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• (1105)

[*Translation*]

The Chair (Yvan Baker (Etobicoke Centre, Lib.)): I call this meeting to order.

Good morning, everyone, and welcome to meeting number 9 of the Standing Committee on Official Languages.

I have a few words to say before we begin our meeting. Please wait until I recognize you by name before speaking. All comments should be addressed through the chair. Members in the room and on Zoom, please raise your hand if you wish to speak. The committee clerk and I will manage the speaking order as best we can.

Pursuant to Standing Order 108(3)(f) and the motion adopted by the committee on September 25, the committee is meeting today to continue its study on the minority-language education continuum.

I would now like to welcome the witnesses for the first hour of the meeting. From the Canadian Association of Second Language Teachers, we have Francis Potié, executive director, and Solomiya Ostapyk, communications and languages engagement coordinator. From the Fédération des francophones de la Colombie-Britannique, we have Dr. Marie-Nicole Dubois, president. Each organization will have five minutes for their opening remarks. We will then proceed to a period of questions and answers with the committee members.

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

Francis Potié (Executive Director, Canadian Association of Second Language Teachers): Good afternoon, Mr. Chair and members of the committee. Thank you for inviting me to testify today.

My name is Francis Potié. I'm executive director of the Canadian Association of Second Language Teachers, or CASLT.

The CASLT is a Canada-wide association that brings together teachers of additional languages and professionals working in this field. Our vision is excellence in language instruction. Our mandate is to advance the teaching of additional languages in Canada. We support our members by creating training opportunities, publishing resources, undertaking and disseminating research, and promoting the sharing of ideas and information. The vast majority of our members work as teachers of the official languages, either English or French.

In 2022-23, more than 1.7 million, or 45% of students outside Quebec, were enrolled in French as a second language programs. In Quebec, all students take a second language course. French is

taught in English-language schools and English in French-language schools.

[*English*]

In total, nearly three million students across the country are learning the language of their province's or territory's linguistic minority. These young people represent a significant pool of students for colleges and universities in official language minority communities. They need access to various post-secondary pathways to further their linguistic and professional development.

[*Translation*]

This pool also helps develop new bilingual speakers and increase the number of professionals able to serve the communities, such as teachers, psychologists, speech-language pathologists and others.

However, the teacher shortage remains a major barrier to language instruction in Canada. A study conducted by the Association canadienne des professionnels de l'immersion in collaboration with the CASLT estimates that there is a shortage of 8,000 to 9,400 teachers of French as a second language, including 7,000 to 8,000 core French teachers.

The CASLT fully supports long-term federal investment in the recruitment and retention of French teachers.

[*English*]

To better understand these challenges, CASLT launched a pan-Canadian research project on training FSL teachers in 2020. This project aimed to identify strengths, gaps and opportunities for improvement in the preparation and support of new teachers. The results highlight three priorities: language development and ongoing language support, pedagogical skills and mentorship. The research also reveals that more than half of beginning teachers were considering leaving the profession—a clear warning sign in the current context. However, the report also highlights sources of hope, local initiatives that focus on collaboration, informal mentorship and the active use of French in schools. This project demonstrates that strengthening the training and support of FSL teachers strengthens the entire language teaching system in Canada.

• (1110)

[*Translation*]

Finally, I want to highlight a crucial issue, the devaluing of core French. Nearly 75% of students enrolled in a French as a second language program outside Quebec take a core French program. There's a persistent perception that that doesn't produce true French speakers, but it's completely inaccurate. With adapted resources and modern teaching methods, core French could play a key role in Canada meeting its bilingualism targets. Improving and enhancing these programs is a realistic and effective way to increase the number of bilingual Canadians and strengthen the education continuum in both official languages.

In conclusion, second-language instruction is an essential driver of cohesion, mobility and linguistic vitality in Canada. The CASLT remains committed to working with the federal government and education partners to advance bilingualism in Canada.

Thank you for your attention.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Potié.

Dr. Dubois now has the floor for five minutes.

Marie-Nicole Dubois (President, Fédération des francophones de la Colombie-Britannique): Mr. Chair, vice-chairs and members of the committee, thank you for inviting us to speak to you about the situation and challenges facing British Columbia's francophones.

I would like to extend warm greetings to the committee members with whom we have an established relationship, and I invite the new members to meet with us so that we can also build a partnership with them based on trust and collaboration.

The Fédération des francophones de la Colombie-Britannique is the official voice of our francophone community. Its mission is not only to promote, represent and defend the rights and interests of francophones in British Columbia, but also to preserve linguistic and cultural heritage. It works with 49 organizations across the province in various sectors. It serves 330,000 francophones living in British Columbia. It's dedicated to the advancement of a welcoming and inclusive francophonie. Its efforts are aimed at expanding British Columbia's francophone and francophile space.

The education continuum is always a difficult goal to achieve on the ground. Despite some positive developments, we're far from being able to say that we have a complete and, above all, functional education continuum. We remain very far from the principle of equivalency as set out by the Supreme Court of Canada, namely that students whose access to French-language education is guaranteed under section 23 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms are entitled to institutions equivalent to those of the majority.

