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• (1630)

[*Translation*]

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

Welcome to the 73rd 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 September 20, 2023, the committee is meeting to continue its study on economic development of official language minority communities.

Once again, I will spare you the instructions about using Zoom, because our guests are participating in person and the parliamentarians who are participating remotely are regulars.

I will simply remind you to make sure your earpiece is not too close to the microphone when the mic is on, since that could result in feedback and cause injury to the interpreters and technicians.

I would like to welcome the officials from the Department of Industry. With us are Etienne-René Massie, Assistant Deputy Minister, Small Business and Marketplace Services, Kasi McMicking, Associate Assistant Deputy Minister, Strategy and Innovation Policy Sector, and Marie-Caroline Badjeck, Acting Director, Strategy and Innovation Policy Sector.

Ladies, Mr. Massie, I believe this is your first appearance at a meeting of the Official Languages Committee, because I have sat on this committee for at least seven years and I have never seen you here.

The way we work is this. You have five minutes to make your presentation, which Ms. McMicking will be doing today. After the presentation, there will be a round of questions. I am strict about the time allowed for the presentation, because I want to leave as much time as possible for the members from each party to ask their questions.

I know I talk rather fast. I will try to slow the tide, for our interpreters.

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

Ms. Kasi McMicking (Associate Assistant Deputy Minister, Strategy and Innovation Policy Sector, Department of Industry): Good morning, Mr. Chair and distinguished members of the committee.

I will be speaking very quickly.

I want to start by recognizing that we are meeting today on the land of the Algonquin Anishinaabe people.

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to appear before this committee to speak to you about how Innovation, Science and Economic Development, or ISED, supports the economic development of official language minority communities, or OLMCs. Almost two million Canadians belong to OLMCs. In addition, at least half of the owners of 123,000 businesses all across Canada have the minority official language as their first language spoken.

Although ISED works with the regional development agencies, my presentation today will be limited to my department's activities.

I would like to talk to you about the Economic Development Initiative. The EDI is funded by the renewed funding for the new Action Plan for Official Languages 2023-2028 and has a total budget of \$30.5 million over five years. The funding is divided between ISED, which receives \$1.6 million in operating funds, and the regional development agencies, which administer the financial contributions.

Innovation, Science and Economic Development coordinates and facilitates the discussions about priorities and planning that take place among the agencies, at the national level. It also conducts economic research and analyzes policies in order to better understand the OLMCs' economic needs.

The research component carried out by ISED focuses on knowledge acquisition and the collection of high quality data that contribute to strengthening capacities and establishing partnerships and to guiding federal policies, programs and services.

Between 2018 and 2023, almost 40 studies or analyses were completed in collaboration with various stakeholders. In 2019, for example, the department commissioned Statistics Canada to develop a methodology for identifying businesses that might be associated with official language minorities. Before that study was done, there was no national and regional inventory of business owners who belonged to official language minorities.

The first report produced for the study, in 2020, shows that in 2017 at least half of the owners of 6.5% of Canadian SMEs had the minority official language of the province where the business was based as their first official language spoken. The report also showed that in Canada as a whole, official language minority business owners are slightly younger, slightly less often women, and slightly more often immigrants than are other business owners.

Providing reliable and usable statistical data at the national and regional levels, for decision-making based on businesses and economic development in OLMCs, is an important objective of our research component. The department plans to continue its partnership with Statistics Canada in 2023-24 in order to update the data I have presented here using 2021 Census data and provide an overview of the investments made in businesses owned by both urban and rural minority official language owners.

• (1635)

[English]

For several years, ISED has also held consultations with OLMCs to understand their issues and immediate needs, to better align our policies, programs and services, and to inform the EDI research component.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, we consulted virtually with hundreds of stakeholders through six sessions—three in French and three in English—to better understand the impact of COVID-19 on community economic development and the tourism industry, and to share best practices.

EDI has been in place for 15 years. ISED coordinates through committees—one English and one French—that include representatives from OLMCs, and through an interdepartmental federal working group that meets regularly to discuss all aspects of delivery of the initiative.

The Chair: Wrap it up in 15 seconds, if you can.

Ms. Kasi McMicking: A key component for addressing support for entrepreneurs has been the programming under the leadership of my colleague, Etienne-René, which has been designed and delivered for women, Black and 2SLGBTQI+ entrepreneurs. Official languages have been considered in the conception and design of these programs, as well as the launch and the ultimate delivery of the programming. How they plan to provide services in both official languages was a factor in the ultimate selection of successful recipients.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. McMicking. You can continue further through the questions and elaborate more if you want.

The next round of questions will be asked by each party, with six minutes for each interaction. I'll be very strict on the time because I want a second round for everyone.

[Translation]

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

Mr. Joël Godin (Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thanks to the departmental representatives for being here today.

The objective is to get a clear understanding of the situation. We are doing a study with the aim of finding tools that would enable businesses in official language minority communities to be more prosperous. From what I have understood, they are believed to need more help to expand and prosper in the current market, which is more difficult.

Ms. McMicking, in your presentation, you said that you had done a lot of studies and analyses, but I am looking at things from

the point of view of an entrepreneur. What is the process by which these businesses can obtain government assistance? Is there government assistance that specifically targets this category of businesses?

• (1640)

[English]

Ms. Kasi McMicking: Yes. What I've described is what ISED's programming does in the context of the EDI program. This is a program of \$30.5 million over five years that we actually work with our colleagues in the regional development agencies to implement. That is directed very specifically towards OLMCs.

What I described was the ISED piece of this puzzle, which is quite a small but very important piece because it is the mechanism by which we collaborate and work with the OLMCs to determine what they need, as well as collaborate with them to share best practices—through engagement, for example.

The programming piece of this is run through the regional development agencies. I believe that our colleagues from ACOA and CEDQ will be here to speak later on.

[Translation]

Mr. Joël Godin: Thank you.

What I understand is that you work with the agencies in the seven territories and areas defined. However, the business has to apply to the agencies, not to you. You coordinate the programs. If we do some searching, we see that the structure is relatively complex.

First, then, can you tell us what the windows are that the businesses can approach to obtain financial and other types of assistance?

Second, do you target specific sectors? There are programs that support certain sectors, such as tourism, or certain industries. Do you target specific sectors, and is that tailored to each of the seven regions? We know that Canada is a large and diverse country.

[English]

Ms. Kasi McMicking: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

There are basically two answers to the member's question. The first is with regard to the EDI piece of the program. The one-stop shop for each of them depends on which region they are located in.

The second piece of that answer is that there are also a variety of programs that exist, such as the Black entrepreneurship program or the women entrepreneurship strategy, which ISED conducts. Through the research work and through our partnership with my colleague, Etienne, we ensure these contain a lens that will ensure that official-language minority communities' needs are applied in terms of the application to these programs.

If I may, Mr. Chair, I will turn to my colleague, Etienne, to just supplement how these programs work.

[Translation]

Mr. Etienne-René Massie (Assistant Deputy Minister, Small Business and Marketplace Services, Department of Industry): For all the programs our department provides, we apply certain conditions. We fund groups that are located in communities, in the provinces and territories, and offer various services for entrepreneurs, be they mentoring, sponsorship or training. All our recipients must offer their services in both official languages of Canada.

In some cases, when we evaluate projects, we make sure that the official language minority communities are able to be part of them and receive services. There are often partnerships between organizations in the communities and our recipients.

Regarding whether we cover specific sectors, I would say there are very few, because when we make a choice, we eliminate certain sectors. We therefore try to maintain a more general approach.

Mr. Joël Godin: Thank you, Mr. Massie.

You used the term “recipient”. So is this a lottery, a draw? How are responsibilities and budget envelopes allocated? Obviously there is money associated with it.

Mr. Etienne-René Massie: When the government grants funds to entrepreneurship programs, our usual approach is to call for competitive bids. We prepare a guide that explains what we want to fund. People are then invited to submit a bid. There are consortiums or organizations that submit applications. We do not work directly with the entrepreneurs. We do it indirectly. We find a third party, which then works with the entrepreneurs.

Regarding the strategy for women...

• (1645)

Mr. Joël Godin: I am going to stop you there, Mr. Massie...

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Godin. That is just about all the time you have. This time goes very quickly, but you will be able to come back to this.

The next questions will be from our colleague Angelo Iacono, who has six minutes.

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

Thanks to the witnesses for being with us this afternoon.

What role does Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada play in the economic development of official language minority communities, the OLMCs?

[English]

Ms. Kasi McMicking: In terms of the economic development of OLMCs, ISED plays a couple of different roles.

We play the direct-funding role that Etienne has just described, as well as the research and data role, and the convening role that I described in my remarks earlier. What we're able to do through the convening, through the various events we hold with OLMCs and through the research we conduct in partnership with them is better determine, first of all, how OLMCs are actually comprised and, second of all, what it is they are in need of at this particular point in time.

These things have shifted. For example, during the COVID-19 sessions I described earlier, what we discovered were very specific things with regard to these entrepreneurs' needs regarding labour mobility, labour sources and issues with the tourism industry. There are long-standing issues and there are these evolutionary issues that we see over time.

Our activity is to work with them to determine what their needs are.

[Translation]

Mr. Angelo Iacono: What initiatives are you proposing, to support OLMCs in rural areas, particularly when it comes to developing telecommunication services?

Ms. Marie-Caroline Badjeck (Acting Director, Strategy and Innovation Policy Sector, Department of Industry): Good afternoon.

