Languages Act.

Given that you have referred to the problems involved in recruiting, what are you doing in that regard and what do you need from the federal government in order to find solutions that apply to our communities in northern Manitoba and communities that depend on bilingual or francophone services?

**Commr Michael Duheme:** Mr. Chair, since the question seems to relate mainly to recruiting, I can assure you that we have revised the recruitment process and we have changed things.

For example, before, we required that each candidate be prepared to work anywhere in Canada. We have eliminated that requirement and we are now seeing a fairly significant increase in the number of people showing an interest in the RCMP in several regions. From now on, they know they will be able to come back to their home province if they want, or go to the province of their choice. That is a definite positive.

There will be other changes to implement the recommendations we have received from our officers or commands in each of the provinces.

**Ms. Niki Ashton:** Let's talk about recruitment and how to encourage people to be bilingual. Do you offer RCMP officers who want to take French courses paid leave, even if they are in a unilingual position? What kind of efforts do you make to encourage unilingual anglophones to learn French?

**Commr Michael Duheme:** There are several aspects to the question of bilingualism on the part of our employees. First, a person who wants to advance and access certain positions in the organization has to learn French, because French opens doors for them. Second, there are several programs for learning French. When sector demands require it, we can ask an officer to go to school eight hours a day, in training, to learn French. That is still done, and you heard Ms. Huggins, for example, talk about our school at Depot, where francophones arrive 13 weeks before their police training to learn English.

We have a number of incentives, as well as a program that enables people who wish to take training at their expense to get a refund, just by filling out a form.

To go back to Ms. Huggins' comments on the subject of bilingualism, when someone holds a bilingual position, they receive a bilingualism bonus that is attached to the position. I think there are a lot of incentives, including promotion, the financial aspect, and learning a second language itself.

• (1135)

**Ms. Niki Ashton:** We understand that a program is offered to francophones who want to learn or improve their English. However, to go back to the second part of my question, can you tell us how many anglophones are now taking French courses, or take them each year? If you do not have that information, could you send it to us as soon as possible?

**Commr Michael Duheme:** We are going to check that and we undertake to send you those figures. Because I only have five seconds left, I want to point out that the budget that is assigned to language training has risen considerably: this year, we have invested \$2.5 million, whereas in previous years the budget was \$1.3 to \$1.4 million.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Thank you, Ms. Ashton.

The next two speakers will have five minutes each.

[English]

Welcome to this committee, Mr. Brock. The floor is yours for five minutes.

[Translation]

**Mr. Larry Brock (Brantford—Brant, CPC):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Good morning, Mr. Duheme and Ms. Huggins.

[English]

Commissioner, you'll agree with me that there are certain basic legal tenets in criminal law. Number one is that ignorance of the law is no excuse. No Canadian is above the law, and the Criminal Code applies to all Canadians, including members of Parliament and the Prime Minister himself.

Is that correct?

**Commr Michael Duheme:** I agree.

**Mr. Larry Brock:** Notwithstanding that, no sitting Prime Minister has ever been charged criminally and/or convicted of—

[Translation]

**Mr. Darrell Samson (Sackville—Preston—Chezzetcook, Lib.):** I have a point of order, Mr. Chair.

**The Chair:** Just a minute, Mr. Brock.

Mr. Samson, you have the floor.

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

I would like to point out that the questions that are being asked have nothing to do with the subject being studied at our meeting today. The motion refers to compliance by the RCMP with the Official Languages Act.

The direction the questions are taking does not correspond to the purpose of the meeting today. I submit that the questions are out of order.

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

Ms. Kayabaga, you have the floor.

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

I think my colleague has read my mind. We are here to discuss matters that relate to our committee.

If our colleague opposite wants to participate in the discussion, he is entitled to do so, and that is important. However, the Commissioner is only here for an hour and we do not want to waste our time on other matters.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Ms. Kayabaga.

Mr. Godin, you have the floor.

**Mr. Joël Godin:** Mr. Chair, I am grateful to my colleagues for their comments, except that you have a practice of allowing each parliamentarian to give an introduction.

My colleague spoke of questions, but I have not heard Mr. Brock ask a question yet. We therefore cannot judge a question before it has been asked. I think we have to give our colleague some time. Then we can determine whether his comments are relevant.



**The Chair:** I am going to rule on the question immediately. I did not hear the words "official languages", "RCMP" or "Commissioner of the RCMP"; I did hear the words "criminal" and "Prime Minister of Canada".

Mr. Brock, if you have questions concerning the matter at hand, I will give you back the floor. However, if you keep talking about something that has no connection with today's study, I will stop you.

**Mr. Joël Godin:** Mr. Chair, with all due respect, you cannot judge my colleague's intention as long as he has not completed his presentation. The fact that he did not name the RCMP and referred only to the Prime Minister does not mean that he is not entitled to speak at this committee and question the Commissioner.

**The Chair:** Mr. Brock, I would point out in passing that I have stopped the clock.

Mr. Godin, Mr. Brock should not be making a presentation. He should be asking questions during his five minutes' speaking time. However, he started out by saying that ignorance of the law is no excuse. He then referred to criminal law and alluded to the Prime Minister of Canada.

Mr. Brock, I am going to allow you a few seconds to get to your question.

[*English*]

**Mr. Larry Brock:** To the comments of my colleague, Monsieur Godin, it would be common courtesy from the Liberal bench to allow a question to be framed before there is any opposition. Quite frankly, Chair, I don't think I have to be confined by a time limit by the chair in terms of how I want to frame the question.

The question is relevant to the study at hand, and I will explain the relevancy if I'm permitted the professional courtesy of asking the question.

• (1140)

[*Translation*]

**The Chair:** Just a moment, please, Mr. Brock.

Mr. Iacono, do you wish to speak?

[*English*]

**Mr. Angelo Iacono:** When we're talking about professional courtesy, I think first of all the courtesy should be attributed to the witnesses here today. They've come here because the parties across and the government party want to question the commissioner based on everything that deals with languages.

If we're going to talk about courtesy, don't preach courtesy the way you want it to be. Preach it the way it is.

I think the utter respect should be to our witnesses who are here. The commissioner has an important job to do. We all have important jobs to do. Your questions do not pertain to languages. Those questions can be asked in another committee that takes care of those matters and—

**Mr. Larry Brock:** That you shut down.

**Mr. Angelo Iacono:** Excuse me?

**The Chair:** Just a second.

Mr. Brock, you're talking about courtesy. Can you retract what you just said to this colleague, please?

**Mr. Larry Brock:** I'll retract it, but I wish to have an opportunity to speak again, Chair.

**The Chair:** Yes, there are people before you and after you. I respect the order.

**Mr. Angelo Iacono:** Mr. Chair—

[*Translation*]

**The Chair:** Mr. Iacono, you have the floor.

[*English*]

**Mr. Angelo Iacono:** I'm asking to suspend until the member across apologizes to the whole committee, to the witnesses and in particular to me for the words he said.

[*Translation*]

**The Chair:** Mr. Iacono, I asked Mr. Brock to withdraw what he just said to you, and he has just done that. You are now asking that Mr. Brock apologize.

Mr. Brock, do you agree to apologize to the committee and the witnesses for the comment you made to Mr. Iacono?

[*English*]

**Mr. Larry Brock:** Mr. Chair, you asked if I was going to withdraw the comment. I did.

**The Chair:** I just made a separation of the two. Retracting the comment is not what Mr. Iacono is asking for. He is asking for you to apologize.

**Mr. Larry Brock:** I apologize to the committee—

**The Chair:** Thank you.

**Mr. Larry Brock:** —and I apologize to the witnesses, but I still have more to say with respect to the original objection.

Thank you.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Angelo Iacono:** Point of order, Mr. Chair.

**The Chair:** I am going to come back to you, Mr. Iacono, but I have to follow the speaking order.

Mr. Dalton, you have the floor.

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

I want to say that I am really disappointed with the immediate reaction to my colleague: he said two sentences, and there was an immediate explosion. I think a bit of politeness is called for on both sides of the room. We have to wait a bit for him to provide some context for his question. Normally, the chair and all the members give a member who is speaking a bit of latitude.

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

Mr. Brock, you have the floor.

[*English*]

**Mr. Larry Brock:** Thank you, Chair.

My friend opposite, Mr. Iacono—

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Angelo Iacono:** Point of order, Mr. Chair.

**The Chair:** Yes.

**Mr. Angelo Iacono:** The comment...

**Mr. Joël Godin:** Mr. Chair, I'm sorry, but when I wanted to raise a point of order earlier, you told me to wait.

**The Chair:** I'm sorry. I was following the comments relating to the first point of order.

**Mr. Joël Godin:** He has a point of order, Mr. Chair.

**The Chair:** Right. Do you have a point of order too?

**Mr. Joël Godin:** Yes.

**The Chair:** So we are going to wait, Mr. Iacono. I thought it was comments relating to the point of order that was on the table, but do you in fact want to raise a point of order?

**Mr. Angelo Iacono:** Yes.

**The Chair:** Right.

Please continue then, Mr. Brock.

[*English*]

**Mr. Larry Brock:** Do I have the floor?

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Angelo Iacono:** Mr. Chair, I was speaking, was I not? The member opposite expressed...

[*English*]

**Mr. Larry Brock:** I have a point of order.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Angelo Iacono:** ... his frustration. So I am requesting an apology to me and also to the witnesses.