There are financial issues. For example, the chronic underfunding of the Conseil scolaire francophone de la Colombie-Britannique has serious consequences, such as a lack of educational resources, excessively large class sizes and inadequate infrastructure. Despite a 20% increase in 2023, funding related to the official languages in education program, or OLEP, agreement remains insufficient. The funding had not been increased for 10 years, despite the fact that enrolment was up and the cost of living had risen. Agreements are

often renegotiated very late, which causes additional stress. Section 41 of the modernized Official Languages Act should be applied to reform the OLEP, establish mechanisms for genuine consultations between the departments of education and the communities, and promote transparency and accountability to determine where the funding the federal government gives to the provinces and territories goes. Why not give the funding directly to the school boards?

There are human resource challenges. The procedures for the review of teacher certification by the Commissioner for Teacher Regulation take too long, even for certificates from countries that have reciprocity agreements. Complementary training is very expensive. The provincial government's policy for skilled labour relies on the goodwill of professional orders, but these orders are very reluctant to recognize foreign credentials. What can be done to help speed up teacher certification? We can increase the number of double degree agreements and encourage that new agreements be reached with countries other than France, begin processes prior to arrival in British Columbia to use such things as pre-departure services and provide financial assistance for refresher courses, because they are very expensive.

When it comes to infrastructure, we also face some challenges. Schools need to be built and existing schools need to be modernized. We have a lack of local schools, which results in long bus rides and overcrowding in many schools. In the long term, using portables gets very expensive. The lack of competitive infrastructure discourages enrolment, and misalignment between growth projections and funding hinders network development. In addition, francophone immigration, which is a driver of growth for our communities, puts even more pressure on our minority school systems.

To conclude, the precarious nature of the early childhood sector, which isn't covered by the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms but is recognized by the federal government, combined with many challenges, including the ones I just listed, has made the education continuum remain elusive.

We encourage the members of this committee to go through the agreements between the federal government and the provinces with a fine-tooth comb to ensure that the consultation and impact measures set out in the modernized Official Languages Act are enforced, particularly in the education and early childhood agreements. At the moment, there is virtually no enforcement. We're counting on you to advance our rights and support the development of minority francophone communities.

• (1115)

The Chair: Thank you very much, Dr. Dubois.

I'd like to thank the witnesses for their presentations. We will now go to questions from members.

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

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

Dr. Dubois, from the Fédération des francophones de la Colombie-Britannique, it's always a pleasure to see you. Is the federation celebrating its 80th anniversary this year?

Marie-Nicole Dubois: Yes.

Marc Dalton: Congratulations. That's great.

Thank you for all the work your organization does for francophones and francophiles in British Columbia. As you know, I'm a member of Parliament who represents a riding in British Columbia. Your organization is essential to the vitality of our official language minority community. You may not know this, but I was a core French teacher for many years. Thank you again for your work.

I have a question about the money for elementary and secondary education. You said that the money is now paid directly to the provinces and not to the school boards. In the past, did the money go to school boards, but that's no longer the case?

Marie-Nicole Dubois: What happens is that the money goes to the provinces, and the provinces allocate a certain amount, depending on the number of students enrolled. There's no accountability, so we don't know exactly where the money is going. A portion of that amount that should be allocated to the French-language school board could be paid at some point to the core French program. I'm not saying that core French is not important. On the contrary, it's essential. However, the money should go to the right place. Since there's no accountability, once the federal government has paid out the money, it thinks that the money is being used for French courses. That's the problem. If the money went directly to the school board, there would then be accountability, and we'd know exactly where the money is going. All the funding would go to the school board, not who knows where.

Marc Dalton: Okay.

The government has just tabled its budget, which represents the largest deficit in Canadian history, except during the COVID-19 pandemic. In the opposition, we're studying the impact of inflation. Can you talk a little bit about the costs of inflation and how that's impacting your organization, as well as the 49 organizations you represent? Can you talk a bit about the impact of inflation on your organization in relation to government funding?

Marie-Nicole Dubois: When you look at the rents nowadays, it's a prohibitive cost for some of our organizations that are looking for appropriate places to operate.

You have to understand that, in a way, the money invested in the francophonie goes to two groups. We provide basic services to francophones and francophiles. Many of them are very proud of their francophonie, and increasingly so as a result of the current context. These individuals can then have a good quality of life. When people have a good quality of life, they're productive. When they're productive, they make money, part of which goes to the government, and that keeps the wheel turning.

Right now, in the context of inflation, everything costs a lot more, but our budgets remain the same. Sometimes, I look at the situation and wonder how we manage to perform miracles with the funding we receive.

• (1120)

Marc Dalton: Thank you, Dr. Dubois.

Mr. Potié and Ms. Ostapyk, thank you for your work. As a former teacher and modern languages department head, this issue is very close to my heart.

We live in a country that's becoming more and more multicultural. In fact, Canada is one of the most multicultural countries in the world. We conducted a study here in committee on the decline of French in official language minority communities. Are you seeing a decline in interest for learning French among parents and high school students, or is the opposite happening?