As my Assistant Deputy Minister said, one of the important jobs we do when it comes to rural areas involves data, the statistics. The goal is to have a better understanding of the needs of OLMCs in rural areas, from an economic point of view, but possibly also in terms of infrastructure.

This year, our priority is to work with Statistics Canada on this data. We are also continuing to work with our partners, including RDEE, two representatives of which appeared before you on Monday. We are working with partners nation-wide so they can tell us what rural communities and their members need.

As my Assistant Deputy Minister said, we have monitoring committees. With the regional development agencies, we can transfer the knowledge we receive from our partners, RDEE for example, and discuss what has to be done for rural areas. On our part, this mainly means strategic planning. Our priority this year relates to statistics and our collaboration with Statistics Canada on the subject of rural areas and OLMCs.

Mr. Angelo Iacono: How does the department ensure access by postsecondary institutions in official language minority communities to funding for digital research infrastructure?

Ms. Marie-Caroline Badjeck: To answer your question, I think we would have to consult our colleagues in the research sector. We will then be able to provide you with an answer.

Mr. Angelo Iacono: Thank you.

What initiatives does your department adopt for complying with the Official Languages Act?

Mr. Etienne-René Massie: If I may, I will answer the question.

In the programming we offer, whether under the Women Entrepreneurship Strategy, Futurpreneur Canada, or the Black Entrepreneurship Program, we incorporate obligations into our contribution agreement. There are very specific clauses that require that every applicant who approaches our department to access these services offer the services in both official languages.

• (1650)

Mr. Angelo Iacono: Thank you.

What are the main barriers that OLMCs face?

Mr. Etienne-René Massie: Are you talking about the main barriers to participation in economic terms?

Mr. Angelo Iacono: Yes.

Mr. Etienne-René Massie: I would say that the communities face a series of challenges. Often, it is access to services. They have to be able to find someone in their niche who offers those services in the language of their choice.

An entrepreneur in an official language minority community often faces quite a few of the same challenges that all the other entrepreneurs face. Entrepreneurs who are excelling are not the ones who seek out our services. Through our programs, we are really trying to work with entrepreneurs who need help, who need support or services. Some run into barriers or discrimination. For example, the black community has faced these kinds of challenges for a very long time. We offer these services to try to overcome these barriers, which often involve access to capital, access to information, or access to markets. These entrepreneurs are trying to get included in bigger companies' supply chains. These are often the same challenges as we see for many entrepreneurs.

Mr. Angelo Iacono: Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Iacono and Mr. Massie.

The next few questions will be asked by the second vice-chair of this committee.

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

Mr. Mario Beaulieu (La Pointe-de-l'Île, BQ): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thanks to our guests for being here with us.

There is something I would like to know. Right at the beginning, you said that Statistics Canada had a new mandate, to identify businesses that represent OLMCs. Can we get access to the inventory of those businesses? Is it public?

Ms. Marie-Caroline Badjeck: I can answer the question.

The data used is from the census, but my statistics preserve anonymity. For the list of businesses, I refer to my colleagues at

Statistics Canada. It is really the 2017 Census database that my Deputy Minister discussed today.

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: Right. That is the data you use.

Basically, if I understand correctly, you do not finance the businesses directly. I would like to know what the situation is for Quebec particularly.

Mr. Etienne-René Massie: For our entrepreneurship programs, our approach is to go through intermediaries. For the Canadian Digital Adoption Program or CDAP, for example, we work with the Fédération des chambres de commerce du Québec and the Réseau des sociétés d'aide au développement des collectivités to provide this service to small businesses in Quebec.

Regarding the Women Entrepreneurship Strategy...

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: This is about anglophone Quebec small business in this case, is that right?

Mr. Etienne-René Massie: In this case, the Fédération and the Réseau provide services to entrepreneurs in anglophone and francophone communities in Quebec, in general. It is the same thing, for example, for the Strategy...

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: How do you divide it up? Does that agency provide services to francophones in general, but grants specific additional money to anglophone small businesses?

Mr. Etienne-René Massie: There aren't necessarily budgets planned, but the data has to be collected.

When we give funding to the intermediaries, we ask them to provide us with data regarding the sex and community of origin of the recipients and with a report on the number of people from official language minority communities who were served. We can use that data to do an evaluation and see whether the service is meeting the needs of OLMCs.

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: Can we know precisely what official language minority community businesses in Quebec have benefited from the program?

Mr. Etienne-René Massie: We would have to ask the intermediaries to provide that information and I would also have to check whether the studies clause that we require all our recipients to sign provides for the information to be distributed.

• (1655)

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: Can you send us the list of your intermediary organizations?

Mr. Etienne-René Massie: Yes, certainly. We can provide you with the list of all our intermediary organizations. Everything is on our website and so we can send you all those links.

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: You talked about a committee on which representatives of the OLMCs sit. I was wondering who the representatives of the OLMCs in Quebec are who sit on the committees or whom you consult.

Ms. Marie-Caroline Badjeck: I do not have the complete list, but, for example, the Community Economic Development and Employability Corporation is one of our members. I know its president was here on Monday. We also have Youth Employment Services. So our committee brings together anglophone and francophone partners from the OLMCs. We can send you the list, if you like.

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: That's good.

We had the Chief Statistician of Canada here, and he told us that he is part of your department. That means that you make the decisions about indicators and what is or is not disclosed. In the case I am talking about, the issue was the breakdown of rights holders, and the Chief Statistician told us that he had to wait for authorization from your department. Can one of you give us some information about that and tell us how it works?

Ms. Marie-Caroline Badjeck: We can't do that today, because our work focuses specifically on the implementation of the Economic Development Initiative. We work with Statistics Canada for the OLMCs. Rights holders are not our sector, but we can see whether they are part of our portfolio. If you have specific questions, we can pass them on to the appropriate people.

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: According to Bill C-13 and statements by ministers and other people, the new approach involves also protecting French in Quebec. In the envelope provided for official languages, is there something different that will be for the francophone side? They say that the vitality of linguistic communities depends on their economic development and that...

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Beaulieu. That is the start of an excellent question, the answer to which will have to wait, since your six minutes are up.

I would like to advise the witnesses that any additional information they might obtain for us, to flesh out their answers, can be sent to our clerk, who will then forward them to all our members.

Ms. Mathysen, today is your first time participating in the work of our committee. You have the floor for six minutes.

[*English*]

Ms. Lindsay Mathysen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Thank you to the witnesses.

I'd like to ask a bit more about the EDI, which you talked about. You spoke about the fact that those numbers are still fairly low with immigrant families, and with women in particular.

I wanted to ask about the lack of French child care options in francophone communities. Have you spoken to a lot of these entrepreneurs about how that limits their ability to build those businesses and innovate in terms of that economic development as well?

Ms. Marie-Caroline Badjeck: In the conversation we had last fall, some of the priorities that were put forward around demographics were more around the aging population and youth migration, as well as succession planning. Those were the things that were brought up to us in the context of the EDI. That doesn't mean that child care and access to education services in the minority official language are not an issue, but in our discussion, they were quite

focused, and those were the things that came up from a demographic perspective.

Again, it was the aging population, youth migration, succession planning and labour shortages. That's what we heard last fall.

Ms. Lindsay Mathysen: So you don't look at a lot of those other supports that would ultimately go into helping some of these groups access or take better advantage of the businesses they want to build in those social ways. Don't you look at that at all?

Ms. Marie-Caroline Badjeck: The EDI is part of the official-language action plan, so we're just one small part of a whole-of-government initiative. There are PCH and ESDC. We're all under that big plan that was announced in April 2023 and will be renewed every five years.

We keep our focus on our departmental mandate. Of course, as part of PCH, we report back to PCH every year, so we are aware of what others are doing and there's good collaboration with the department, but again, we stay within our mandate in terms of the focus of our activities with an understanding of what's happening. To be clear, the EDI is part of the official-language plan at large, so there's a lot under there that deals with child care and all those issues.

● (1700)

Ms. Lindsay Mathysen: A lot of what I've heard from business owners in general, of course, is about the time that it takes away from what they're desperately trying to put together. They're very busy in terms of those businesses. It consumes so much of their life, so to try to carve out some extra time to be able to apply for a lot of these programs is very difficult. I heard that a lot when I was working on the trade file.

How are you helping these businesses and these people do that? Has the application process been more streamlined over the years? Could you explain a bit of that?

Mr. Etienne-René Massie: I can speak to the entrepreneurship programming that we have in the department. We hear that entrepreneurs are busy people. They're problem-solvers on an ongoing basis. Our intermediaries provide a range of services and a different level of engagement with the entrepreneurs, so the entrepreneur can sometimes come in and get quick hits, or they can get more in-depth services that are there.

The ecosystem providers, like Futurpreneur or an organization like the Black Business and Professional Association, will try to tailor their program to make it easy for entrepreneurs, which is why we believe that intermediaries are key in the delivery of our services. For these intermediaries, this is their business. They are there to support entrepreneurs. They are there to work with entrepreneurs, so they know what entrepreneurs want, how they want it, and when they want it. That's why we fund these organizations, because they are best placed to work with entrepreneurs to help them develop their project.

Ms. Lindsay Mathysen: Do those intermediaries—forgive my ignorance—take the entire pot of funding and then decide who receives it and how it's received? Is it a separate amount of money that you provide to them that's not indicative of what those businesses get?

Mr. Etienne-René Massie: The programming that I'm talking about is their entrepreneurship programming, which is over and above the official-language minority programming that we have in the department.