**The Chair:** Mr. Iacono...

**Mr. Joël Godin:** Mr. Chair...

**Mr. Angelo Iacono:** I am not asking that he retract his words, I am asking for an apology to me...

**Mr. Joël Godin:** You got it, your apology, Mr. Iacono.

**Mr. Angelo Iacono:** ... because the word was directed at me.

**The Chair:** Just a minute, everyone.

• (1145)

**Mr. Joël Godin:** Point of order.

**The Chair:** Wait a minute, please.

Mr. Iacono, I think that Mr. Brock has done that properly. Personally, I heard him do it, and that is entirely to his credit. We were talking about the first point of order that was raised, concerning the content of the questions Mr. Brock wanted to ask.

However, you are telling me, Mr. Godin, that you have your own point of order.

Mr. Brock, do you also have a point of order, or do you simply want to comment on the first point of order?

[*English*]

**Mr. Larry Brock:** I want to speak to both, Mr. Chair.

The chair gave me the floor. Before I uttered two words, I was interrupted by Mr. Iacono on another point of order. I don't know what that point of order was, but I had the floor.

If I have the floor, I would like to continue, Chair. My thoughts are these. Mr. Iacono spoke about professional courtesy. I want to comment on those words, "professional courtesy", because I think it's important for all of us to reflect on what has happened over the last week.

Last Monday, the commissioner was scheduled to testify at not one, but two committees, here at official languages and also at the ethics committee. He chose to attend the ethics committee, because this is a pressing issue. It's a pressing issue for all Canadians as to why it took as long as it did for the RCMP to come to the conclusion that the investigation into criminality with respect to the Prime Minister's handling of the SNC-Lavalin affair would not result in criminal charges. He was expected to testify—

**Mr. Darrell Samson:** Point of order.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Angelo Iacono:** I have a point of order also.

[*English*]

**Mr. Larry Brock:** I have the floor, Mr. Iacono.

I have the floor, Mr. Samson.

[*Translation*]

**The Chair:** Wait a minute, Mr. Brock.

**Mr. Angelo Iacono:** If Mr. Brock is incapable of pronouncing my surname correctly, he should not pronounce it.

**Mr. Joël Godin:** Mr. Chair, If you want my point of view...

**Mr. Darrell Samson:** Point of order.

**The Chair:** Mr. Brock, I am listening to your explanation. I am going to come back to you, but I have to rule on the points of order, in order. I am not convinced that your point of order relates to what we are discussing. It is not the committee's job to pass judgment on what happened elsewhere, in another committee or at another time.

Mr. Godin, you have the floor.

**Mr. Joël Godin:** Mr. Chair, first, I would like to apologize to the Commissioner for the flap the Liberals have caused because they do not want to allow us to have a discussion with you. It is unacceptable.

When Mr. Iacono talks about courtesy, I think he should show some by accepting my colleague's apology and moving on to something else. Everything was going fine up to now. What I feel, and I am expressing this, Mr. Chair...

**The Chair:** What is your point of order, Mr. Godin?

**Mr. Joël Godin:** In fact, I just wanted to give the floor back to Mr. Brock so we could continue, and to ask my colleagues opposite to stop filibustering.

**The Chair:** Mr. Samson, you have the floor.

**Mr. Darrell Samson:** I don't think the member in question can answer for the Commissioner. He made a comment that I find very problematic. He said that the Commissioner himself had chosen last week to participate in the meeting of the Standing Committee on Access to Information, Privacy and Ethics rather than come to our committee meeting because, in his words, it was more urgent.

I would like the Commissioner to confirm what the member said and say that the reason why he refused to appear before our committee is that he thinks the Official Languages Act and the need to comply with it are less important to him.

**The Chair:** Mr. Iacono, you have the floor.

[*English*]

Oh, I'm sorry, Madame Goodridge. I missed you. Go ahead.

**Mrs. Laila Goodridge (Fort McMurray—Cold Lake, CPC):** Thank you.

I very much appreciate the fact that this has devolved into chaos, because the Liberals don't want to hear what Mr. Brock is trying to ask and how he is framing his questions. I think it's very unfortunate that we have devolved into a space where we are just having points of order on points of order.

I will remind you, Mr. Chair, that you cannot actually have a point of order on a point of order. There can be conversation on a point of order, and then you can rule on it, or you can set it aside, but very clearly, in *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*... What this has devolved into is not how I've seen this committee operate up to this point in time.

I would request very respectfully that we get back to the conversation at hand so that we can ask questions. I have questions. I know other colleagues have questions. This is a very important topic on bilingualism in the RCMP. Frankly, I did not hear Mr. Brock in any way, shape or form say that somehow official languages was less important than ethics. He just keeps getting interrupted before he can even get to his point.

Thank you.

• (1150)

[*Translation*]

**The Chair:** Thank you, Ms. Goodridge.

[*English*]

It's much appreciated.

[*Translation*]

The Standing Committee on Official Languages is not used to having repeated points of order. I love this committee because, in general, it is not very political or politicized.

Mr. Brock, you are asking us for a chance to ask your question about today's study, so I am giving you the floor. However, you have heard everyone state their opinions about what you are going

to say. I will see where you are going and I will stop you immediately if you are not on the right track.

[*English*]

**Mr. Larry Brock:** With respect, I wanted to provide a response to the number of interventions from the Liberals objecting to my presence and how I framed a question, which wasn't even framed, because I didn't have the opportunity to frame it. Somehow I'm being denied the opportunity.... I wanted to provide context, but I was objected to. On the last occasion in which I tried to provide context, we talked about professional courtesy.

The RCMP commissioner attended last Monday at the ethics committee and was prepared to comment on the SNC investigation. The Liberals, together with the NDP, before we even heard the statement of the RCMP commissioner, shamefully shut down the committee.

We talk about professional courtesy, Chair. It goes both ways.

**The Chair:** Mr. Brock, before you continue, your time is running. I am putting back the clock.

**Mr. Larry Brock:** All right.

Commissioner, going back to the original line of questioning, although no Prime Minister in the history of this country has ever been charged with and/or convicted of a criminal offence, if your service had reasonable and probable grounds to believe that a criminal offence had been committed, such as obstruction of justice—

**An hon. member:** Point of order.

**Mr. Larry Brock:** Again, [*Technical difficulty—Editor*] the opportunity of framing a question, now for the second time by the Liberals.

**The Chair:** Mr. Brock, forget the Liberals, the NDP, the Bloc or whatever. For now, the point of order is clear. You know exactly what the point of order was and why you're here today, why this committee is sitting today in front of these witnesses. It is to ask them questions concerning the present study, which is not where you're going at all.

I tend to agree with what I'm hearing in terms of points of order. You're not—

**Mr. Larry Brock:** Mr. Chair, I have a point of order. Again, you are denying me my privileges in terms of asking a full question. The question was not fully asked of the witness. The Liberals are shutting me down again, and now the chair is shutting me down again.

Is that what you're saying, Chair?

[*Translation*]

**The Chair:** Mr. Brock, to put it as politely as possible, if you think I am doing that in my capacity as chair, I do not want to prevent you from thinking that, but it is not at all my intention.

I respect and accept the points of order I have heard, about the right to ask questions that relate to today's study, which you are not doing. I gave you a chance to convince us that it was what you were doing, but once again I have seen that this was not the case.

[English]

**Mr. Larry Brock:** I have to be allowed to ask the question before I can convince anybody of the relevancy by which I'm asking the question. I'm repeatedly being denied by the Liberal bench, and now the chair.

[Translation]

**The Chair:** You are free to think that, Mr. Brock. I am telling you that you are wrong, but if you want to think it, I can't do anything about it.

[English]

**Mr. Larry Brock:** Can I ask the question, Chair?

[Translation]

**The Chair:** I will permit you to ask a question that relates to today's study. Go ahead, I am listening.

Wait a minute, Ms. Kayabaga has a point of order.

**Ms. Arielle Kayabaga:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I want us to get back to the study that our Bloc Québécois colleague requested. It is his study and these are his guests. We are at the Standing Committee on Official Languages. If someone wants to have discussions about ethics, they can do that at the committee that deals with ethics.

Today is the first time there has been this much excitement at the committee. We are here to talk about bilingualism in the RCMP, and that is what we want to do. We do not want to waste the time of our guests who are here today. We have questions to ask them and we do not want them to leave before we have a chance to do that. Our communities want us to ask these questions. We have educational institutions full of students, here in La Cité collégiale, and in Regina, that want to know how they can join the RCMP.

Mr. Chair, we therefore want to get back to the study that Mr. Beaulieu proposed and ask his guests our questions. We want to finish this study today.

• (1155)

**The Chair:** Thank you, Ms. Kayabaga.

Mr. Beaulieu, you have the floor.

**Mr. Mario Beaulieu:** First, before rejecting what a member is saying, I think we have to give the person speaking a bit more time. Maybe he is going to bring what he is saying back around to the subject of official languages and give examples. What is preventing us from moving ahead is really the fact that one person after another is filibustering.

Second, I would like this period to be extended by ten or 15 minutes.

**The Chair:** There are witnesses waiting on the other side of the door for the second hour of the meeting.

Mr. Godin, you have the floor.

**Mr. Joël Godin:** I have two things to say, Mr. Chair.

To answer my colleague, I understand that there are witnesses outside, but the filibustering by the Liberals at present means that we are being stifled. What Ms. Kayabaga said is right on point. I

think we have to proceed. If there had been no obstruction, we would have moved on to another witness and the Liberals would have had the floor.

Mr. Chair, I am asking you to permit our colleague to ask his question. You will then determine whether it is relevant. If not, you will take away his right to speak and we will do what needs to be done at that time. There are parliamentary rights, and I think that is important.

The least that can be done is to let him speak. He is explaining why he is here. He is not a usual member of this committee. He experienced something in the past and he is expressing it. It is quite simply legitimate, in my opinion, to let him speak so that he can ask his question with a question mark at the end.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**Mr. Darrell Samson:** I have a point of order.