Francis Potié: Following the pandemic, we observed a slow-down in enrolment in French immersion programs in a number of places. In some places, the requirement to teach French is being removed, especially in certain rural school boards. That's why the proportion of students living outside Quebec who are enrolled in a French as a second language program has risen to 45%. It used to be higher.

I don't know if it's because of a drop in interest, but the teacher shortage is certainly a factor. In core French alone, there is a shortage of 7,000 to 8,000 teachers, which puts a lot of pressure on school authorities, if only to offer the programs. So I would say it's more a lack of resources than a drop in interest.

Marc Dalton: Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Dalton.

Mr. Deschênes-Thériault, you have the floor for six minutes.

Guillaume Deschênes-Thériault (Madawaska—Restigouche, Lib.): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Thank you to the witnesses.

Dr. Dubois, we met last summer and had a good discussion. I hope to be able to continue these enriching discussions on the promotion and vitality of French across the country, including in British Columbia.

In your province, you've often had to turn to the courts to assert your language and education rights. The Supreme Court handed down a landmark decision in 2020, because we know that the provincial government hasn't always supported French-language education in the province as it should. Since that decision, have you seen any changes in the province's support for French-language education? How has that evolved over the last five years?

Marie-Nicole Dubois: No, unfortunately. The school board went back to court because, even though we won the case, there was no action afterwards. I admit that things have been moving forward recently, but it's taking so long. Even if we agree to have a school built, it takes a very long time for that to happen. That said, this is brand new; it's only been a few months. The short answer is no, but we're hopeful.

Guillaume Deschênes-Thériault: In the media, we've heard that the province has chronically underfunded school transportation for francophones in British Columbia. Is that correct?

Marie-Nicole Dubois: Yes, absolutely.

One of the big problems is that, with the amount of money we are given, we also have to pay for school transportation. Since we don't have a school nearby for the courageous families who choose to send their children to a French-language school, the students have to take the bus. This results in an additional cost that neighbourhood schools do not have to bear. So there is underfunding. I don't understand how our schools manage to make ends meet with this budget headache.

• (1125)

Guillaume Deschênes-Thériault: So we can see that there's a problem in the province's support for French-language education.

I'd like to address the issue a little more broadly by talking about the education continuum, which goes from early childhood to post-secondary education. The federal government's latest action plan for official languages provides for an investment of \$4.1 billion, including \$1.4 billion in new funding, and a large part of that money will be used to support the French-language education continuum in the country.

We're talking about \$900 million to support minority-language education, French-as-a-second-language learning, support for minority-language post-secondary education, which benefited the Collège Éducacentre in British Columbia, and early childhood development. For example, investments will be made in creating a network of early childhood workers in francophone communities and in strengthening the capacities of educators.

Can you tell me about the importance of this funding for the French-language education continuum in British Columbia?

Marie-Nicole Dubois: It's absolutely essential. For language to really be integrated, learning has to start in early childhood. So we absolutely have to invest in that.

The same is true for post-secondary education. We don't have a university here, but we do have certain programs that are essential to having a vibrant francophonie. This is possible, because I see a great deal of interest from the people around us. Anglophones want to speak French. They are proud that our country has two official languages. In general, that's what we see. The problem is that the necessary investments aren't being made to offer services. We were talking earlier about the decline in the number of students enrolled in immersion programs or French courses: it's not because of a lack of interest; it's because governments aren't funding the programs.

Guillaume Deschênes-Thériault: Thank you very much, Ms. Dubois.

Mr. Potié and Ms. Ostapyk, I'd like to thank your members for their important work in promoting bilingualism in Canada, which contributes to greater vitality of francophone communities. To have strong francophone communities outside Quebec, French must be present in the public sphere. Training in French as a second language allows people who work in the service sector, whether in

stores, cafés or public services, to offer services in French. So this is an important factor in vitality.

I understand from your testimony that there are challenges in terms of labour, particularly when it comes to recruitment and retention. Can you tell me about a winning strategy that would help improve workforce retention and training? What more could we do?

Francis Potié: I'm not sure where to start on that big question.

The labour crisis is multi-faceted. A lot of people are retiring and fewer young people are moving up the ladder, for instance. As for retention, a number of studies by the Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages and the Canadian Association of Immersion Professionals, among others, show that there is also a crisis among new teachers, who find the profession too difficult from the outset.

There are several challenges. I know that in Canada, it's very complicated to establish certain standards for training second-language teachers. Standards vary greatly across Canada. In fact, from one institution to another or from one province to another, certified teachers have received varying degrees of training. At the beginning of their careers, new teachers therefore have a steep learning curve. Under our system, new employees often end up with the most complex and difficult workload. This is perhaps the only sector in Canada where new employees are treated this way. It should come as no surprise, then, that employees find the work quite difficult.

Training and supporting early-career teachers are important avenues—

The Chair: I'm sorry, Mr. Potié, but I have to interrupt you because the time is up. I always try to allow the witnesses to finish their answers, but sometimes I have to cut them off. You may have a chance to come back to it in response to the other members' questions.