Ms. Lindsay Mathysen: So it's separate.

Mr. Etienne-René Massie: It's separate, and it's generalized to the population.

We try to enable organizations to help businesses through the provision of free services and supports. We don't necessarily do a direct contribution to a business or even an indirect financial contribution to the business. We do a range of services that help that entrepreneur build out their project through that programming, be it WES, BEP or Futurpreneur.

Ms. Kasi McMicking: May I just add one additional thing to what Etienne was just saying to the member? With regard to what our shop does, Marie-Caroline and I are essentially, apart from doing research and coordination, the one-stop shop for coordinating feedback with regard to how the EDI program itself operates throughout the country. We are quite conscious of the issues for entrepreneurs in all parts of the country and in all ways with regard to capacity. We try to work with our collaborators in other departments to make the processes as simple as possible using the feedback that we hear from entrepreneurs.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Mathysen and Ms. McMicking.

In the second round of questions, we'll start with the member for Fort McMurray—Cold Lake, Mrs. Goodridge.

The floor is yours for five minutes.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Laila Goodridge (Fort McMurray—Cold Lake, CPC): Thank you. It is not very cold here today. It is one degree Celsius.

First, the responsibility for western Canada economic diversification has been divided between two different agencies: PrairiesCan and PacifiCan. How does that change the way the funds will be spent?

• (1705)

Ms. Marie-Caroline Badjeck: Up to now, the funding associated with the Economic Development Initiative was a function of the population. We can expect that this will continue. However, that is

why the presence of the representatives of the regional agencies at this committee is important, as the Assistant Deputy Minister said, because they can tell you in greater detail about the allocation of resources between these two new agencies.

Mrs. Laila Goodridge: Is the funding divided based on the number of francophones or based on the general population?

Ms. Marie-Caroline Badjeck: Once again, I would invite you to put that specific question to our colleagues who will be testifying in the second hour. They will be better able to explain how they use their funds and how they are given out.

Mrs. Laila Goodridge: Right.

Can you give me examples of economic development projects or programs in official language minority communities that have been successful and have been supported by regional development agencies under the Action Plan for the Official Languages 2018-2023?

Ms. Marie-Caroline Badjeck: Once again, I would not want to take the pleasure of talking about their successes away from the representatives of the agencies who will testify after us. They will be able to give you examples of projects.

However, I can talk to you about the type of projects that we fund directly at Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada, to support strategic planning and evaluate the emerging needs of communities. For example, we fund research projects relating to strategic planning, such as RDEE Canada's recent white paper, which was submitted in 2023 and was funded in part by us.

Once again, the regional development agencies are on the ground.

Mrs. Laila Goodridge: Thank you.

We know that bilingualism is an economic advantage, but in what respect is it an asset for the economy at the national and international level?

Ms. Marie-Caroline Badjeck: I do not have data on that on hand. However,...

Mrs. Laila Goodridge: Can you send it to the committee, in that case? We have very little time.

[*English*]

You can submit it in both official languages to the committee, or in one of the languages, and the clerk can share it. It's just because my time is running out very quickly.

One of the big things that I've heard very clearly from language communities is the importance of having “by and for”. It's not an anglophone community that can do the work in both languages, but a francophone community that is serving the francophone community.

You were talking about the fact that you hire agencies to spend the money. How do you guys make sure that the money is spent exactly how you want?

Mr. Etienne-René Massie: In our entrepreneurship programming, the contribution agreement spells out a range of reporting requirements, so the quarterly claims come in and annual reports come in, which allow our officers to do a paper review. Then we have ongoing engagement with our recipients, so those are phone calls and regular meetings to get an understanding of what the challenges and opportunities are.

We will often bring the recipients together under an initiative. For example, the Black entrepreneurship initiative—the knowledge hub of which is at Carleton—will bring all the ecosystem recipients together for information exchange, learning, lessons and best practices. We are there, talking with them directly during the meeting, and in the hallways as well, to try to better understand the issues.

The reporting is the ultimate.... They have to account for the number of services and the diversity of clients they have, and that gives us a full accounting.

Mrs. Laila Goodridge: So it's—

• (1710)

The Chair: I'm sorry, Mrs. Goodridge. That's all the time you have for now.

[*Translation*]

Thank you, Mr. Massie.

The floor will now go to Mr. Serré, MP for the North Bay region.

Mr. Marc Serré (Nickel Belt, Lib.): In fact, Mr. Chair, I represent the region of Nipissing and Greater Sudbury, more precisely.

Thanks to the witnesses for being here today and for their work in the department.

Ms. McMicking and Mr. Massie, you spoke about the consultations you held a few years ago. You mentioned problems accessing capital and markets. Since we are here to make recommendations that will enable us to progress, is there a formal report on the consultations that you could send to the committee so that our analyst and committee members could get some ideas from it?

Ms. Kasi McMicking: Yes, we have a report on the consultations our department held.

Mr. Marc Serré: Thank you. Given that we do not have a lot of time today, please let us have that in writing after the meeting. We would appreciate that.

There have been consultations about the action plan for the official languages with a number of official language minority communities around the country. They want the federal government to play a major role, and it is doing that. However, do the provinces also have to address the needs of francophone minority communities? What is your role with the provinces? Do you have formal agreements with some of them?

Ms. Marie-Caroline Badjeck: No, we do not have formal agreements with the provinces at this point.

In Ontario, for example, the communities themselves, through organizations like the Assemblée de la francophonie de l'Ontario or the Société économique de l'Ontario, hold discussions with their

provincial government and present the results to it. That is kind of the idea of development by and for the communities.

Mr. Marc Serré: Like Ms. Goodridge and Mr. Iacono before you, you referred to the idea of development by, for and with the communities. Do you have formal criteria, concepts, priorities or practices that require you to work first with organizations that prioritize work by, for and with the communities, rather than with bilingual organizations?

Mr. Etienne-René Massie: In our call for tenders, when we award funding for offering services to entrepreneurs in official language minority communities, our guides set out our expectations regarding official languages, which are part of our evaluation criteria.

For example, when we do an entrepreneurship program, if the bidder says it will not offer the service in the minority official language, the evaluation ends right there, because this is a statutory obligation that is part of our work.

Mr. Marc Serré: Ms. McMicking, you stated that your department was responsible for Statistics Canada. We have heard repeatedly that there was a shortage of data regarding official language minority communities in Canada. You also said earlier that there was a Statistics Canada report and that you were going to follow up with them.

What kind of questions are you going to ask them? We would like to know so we can make recommendations directly to Statistics Canada or make sure that certain specific questions are asked.

In addition, what is the date of the next Statistics Canada census? When we examine the data, we are always five to ten years behind.

• (1715)

The Chair: Please answer in less than 20 seconds, if you would.

Ms. Marie-Caroline Badjeck: We are currently in negotiations about this new mandate. For that reason, unfortunately, I cannot tell you about it, but we hope to have an agreement over two years to produce the data we consider to be important, based on our consultations with the OLMCs, including in rural and urban areas. We also want to update the data based on the 2021 Census. We should be able to give you an answer by the end of your study, but for now I want to be careful what I say, because we are in negotiations with Statistics Canada.

Mr. Marc Serré: Thank you.

In Ontario, 80% of Statistics Canada employees are in my riding and they are bilingual. We have to make sure that continues to be supported.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Serré.

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

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: I am going to go back to my question.

Since 2020, and in the new act, the government has recognized that francophones in Quebec are a minority in Canada and North America and that it has a responsibility to protect the French language. To your knowledge, in the Action Plan for Official Languages 2023-2028, is there money provided for the economic development of the francophone community in Quebec, specifically?

[English]

Ms. Kasi McMicking: To be honest, I can't speak to the entirety of the action plan. That is a very large amount of money that cuts across a very large number of departments. I can't speak for those departments.

The economic development initiative, which I described earlier and which our colleagues from the regional development agencies will speak to, is part of that. That's the \$30.5 million over five years. That is specifically for economic development, in the sense that it is the work we do with data evaluation, research and engagement.

[Translation]

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: No money is provided specifically for the economic development of the francophone community in Quebec under the Action Plan for Official Languages 2023-2028.

Ms. Marie-Caroline Badjeck: Under the economic development initiative, the focus is on official language minority communities.

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: It talks about linguistic minorities by province, so it is English in Quebec, period.

Ms. Marie-Caroline Badjeck: Yes, it is English. Once again, in the context of the official action plan, there are various departments that work in all the provinces. So if you want to extend it, that goes beyond the OLMCs.

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: Right.

At the same time, however, because you are using first official language spoken, it includes English-speaking newcomers. That is also the language indicator chosen by Statistics Canada in order to inflate the numbers. Does the fact that there are specific strategies for English-speaking newcomers or for anglophones create discrimination in the case of Quebec?

The Chair: That is an excellent question, Mr. Beaulieu, but your time is up.

[English]

Two and a half minutes go by very fast.

Ms. Mathysen, the floor is yours for two and a half minutes.

Ms. Lindsay Mathysen: Thank you.

You were talking about issues in terms of the labour market, finding that it's consistent all over Canada in many communities. Does your department work in ways to better inform overall government policies, or what have you, in terms of francophone immigration to address the needs of the minority francophone communities and specifically those businesses you're looking to support?

Ms. Kasi McMicking: Thank you for that question.

At our department, we aren't focusing specifically on franco-phone immigration. It is certainly an issue we look into and one that we are discussing with our partners.