I would ask that the clerk read his question, because he asked it. He said several words about the Commissioner, and then he asked: "Is that correct?" If we read the last 15 words my colleague spoke, we see that the question was asked. I would therefore like the clerk to repeat it, to confirm that I am right.

**The Chair:** Before I give Mr. Brock the floor, I would like to be sure I understand what you are asking, Mr. Samson. Do you want the clerk to read the question that Mr. Brock asked, or the motion?

**Mr. Darrell Samson:** I am talking about the question. He asked a question. My colleague opposite said he was not given the time to ask his question, but he asked one, and it had nothing to do with official languages.

Go and listen to the question.

**The Chair:** We do not have that information at our fingertips. We will probably be able to verify the question later in the transcript.

**Mr. Joël Godin:** Mr. Chair, I would also add that...

**The Chair:** Wait a minute, Mr. Godin. Mr. Brock had the floor before you.

[English]

**Mr. Larry Brock:** Thank you, Chair, again.

I have questions related to official languages, but no member of this committee—particularly the Liberals and the NDP—can suggest how I have to frame my questions or whether or not I can ask questions in sequential order.

There is a connection by which I'm trying to have the opportunity of questioning the RCMP commissioner, because the SNC corporation, a Quebec-based corporation, is very much concerned about official languages. If you recall, Chair, not too long ago, the CEO of SNC-Lavalin cancelled a Montreal speech after the Canadian boss at the time refused to speak in the French language.

You acknowledge that, and I have a right to question the commissioner with respect to the corporation.

[Translation]

**The Chair:** Absolutely.

Mr. Iacono, you have a point of order, so you have the floor.

**Mr. Angelo Iacono:** We are at the Standing Committee on Official Languages and the subject of the study relates to languages and bilingualism, not to criminal charges. I see no connections to be made and no similarity between languages and criminal charges. I do not understand.

If we want to hold a debate about languages or bilingualism, let's stick to that subject. If we want to debate criminal charges, I do not think this is the right committee to do that.

Could we get that straight, please?

**Mrs. Laila Goodridge:** Mr...

**The Chair:** Yes. Thank you, Mr. Iacono.

Before I give Ms. Goodridge the floor, we have a decision to make about the witnesses we called for the second hour, who are here.

• (1200)

[*English*]

I'll come back to you, Mrs. Goodridge. Hold on just a second.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Mario Beaulieu:** May I finish my point of order?

**The Chair:** I am listening, Mr. Beaulieu.

**Mr. Mario Beaulieu:** I just want to say that we can take until 1:30, so there is nothing to prevent us, if there is unanimous consent, from extending the meeting by 15 minutes to let Mr. Brock speak. Normally, if his remarks have a connection with the subject being studied, he has the right to ask his questions.

**The Chair:** Mr. Beaulieu, you are saying 1:30, but I don't know where that comes from. We have an hour to spend on this subject, and we started at 11:05 on the dot.

I don't want us to talk about Mr. Brock or his question or how he is asking it. I would like the committee to open a parenthesis right away to decide what it is going to do with the next hour.

Mr. Godin, you have the floor.

**Mr. Joël Godin:** Mr. Chair, as you said, yes, other witnesses were called to appear starting at noon. By now, we should have finished hearing the first group of witnesses, but because of the Liberals' filibustering we are unfortunately in this situation.

If the House of Commons had summoned members for a vote, the invited witnesses would not have been able to be heard in committee and their time would then have been wasted. This kind of situation is unfortunate for them. However, on this side of the table, and I am talking about the Conservative Party and Bloc Québécois members, we are not responsible.

I would not want this situation to stifle us by preventing us from asking the Commissioner our questions, when he has been kind enough to be here today. I would like my colleague to be given the floor so he can finish his question and us to then be able to ask other questions on the subject being studied, before moving on to the other witnesses.

**The Chair:** Ms. Goodridge, I will give you the floor on the subject of this point of order. What do you have to say on this subject?

**Mrs. Laila Goodridge:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

In fact, I had raised a point of order before Mr. Iacono spoke. Several times during the meeting I have been ignored when I raised a point of order.

I just wanted to make a point. I see nothing in *House of Commons Procedure and Practices* that would justify my Liberal colleagues' points of order. If they are unable to point to a particular page to which they are referring, the meeting should proceed in the normal way.

[*English*]

Can we proceed to Mr. Brock, please?

**The Chair:** Yes, but, again, I'm still in the bracket that we had. As a committee, we need to make a decision concerning the fact that the hour is gone—it is already behind us—and in the second hour, we're supposed to have other witnesses.

[*Translation*]

If I have to make a decision, I will make it, but I am asking the committee to tell me what it would like to do.

**Mr. Mario Beaulieu:** I would propose that we be able to finish a round of questions. Mr. Brock had spoken, but there was still another round of questions.

**The Chair:** In this round of questions, what remained was less than five minutes for Mr. Brock and five minutes for the Liberals.

**Mr. Mario Beaulieu:** Is there no speaking time for us?

**The Chair:** In fact, there will be no more time.

**Mr. Marc Dalton:** We are going to stop in five minutes, more or less.

**Mr. Mario Beaulieu:** Basically...

**The Chair:** Help me make a decision; otherwise I am going to make it myself.

**Mr. Joël Godin:** Mr. Chair, I propose that we let Mr. Brock finish his turn and then give the Liberals, the Bloc Québécois and the NDP a turn. Then we could conclude the discussion with the Commissioner and continue with the other witnesses.

That is my proposal, Mr. Chair.

**The Chair:** In practice, that would mean that we would still have about 12 minutes with the Commissioner, taking the time that Mr. Brock has left into account.

**Mr. Joël Godin:** That will depend on the filibustering the other side will be doing.

**The Chair:** Thank you for your comment, Mr. Godin.

Are there comments on this proposal? I would really like us to resolve the question of the time for the next hour and close this sidebar.

Is there unanimous consent to continue? I see no one objecting.

In that case, Mr. Brock, you have about two minutes left. You have the floor.

[English]

**Mr. Larry Brock:** With all due respect, Chair, I was cut off within 30 seconds of my five-minute round. Have I lost two and a half minutes?

**The Chair:** I stopped the clock, and I put it back. I indicated to you that I was putting the clock back, and then it came back to others. I stopped it again.

Plus or minus, you have two and a half minutes that are gone.

**Mr. Larry Brock:** Thank you.

Commissioner, I apologize for not only what transpired last Monday but also what is clearly happening today. Again, if the service had reasonable and probable grounds to believe our Prime Minister, Justin Trudeau, committed a criminal offence, you would charge him accordingly. Is that correct?

[Translation]

**The Chair:** There, that was a question, Mr. Brock.

[English]

**Mr. Larry Brock:** That is a question. The follow-up question was going to be this: How many fully bilingual RCMP officers—

**The Chair:** Monsieur Brock, I'm sorry, but that was a question.

You agree with me that it was a question.

**Mr. Larry Brock:** That was a question.

• (1205)

**The Chair:** Okay. Do you agree with me that you just asked the commissioner a question?

**Mr. Larry Brock:** I repeated the same question that was put to the commissioner before the interruptions.

**The Chair:** That is clearly a question. Is that right?

**Mr. Larry Brock:** I was repeating the same question.

**The Chair:** Yes, I agree. We are saying the same thing.

**Mr. Larry Brock:** Right.

**The Chair:** Okay, but that is not related to the present study.

**Mr. Larry Brock:** Then I have a related question, Chair.

**The Chair:** But that was not one.

**Mr. Larry Brock:** I repeated the same question that the Liberals interfered with, Chair.

[Translation]

**The Chair:** Just a minute...

[English]

**Mr. Larry Brock:** Whether you allow the commissioner to respond or not—

[Translation]

**The Chair:** Just a minute, Mr. Brock. I'm sorry, but in all good faith, I allowed you to continue. You have heard the concerns about the questions you were asking. You have now asked a clear ques-

tion. We definitely heard you. Your question is not related to this study and that was precisely the reason for the first point of order.

Do you want to ask the witness a question that relates to this study? I am asking that you show the same courtesy as you are asking from the Liberals across from you. Can you tell me, courteously, that you have questions to ask the witness concerning this study?

**Mr. Larry Brock:** Yes.

**The Chair:** If not, there are colleagues beside you who could ask questions.

[English]

**Mr. Larry Brock:** Yes, I do.

[Translation]

**The Chair:** You have the floor, then.

[English]

**Mr. Larry Brock:** Commissioner, how many fully bilingual officers were part of the investigative team on the SNC scandal?

**Commr Michael Duheme:** Mr. Chair, I don't have the exact number. The lead investigator, who was here last Monday, is bilingual, but I'm more than happy to circle back—

**Mr. Larry Brock:** What is that person's name?

**Commr Michael Duheme:** Staff Sergeant Frédéric Pincince.

**Mr. Larry Brock:** Was he the lead investigator?

**Commr Michael Duheme:** I believe he was the lead investigator on the file.

**Mr. Larry Brock:** How many other members were on his team?

**Commr Michael Duheme:** I'd have to get back to you as to how many people were actually assigned to that file as a group.

**Mr. Larry Brock:** Was he specifically assigned to speak to French-speaking witnesses only?

**Commr Michael Duheme:** As I said, I'd have to circle back. The whole speed, flow and direction of the investigation were dictated by the lead investigator.

**Mr. Larry Brock:** All right.

Commissioner, I understand that only three witnesses were interviewed over the course of four years by the fully bilingual lead investigator. Is that correct?

**Commr Michael Duheme:** Again, Mr. Chair, I'm not aware of how many bilingual investigators were assigned to it, so I can't say how many interviews took place with the bilingual investigators.