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

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

Thank you to the witnesses.

Ms. Dubois, not long ago, we heard from representatives of the Fédération des parents francophones de Colombie-Britannique. When we look at that, there has clearly been an obstruction to French-language education and intentional anglicization of francophones as a result of British and English-Canadian colonialism. We were told that it was in 1977 that the British Columbia government granted francophones the right to French-language education.

When we look at what's happening today, we see that there's a lack of political will when it comes to funding French-language schools. You mentioned the chronic underfunding of French-language schools, and all the other witnesses have spoken about this as well. We have to wonder whether, in the end, there isn't a desire to let the assimilation of francophones continue by underfunding educational institutions. What do you think?

• (1130)

Marie-Nicole Dubois: I'm not in the minds of provincial elected officials who make the decisions. I am in contact with certain people who are truly supportive of the francophonie and are proud that Canada has two official languages.

I don't think it's the case now, but it certainly was in the past. At one point, my husband was told to "speak white". There was definitely a problem in that regard, even in Quebec, but we're not here to rewrite history.

I seriously believe this is a question of funds, of money. There's a lack of understanding about investment. In the long term, investing in the francophonie pays off, but that's not the case in the short term, and that's where the problem lies. We need to stop thinking about the short term and in terms of our own short-term mandate, and we need to invest in the long term. I am sure that everyone here is convinced that we are richer for having two official languages. It opens doors for us and allows us to be more open-minded.

I don't know if that answers your question.

Mario Beaulieu: Yes, I agree with you. However, what's surprising is that, even if there are people in government who are open, the result is that nothing happens, there is still underfunding. So it's a bit like there's indifference. Indeed, if the majority of the population really wanted to support French in British Columbia, that would translate into action.

There is also another factor, which my colleague mentioned earlier, legal cases and Supreme Court rulings. In Quebec, Bill 101 has been largely dismantled by Supreme Court rulings. The Quebec government has rallied behind these rulings. However, in British Columbia, as in several other provinces, there have been Supreme Court rulings, but it seems that nothing is happening. Governments haven't complied with the rulings. Also, you are currently pursuing other lawsuits. I saw an article that even said you were in financial trouble because financing these lawsuits is so expensive.

How do you explain the fact that there is no willingness to respect Supreme Court rulings?

Marie-Nicole Dubois: It's about money. I think we're so busy surviving that we have trouble communicating the added value of the francophonie. It's a bit of a marketing problem: Marketing is expensive, and we don't have the money for it.

When I talk about marketing, I'm just talking about communicating the facts to the entire population. I'm sure that if Canadians who aren't yet convinced understood the merits and benefits of having both languages, particularly the wealth they provide, we wouldn't be here. However, who has the time and the money to do that? I think that's the issue.

Mario Beaulieu: Yes. The committee heard from representatives from the Power law firm, which you know well, as I believe you worked together. They showed us that, according to case law, the federal government could directly fund schools outside Quebec. Why, then, is it not doing so?

• (1135)

Marie-Nicole Dubois: I don't understand why it isn't. If it funded the people who do the work on the ground directly, we wouldn't be in this situation, that's for sure. Funding currently goes through the provincial governments. They analyze it, then they give us what they think they should give us.

We wouldn't be in this position if the funding came directly from the federal government. I think it could be done, even though, as we know, education is a provincial jurisdiction. However, official languages are a federal jurisdiction, so it would be possible. I must admit that I don't understand why this isn't currently being done.

Mario Beaulieu: Thank you.

I will have questions for Mr. Potié and his colleague in my next turn.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Beaulieu.

Mr. Vis, welcome to our committee. You have the floor for five minutes.

Brad Vis (Mission—Matsqui—Abbotsford, CPC): It's a great pleasure to be here.

Mr. Potié, in most cases, French-language instruction doesn't begin until grade 4 in British Columbia. In my experience, children aren't learning much at that stage. Furthermore, teachers generally don't have a good command of French.

Given that teachers from across Canada will be in Ottawa this week, should Parliament consider a measure to improve the level of French proficiency of teachers of French as a second language, particularly in core French education?

Francis Potié: It's definitely a challenge. As I said earlier, there is a shortage of core French and French immersion teachers. The popularity of French immersion programs means that all teachers capable of teaching French are hired by immersion schools. This reality exacerbates the shortage of French-as-a-second-language teachers.

What can we do? A number of studies have been done on the subject. Certainly, language training for teachers is important. In some provinces, there are teachers who don't speak French, but who teach French. Then it comes as a surprise that the results aren't satisfactory.

Brad Vis: This is a normal situation in British Columbia.

Francis Potié: This is a normal situation. It's like asking me to teach trigonometry. I don't know about trigonometry; I couldn't teach it. So the situation is not optimal.

Brad Vis: Canada has a Red Seal program at the national level. Along the same lines, could we consider offering teachers a diploma program that would make it possible to ensure that they meet standards and know French well enough to teach it? For instance, it could be an online program offered by the federal government.