You probably would be better off to ask that question of our partners at IRCC.

Ms. Lindsay Mathysen: Is it entirely siloed in terms of those conversations you have? Is it not shared? Do they take that information and learn from what you do?

Ms. Kasi McMicking: Absolutely. As we described previously, part of what we do is serve as a bit of a one-stop shop for the entrepreneurs and also as part of the federal family. We share information that we learn from the entrepreneurs and the groups that we speak to with our colleagues in other departments. We are very specific to the economic development side, rather than other issues.

Ms. Lindsay Mathysen: Certainly that would inform how successful the program is, so sharing information would be pretty key.

• (1720)

Ms. Marie-Caroline Badjeck: At the working level, there are interdepartmental working groups led by IRCC and we are part of that. We're not leading those; they're leading them. For example, my director general is part of one of those interdepartmental working groups.

There is sharing of information, especially on those really important issues. It's just that it's not the focus of our work. Of course, it's part of the discussion of labour shortages.

Ms. Kasi McMicking: There are a lot of different actors who will share this type of information with the various departments that are engaged in these issues.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Mathysen.

For the next questions, we will be very short.

[Translation]

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

Mr. Bernard Génèreux (Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, CPC): Thanks to the witnesses for being here.

Out of the budget of \$30-some-odd million spread over five years, if I understand correctly, what is the actual portion that will go to entrepreneurs and businesses once the administrative and management expenses of the program have been paid and the organizations themselves have paid their own administrative expenses? What percentage of the money they receive goes to cover administrative expenses and how much do they have left at the end?

[English]

Ms. Kasi McMicking: In terms of the money that ISED spends, of that \$30.5 million over five years, we spend \$1.6 million over five years. Our funding is very specific to operating, so our money does not go to entrepreneurs.

When our colleagues from the regional development agencies are here to speak to you—when we are finished—I think they would be the people who could probably answer your question.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Bernard Généreux: What accountability is there at that point? Is it done to all the federal economic development agencies everywhere in the country? Are they the ones to whom the money paid to businesses and entrepreneurs will have to be accounted for?

Ms. Marie-Caroline Badjeck: If I may clarify your question, do you want to know how we go about accounting to the federal government or within the businesses?

Mr. Bernard Généreux: Yes. It is federal money, \$30 million that we are making available to businesses and entrepreneurs. It is important to point out that these are loans, in the very large majority of cases, not grants. What is the return percentage on the loans that have been granted? Do you have statistics on that?

Ms. Marie-Caroline Badjeck: The last official evaluation of the economic development initiative that we have goes back to 2017. We can send you that evaluation, which is also accessible online. It is a public document.

We consult on an ongoing basis with our partners, the regional development agencies, on the next steps for evaluating the program. Once again, those agencies will be able to speak precisely about how they manage the funds.

How it is, since these are initiatives, is that all partners of the initiative account to Canadian Heritage each year. We can provide you with that information in aggregate form.

The Chair: Thank you.

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

Mr. Marc Serré: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

As I said earlier, most Statistics Canada employees are located in Sturgeon Falls, Ontario. The committee knows that Sturgeon Falls is the town where the first French-language secondary school in Ontario was opened, in 1971.

Mr. Beaulieu, since my ancestors settled here in 1870, we have developed the francophonie in the town, and there is a significant francophone community there.

I now want to talk about the economic development agencies. As you know, there are seven, including the Federal Economic Development Agency for Northern Ontario, or FedNor. Their mandate is very broad and they play a very strong role in relation to francophone communities and services in French.

Do the economic development agencies themselves have responsibility for deciding, without your involvement, whether they offer services to francophones, or does Industry Canada have some sort of protocol to make sure that all these agencies spend money for the francophone community in their respective regions?

[*English*]

Ms. Kasi McMicking: Unfortunately, I would ask you to ask that question of the regional development agencies.

That being said, what I would say is that we are all subject to the Official Languages Act, so they will be required to provide services under the act. In terms of how that all works and the mechanisms behind it, where they do it and how they do it, I think our colleagues from the RDAs would be better able to answer that question.

• (1725)

Mr. Marc Serré: I want to be clear. We're going to ask that question of the agencies, but you, as a department, do not have a specific mandate given to all RDAs that they must offer French services.

Ms. Kasi McMicking: No. Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada is one department. Each of the RDAs is its own department. They are independent of us, so we don't tell them what to do in any way, shape or form. They are excellent partners of ours, but we—

[*Translation*]

Mr. Marc Serré: So you will have to ask the seven agencies individually that question, if you want to know about their mandate and their priorities regarding francophone communities. This is a recommendation that we can make.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Serré, Mr. Massie, Ms. Badjeck, and Ms. McMicking. This was really interesting.

I am now going to suspend the meeting for a few minutes to allow our new witnesses time to get settled.

• (1725)

(Pause)

• (1730)

The Chair: We are resuming the meeting.

We are continuing our study on the economic development of official language minority communities with representatives of the two regional development agencies, something that had not happened for at least seven years at the Standing Committee on Official Languages.

We have Daryell Nowlan, Vice-President, Policy, Programs and Communications at the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency, the ACOA. And we have Sony Perron, Deputy Minister of the Economic Development Agency for the Regions of Quebec, or CED.

Welcome, gentlemen. You will each have five minutes to give a short presentation. I will let you know when your speaking time is up. I am pretty strict about this. If you do not have time to finish, you will have an opportunity to complete your remarks when you answer questions.

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

Mr. Daryell Nowlan (Vice-President, Policy, Programs and Communications, Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Members of the Standing Committee on Official Languages. My name is Daryell Nowlan and I am the Vice President of Policy, Programs and Communications at the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency, or ACOA.

I am pleased to join you in person here in Ottawa and respectfully acknowledge that we are on the traditional unceded territory of the Anishinabe Algonquin nation.

• (1735)

[English]

Thank you for the invitation to appear today. I'm happy to be here to speak to you about what ACOA does on the ground with respect to official-language minority communities.

[Translation]

For more than 35 years, the agency has worked with Acadian and French-speaking businesses, organizations, and communities in the four Atlantic provinces. One of our greatest strengths is our presence throughout the Atlantic region.

[English]

We have employees working directly in offices located in over 30 communities around Atlantic Canada, ranging from our larger cities to small, rural, coastal and remote communities. We're proud to be a leader in providing services to entrepreneurs in communities in both official languages.

Our offices located in bilingual regions for language of work are all of our offices in New Brunswick, including our head office in Moncton, as well as our small office that we have here in Ottawa. We have established offices directly in francophone and Acadian communities throughout the region: for example, Wellington in P.E.I., Pointe-de-l'Église in Nova Scotia, and Edmundston and Campbellton in New Brunswick.

One way that ACOA successfully supports entrepreneurs in official-language minority communities is by being more accessible and visible. That is why, wherever possible, our staff are co-located with other economic development organizations in these communities. This type of partnership allows for entrepreneurs in Acadian and francophone communities in Atlantic Canada to be made aware of the full suite of programs that are available to them to help them grow their businesses, and they can have that service in French.

[Translation]

For example, in the southwest region of Nova Scotia, two agency employees share offices with the Corporation for the Benefit of Community Development, the Economic Development and Employability Network, or RDEE Canada, the Nova Scotia Economic Development Council, and the Nova Scotia at Work employment services centers.

[English]

The agency works closely with these partners to identify priorities and opportunities that might exist, and they bring all of their services together in a bit of a one-stop shop.

Through our regular programming, including the business development program and the regional economic growth through innovation program, the agency helps small and medium-sized businesses become more competitive, innovative and productive. We also work with communities to identify growth opportunities and investment initiatives that lead to long-term jobs through our innovative communities fund.

[Translation]

In addition, in recent years, the agency has implemented the economic development initiative, a component of Canada's Action Plan for Official Languages 2018-2023.

[English]

The EDI, as we've talked about previously, represents \$6.2 million over five years to support things like tourism, innovation, productivity improvement, market and trade development, and francophone immigration projects with francophone and Acadian communities.

Over the last 18 months, ACOA, in addition to the EDI, has approved 1,250 projects in francophone communities for over \$211 million. For example, we've done projects with la Société acadienne et francophone de l'Île-du-Prince-Édouard and Horizon TNL to provide support for francophone immigration services.

[Translation]

Last April, ACOA also announced an investment of \$1.6 million for the IMPACT project, led by the four RDEEs in the Atlantic, the Centre québécois de développement durable, and RDEE Canada. This project aims to increase the performance and competitiveness of businesses and organizations in French-speaking and Acadian communities in the Atlantic provinces by helping them better position themselves in the face of new market and societal expectations in terms of sustainability.

[English]

The agency remains committed to creating more diversified and inclusive communities, and to solidifying economic development efforts that benefit all Atlantic Canadian communities.

[Translation]

Mr. Chair, members of the committee, thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak about the role of the Atlantic Opportunities Agency of Canada in the development of official language minority communities in Atlantic Canada.

[English]

I'll be happy to take your questions.

[Translation]

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Nowlan.

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

Mr. Sony Perron (Deputy Minister, Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Good afternoon, everyone.

My name is Sony Perron and I am the President and Deputy Minister for the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec.

Thank you for inviting me to appear before you to discuss the work done by Economic Development Canada for the regions of Quebec to support the economic development of official language minority communities.

[English]

I wish, first, to acknowledge that we are gathered on the traditional territory of the Algonquin Anishinabe nation, and I would like to thank the members of the first nation for welcoming us on their ancestral territories.