[Translation]

**The Chair:** Thank you, Commissioner.

[English]

**Mr. Larry Brock:** Well, according to the—

**The Chair:** Mr. Brock, I'm sorry. That's your time.

[Translation]

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

**Ms. Arielle Kayabaga:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I would first like to apologize to our guests. There is rarely so much excitement at our committee. If you come back, you will clearly see that our committee is very organized. This is the first time we have had this kind of situation.

So I want to welcome you, Commissioner, Ms. Huggins.

Earlier, Commissioner, you talked about the fact that there were fewer francophones who held positions on the executive committee. Can you explain why?

I am going to ask my second question right away, given that we do not have a lot of time left. I would like to know whether, in order to hire people, you search at educational institutions like La Cité collégiale, or in other resource pools you might have access to.

**Commr Michael Duheme:** First, regarding recruiting, of course, we look for people who are actively enthusiastic about police work. In fact, there is no uniform approach. We look for people in different communities and at different universities, and we conduct campaigns to attract people to our organization. Our recruiting efforts therefore have several aspects.

On the subject of senior management, you should know that I also include what are called the deputy commissioners, who are responsible for the divisions. For us, a division is a province. As I said earlier, most of our executives are in the British Columbia and Alberta region. I also raised the issue of individuals' mobility. In the past, people accepted promotions and moved, but that is happening less and less.

Another challenge we are facing at present concerns training while people are in the job. Some people hold a key position, so it is difficult for them to leave for six months to go on a second language training course, given the level of expertise.

• (1210)

**Ms. Arielle Kayabaga:** You have not yet answered my question about the fact that you said earlier that there were not enough bilingual or francophone positions in senior management.

How many bilingual positions do you have that are held by francophones? Could you tell me why there aren't more?

**Commr Michael Duheme:** I don't have the exact figures about the number of bilingual positions.

I don't think I said there were not enough bilingual positions. I said we had trouble filling certain bilingual positions at the senior level.

**Ms. Arielle Kayabaga:** Why is that the case? Is it because the francophones you recruit are not up to the job? What is the problem?

**Commr Michael Duheme:** No. In fact, it is a problem that dates back several years. Over the years, we have observed a dichotomy. On the one hand, there are people who have an aptitude for the second language although they are not fluent in it; on the other hand, there are people who have the necessary expertise. As I said earlier,

for some positions, we have to choose the most qualified person. Then we make an agreement with the person for them to take second language training.

**Ms. Arielle Kayabaga:** Can you send us in writing the number of bilingual positions in senior management in your organization?

I would like to come back to what I said earlier about resource pools like La Cité collégiale. Is it one of the resources you use? How many people from La Cité collégiale, for example, do you hire in a year?

**Commr Michael Duheme:** I am going to let Ms. Huggins answer that question, but I first want to clarify your request concerning the number of bilingual positions. We need to agree that when we talk about an officer position, that does not mean a police officer, it means an executive in the organization. We undertake to provide you with the statistics regarding bilingualism for executive positions, which range from inspector up to the position I hold.

Ms. Huggins can answer your question about La Cité collégiale.

**Ms. Nadine Huggins:** The answer is simple: yes, we use all resources and all recruiting pools.

It is easier to hire public service employees than police officers. Our police officers have to go through Depot and take another six months' training. However, we have just started a project for our federal public service employees and we can consider candidates who have training from another college.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Ms. Huggins.

Thank you, Ms. Kayabaga. Your five minutes are up.

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

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

Commissioner, there have been numerous official languages violations in the RCMP in the past, and there still are at present. Among other things, access to information requests in French take longer to process than requests in English.

Recently, the Commissioner of Official Languages criticized the RCMP because of dangerous road condition warnings in Prince Edward Island were not translated into French until four hours later.

Given all this past history, should the RCMP not apologize to Quebecers and francophones outside Quebec and commit to having a specific plan of action? I am not talking about you personally, but about the RCMP as an institution.

**Commr Michael Duheme:** I can assure you that the organization takes bilingualism very seriously.

In the past, yes, there were cases when public warnings were issued in English first and then in French. Sometimes, the urgency of the situation made it necessary. What we want to do, using the four pillars of the official languages strategy, is make sure that in the future, any message is sent in both languages at the same time.

**Mr. Mario Beaulieu:** Can you commit to saying that there will be unilingual French positions and there will be training in French?

**Commr Michael Duheme:** Yes, I can tell you that we are going to examine the situation regarding unilingual French positions, especially in Quebec.

Regarding training solely in French, we have been discussing it for several years, but we are not there yet.

**Mr. Mario Beaulieu:** I think that is essential. You say you are having trouble recruiting people. But if there is no basic training, francophones will not have a chance to rise through the ranks and establish themselves in the organization.

That makes me think of the government's work as a whole. It often has good intentions, but it does nothing.

Have people in the government, for example the ministers responsible for official languages or public safety, contacted you to ask you to follow the Official Languages Act and act accordingly?

• (1215)

**Commr Michael Duheme:** Yes. I have had a conversation with the Minister, Mr. LeBlanc, who is responsible for public safety, among other things, to discuss the importance of French in the organization and the plan for moving forward.

Regarding implementing the plan, I want to point out that we will have to rearrange resources inside the organization to make sure there will be a team, because we will not have any additional funding or resources.

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

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

**Ms. Niki Ashton:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I would first like to address the problem raised by the Commissioner of Official Languages regarding the fact that during recent extreme weather events in the Atlantic, the warnings from the RCMP were not issued in French until much later.

Knowing that climate change is a reality, we expect to see more and more extreme weather events. What is the RCMP doing to improve its communications service and make sure that this kind of situation is not repeated?

**Commr Michael Duheme:** The question will be raised with our communications director to make sure that we make every effort possible to have every public communication issued in both official languages at the same time and for there to be no delays like the ones Mr. Beaulieu mentioned earlier.

**Ms. Niki Ashton:** We appreciate that commitment, but what about the resources? I understand that the communications director is not with you to speak to this, but are you going to hire people? We don't need good intentions alone; we need concrete actions.

**Commr Michael Duheme:** I believe that there is certainly a way within the organization to expedite the translation process when we have to issue an emergency notice.

**Ms. Niki Ashton:** Are you going to allocate more resources to make sure it is done?

**Commr Michael Duheme:** We allocate our resources based on the priorities. For example, finding bilingual people for the Northwest Territories is sometimes a challenge. However, that service could be provided remotely. Our Montreal office or our Ottawa office, for example, could offer immediate assistance when a notice has to be issued to the public.

**Ms. Niki Ashton:** Solutions do have to be found, because extreme weather events will be happening more and more often, as I said before.

I would like to come back to the question of...

**The Chair:** You have less than ten seconds left, Ms. Ashton.

**Ms. Niki Ashton:** In that case, I will conclude by saying that we look forward to receiving the answers to the questions we have asked for which you did not have the figures needed to answer immediately. We also look forward to seeing the concrete actions and incentives you will be implementing to solve the problems with recruiting and with bilingual services for francophones.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Ms. Ashton.

Mr. Duheme, Ms. Huggins, we are going to wait for the information in writing that you will be sending to our clerk. If possible, we would like to know the percentage of senior management positions that are designated bilingual, as compared to the ones in the police force on the ground, and the percentage of those positions that are filled by bilingual individuals.

Thank you very much. I am sorry about the little storm we experienced, if I may put it that way. Those are the joys of parliamentary committees. In any event, thank you for being here. We are eager to receive the information requested.

With that said, I am going to quickly suspend the meeting to bring in the new witnesses.

• (1215)

(Pause)

• (1220)

**The Chair:** I am now calling the meeting back to order.

Thank you for your patience, witnesses.

The second hour of the meeting will be a bit shortened. We can continue for 15 minutes longer than scheduled, until 1:20, if the committee consents.



In this second hour, we have, first, John Buck, President and Chief Executive Officer of the Community Economic Development and Employability Corporation. We also have two representatives from the Réseau de développement économique et d'employabilité du Canada: Yan Plante, President and Chief Executive Officer, and Roukya Abdi Aden, Manager, National Consultation on Economic Development and Employability.

You have five minutes to make your presentation, and then we will move on to questions. I will be strict about time.

We will start with you, Mr. Buck.

[*English*]

The floor is yours for five minutes.

• (1225)

[*Translation*]

**Mr. John Buck (President and Chief Executive Officer, Community Economic Development and Employability Corporation):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

[*English*]

The Community Economic Development and Employability Corporation thanks the committee for the opportunity to share highlights of its brief with you, which was submitted on October 6, 2023.

In terms of introduction, I would simply like to remind committee members that CEDEC is the federally designated and financed organization responsible for the economic development of the official-language minority community in Quebec. Economic development includes business and social enterprise development, as well as labour market and employment service development.

During my remarks today, I will make five points.

Number one, individual and community well-being across Quebec and Canada is fully dependent upon an economy that maximizes the possibilities for exchanging value. To succeed today, a small bed and breakfast in Blanc-Sablon on Quebec's lower north shore must connect with and offer its services to customers from across the province, across the country and around the world. Understanding that we are all part of a common economy with its local, regional, provincial, national and global dimensions is fundamental to determining how best to position official-language minority communities to contribute to and benefit from economic development.

Number two, English speakers are strengthening their contribution to growing Quebec's economy and focusing on the opportunity and wealth this contribution creates. Growing businesses and social enterprises, generating jobs, placing English speakers in vacant positions and attracting investment across the province are some of the ways English speakers contribute to the economy shared by all Quebecers. Additionally, this economic development contribution enables the community to address the distressing economic situation it has experienced for more than a decade. A summary of 2021 data reconfirming this situation was provided to the committee in our brief.