Francis Potié: We would obviously support a national standard on what constitutes adequate training for a language teacher. This touches on matters of federal and provincial jurisdiction. The federal government certainly has a role to play, not only when it comes to funding allocated to the provinces and school boards, but also when it comes to monitoring the funds provided to them to ensure that they are used effectively. That's not always the case, and we often hear about it. Better accountability methods are needed if funds are to have a real impact in the classroom.

Brad Vis: I really agree with you and I know that everywhere, and particularly in British Columbia, there are problems with the use of money earmarked for school boards for teaching French.

However, we still have good news in British Columbia.

Ms. Dubois, a new French-language public school will be built in Abbotsford in the next few years. Could you talk about the impact it will have? Do you think it will be sufficient to meet the needs of students and the demand in the province?

• (1140)

Marie-Nicole Dubois: It's a first step. There is no doubt that the students who will attend this school will, among other things, relieve congestion in other schools because some students travel long distances. It's obvious that this school will fill up quickly and could become overcrowded. Still, we're very happy.

Brad Vis: We should have a party when it's built.

Marie-Nicole Dubois: Yes, absolutely.

Brad Vis: Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Vis.

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

Louis Villeneuve (Brome—Missisquoi, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Ms. Dubois, first of all, my colleague mentioned Canada's debt, but I'd like to put things into perspective: Canada is the G7 country with the lowest net debt, and it has been given a perfect rating by Moody's.

That said, you spoke earlier about agreements that are often renegotiated late. My question is twofold. First, what is the reason for the delay, and second, does British Columbia sufficiently consult community organizations like yours before negotiating its agreements?

Marie-Nicole Dubois: I would say that there are no negotiations. I'll give you an example. It's not about education, but it will give you a glimpse of how things work in British Columbia.

We had a meeting with representatives of a federal department, who were very proud to announce that the federal government had completed negotiations with the province on funding for employment assistance services. However, they hadn't consulted us, even though the modernized Official Languages Act had just been

passed. As you can see, even federal departments don't know how to apply the policies. If the federal government doesn't consult us before signing agreements with the provinces, how do you expect the provinces to feel obligated to do so with us? It's a huge struggle.

However, we have some good-faith connections with the minister responsible for francophone affairs, who is pro-francophone and has worked very hard to get a policy on French-language services adopted. We have a good relationship and are working together to make progress for our francophone community.

The problem is that there's too much bureaucracy. It comes back to what I was saying earlier: Why add a player to the equation? Why not put the money directly where it should go? As Mr. Potié mentioned, when you give money to the provinces and then they hand it out wherever they want, it reduces effectiveness.

Louis Villeneuve: You're not the only one talking about the problem of not transferring federal money directly to the organizations themselves. I can tell you that this information has been noted in other committee meetings. Thank you for raising that.

As we know, the Fédération des francophones de la Colombie-Britannique plays a central role in defending language rights. What progress have you seen in implementing the francophone education continuum in your province?

Marie-Nicole Dubois: At the moment, the Fédération des parents francophones de Colombie-Britannique is working very hard to open early childhood centres. That, to me, is a huge step forward.

Apart from that, we are in a constant struggle. Some schools are opening, but it's never enough. There's not a lot of progress, let's put it that way.

Louis Villeneuve: That's noted. Thank you, Ms. Dubois.

Mr. Potié, I'm going to give you a chance to continue your answer to my colleague's question on how to strengthen retention in French. Since you weren't able to finish your answer earlier, I'll give you the time to do so.

Francis Potié: Several studies have been done on this subject, and certain themes keep coming up. First is training. Teachers need skills in the language they teach. If they don't have them, they will quit the profession.

There are also teaching skills, because language teaching has evolved a lot. When we adopt that, things go much better.

There's also professional isolation. We teach a subject that no one else teaches. No one understands us. The administrators and colleagues don't understand the material and don't value it. It creates professional and personal isolation, which makes people want to do something else. These are things that we need to invest in and pay attention to in order to change the system and move forward.

As a final point, it's not just language teachers who are struggling; it's teachers, period. We hear that. There are shortages everywhere. However, it may be more acute for language teachers. It's a systemic problem. Again, there are plenty of reports and studies that show this.

It's really going to take serious dialogue and serious thinking to change our education systems. Otherwise, we're going to have teacher shortages for years to come.

• (1145)

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Villeneuve, your time is up.

I now give the floor to Mr. Beaulieu for two and a half minutes.

Mario Beaulieu: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Potié, Statistics Canada conducts studies on English-French bilingualism. According to these studies, bilingualism in English Canada has generally stagnated, if not declined. The decline is mainly related to the lower proportion of francophones, who are much more bilingual. In Quebec, however, we are seeing an increase in bilingualism. Among francophones and allophones, there is even some assimilation and anglicization.

How do you explain the decline in bilingualism in English Canada despite the investments that have been made? You say that the investments are insufficient. Maybe I'm giving you an answer.

Francis Potié: I think it has kind of been said. First of all, there are not enough teachers.