[Translation]

Economic Development Canada, or DEC, for the regions of Quebec is the regional economic development agency dedicated to Quebec, a province where language is particularly important.

This is true historically, but it is also reflected in the economic geography of each region. It is essential that this geography be taken into consideration, for us to fulfil our mandate. That is what we do, based, in particular, on our capacity to offer the services of our advisers in both official languages in each region of Quebec.

DEC's mission is to promote economic development in all regions of Quebec, through promising projects for small or medium enterprises, or SMEs, and the communities, that will contribute to building sustainable, green and inclusive growth.

It is clear to us that carrying out this mandate also calls for full participation by official language minority communities. That participation contributes to the economic vitality of Quebec and Canada. The economic and entrepreneurial ecosystems of those communities are engines of innovation, productivity, job creation and economic growth everywhere in Quebec.

• (1740)

[English]

This is why CEDQ provides them with ongoing support through the delivery in Quebec of the economic development initiative for official languages. Between 2018-19 and 2022-23, CEDQ invested \$8.7 million in the OLMCs through the economic development initiative for official languages. This has led to the implementation of innovative projects and entrepreneurship initiatives, and to the development of partnerships that help to diversify the economic activity of these communities everywhere in Quebec.

Our approach is to ensure that the support we offer meets the needs of these communities. One example is CEDQ's support for the Youth Employment Services foundation, called YES, an NPO that provides entrepreneurial support for English-speaking youth looking to start their own business. This year's renewal of CEDQ's agreement for \$2.84 million of nonrepayable contributions for this organization, under the EDI program, helps YES to be there, everywhere, in all regions, including in the Montreal region.

[Translation]

Another example of agency funding is the Community Economic Development and Employability Corporation, or CEDEC, which

develop economic development partnerships and initiatives for entrepreneurs in Quebec's anglophone community.

DEC has just renewed its support for the CEDECs in the amount of \$1.17 million over four years. This funding is intended to help them mobilize communities around economic development issues, identify business development opportunities, and put tools in place to guide communities and help them launch economic diversification projects.

DEC is convinced that economic development must be done for and by the community. That is why it is crucial that we listen to the community's needs. We do this continuously, both through our network of business offices and by holding bilateral meetings that bring together DEC's senior officials and representatives of official language minority communities.

Under the economic development initiative for official languages, and in collaboration with Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada, or ISED, Economic Development Canada meets with representatives of the communities every two years to hold dialogue days, the last one having been on October 5, 2022, I believe.

These consultations are very important meetings for us in that they keep us up to date on the challenges and needs of entrepreneurs from official language minority communities, which enables us to adapt our actions to the needs voiced. They also enable us to make sure that the communities are aware of the federal programs and services that entrepreneurs could access.

SMEs are what drives the economy. The DEC believes that it is essential to support the high potential enterprises that originate in official language minority communities, through the Economic Development Initiative for the official languages.

An excellent example is that with our funding, a promising business plan was developed on the Îles-de-la-Madeleine: Generation V—Boat Builders, in Grosse-Île.

I will stop there Mr. Chair. I could continue for several more pages, but I will find a way of telling you more in the next minutes.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Perron. That is what I was going to say.

As you are asked questions, you will certainly have a chance to continue what you were saying.

This is how it will work from this point. In the first round of questions, each party will be allowed six minutes. That speaking time includes discussion.

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

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

Mr. Joël Godin: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you for being with us, gentlemen.

As a member of Parliament from Quebec, I am happy to see that we will be hearing comments from a representative of Economic Development Canada for the Regions of Quebec.

Mr. Nowlan, my first question is about ACOA's operating budgets.

What is the total envelope that serves as operating funds for the financial assistance measures, the grants and loans given to communities in the Atlantic region?

• (1745)

Mr. Daryell Nowlan: When we talk about economic development initiatives for the communities—

Mr. Joël Godin: My question relates to the entire operating budget that you receive from the federal government for financial assistance, in the form of grants or loans. I would like to know the total envelope.

Prepare yourself, Mr. Perron; I am going to ask you the same question.

[English]

Mr. Daryell Nowlan: I didn't bring that exact data with me. I would have to get back to you specifically on that question.

[Translation]

Mr. Joël Godin: Can you give me an order of magnitude?

[English]

Mr. Daryell Nowlan: We would provide on a regular basis in the neighbourhood of \$220 million in grants and contributions. That goes out directly to businesses and communities, in general, in the neighbourhood of—

[Translation]

Mr. Joël Godin: Right, I'll stop you there.

Generally speaking, \$222 million is invested. If we break that figure down to find out what percentage goes to official language minority communities in the Atlantic region, it corresponds to 25%, 50%, 75%?

I am throwing out figures, but I just want an order of magnitude.

Mr. Daryell Nowlan: I do not have the figures, but I would say that through the economic development initiatives, for example, we receive funds amounting to \$5.5 million over five years.

[English]

In addition to that, we use our regular programming. For example, in the last 18 months, as I mentioned in my notes, ACOA provided \$211 million to francophone entrepreneurs or francophone communities. That's in the last year.

[Translation]

Mr. Joël Godin: Right.

Do you give money directly to enterprises? I saw that you work with other organizations. In fact, you are the second level: there is the ISED, the ACOA, and the organizations, and then there are businesses. There are three levels before we get to the business.

Is that it?

Mr. Daryell Nowlan: For the most part, we work directly with the businesses and their community.

Mr. Joël Godin: So businesses can apply directly to your agency to request financial assistance in the form of a grant.

Is that right?

Mr. Daryell Nowlan: That's right.

Mr. Joël Godin: So there are businesses that come to see you. What is your success rate with businesses that belong to official language minority communities?

[English]

Mr. Daryell Nowlan: For the targeted money that we have—the specific EDI funding of \$5.5 million—we invested in 66 projects over five years. We leveraged a total of \$18.7 million—that's getting funding from other partners as well—and assisted directly and indirectly over 500 businesses in the region.

Our success rate with the agency is generally very high. Our writeoff rate is less than 5%.

[Translation]

Mr. Joël Godin: Right.

Do you have examples of successes concerning businesses you have helped? Is there a list of those cases that businesses in the Maritime provinces can access?

[English]

Mr. Daryell Nowlan: Are you asking about success stories?

[Translation]

Mr. Joël Godin: Yes, that's right.

[English]

Mr. Daryell Nowlan: We have success stories on our website. For example—

[Translation]

Mr. Joël Godin: You want to publicize them.

Is that correct?

Mr. Daryell Nowlan: Yes, that is correct.

[English]

Certainly we share those with them.

[Translation]

Mr. Joël Godin: Thank you, Mr. Nowlan.

Mr. Perron, I am going to engage in more or less the same exercise with you concerning the budget.

In Quebec, in the official language minority communities, the businesses to which you grant funding are owned by anglophones, is that right?

Mr. Sony Perron: That is correct.

Mr. Joël Godin: What does that represent, as a proportion?

Mr. Sony Perron: Our normal investment fund is approximately \$220 million per year. Those investments are granted to businesses or not-for-profit organizations, NPOs, for various economic development programs. We have a specific program for official languages, with a value of \$1.8 million per year in financial contributions intended for NPOs and businesses.

Mr. Joël Godin: So that is for official language minority communities.

Mr. Sony Perron: Yes. However, all of the programming is accessible to businesses and organizations in official language minority communities as it is to the rest of the businesses and organizations in the Quebec region.

Mr. Joël Godin: Could anglophone enterprises obtain all of the budget envelope that Economic Development Canada for the Regions of Quebec has? That is a hypothetical question.

• (1750)

Mr. Sony Perron: It would be hard to have that happen, in that our mandate is to operate in all regions of Quebec.

As a result, we place considerable importance, particularly in the devitalized regions, on being there to support projects that would otherwise not be created. We make sure that our actions are balanced.

Mr. Joël Godin: Could you give us an estimate of the proportions?

Mr. Sony Perron: I will give you an example.

As I was saying before, we have granted \$220 million to base programs. Obviously, during the pandemic, there were additional roles, what we call special initiatives, but our base programming was about \$220 million. Over a five-year period, we invested approximately \$120 million in businesses led by anglophone entrepreneurs.

Mr. Joël Godin: So that is \$120 million out of \$220 million.

Mr. Sony Perron: Yes, it is \$120 million—

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Perron. You can go into more detail later, but the member's speaking time is up.

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

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

Thanks to the two witnesses for being here today to help us to understand the situation on the ground better.

Mr. Nowlan, I see you spell your first name differently from mine. That is interesting. There are so many ways of writing it.

I am first going to address a few items very quickly. I want to congratulate the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency and the Economic Development Agency for rural regions. During the COVID-19 pandemic, your support was exceptional and you helped businesses and communities enormously.

On the other hand, I have a memory that is a bit painful, one that dates back 50 years. I was very young at that time, and that gives you an idea of my age.

My father, who was a municipal councillor, had asked for business incubators. He did that for five years. He had to write to the newspapers in Quebec and Ottawa to get money, because the Acadian community never got funding. I know it has improved a lot, and I am going to ask my question with that in mind.

Listening to the presentation by the representative of the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency earlier, I thought I understood that there was a database of francophone Acadian businesses in the Atlantic region. Is that true?

First, could we know what this business database is? Second, could we know the regions in which the businesses are located? Third, could we know what amounts have been received, by province and by region, so we can get a picture of the situation once we know how many businesses there are in each region?