Number three, the English-speaking community of Quebec has created an ambitious, actionable, achievable and, most importantly, necessary 10-year economic development plan. The ESCQ created a 2023-33 economic development plan that lays out bold and targeted results to further strengthen the contribution of English speakers to growing and developing Quebec's economy while leveraging these efforts to reduce the disparities limiting its contribution. The plan provides a long-term playbook to continue to enhance the well-being of English speakers and the vitality of the community, positioning it to effectively navigate the economic, social and political dynamics of its environment.

Number four, the key to success in achieving the economic outcomes of our 10-year plan is unprecedented collaboration and coordination. To achieve success, the execution of the 10-year plan requires unprecedented collaboration and coordination across the English-speaking communities of Quebec, between the English-speaking communities of Quebec and the francophone majority, especially Quebec's public, private and civil society sectors, and between the English-speaking communities of Quebec and federal departments and agencies with official languages economic development responsibilities for the community.

Number five, and perhaps most importantly for you, your committee can be instrumental in making all of this happen by recognizing and endorsing, through your recommendations, the following.

Each OLMC in Canada must find a way to maximize its economic development in a manner that is tailored and suited to its particular economic, social and political circumstances. The "by and for" long-term collaborative economic development plan developed by the English-speaking communities of Quebec is the road map the federal government should be guided by to ensure the community's full participation in growing and sustaining Quebec's economy while simultaneously reducing the economic disparities limiting such participation.

The federal government should maximize its investment in the OL economic development space in Quebec by aligning and coordinating its funding to actively support the achievement of the economic outcomes outlined in the ESCQ's 10-year economic development plan. That includes supporting the ESCQ economic development ecosystem created to ensure required collaboration across the community. It includes supporting collaborative economic development as the optimal approach to ensure required collaboration between the English-speaking communities of Quebec and the francophone majority, especially Quebec's public, private and civil society sectors, and creating a \$15-million five-year collaborative economic development leverage fund.

It also includes maximizing interdepartmental coordination in the OL economic development space in Quebec under the leadership of the Department of Canadian Heritage, with the active and sustained participation of Employment and Social Development Canada, Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada and Canada Economic Development for Quebec Regions.

Finally, it includes working with already designated organizations such as CEDEC and enabling them to act as community hubs to receive and distribute federal transfers in a pooled, focused and coordinated manner.

• (1230)

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

You can elaborate further if you want through the different questions that will be asked of you.

[*Translation*]

I will now give the floor to Mr. Plante or Ms. Abdi Aden for five minutes.

**Mr. Yan Plante (President and Chief Executive Officer, Réseau de développement économique et d'employabilité du Canada):** Mr. Chair, members of the committee, on behalf of the Réseau de développement économique et d'employabilité du Canada, RDEE Canada, I want to thank you for the invitation to come and speak with you today.

RDEE is composed of a national office that is responsible for coordinating and representing its members, who are located in all provinces and territories with the exception of Quebec. Our members are the experts on the ground. They offer services in entrepreneurship, employability and community economic development. We are talking about approximately 250 professionals with special expertise in economic development and employability in francophone communities in Canada. This is an existing structure that has the expertise and a presence throughout the country, a skilled network that almost always answers the call when the time comes to do more, as long as it is given the resources.

I have held this position only since June 8, but so far, I have had the chance to travel to seven provinces to gain a better understanding of the situation on the ground and meet with entrepreneurs or people who use our services. I am excited by what I see. From a veteran who has become a cheese maker in Alberta to the Bottle Houses of Prince Edward Island; from the village of Ste. Agathe in Manitoba, which has developed an industrial park, to Cielo Glamping in New Brunswick, which offers accommodation in open-air domes, I have met some inspiring people who show how dynamic, close-knit and full of potential our francophone communities are.

That brings me to the vision I want to present to you today: let's go on the offensive and see the economic Francophonie as an opportunity to be seized. I was a panelist at the Toronto Global Forum a few days ago, with three other organization heads, and that was the message we all brought, in English. Yes, it was in English, because it is important to also make our anglophone fellow Canadians understand that there is an ocean of mutually beneficial opportunities. Some projections say that there will be approximately 700 million francophones on Earth by mid century, or double today's figure. That represents an extraordinary market for Canada, both for trade and for recruiting workers or entrepreneurs.

We have to realize that not only do the francophone and bilingual immigrants we bring to Canada help to solve the labour shortage, but they also bring with them their own network of contacts in their country of origin. Their employers will be able to benefit from that if they want to do business abroad. For our small and medium-sized

enterprises, there is also the potential to be included in multinational supply chains that are already here, as LMS Rail Equipment Services, for example, a francophone company based in Hearst, Ontario, is doing.

When it comes to the idea of mutual benefit for francophones and anglophones, I would like to refer to a study entitled "Two languages: It's good for business". That study, which was cosigned by Pierre-Marcel Desjardins and David Campbell, points to a series of benefits from economic bilingualism, including attracting businesses, immigrants, international students and tourists, and developing language industries or sectors like engineering and telecommunications.

I would like to highlight an example that is found in the study. A big corporation opened a call centre in New Brunswick. When you call the customer service department and hear that you have to press 1 for service in French or press 2 for service in English, it means that some of the employees who answer customer calls are unilingual and others are bilingual. What the study showed, in fact, is that 31% of the company's employees were francophone or bilingual, while 66% were unilingual anglophone. The company then continued to develop its information technology from its service centre and was able to create more jobs. That is an excellent example of how the importance of a business providing services to its customers in French also created jobs for the anglophone population.

In September 2022, RDEE Canada organized a summit on the francophone economy in Canada. Two hundred key actors came together to exchange findings and ideas, with the aim of promoting economic growth. Their discussions were compiled in a white paper published by RDEE Canada that we have submitted to the Committee and that we hope will contribute to your study.

The point that was most often noted in the discussions was the desire to see the creation of a government plan dedicated to the francophone economy in minority communities. In fact, the mandate letter for the former Minister of Official Languages and Minister responsible for the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency dated December 16, 2021, gave us considerable hope in that regard.

In closing, I would like to reiterate my key message: let's go on the offensive when we talk about the economic Francophonie, and let's see the economic Francophonie and bilingualism as an opportunity to be seized.

Thank you. We will be happy to answer your questions.

• (1235)

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

For the first round of questions, each of the various parties will have six minutes to ask questions and hear the answers.

We will start with the first vice-chair of the committee, Mr. Godin.

**Mr. Joël Godin:** Thanks to the witnesses for taking part in this exercise. As I often say, you help us to be better, so we are going to take advantage of the opportunity.

I am going to start with Mr. Buck from CEDEC.

As you know, the objective of the study we are doing is to learn about best practices, particularly from the economic point of view. I would first like to ask you whether the anglophone economic community in Quebec is prosperous.

**Mr. John Buck:** Thank you, Mr. Godin. I will be happy to answer.

[English]

I will start by providing some information that's much more articulated, I think, in the brief that was presented. I'll speak to the economic circumstances of the linguistic minority community in Quebec, the English-speaking community in Quebec.

I think, perhaps counterintuitively, that it's not as prosperous as many assume it is. In fact, when we look at some of the key indicators, some of the perhaps more relevant indicators, things like—

[Translation]

**Mr. Joël Godin:** Mr. Buck, I apologize for interrupting, but you will understand that we have limited speaking time.

You are telling me that the anglophone community is less prosperous than you would hope.

**Mr. John Buck:** That is absolutely right.

**Mr. Joël Godin:** What are you using for your comparison?

**Mr. John Buck:** That is by comparison with the population of Quebec in general.

**Mr. Joël Godin:** Are you comparing it with OLMCs, official language minority communities, outside Quebec? In terms of prosperity, is your community's position better than the position of OLMCs outside Quebec, is it worse, or are your positions similar?

**Mr. John Buck:** The 2021 figures have not yet been completely compiled. According to the 2016 figures, we were in a less favourable position than francophones outside Quebec.

**Mr. Joël Godin:** Could we say there is more solidarity, or it is easier to mobilize, in OLMCs?

**Mr. John Buck:** I think so. I think we work well together.

**Mr. Joël Godin:** Thank you for your answers.

I would now like to ask Mr. Plante some questions.

Mr. Plante, the objective of our study is to learn best practices. You named some in your presentation. Can you describe some good practices that can be exported to other regions of Canada? The goal is to create prosperity for OLMCs.

I know that for your members, there are regions that are much more active and have better results. Can you identify some measures that should be exported to other regions?

**Mr. Yan Plante:** Three come quickly to mind. If needed, my colleague will add to my answer.

For example, our Ontario member, the Société économique de l'Ontario, has established a virtual incubator for entrepreneurs. When the enterprise is ready to fly on its own, it does so. Our member created the program, which has had considerable success. Through national consultation, these ideas are exchanged. In fact, that is, in a way, what comprises the strength of a network: it brings

people together. At present, other colleagues are looking at how that could be implemented in their locations.

I can give you another example. Our British Columbia member has set up what we call speed jobbing. This is an entire process, and I will spare you the details, where a connection is made between employers and job seekers. Screening is done among the two groups, so that when a candidate meets with an employer, they almost know in advance that it is a good match. We are in the process of implementing this system across the country. We are holding these kinds of events.

I have another example I can give. We also participate in targeted international recruiting. For example, our Manitoba member held an event called Destination Manitoba, where some of its representatives travelled to Côte d'Ivoire and met with 1,700 candidates who potentially wanted to come and work in Manitoba.

**Mr. Joël Godin:** Thank you. I see there are some good ideas.

Are the other communities receptive when your network contributes to making these best practices known?

**Mr. Yan Plante:** Absolutely. That is somewhat why we...

**Mr. Joël Godin:** Excellent. Thank you, you said they are and that is what I wanted. I have to continue, since the clock is ticking.