How to explain this phenomenon? I think it's a system and capacity issue. There is a major shortage of teachers, which has consequences in program decisions. Let's take the example of Saskatchewan and the Prairies. Some provinces have allowed the requirement to teach a second language to be dropped. This is the case at a number of rural school boards.

We can reverse that by doing a much better job of teaching French in those places. We can't just teach French courses; we also need to recognize their value. For your information, learning a language brings all kinds of cognitive, academic and cultural benefits—

Mario Beaulieu: For a long time, I was told that English Canadians had an appetite for learning French, but fewer and fewer of them are bilingual and speak French. I think the issue is anglonormativity. Just about everywhere, speaking English is the norm.

Also, neither the federal government nor the provincial governments want to use a territorial approach, which is working well elsewhere in the world. Having territories where French is the common language would ensure the vitality of French. Right now, it's as if people are lost in a sea of anglophones, so it's very hard to move forward—

The Chair: Mr. Beaulieu, I'm sorry to interrupt you, but your time is up. You'll have a chance to finish your thought in another round. I have to go to the next member.

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

Jim Bélanger (Sudbury East—Manitoulin—Nickel Belt, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Potié, you say that there are about three million students and that there is still a shortage of 8,000 to 9,000 teachers of French as a second language.

You mentioned that it was difficult for second-language teachers. What makes it difficult? What are the main obstacles facing second-language teachers?

• (1150)

Francis Potié: One of the factors is that they often have not been properly trained. Teachers take a course at a university, but it's not the same everywhere. There are excellent programs at some universities, but at others, a teacher of French as a second language is trained and certified without that person having taken a university course in French. However, all the research shows that the more comfortable and competent you are in the language you teach, the more confident you will be as a teacher and the more successful you will be. It's the same thing in terms of teaching skills. People who haven't had the support and training to teach languages will be lost. Right now, because of the shortage, language teachers are being recruited from all over. There are people who find themselves teaching a subject for which they are not prepared.

The support we receive from the administration and the school board is another factor. Sometimes their support is very good, but sometimes it is almost non-existent. There needs to be better recognition of what has been proved, what has worked and what has shown good results, as opposed to methods that have shown poor results.

Jim Bélanger: How could the federal government further encourage teachers to take programs to be able to teach in their second language?

Francis Potié: In many respects, we're in the process of doing that. We get an investment of about \$30 million a year to address the shortage of teachers of French as a second language, and we work on recruitment and retention. I don't think there's only one solution to the problem.

We are trying to attract foreign-trained teachers, but that raises other issues, such as cultural and professional adaptation to a new system. Adapting can take years and can be frustrating.

There are a number of possible solutions, including training, recruitment, career support and continuing professional development. All the reports and studies show how important it is to have specialized professional training. Language teachers complain about taking training that isn't designed for them, but rather for their colleagues who teach mathematics or another subject.

It's a matter of investing, valuing it and taking it seriously.

Jim Bélanger: Ms. Dubois, you talk about the lack of financial and human resources and the lack of infrastructure. It seems to me that it always comes down to a lack of budget or a misallocation or management of funds. It seems to me that it would be easy to find solutions. Is there not enough money? If the money spent were better distributed, would it be enough? What do you think the problem is?

Marie-Nicole Dubois: There is a lack of funds, and the funds that are paid out are not necessarily distributed properly. If the funds earmarked for us really went to the right places, things would be better. As I said earlier, even the funding provided under the official languages in education program is not enough. There's a huge lack of investment.

• (1155)

Jim Bélanger: Could more guidance be given to the provinces as to how to allocate the funds properly? Is that not happening?

Marie-Nicole Dubois: Right now, it's not being done, but it could be. Of course, if conditions were set to account for the money paid out, it would go to the right place, because there would be a follow-up. As I was saying earlier, that would be a useful avenue. If the government doesn't give more money, it should at least make sure that the money it gives goes to the right place.

Jim Bélanger: Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Bélanger.

I now give the floor to Ms. Mingarelli for five minutes.

Ms. Mingarelli, you will be the last member to ask questions of this panel.

Giovanna Mingarelli (Prescott—Russell—Cumberland, Lib.): Great. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Ms. Dubois, thank you for being with us today.

The growing diversity of francophone families, particularly as a result of immigration, is profoundly changing the face of francophone minority communities. How does the Fédération des francophones de la Colombie-Britannique help these families integrate into the francophone education continuum, particularly with regard to the transition from early childhood to primary and secondary school?

Marie-Nicole Dubois: That type of activity is not at all a part of our mandate, but we support the organizations that do it. We also oversee the province's Réseau en immigration francophone. As such, we meet with all of the organizations to give them the tools they need so that these families feel welcome.

Giovanna Mingarelli: In British Columbia, francophone communities are scattered and far apart, which makes for a constant challenge to ensure equitable access to education in French. What concrete initiatives or partnerships is your federation putting for-

ward to address these barriers, whether through digital innovation, community co-operation or interprovincial partnerships?