You said earlier that there was an office in Meteghan or Clare, but there wasn't one in Cape Breton. In fact, there is one, but there are none in the Acadian region. I would like to know what businesses there are in each province and each region and how much money they were given in comparison with the other francophone businesses in each of the provinces. Would it be possible to send that information to the committee very quickly?

[English]

Mr. Daryell Nowlan: Absolutely, Mr. Chair, we can certainly send that information to the clerk.

As I mentioned, we service the whole region, and we have officers situated everywhere. I mentioned some of the specific communities where we do have offices. Even in the places where we may not have a particular office—you mentioned the francophone region in Cape Breton, for example—obviously we have officers who would go to that region and serve that space.

[Translation]

Mr. Darrell Samson: Right. In any event, when you tell me the amount given to each region, I will see how well the work is going in the province in question.

I would also like to know whether you focus on young entrepreneurs in the Atlantic region, whether they are anglophone or francophone. Do you have a particular approach for novices who want to get into entrepreneurship? What steps do they have to go through? Is it your objective to try to attract new businesses and young entrepreneurs?

Mr. Daryell Nowlan: Absolutely.

[English]

As colleagues from my side have mentioned before, when you look at the make up of OLMC entrepreneurs, certainly in our region, they're in rural communities. Rural businesses are facing the same challenges other businesses are. They are facing the challenge of labour shortages, lack of immigration, all those sorts of things.

We have invested a lot in trying to keep young people in the region. For example, in northeastern New Brunswick, we're doing a project in the francophone school system to engage students in innovative ideas and innovative entrepreneurship practices to try to teach them how they can start businesses—

• (1755)

Mr. Darrell Samson: Very good. Can you send us that? What projects are out there in Atlantic Canada and in French communities where we have initiatives for francophones?

Finally, what are some of the challenges that you're seeing in Acadian communities around Atlantic Canada?

[Translation]

Mr. Daryell Nowlan: As I said, we have the same problems in our official language communities as in the rural communities in the Atlantic region.

[English]

We have the challenges around labour. We have the challenges around access to capital. We have the challenges around accessing the skill sets that they need. The challenge is exponentially more difficult because they're doing that in the minority language.

That's why we have directed funding and we have people there who could work with them on a case-by-case basis, in a client-centred approach, so that they can actually figure out what the exact need of that business is, because it varies business by business. We can work with them to support whatever specific problem they might have.

Mr. Darrell Samson: How long do you think it would take to get the information I'm asking for, which is identifying the regions that have francophone communities and how much money is in projects that were approved in those communities across Atlantic Canada?

Mr. Daryell Nowlan: That will not take very long at all.

Mr. Darrell Samson: And the youth projects as well....

[Translation]

Mr. Daryell Nowlan: Absolutely.

[English]

Mr. Darrell Samson: Does “not too long” mean a week, two weeks, a month, before Christmas?

Mr. Daryell Nowlan: It means before Christmas—this Christmas.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Darrell Samson: The sooner the better. Tomorrow is better, but—

Mr. Daryell Nowlan: I would say we'd be able to get that to you in a week or so.

Mr. Darrell Samson: I appreciate that. That's why you carry the name Daryell.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

[Translation]

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Samson.

Mr. Beaulieu, you now have the floor.

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: Mr. Perron, you said earlier that out of a total of \$220 million, approximately \$120 million was intended for anglophone businesses.

Mr. Sony Perron: Mr. Chair, I would like to clarify that, since I did not have the time to finish.

We did a thorough evaluation of investments over a five-year period, because businesses' projects can take a lot of time to materialize.

In five years, \$120 million was allocated to business projects or development projects associated with entrepreneurs who identified as anglophone.

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: So that was about \$120 million over five years.

Mr. Sony Perron: Yes.

As I said earlier, our base budget, if we exclude special initiatives, is approximately \$220 million per year. That means that \$120 million out of approximately \$1 billion in investments was granted to anglophone entrepreneurs in Quebec.

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: Does that include the \$10.2 million per year budget that you are allocated?

Mr. Sony Perron: No, that is part of regular programming. That budget is an addition.

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: Right. So the \$10.2 million budget is an addition to support anglophone entrepreneurs.

Mr. Sony Perron: We also support organizations, such as the ones I mentioned in my opening statement, that are there to support the community, to set projects up, and to support anglophone entrepreneurs, including young entrepreneurs. There is an equivalent that is used for the population as a whole, but we specifically support some organizations in those communities in order to make sure that the service is available and is very active in the anglophone communities.

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: Since 2020, and it is in the new act, the government has recognized that francophones in Quebec are a minority in Canada and in North America and that it also has a responsibility to protect the French language in Quebec. In the Action Plan for Official Languages 2023-2028 and the \$10.2 million in funding, was something provided for protecting the French language?

Mr. Sony Perron: The funding allocated to Economic Development Canada for the Regions of Quebec is reserved exclusively for official language minority communities, so, in Quebec, the anglophone community.

DEC's programs and services, in general, are available to everyone.

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: Right.

So Economic Development Canada has already provided funding for anglophones, as for any business. There is preferential funding, if I may put it that way, for anglophones, because they are supposed to be a minority.

Mr. Sony Perron: It is additional funding that has enabled us to expand the services we offer to make sure that services are provided to those communities.

• (1800)

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: Right. In any event, I will not shoot the messenger.

You told me that you consulted representatives of the anglophone community in Quebec. Can we know which ones?

Mr. Sony Perron: In fact, among the groups, there is CEDEC, the Community Economic Development and Employability Corporation, which I mentioned earlier. I think you may have had representatives of that organization appear before the committee recently to learn how it operates.

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: Apart from CEDEC, was the Quebec Community Groups Network or were other groups consulted?

Mr. Sony Perron: I could provide you with that information in addition. I do not participate in all the various discussions, so I cannot tell you who was around the table.

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: Can you give us concrete examples of projects that you fund? Because these are public funds that fund the businesses, do we have access to information about the projects that are funded?

Mr. Sony Perron: Yes. As for all of the federal government grant and contribution projects, the list of contributions is published regularly. You will not necessarily find the details of the entrepreneur's business plan or technology or their financial forecasts in that information, but you will find out what businesses we invest in and what amounts are provided.

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: Can a person contact you to obtain the list of projects and businesses?

Mr. Sony Perron: Yes.

We announce it and, somewhat like our colleagues at ACOA, we put a lot of information about those projects online. We may also organize information sessions, if that interests you, or direct you to various relevant sources.

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: Right.

Could you give me some concrete examples of projects?

Mr. Sony Perron: I wanted to talk to you briefly in my introduction about a project from a small business that manufactures boat hulls in Îles-de-la-Madeleine. The project created jobs in Îles-de-la-Madeleine. It came from a group of anglophone entrepreneurs. We have projects in various regions of Quebec.

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: Are there also projects in Montreal?

Mr. Sony Perron: Certainly, there are, but I do not have any off the top of my head at the moment.

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: Is it in Westmount?

Mr. Sony Perron: I could do that analysis if that interests you.

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: No. I'm teasing you.

I noticed, in the public accounts, that there are grants under \$100,000; we can't tell who received them, but since 2010, the number of grants allocated has been disclosed. A fairly substantial proportion of those grants was given to economic development projects.

Could you tell me how you allocate those grants? Is there a way of getting access to that information?

Mr. Sony Perron: If you make an information request, we will reply to you. If you have something specific to ask for today, I am prepared to answer your questions.

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: Can those grants be given to individuals?

Mr. Sony Perron: Ordinarily, the grants are given to businesses. We have agents, economic advisers, who do evaluations based on the program criteria to see whether it contributes to improving the economic position of the various regions of Quebec. That is how it is determined.

Does it meet the criteria of our programs? Ordinarily, they are innovative businesses, businesses that have growth potential, businesses that are going to export.

However, our programs are tailored to the socioeconomic circumstances in the regions.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Perron.

[English]

Ms. Mathysen, the floor is yours for six minutes.

Ms. Lindsay Mathysen: Actually, I would really love to keep going in that vein.

You were talking about how you assess those factors that allow you to invest in the businesses that you do. In terms of how you make those decisions, I assume that you take into account the age of the owners—you were talking about youth—how many they employ, women, and how they bring in people from different communities in terms of those immigration numbers and attracting new immigrants to those businesses.

Can you talk about that more and be specific about it?

Mr. Sony Perron: Yes. We don't start by looking at who the entrepreneur is. We start by looking at the nature of the project, its value and its alignment with the program standards. We invest a fair level of effort in helping entrepreneurs from diverse groups join and take advantage of the program.

The initial assessment is really about the business value of the project or the community development potential that this project has, whether it's in tourism or in manufacturing. We look at the business opportunity and we move on it. We invest in the ongoing business to try to attract and support new entrepreneurs.

We have a stream for diversity, clearly, and we monitor our numbers to see if we are doing better. If we invest time and energy in trying to support entrepreneurs from diverse groups, we want to see them coming and taking advantage of these programs over time.

The numbers are interesting to follow. Official languages are one of the dimensions we are often tracking, so I have a sense of how much we have invested over the last five years in businesses led by anglophones in Quebec, for example.

The profile is important. Do we have an impact with everybody in all regions and in all sectors? We are looking at these stats.

• (1805)

Ms. Lindsay Mathysen: You look at the entrepreneurs themselves, but do you look at their workforce as well?