Have you heard of entrepreneurship? Our official language minority communities were very strong and prosperous in the past, but the influence of numerous factors has meant that this is declining.

Are you doing anything with entrepreneurship?

• (1240)

**Mr. Yan Plante:** This was raised with me in all the provinces I have visited to date.

We have to understand that entrepreneurship is different from selling a business. It is not just about selling a business and agreeing on a price. In the case of entrepreneurship, the seller wants the culture of their business to be retained—its history and language of operation, in this case—while the buyer wants a business that already exists, in order to keep a business that is already a symbol in its community going.

Some of our members are exploring this avenue. In New Brunswick, for example, I met an entrepreneur who used our services for this. If we had more resources and funds, that is something we could do. I think a broader entrepreneurship strategy in francophone communities would be welcome.

**Mr. Joël Godin:** Is that an objective of RDEE Canada?

**Mr. Yan Plante:** Certainly we would like it to be, but it is always a question of funding.

**Mr. Joël Godin:** I have one last question to ask you.

When the enterprises you represent, in the various regions where they are located, have a choice between hiring a bilingual employee and a unilingual francophone employee, which one are they going to choose first?

**Mr. Yan Plante:** Apart from Ontario and New Brunswick, life happens in English in several provinces. We must not spin tales for ourselves. I think the bilingual candidate will be more attractive. That being said, there is still a degree of suspicion. Take the example of Saskatchewan. When you leave...

**The Chair:** I am sorry to have to interrupt you, Mr. Plante, but the clock is ticking. You may have an opportunity to say more about this later.

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

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

I want to thank the witnesses for their presentations.

Colleagues, it is some time since we have seen one another, but we are pleased with the work being done.

I am going to focus my questions on francophone immigration, but I would first like to know what connection there is between your association and the regional development agencies that are involved in economic development. As you know, Canada has created an agency in each region, and that is an important network.

What connection is there between your association and those agencies?

**Mr. Yan Plante:** I am going to let my colleague answer that question, because he is our immigration expert on the board.

**Mr. Darrell Samson:** Actually, my first question is not about immigration. I am going to talk about that, but first I want to know what connection there is between your association and the regional development agencies in Canada.

**Mr. Yan Plante:** Right, I'm sorry.

Our members have their own relationships with their regional development agencies, based on where they are located in the country. In terms of ourselves, at a higher level, we may also have discussions with those agencies, but it is not something that happens regularly. I have only been at RDEE Canada for four months, so I don't really have a very established relationship with the agencies, myself, but I know our members do have.

**Mr. John Buck:** I am going to answer for our organization, Mr. Samson.

[English]

For us at CEDEC, as part of the official-language minority community in Quebec, there is one regional economic agency in the form of DEC. We have a very strong relationship with DEC. It actually precedes the creation of the economic development initiative, EDI. We have been sponsors and beneficiaries of the economic development initiative since its creation. As all of you are aware, the most recent action plan is the agreement for \$30 million over five years, \$10 million of which goes to Quebec.

We participate with and partner with DEC in a couple of ways. One, we have a multi-region agreement because we have a presence in all parts of Quebec. We also have direct involvement of regional offices of DEC, so we have a very direct relationship.

[Translation]

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

Mr. Plante, I think it is important to take inspiration from best practices followed by organizations in the regions that work closely with the regional development agencies. As you know, those agencies are creatures of the federal government and have responsibility for supporting the economic development of both official language communities. It is therefore extremely important that the national association, which has the power, or the duty, to influence the government regarding the barriers that may exist present this case to it.

Ms. Abdi Aden, it is always a pleasure to see you again. We have not seen each other in a long time. We participated in an international mission a few years ago.

The Conseil de développement économique de la Nouvelle-Écosse has responsibility for employability in that region. Do all members of RDEE Canada, from one end of Canada to the other, with the exception of Quebec, have responsibility for promoting employability on the part of francophone immigrants?

• (1245)

**Ms. Roukya Abdi Aden (Manager, National Consultation on Economic Development and Employability, Réseau de développement économique et d'employabilité du Canada):** Yes, all members of RDEE Canada have responsibility for working on employability.

For example, our member in Alberta is in the process of merging with Accès Emploi, which is the employability agency in Alberta. Today, we are fortunate to be able to say that everywhere in Canada, outside Quebec, our networks and Accès Emploi have been working on employability of francophone immigrants for several years.

A few minutes ago, mention was made of best practices. At the national level, we are doing a lot to move forward on that issue and that function, through national consultation. Mr. Plante talked about speed jobbing, an initiative that started in British Columbia and became a national activity. All of the RDEEs have adopted that good practice.

The answer is therefore yes, absolutely.

**Mr. Darrell Samson:** This summer, I met with people from the Centre francophone du Grand Toronto, an organization that greets francophone immigrants at Pearson Airport. I would like to know what connection there is between your network and that centre, which plays an extremely important reception role for those people. If I understand correctly, there is a similar pilot project in Edmonton.

Can you tell us whether there are connections between you, and if so, describe them for us? Greeting is one thing; integration into the communities is another, as is employability.

Are these discussions undertaken from the beginning of the process?

**Ms. Roukya Abdi Aden:** Regarding the reception at Pearson Airport, you have to understand that the role of the Centre francophone du Grand Toronto is to give francophone immigrants arriving via that airport the information they need. The immigrants receive a leaflet where they can see the various services offered in all provinces and territories. It is also available through an app, now. It is then up to them to contact the organizations on the ground.

We therefore have no direct connections with the Centre, but some immigrants learn about the existence of services through the information they are given by the Centre. Then, once they have reached the province they needed to get to and have settled there, they come to see us to access the services we offer.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Ms. Abdi Aden.

Mr. Samson, that is all the time you had.

The next speaker will be Mr. Beaulieu, who is the second vice-chair of this committee.

Mr. Beaulieu, the floor is yours for six minutes.

**Mr. Mario Beaulieu:** Good afternoon.

My first question is for Mr. Buck.

You refer to studies that you say show that anglophones have lower wages, experience more unemployment, and so on. You said it was counterintuitive, and that is putting it mildly. I think it is far from obvious. You get those results by looking at first language spoken, which includes 33% of the immigrants to Quebec, according to data from Statistics Canada. So it includes people who, in some cases, are coming from less developed countries. That method certainly lowers the average.

As well, you use the median, which is more sensitive to wealth disparities. On the other hand, if we use indicators that focus more on the historic anglophone minority, we still get a considerable gap in favour of anglophones.

Regarding mother tongue, I agree that it is not the best indicator and that the most representative indicator is language spoken at home. Unfortunately, those figures are not provided by Statistics Canada. I have asked for them to be provided to us, and we will be getting them later.

The fact is that the average wage for anglophones is \$7,800 lower. It is a little lower if we consider the median income. However, the median income does not take disparities into account. We know that among anglophones there are many more very wealthy people who fall at the top of the scale.

When we consider indicators that, in my opinion, better reflect the status of the situation for the historic anglophone minority, we see that it still falls very high on the scale.

Do programs like yours not simply have the effect of upholding the economic advantages of the anglophone community in Quebec?

• (1250)

**Mr. John Buck:** Thank you for the question, Mr. Beaulieu.

[English]

It's a good question. I'm not a statistician; however, I am an English speaker in Quebec. I'll say that the data we use is the convention with respect to how the English-speaking community in Quebec defines itself as being very inclusive, as being a community that is very diverse. Historically, this has been the approach that has been used. It is very consistent.

With respect to the way in which we engage, in fact, collaborative economic development, the model we use very deliberately actually looks to diminish the disadvantages that are experienced by different segments of our population.

Looking at the statistics—and there can be a debate among statisticians, I presume, around which indicators we're using—and looking at the impact and the results, I can demonstrate to you individuals who are in very impoverished and challenging circumstances and who are ultimately able to benefit—

[Translation]

**Mr. Mario Beaulieu:** I am going to stop you there, Mr. Buck.

Myself, I can provide you with data that shows that francophone immigrants have a lot of trouble finding jobs. It would be interesting to have a comparative study on this; in fact, I am currently working on that.

It all depends on how you look at the data.

For example, before we had the Official Languages Act, researchers showed that anglophones' wages were sometimes as much as 50% higher than francophones'. Even among people with low education levels, there was discrimination against francophones solely on the basis of language. Things have changed a bit, but the difference is still significant.

The Office de la langue française has shown that people who use only English at work earn \$46,000 on average, which is 20% higher than people who use French. When we measure people based on their use of French or English, we realize that it is still more advantageous to use English.

That is what makes me say it is really unjustified for these programs to support anglophones only. In my opinion, that is discrimination. Anglophones have always been economically advantaged, and now it looks like the majority in Canada added to those advantages in Quebec, in addition to offering some programs only to anglophone or anglicized immigrants.

In addition, just to maintain francophones' demographic weight, Quebec needs to francize 90% of immigrants.

Essentially, by using your programs, you are working to make francophones a minority.

[English]

**Mr. John Buck:** Perhaps I can just respond briefly, because I think this is such a fundamental concept when we look to economic development within official-language minority communities.

The economy does not operate in English, and it does not operate in French. The economy is something that we all share. In fact, when a program is engaged, particularly using the collaborative economic development model that we use, we very deliberately engage with the majority population, so any economic activity or benefits that are felt by individuals in communities are not felt uniquely by members of an English-speaking minority community.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Mario Beaulieu:** In that case, I suggest that you do it on the francophone side, and that will help anglophones indirectly.

I have done the calculation in the case of the Community Economic Development and Employability Corporation. I know you use a French name, but it doesn't show anywhere.