Marie-Nicole Dubois: Again, that type of activity is not part of our mandate. Your question would be more for the school boards, because they are the ones that work directly with the schools on this kind of thing. However, we serve as a link between the school boards and the communities, because we know very well that school is an essential pipeline for the sustainability of French, while not the only one. For people to keep French in their hearts, recreational activities must also be held outside school and in the community.

Giovanna Mingarelli: Thank you.

Mr. Potié and Ms. Ostapyk, thank you for being here today.

Second-language teaching, particularly in French, plays an essential role in promoting Canadian bilingualism and intercultural understanding. How does the Canadian Association of Second Language Teachers help people learn French as a second language across the country? What tools or programs do you think are the most effective for encouraging young people to take a real interest in learning French and continuing their studies in French?

Francis Potié: Our programs touch on four areas.

First, we offer educational training focused on the best ways to learn or teach a language. Second, we produce professional and educational resources based on current research and intended for teachers, not students. Third, we provide information through our website, magazine and digital newsletter. We do research that looks at best practices in language teaching and share the results. Finally, we promote the benefits of learning a language. That's what we're doing.

I don't remember your second question, Ms. Mingarelli.

• (1200)

Giovanna Mingarelli: My second question was about—

Francis Potié: I remember it now. It was about how to make young people want to continue learning another language.

First, it's important to have good courses that attract and inspire people. Second, students need to have authentic, impactful experiences. The explore program and the French for the future program, as well as exchange trips and the multicultural experience, have an important role to play when it comes to making young people want to continue their experience.

After all, language is a means of communication. If you learn a language but have no one to communicate with, you are quite a bit less tempted to continue learning. Learners need to be provided with real, authentic and stimulating experiences.

The Chair: Ms. Mingarelli, your time is up. Thank you.

On behalf of the committee, I would like to thank the witnesses for the first hour: Mr. Potié, Ms. Ostapyk and Ms. Dubois.

As chair of the committee, I rarely get a chance to ask witnesses questions.

Ms. Dubois, I want to thank you and your colleagues. I was lucky enough to go and see you this summer and ask you some questions. You told me about the challenges you face and how the government could support you. Thank you for your testimony today as well.

Colleagues, I'm going to suspend the meeting for a few minutes to bring in the next panel.

- (1200) _____ (Pause) _____
- (1210)

The Chair: Let us resume.

Colleagues, welcome to the second part of meeting number 9 of the Standing Committee on Official Languages. We are continuing our study on the minority-language education continuum.

I would now like to welcome the witnesses for the second hour of our meeting. We are joined by representatives of the Association canadienne d'éducation de langue française: Marcel Larocque, president, and Marie-Hélène Tanguay, executive director. Éric Bouchard, chief executive officer of Mouvement Québec français from 2014 to 2017 is also joining us as an individual. Each organization will have five minutes for its opening remarks. We will then proceed with a question and answer period with committee members.

Mr. Larocque and Ms. Tanguay for five minutes.

Marcel Larocque (President, Association canadienne d'éducation de langue française): Good day, everyone.

On behalf of the Association canadienne d'éducation de langue française, of which I am the president, I want to thank you for having us. My name is Marcel Larocque and, naturally, I salute my executive director, Marie-Hélène Tanguay, who will no doubt be of great help to me during the question period.

Our pan-Canadian network informs, trains and equips stakeholders in francophone education in every province and territory to foster identity building, meaning how individuals recognize themselves and act as members of a linguistic and cultural community.

The Association canadienne d'éducation de langue française helps strengthen the francophone minority-language education continuum, not only through its training programs and events, where participants at different stages of the continuum interact to build bridges between them, but also through the publication of the 15th issue of our booklet *Comprendre la construction identitaire*, entitled "*Pour un continuum solide*". This booklet was developed with the members of a tripartite committee comprising representatives of the federal, provincial, and territorial governments, as well as representatives from the community and academic sectors with an inter-

est in and a commitment to education. This booklet demonstrates that the continuum is not linear.

People say a picture is worth a thousand words, so allow me to draw an analogy. Let me describe the education continuum in minority-language communities to you as a house. The foundation represents the family, where individuals are first exposed to French. It's where our relationship with the language, culture and community begins. The front door represents early childhood. It opens onto the educational adventure in French and must be welcoming and solid so children can cross the threshold with confidence. The walls represent elementary and secondary schools. They provide structure and enrich the francophone experience by offering safe spaces conducive to rich and varied learning experiences. The roof represents continuing and post-secondary education. It protects, but above all, it opens onto the future so that the francophone identity can endure and thrive into adulthood. The windows represent informal and non-formal learning. They let in the fresh air of experiences acquired outside formal education. The land symbolizes the community, an essential space for building and supporting the house.

To ensure its long-term stability, the house needs a binding agent; in other words, it needs to be part of a complete ecosystem. This is where identity building comes in. The process is unique to each individual and is strongly influenced by their environment. This process is at the heart of the mission of French-language institutions in minority communities. Not only do they need to ensure the educational success of children and students, but they also have a responsibility to enable them to give French and francophone culture a true place in their lives. In this way, the house becomes a place that is alive, full of meaning and pride.