Mr. Sony Perron: The level of employment related to a project will be interesting, to see if there is potential for increased employment, but it's not necessarily the sole factor—

Ms. Lindsay Mathysen: No, but if you wanted to—

Mr. Sony Perron: Sometimes in productivity, for example, we are going to invest in businesses that will not create more jobs but in the end will be stronger in the market. Maybe they will have a chance to grow, export or survive. There is competition coming from other countries as well, so productivity is a big angle that we are going to go to. It doesn't necessarily create new jobs in all instances, but sometimes it's going to solidify and increase the market where these enterprises will be more productive over time.

Ms. Lindsay Mathysen: You were talking about long-term jobs, obviously, and again, that viability. A lot of times I would be concerned, too, about how those entrepreneurs use those funds and how that translates to those they employ as well. In terms of the viability of communities, that's very much based on good-paying, unionized jobs. Do you look at that as well? How do you value that?

Mr. Sony Perron: In fact, part of the business assessment is also the management of these enterprises and businesses. Our advisers will also work, for example, on subjects like greening, cybersecurity, management and workforce diversity and inclusion, and they will make sure the businesses are aware of these important dimensions for their success in the future.

You were looking at results. Most of the funding we provide to small and medium-sized enterprises is in repayable contributions, so our ability to recoup that money in the future is also one indicator that the project has been a success, because the business has been able to make enough money to pay back to government the contribution we made earlier in the process.

Ms. Lindsay Mathysen: It's interesting that you speak about that. Obviously, a lot of the businesses existing throughout COVID were hit very hard. Many of them received CEBA loans and now they're being forced to pay them back. Many can't.

Are you using your data and seeing that the need is greater on your end to try to make up for what these businesses are suffering through because of the end of the loan forgiveness from CEBA?

Mr. Sony Perron: Yes, this is what we call "special initiatives". It's a different group of entrepreneurs that we worked with during

that period. I have a different program for people who work with those who have benefited from this kind of support. We are tracking that really carefully. Recently, there were some announcements to postpone or delay some payment periods.

We are working really closely with our partners to make sure we support them, and of course we want them to succeed, but it's a different program. Unfortunately, I was not really prepared to talk to you about that today.

The Chair: You have 30 seconds.

Ms. Lindsay Mathysen: All my questions were answered by Mr. Perron, but they did apply to you as well, Mr. Nowlan.

Mr. Daryell Nowlan: Yes, in terms of what Mr. Perron described, we operate in very similar ways in our due diligence process and how we work with businesses and look at what the project is giving from a holistic perspective. Is it helping to grow the company? Is it helping to grow employment where that's appropriate or improving productivity where that is the objective?

I would add one thing. You talked about the overall community and the impact on the community. Both of our agencies have a separate suite of programs that are geared directly toward community development and helping the communities, the municipalities themselves, in terms of supporting economic infrastructure as well as businesses.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Nowlan.

Thank you, Ms. Mathysen.

The next questions will be from Mr. Dalton for five minutes. The floor is yours.

Mr. Marc Dalton (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge, CPC): Thank you very much for coming here today.

The documentation we have is that for the next five years the allocation is \$10.2 million for CED in Quebec and then \$6.2 million for the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency. I have a couple of questions. One, is that primarily just going to administration or is that being disbursed? What is that money for? I know this has been asked in different ways, but we want to know what that is and if it is primarily operating funds, just this budgeted amount right here, because it's actually been the same amount.... It's been consistent over the past quite a few years, so obviously it's not just going forward. Can you tell us how it has been used in the past, specifically that money?

• (1810)

Mr. Daryell Nowlan: The \$6.2 million, in our case, is almost entirely going out to communities and to businesses to help support the priorities of the economic development initiative: to help businesses grow, to help support tourism and to help communities. I think, in our case, less than \$500,000 goes to administration. The vast majority of it goes right out the door to businesses and communities.

It would help projects like some of those I mentioned in my remarks: things like helping attract and retain young French-speaking immigrants in Newfoundland and Labrador with Horizon Terre-Neuve-et-Labrador. It's helping to support—

Mr. Marc Dalton: If I could, just because I have limited time.... You said \$500,000, but that would be per year. That's not over the entire five years. Is that correct?

Mr. Daryell Nowlan: That's over the entire five years.

Mr. Marc Dalton: Okay, so it's \$100,000 per year. Is this basically your sole pot of administrative money? You mentioned \$500,000. Is that all you have? That sounds like one or maybe two positions. Are there other sources of government financing that you also receive to support your program in operating?

Mr. Daryell Nowlan: In terms of delivering on the \$6.2 million, \$5.5 million, give or take, goes out the door to businesses. When we get that money from the centre, from Treasury Board and Finance, it specifically says that this is the amount of money that's allocated to allow for the operations and delivery of that program. It's proportionally divided that way. That's what we use to deliver that portion of the program.

Mr. Marc Dalton: Okay, but this is not the only program that you do. You have other programs too. Or are you strictly focused on this?

Mr. Daryell Nowlan: Do you mean in general that ACOA does?

Mr. Marc Dalton: Yes.

Mr. Daryell Nowlan: No, of course not. As I've mentioned, we have in the neighbourhood of \$220 million in grants and contributions that goes out, and somewhere in the neighbourhood of.... I have to get the exact figure in terms of how much is operating costs, but no, it's not the only amount.

Mr. Marc Dalton: Would that include the Black entrepreneurship initiative and the women entrepreneurship initiative too? Are those different?

Mr. Daryell Nowlan: Yes, we have our regular programming that I mentioned—our REGI programming, our business development programming and our innovative communities fund—which is our core programming.

Then we have special initiatives like the ones you mentioned, the Black entrepreneurship program and women business programming, and we have tourism programming. Those are special initiatives that are targeted over and above what our core programming is.

Mr. Marc Dalton: Okay. I'm going to assume that's the same answer.

Do you have anything to add, Mr. Perron?

Mr. Sony Perron: I would maybe add just one thing. The regional development agencies are a nice vehicle to implement smaller initiatives, because we rely on a common infrastructure to deliver these. If we were an organization created to deliver this \$10.2 million over five years, our problems with costs would be terrible because you would need to stand up a structure, but since we are already in that business of supporting and funding community organizations, this is in addition, and that makes us, I would say, pretty lean.

Mr. Marc Dalton: Thank you very much.

The concern we have is obviously top-heavy bureaucracy. We want to make sure that this is getting targeted, that you're measuring and you're seeing results, and that it's not being wasted as we're seeing with the ArriveCAN app and the green slush fund and all these kinds of things that have made Conservatives extremely nervous when we're putting out line things. Those details are important.

If you could send—or maybe it's already available—exactly what your administrative costs are, all sources, and what you are providing in services, it would be helpful. We can support or just examine it further.

• (1815)

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

[*Translation*]

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

Mr. Stéphane Lauzon (Argenteuil—La Petite-Nation, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I would like to welcome Mr. Nowlan and Mr. Perron.

Mr. Perron, I would like to come back to the question of devitalized regions. You said there were evaluation criteria for those regions.

Are most devitalized regions essentially remote and rural? Could you tell us more about that?

Mr. Sony Perron: We evaluate the economic development of the regions of Quebec at the regional county municipality level. We use analyses done using a very defined statistical method to identify the regions where the potential for economic development is the lowest.

With that, we look at those regions through a slightly different lens when we examine the projects submitted to us for funding. Some of the projects we support would probably not have been considered as actively if they had been intended for urban centres or for dynamic, high potential regions. On the other hand, we are more open to supporting such projects and moving them forward when they are intended for regions where there is less potential in the short term. For example, we fund projects relating to tourism or agri-food in regions where those services are absent or underdeveloped, to make the region more attractive and stimulate future economic development.

Yes, several of these regions are rather rural, as you said.

Mr. Stéphane Lauzon: Which brings me to ask you a question about businesses in the agro-tourism sector and tourist businesses in general, which are essentially seasonal.

Do your criteria leave a bit of latitude for seasonal businesses so they are able to receive support from you?

Mr. Sony Perron: Your question is very pertinent.

In our regular programming, our criteria are relatively rigid, given that we are looking for an activity that will contribute to economic development in the long term.

However, for special initiatives like the ones we have launched in recent years, we are able to get involved in smaller projects, which may be seasonal, as you pointed out, particularly if it presents added value for what is on offer in the region and improves its tourist circuit. Recently, we have also been involved in accommodations in some regions where the supply was very low. So we have gotten involved in these sectors to supplement the supply and ensure that these regions have greater potential in the medium and long term.

Mr. Stéphane Lauzon: I have had the opportunity to travel from one end of Canada to the other, to visit several communities and to meet people in a number of businesses, particularly in linguistic minority communities. Often, they learn about the existence of these programs or services somewhat by chance, whether through a member of Parliament or through another business that has received services from a federal body like yours.

What are your communication tools for reaching businesses in the official language minority communities? Often, they may feel isolated and it is not necessarily instinctual for them to go out and search for resources themselves.

Mr. Sony Perron: We provide a presence in 12 regional offices staffed with fully competent personnel.

We also fund a socioeconomic ecosystem through our programming. The Community Economic Development and Employability Corporation, or CEDEC, is an example, as is the YES organization.

We also have community futures corporations, or CFs, which are scattered over the rural communities of Quebec and are also a spearhead for our presence in those communities. These organizations often work with very small businesses and put them in touch with us, Economic Development Canada, when their projects start growing and it is time for us to support them.

So we are not alone. I feel like people know us, and we regularly submit that with our partners. People submit pertinent cases to us.