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

**Mr. Mario Beaulieu:** Since 2005, your organization has received almost \$43 million.

Can you tell us what projects those grants were used for, precisely?

**The Chair:** That is an excellent question, Mr. Beaulieu, but we will have to wait for the next round to get an answer. I'm sorry, but it is my job to enforce speaking times.

We will now be transported to northern Manitoba, where the snow has certainly fallen this morning.

Ms. Ashton, you have the floor for six minutes.

**Ms. Niki Ashton:** There is indeed a lot of snow. Here, it's normal for there to be snow on Hallowe'en.

I want to thank today's witnesses.

I would like to ask you some questions about challenges affecting economic development in general, starting with immigration. Some of my colleagues have touched on this.

As we know, the Fédération des communautés francophones et acadienne argues that we need to have very ambitious targets for francophone immigration in order to solve the labour shortage in our communities and slow the decline of French. The FCFA says that there has to be an ambitious, higher target for francophone immigration, which would be on the order of 12%.

Do you agree with that percentage? Do you agree that the targets should be much more ambitious if we want to admit francophones from other places?

• (1255)

**Mr. Yan Plante:** I imagine that the question is meant for me.

The 12% target does seem to be fairly widely recognized in the ecosystem of organizations in the Francophonie. In our organization, that is also the one we use.

We want to be ambitious, we want to set ambitious targets, but I think the important thing is for the government to take steps in the right direction. I will never hesitate to congratulate the government or the Minister if they go ahead and they succeed in bringing in more francophones. With that said, we have to be realistic: we can't go from 4% to 12% in two years. It is not going to happen.

It is fine to set ambitious targets in the medium and long term, but I think we also have to recognize the efforts being made on a day-to-day basis.

**Ms. Niki Ashton:** I have another question to ask.

We know that lack of access to childcare and early childhood services is one of the barriers to economic development, whether for entrepreneurship or for entering the labour market. I have talked about this on several occasions in this committee.

We are well aware that there is a labour shortage in early childhood services in French everywhere in Canada. So that means that there are fewer opportunities to send your children to a childcare centre where French is spoken. For some women who want to work, that presents them with major challenges.

Do you think we should invest in early childhood services in French, particularly to mitigate the labour shortage? Would that contribute to economic development?

**Mr. Yan Plante:** Yes, very certainly.

Investments have already been made and a program has been put in place. RDEE Canada has played a role that has produced results: childcare spaces have been created, people have created their small businesses to set up childcare centres, and children have been able to spend 40 hours a week in a centre where French, rather than English, is spoken. That is all a good thing, and we obviously support it.

Where things change a bit is that since that first program was set up, the government has announced major investments for childcare spaces anyway. So in the communities, people are looking at what that means going forward.

Some needs seem obvious, in any event from what I hear since I have been in the job, and they involve facilities, the infrastructure needed for creating spaces.

Ms. Abdi Aden, do you have anything to add?

**Ms. Roukya Abdi Aden:** Certainly there are labour shortages. However, there are also targeted recruitment initiatives, such as the one Mr. Plante was talking about. Destination Manitoba is a great example of collaboration between Manitoba and Côte d'Ivoire that enables the province to recruit francophone early childhood workers.

As you know, some provinces and territories have regulations governing recognition of diplomas and what courses have to be taken. Manitoba has also established ties with an educational institution in Côte d'Ivoire that it is working with to facilitate recognition of diplomas so that the transition can be made very quickly.

Nonetheless, there are needs in terms of labour and creating the infrastructure to accommodate all these children and these employees.

**Ms. Niki Ashton:** Thank you for talking to us about this example of success.

Because one of our committee's purposes is to submit recommendations to the federal government, are there any you would like to tell us about, whether they relate to immigration or early childhood services?

What could be done to support economic development in our communities?

**The Chair:** You have 30 seconds left.

**Mr. Yan Plante:** What the members of my organization tell me is that there are not enough properties available for creating spaces. If there were adjustments to make in the existing programs, it would be to invest in that, essentially.

• (1300)

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

Thank you, Ms. Ashton.

The next questions will be asked by Bernard Généreux.

Mr. Généreux, you have five minutes.

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

Ms. Abdi Aden, gentlemen, thank you for being here today.

If I understood correctly, Mr. Beaulieu said that Mr. Buck's organization had received \$43 million since 2005.

Mr. Plante, are you able to tell us how much money your organization has received since 2005?

**Mr. Yan Plante:** Not since 2005, but I could send the answer to the committee in writing.

In general terms, however, our base funding, which we receive from Employment and Social Development Canada, is in the neighbourhood of \$2 million per year. We can calculate the number of years, but that is our base funding.

We also receive five-year funding from the Department of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, which also comes to about \$2 million. That funding is expiring shortly, but a new round of tenders is in preparation. So watch this space.

In addition, we generally have access to a third source of funding intended for managing national projects, that provides funding for one-time projects once they are created.

However, you have to be careful when you analyze those projects, because some of them are managed by an intermediary. That happens when funds are granted on behalf of the government. However, in the case of some of these projects, we cannot even get administrative expenses. So we are not able to bill the government for much of anything.

In reality, the money goes through us, we can hire people, but it is not as if we made any profits, either. So it is important to understand that.

**Mr. Bernard Généreux:** I understand.

You were not the executive director at the time the RDEE white paper was published, but it contains a general recommendation that

a government plan dedicated to the economic Francophonie be implemented.

Was there ever a plan in the past such as you are proposing?

**Mr. Yan Plante:** From memory, no. However, I was present at the National Summit on Francophone Minority Economies.

When the white paper was published, I was not part of RDEE Canada, but I recall the discussions very clearly. In fact, the people at the mic said that to governments, it was as if economic development had no language, no matter what level of government or what party it was. To governments, a good project is a good project and a bad project is a bad project, whether the sponsor be francophone, anglophone or allophone. It is not really a criterion that is considered.

Alongside that, the participants at the mic pointed out that yes, there are programs, but they are scattered among all sorts of government departments that do not have the same level of accountability. I think people would like there to be a kind of single window, and for francophone economic development, they would like to be directed to a single place.

**Mr. Bernard Généreux:** Have you done an overall estimate of the cost to the government of implementing that recommendation?

**Mr. Yan Plante:** I do not have the figure in my head, but what was particularly wanted was to establish a kind of consistency or coordination relating to economic development. Obviously, it would mean millions of dollars, but I am not able to tell you how much, today. However, what I felt from the people who were at the mic, and correct me if I am wrong, Ms. Abdi Aden, was the desire that there be some sensitivity to economic development in French and a strategy for that. The Action Plan for the Official Languages, the APOL, and the other initiatives are all excellent measures, but they do not necessarily promote economic development by and for francophones.

**Mr. Bernard Généreux:** I have read some of your publications about the tour you have started, from one end of Canada to the other. What francophones are achieving despite the language barrier, particularly in minority communities, is quite exceptional.

To borrow a popular saying, what is sauce for the goose is sauce for the gander. That is kind of what you suggested when you said that francophones create jobs for anglophones, just as anglophones create jobs for francophones in OLMCs.

Ms. Abdi Aden, you spoke earlier about international recruitment. Are there countries where it is harder for you to look for people, or regions in the world that are more problematic for francophone recruitment, in particular?

• (1305)

**Ms. Roukya Abdi Aden:** At the moment, no, but I know that some countries will not let us recruit on site, such as Algeria, for example. Elsewhere, we have not yet undertaken recruiting, given that the only recruitment event at the international level at present is really Destination Canada, which often takes place in Paris, Belgium or Morocco.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Ms. Abdi Aden, but Mr. Généreux's time is up.

Ms. Fortier, welcome to the Standing Committee on Official Languages.

You have the floor for five minutes.

**Hon. Mona Fortier (Ottawa—Vanier, Lib.):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Hello. This visit takes me back 26 years, because I had the privilege of being one of the founding members of what was, at the time, the National Committee for Canadian Francophonie Human Resources Development, which became RDEE Canada.

After all these years of investments, largely from contributions by the federal government, has RDEE Canada managed to acquire structuring services or models that mean you are able to do business promotion or employability everywhere in Canada, in both rural and urban locales?

**Ms. Roukya Abdi Aden:** Thank you.

When it was put in place, 25 years ago, we had a blank page. It had to be built up from nothing. A number of structuring models have been put in place. I am thinking, in particular, of all the employability services that did not exist before. They have evolved, growing from basic services to much more professionalized services for putting people in contact with employers. Now, people go to direct placement services, which were not part of the services offered. These are models that need to be explored.

I know that at present, Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada, or IRCC, funds pre-departure services, at the initiative of RDEE Canada. This program did not exist before. We started to implement it in 2015. So I am very happy that the Francophonie finally has pre-departure services that are managed by La Cité collégiale and other partners. It is also a very good thing for entrepreneurship, which, in my opinion, is kind of the poor relation of economic development, because it all comes down to base funding. We have to do entrepreneurship in all the fields possible with just the base funding we receive.

**Hon. Mona Fortier:** I would like to go further and talk about the expertise that RDEE Canada has developed over the last 26 years. It has shown that French, or bilingualism, in Canada, especially outside Quebec, represents added value. You have that expertise. There is no need to work with other businesses or with anglophone chambers of commerce to show that French contributes to the prosperity of Canada.

So although the federal government has made a number of contributions, and continues to do so, is there no way of showing that this expertise is for sale now and you can get a better return for offering more services in Canada? I am thinking, for example, of francophone tourism and the packages that are available from one end of the country to the other.

Is there no way of making more of it, through the investments that the federal government has made over the years?

**Ms. Roukya Abdi Aden:** Yes, certainly. In fact, we are in the process of doing a study in order to market these services and create services that could operate on a membership basis: services offered to businesses that they could pay for afterward. We are in the process of showing all that for the tourism industry.

Yes, the expertise can be sold, but we first have to use the funding we receive to meet the client's needs, even before trying to make the services profitable. We know that some contributions are tied to a clear prohibition on selling services, so as not to duplicate the service offered by the government.

That being said, it is in the process of being set up for tourism.

• (1310)

**Hon. Mona Fortier:** On your website, it talks about Passeport entrepreneurial Canada, or Business Passport.

Is that program working well, particularly in rural communities? That is one of our big concerns, because there is such a wealth there. In 15 seconds, can you tell me about Passeport entrepreneurial Canada?

**Ms. Roukya Abdi Aden:** The Passeport entrepreneurial Canada project involves four activities, including the liaison tour, which facilitates international recruitment to mobilize francophone and anglophone employers in order to demonstrate the possibility of recruiting bilingual employees. You were talking about remote regions. The beauty of doing things virtually is that it enables employers located in very remote regions to meet a candidate in 12 minutes, to see whether they match the profile wanted.

In connection with Passeport entrepreneurial Canada, we also do...

**The Chair:** Thank you, Ms. Abdi Aden.

I'm sorry. I want everyone to get their turn and there is not a lot of time left. We have to stop at 1:20, at the latest.

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

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

Mr. Buck, earlier, you did not have time to answer my question.

What are these grants of around \$42 million used for? Can you give me examples? Would it be possible to know what all the projects are?

**Mr. John Buck:** Yes, absolutely, Mr. Beaulieu.

[English]

We're very transparent with all of our funding that arrives. I can share with you that, if we look at the actual investment, the primary investment in economic development, as you know, comes through the enabling fund and through EDI.

If we look at the value that was invested in the last action plan, we see that English speakers in Quebec were recipients of about 15% of the total envelope. That has remained fairly equivalent throughout that entire period of time. I really want to remark on that, because I think it is important to acknowledge that about 15% of the investment for economic development of OLMCs finds itself in Quebec.



That being said, with respect to the actual projects, they are far too numerous for me to articulate here, but I can provide examples, of course, to the committee—

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Mario Beaulieu:** You are saying 15%. Does that mean that in Quebec, 85% goes to francophones?

**Mr. John Buck:** No, that is not it.

[*English*]

For example, during the period of the last action plan, from 2013 to 2018, if we were to look uniquely at the enabling fund, a fund of \$80 million more or less, over that five-year period of time about \$13 million of that went into investments in Quebec led by the official-language—

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Mario Beaulieu:** You are talking about the programs as a whole.

**Mr. John Buck:** That's right.

**Mr. Mario Beaulieu:** Can you give us concrete examples of projects?

We have seen that there was almost \$10 million in small transfers, under \$100,000. We do not know what it was used for. We do not know anything.

Is there a way of knowing what specific projects are funded and to whom the small payments, under \$100,000, go?

**Mr. John Buck:** Certainly.

[*English*]

A great example I love is a venture that we have under way. It's a public-private-civil society collaboration that's happening as we speak in the Quebec City area. It involves individuals from the English-speaking community as represented by—and our friends from the Quebec City area will recognize this—the Valcartier family centre. It works in employment services with employers like Ver-Mac, which makes signs. It's a well-established Quebec business that is looking for and recruiting individuals to work. School boards are involved in this. The venture is actually allowing us to recruit individuals who are English speakers and bilingual to occupy vacant posts so that the local economy can benefit from all of that productivity.

It's a great example of how this investment impacts everyone—

[*Translation*]

**The Chair:** Thank you.

[*English*]

I know it's tight, but we are far behind the two and a half minutes.

[*Translation*]

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

**Ms. Niki Ashton:** Thank you.

Mr. Plante, you referred to Destination Canada and the work done in connection with that initiative. I would like to know

whether your organization is part of Destination Canada when the delegation goes to Paris or Morocco.

**Mr. Yan Plante:** We go, but this year we decided to participate at our own expense. The Fédération des communautés francophones et acadienne received funding to send a delegation. It is a really strategic issue for our members. They want us to be there anyway. So we will be there.

**Ms. Niki Ashton:** That is good. Obviously, we have heard about the work that gets done on those visits. It is important work. However, we have heard that the demand was stronger when Destination Canada went to Morocco, as compared to Paris, for example.

Would you recommend that Destination Canada find a way to visit other countries, other francophone pools, to bring people, not just from Morocco, but from elsewhere in Africa as well?

• (1315)

**Mr. Yan Plante:** I would like to come back to the example of Destination Manitoba that I talked about earlier.

One of our members, in Manitoba, wanted to know what forum produced the best result. I think it was in connection with a partnership with the province that he decided to go to Côte d'Ivoire. There were discussions with representatives of the government of Côte d'Ivoire. They told him that he should not recruit in certain sectors, and if he complied with that condition, they would facilitate things, in particular access to premises and publicity.

In the room, there were 1,700 people who knew they were going to be hearing about Manitoba, and not just Canada as a whole. We shall see whether placements in jobs will ultimately increase as a result of this formula. The Manitoba member seems to be very excited about this somewhat more targeted approach.

Watch this space, but it is probably a model that can be followed and that can add to what is already being done. Destination Canada does good things, but there may be a way to add to it through slightly more targeted initiatives, by province.

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

I'm sorry, Ms. Ashton, but that is all the time we have.

Mr. Buck, Mr. Plante and Ms. Abdi Aden, I had to interrupt you, but it was to give everyone a chance to speak. The interpretation is going to end very shortly. If you want to send additional information to the committee, through our clerk, please do not hesitate to do so. The clerk will forward the information to all the members.

Thank you for being with us.

Before you leave, colleagues, I want to say that the meeting on Wednesday will deal with the economic development study.

**Mr. Joël Godin:** Do we have a confirmation for November 8?

**The Chair:** Not yet, no. We are preparing a letter.

On the judicious advice of the analyst and the clerk, we will not focus only on Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada. We have also asked that during the second hour, we hear from organizations on the ground, such as the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec, the Atlantic

Canada Opportunities Agency, and the Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency. We want to hear not just from officials from here, but also from officials in the regions.

The meeting is adjourned.

---







Published under the authority of the Speaker of  
the House of Commons

---

### SPEAKER'S PERMISSION

---

The proceedings of the House of Commons and its committees are hereby made available to provide greater public access. The parliamentary privilege of the House of Commons to control the publication and broadcast of the proceedings of the House of Commons and its committees is nonetheless reserved. All copyrights therein are also reserved.

Reproduction of the proceedings of the House of Commons and its committees, in whole or in part and in any medium, is hereby permitted provided that the reproduction is accurate and is not presented as official. This permission does not extend to reproduction, distribution or use for commercial purpose of financial gain. Reproduction or use outside this permission or without authorization may be treated as copyright infringement in accordance with the Copyright Act. Authorization may be obtained on written application to the Office of the Speaker of the House of Commons.

Reproduction in accordance with this permission does not constitute publication under the authority of the House of Commons. The absolute privilege that applies to the proceedings of the House of Commons does not extend to these permitted reproductions. Where a reproduction includes briefs to a committee of the House of Commons, authorization for reproduction may be required from the authors in accordance with the Copyright Act.

Nothing in this permission abrogates or derogates from the privileges, powers, immunities and rights of the House of Commons and its committees. For greater certainty, this permission does not affect the prohibition against impeaching or questioning the proceedings of the House of Commons in courts or otherwise. The House of Commons retains the right and privilege to find users in contempt of Parliament if a reproduction or use is not in accordance with this permission.

---

Also available on the House of Commons website at the following address: <https://www.ourcommons.ca>

Publié en conformité de l'autorité  
du Président de la Chambre des communes

---

### PERMISSION DU PRÉSIDENT

---

Les délibérations de la Chambre des communes et de ses comités sont mises à la disposition du public pour mieux le renseigner. La Chambre conserve néanmoins son privilège parlementaire de contrôler la publication et la diffusion des délibérations et elle possède tous les droits d'auteur sur celles-ci.

Il est permis de reproduire les délibérations de la Chambre et de ses comités, en tout ou en partie, sur n'importe quel support, pourvu que la reproduction soit exacte et qu'elle ne soit pas présentée comme version officielle. Il n'est toutefois pas permis de reproduire, de distribuer ou d'utiliser les délibérations à des fins commerciales visant la réalisation d'un profit financier. Toute reproduction ou utilisation non permise ou non formellement autorisée peut être considérée comme une violation du droit d'auteur aux termes de la Loi sur le droit d'auteur. Une autorisation formelle peut être obtenue sur présentation d'une demande écrite au Bureau du Président de la Chambre des communes.

La reproduction conforme à la présente permission ne constitue pas une publication sous l'autorité de la Chambre. Le privilège absolu qui s'applique aux délibérations de la Chambre ne s'étend pas aux reproductions permises. Lorsqu'une reproduction comprend des mémoires présentés à un comité de la Chambre, il peut être nécessaire d'obtenir de leurs auteurs l'autorisation de les reproduire, conformément à la Loi sur le droit d'auteur.

La présente permission ne porte pas atteinte aux privilèges, pouvoirs, immunités et droits de la Chambre et de ses comités. Il est entendu que cette permission ne touche pas l'interdiction de contester ou de mettre en cause les délibérations de la Chambre devant les tribunaux ou autrement. La Chambre conserve le droit et le privilège de déclarer l'utilisateur coupable d'outrage au Parlement lorsque la reproduction ou l'utilisation n'est pas conforme à la présente permission.

---

Aussi disponible sur le site Web de la Chambre des communes à l'adresse suivante :  
<https://www.noscommunes.ca>