It is also important for fulfilling our mandate that it be done in both official languages. It is important that the anglophone communities in Quebec be familiar with us just as the francophone communities in Quebec should. That is why it is important to invest in the ecosystems of both official language communities. The program for the official languages that we talked about earlier, and the \$10.2-million figure that we receive over a five-year period, help us to improve the services offered so that the anglophone communities in the various regions of Quebec are familiar with us and know that these programs are accessible and available. We cannot

allow ourselves to miss out on a good business proposal in Quebec and in Canada.

• (1820)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Perron and Mr. Lauzon.

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

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

If I understand correctly, you distribute a majority of the grants directly to businesses. You mentioned a figure of \$8.7 million. You also mentioned a figure of \$1.17 million for CEDEC.

Are there other organizations that serve as intermediaries? You mentioned YES, which is in Quebec, I think.

Mr. Sony Perron: The two main organizations are CEDEC and YES, for serving the official language minority communities in Quebec.

However, all of the organizations we fund, in most cases, are required to offer services in both official languages. It is not one or the other; it is often one and the other. In that case, however, it is specialized.

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: How do you make sure that they are anglophone or francophone businesses?

Mr. Sony Perron: Allow me to make a clarification.

For example, the businesses that are served by CEDEC—

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: The \$10.2 million budget is supposed to go to businesses owned by anglophones, I think, but what criteria are used to determine that? People could say they are anglophones to get money. Is checking done? How do you determine whether the businesses meet the criteria? Is it the organizations that refer them to you?

Mr. Sony Perron: People ordinarily self-identify when they request our services. Given that they have access to our regular programs in any event, it does not really matter whether they are anglophone or francophone entrepreneurs. However, the data enable us to see whether both communities are using our programs.

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: That's good.

Based on the figures you mentioned earlier, in particular the \$120 million over five years, if I do the calculation and include the program as well, it comes to almost 16% per year going to the anglophone side.

Mr. Sony Perron: I think it is actually 10%, if we look at—

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: As I was saying, the \$120 million over five years amounts to about \$24 million per year for anglophone businesses. I could redo the calculation, but in any event—

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Beaulieu and Mr. Perron.

We will now go to Ms. Mathysen for two and a half minutes.
[English]

The floor is yours.

Ms. Lindsay Mathysen: Thank you.

Of course, there has been a lot of talk about labour shortages and the stress this puts on businesses and so on.

I'll ask my questions of Mr. Nowlan, considering Mr. Perron got the first round entirely.

Regarding francophone immigration and specifically ensuring we are trying to attract more people to those jobs, how does ACOA coordinate or work with the francophone immigration centre in Dieppe?

Mr. Daryell Nowlan: That's a relatively new organization, so we're just starting a relationship with them.

I'll take a step back, in terms of talking about what we do regarding francophone immigration.

First of all, one of the biggest initiatives we had in Atlantic Canada was the Atlantic immigration partnership. It's been around for about four or five years. What we did for that was have about eight of our staff throughout the region specifically assigned to support the work our colleagues at IRCC were doing. We went out to businesses. We talked with businesses and told them this was a great new initiative to use to help attract new immigrants to their business, including in our francophone minority communities. We worked directly with them.

In addition to that, we have a number of specific projects to help our francophone businesses attract immigrants, starting with projects we have with our francophone universities to help get students or recent graduates into businesses so they stay in the region. It's also to help educate all our businesses—in this case, particularly, our francophone businesses—on what it means to navigate the immigration system and have an immigrant work in their company.

As you know, when an immigrant comes in, it's not just about having a person who can turn a screwdriver. It's about bringing in the whole person and their family, and having an inclusive and diversified work environment. We provide that kind of training to them, with the supports to help them understand what it takes to go through that process.

• (1825)

Ms. Lindsay Mathysen: One of the past conversations in this committee, apparently, was with the president of the Acadian Society of New Brunswick, who said they had never had a relationship with the immigration centre in Dieppe.

I am curious about that. You said it's new.

Mr. Daryell Nowlan: Yes, it's relatively new, so—

Ms. Lindsay Mathysen: How are you developing it, and what are your future plans?

The Chair: You have 10 seconds.

Mr. Daryell Nowlan: We're going to work with them in close conversation and figure out the best way to work with them. Our

number one objective is to think about what it is that businesses and the communities need.

Ms. Lindsay Mathysen: That centre hasn't been fully defined yet.

Mr. Daryell Nowlan: I can't speak for them, but in terms of our relationship, no.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Nowlan.

Ms. Mathysen, thank you. That was very quick.

We have time for two more questions of two and a half minutes.

[Translation]

We will start with Mr. G  n  reux.

Mr. Bernard G  n  reux: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I have to declare that I have been a client of Economic Development Canada. I wanted to be sure I let everyone know before asking my questions.

Mr. Perron, thank you for being with us.

In recent years, the Liberal lens has been much focused on persons in various categories, in particular women, indigenous people and members of the LGBTQ community.

Are you able to—

[English]

Ms. Lindsay Mathysen: I'm sorry to interrupt. The interpreters say they cannot pick up your sound.

Thank you.

[Translation]

Mr. Bernard G  n  reux: Right. I'm sorry.

The Chair: I am going to give you an additional 15 seconds.

Mr. Bernard G  n  reux: Thank you.

Are you able to tell us what percentage of the money was allocated to those individuals or those businesses? Do you have that kind of statistic?

Mr. Sony Perron: That is probably something we will have to check. If you want an overview of investments in terms of diversity, I think we can do that work and provide you with that information in the next few weeks.

Mr. Bernard G  n  reux: Right.

I did the figuring just now. The amount you receive, about \$10 million over five years, corresponds to \$2 million per year. Of that amount, \$1.6 million goes to CEDEC, if I understand correctly.

What is the amount for CEDEC? Is it \$1.6 million or \$1.3 million?

Mr. Sony Perron: For CEDEC, it is \$1.17 million in funding over four years. It is not \$1.6 million per year.

Mr. Bernard G  n  reux: So it is not an amount per year.

Mr. Sony Perron: No. These are long-term agreements so the organizations can stabilize their workforces and do work on the ground. They are multi-year agreements.

Mr. Bernard Généreux: Right. So there is CEDEC in the Montreal region and there is another organization in Quebec City whose name I have forgotten.

Mr. Sony Perron: It is YES.

I should point out that both organizations have mandates that involve multiple regions.

Mr. Bernard Généreux: Right.

You spoke earlier about Îles-de-la-Madeleine and the Gaspé, where there are probably communities that use your services. Is it these organizations that handle these cases?

Mr. Sony Perron: They did not necessarily go through those organizations. A lot of businesses come directly to Economic Development Canada to apply for funding.

Mr. Bernard Généreux: They can also go through the SADCs, for example, with which I am very familiar.

Mr. Sony Perron: That's right. No door is closed.

Mr. Bernard Généreux: Do you know about what percentage of cases are handled by those two organizations, which are more oriented toward the official language minority communities, as compared to cases that are handed by Economic Development Canada?

The Chair: Please answer in 10 seconds.

Mr. Sony Perron: In fact, the mandates are very different. The work done by YES and CEDEC is much more focused on coaching, not on funding.

Mr. Bernard Généreux: Right.

The Chair: Thank you.

We will conclude with Darrell Samson, for two and a half minutes.

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

Mr. Nowlan, I am going to continue my series of questions for you.

I know that a connection has been made between francophone postsecondary institutions and the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency, or ACOA. In the Atlantic region, are there connections and projects that also take place between francophone schools and ACOA? Francophone schools also have community centres and therefore play an important role in the community. Do they receive support from ACOA, one way or another?

[English]

Mr. Daryell Nowlan: Yes, there is.

In terms of the secondary schools, we do have partnerships and projects that we support. For example, at Collège communautaire

du Nouveau-Brunswick they have—I'm not scientist—a moulding technology there. We help support them on how they can use their technology and their processes in local businesses to help them, so it's growing innovation and it's growing local businesses.

We also have a number of projects throughout the region helping students in our francophone institutions in all four provinces.

• (1830)

[Translation]

Mr. Darrell Samson: Can we get a list of that also?

In Nova Scotia, for example, there were two francophone schools. After the expulsion, the francophone schools were very isolated. They therefore face much greater challenges.

Is it possible to have a list of the regions where francophone schools in the Atlantic region have received funds or carried out projects and know what types of projects they are?

[English]

Mr. Daryell Nowlan: For sure, absolutely.

[Translation]

Mr. Darrell Samson: Can you provide us with that information also in the same week?

Mr. Daryell Nowlan: That may take another week, because I now have a long list of questions for which I have to give you an answer in writing.

Mr. Darrell Samson: So let us say that I would very much like you to be able to send us that information within two weeks. Thank you.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Samson.

Thank you, Mr. Perron and Mr. Nowlan. It was really interesting to hear what happens on the ground. I have a habit of poking around the ACOA website, for example, and I think that most of the information that has been requested can be found there. However, I find it difficult to find information there on a territory by territory basis, and in fact that is the answers you are going to provide, Mr. Nowlan, in response to Mr. Samson's requests. I don't know whether it works by postal code or some other way, but it is hard to determine that a specific region received a particular amount for such and such a thing.

With that said, before adjourning the meeting, I would like to tell you that at the next meeting, we are going to undertake the revision of the draft report on our study on increased francophone immigration to Canada.

Thanks once again to the witnesses.

If it is the will of the committee, the meeting is adjourned.

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