Identity building is not an isolated activity or a one-off project. It's an educational intention at every stage in the continuum. It gives meaning to learning, supports success and nourishes linguistic and cultural vitality. When individuals understand that learning to speak French allows them to take part in a history, a community and a collective future, the right based on section 23 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms becomes a lived reality.

For a continuum to be vibrant and cohesive, several winning conditions are required. In particular, high-quality educational services are needed from early childhood onwards, within a cultural framework that fosters francophone identity. We also need French-language schools that fully embrace their identity mission by offering stimulating programs, a sense of belonging, and francophone role models. It also requires post-secondary institutions that are sensitive to the minority reality and offer initial training tailored to the unique needs of the communities. All stakeholders must have a shared vision and opportunities for cross-sector collaboration to build bridges. It is also essential to have resources adapted to the minority reality to promote identity building among children and students. Finally, above all, we need committed individuals, namely educational staff, families, administrators and community partners. The African proverb "It takes a village to raise a child" takes on its full meaning here.

The education continuum is not just a series of stages. It's a life-long journey in French where we put identity building at the heart of our behaviour. We can have schools, services, and programs, but if francophone identity does not take root, we risk failing to achieve the goal of ensuring the vitality and sustainability of francophone communities in Canada.

• (1215)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Larocque.

Mr. Bouchard for five minutes.

Éric Bouchard (Chief Executive Officer of Mouvement Québec français, 2014 to 2017, As an Individual): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Honourable members of the committee, I'll start by taking a few moments to tell you about my professional experience since 2009, which has allowed me to gain expertise on the anglicization of Quebec. Then, I will explain why Canada's Official Languages Act is a genocidal law when it comes to the French language, since it's based on the fallacious premise that anglophones in Quebec constitute a minority.

Between 2009 and 2012, I worked as a political staffer for MNA Pierre Curzi, for whom I wrote a study on Quebec's language situation at the time; the document was entitled *Le grand Montréal s'anglicise*. I also wrote a study on the need to apply the Charter of the French Language to college-level education. I then coordinated a study on the correlation between the anglicization of Montreal and the overfunding of anglophone universities in Quebec. Finally, I drafted Bill 593, which sought to improve the Charter of the French language and which Pierre Curzi introduced in 2012. Next, I was the chief executive officer of the Mouvement Québec français from 2013 to 2017. From 2017 to 2021, I took a break from the language file to sit on the City of Laval's executive committee and, for the past year, I have been drafting a paper on how the Canadian-English colonial regime assimilates francophones in an organized fashion via the Official Languages Act. According to my thesis, the notion of an anglophone minority in Quebec is a fallacious social construct that serves to develop tools to linguistically colonize the only region in which anglophones do not numerically outnumber francophones.

Let me give you the facts. On May 5, 1993, the United Nations Human Rights Committee rejected the request to recognize anglophones in Quebec as a minority. Referring to francophones in Quebec, the report indicated that "a group may constitute a majority in a province but still be a minority in a State". The report adds "English speaking citizens of Canada cannot be considered a linguistic minority." I will say it again, the UN stated that English-speaking Canadians cannot be considered a minority. Not only do the anglophones living in Quebec not belong to a minority requiring protection, but they are an integral part of the Canadian and continental majority. Furthermore, they speak the most powerful language in the history of humanity and which has dominated for over a century in all spheres of human activity.

In Quebec, there are nine francophones for every anglophone. Yet, this so-called minority absorbs half of all assimilation cases. That's high for a minority. In Quebec, there are more francophones assimilating to English than anglophones assimilating to French. If

anglophones are a minority, how do they manage to assimilate speakers from what Canada calls the francophone majority? In Quebec and in Montreal, the percentage of language-of-use and mother-tongue francophones is declining while the percentages for anglophones are rising. In short, no linguistic minority on Earth has the assimilation power that anglophones in Quebec do. This unique situation exists nowhere else on Earth. If we speak frankly and truthfully, the anglophone minority only exists, then, as a concept to allow the development and deployment of the tools of assimilation by the Canadian-English colonial regime.

As for the education continuum of the Canadian English-speaking majority in Quebec, 8.8% of Quebec's population is anglophone with 8.8% of students in English-language elementary and secondary schools. However, once Bill 101 no longer applied, the percentage of students attending English-language institutions rose to 22%. How can minority institutions be so appealing? It's because Canada's Official Languages Act creates anglonormativity in Quebec. This contributes to the appeal of post-secondary education in English and, consequently, to the anglicization of the workplace, which has led to changing the language used at home in favour of English. In contrast, the francophone university network in Canada is so poor that 55% of francophones attend anglophone universities. The \$100 million per year that the Canadian Parliament votes to anglicize Quebec should be entirely allocated to francophone institutions outside Quebec.

• (1220)

Finally, as Canadian parliamentarians now recognize that francophone minorities outside Quebec cannot be treated the same way as the Canadian-English speaking majority in Quebec, and since the anglicization of Quebec has been recognized, investing \$100 million per year in anglicizing Quebec is an act of genocide on the French language.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Bouchard.

We will now move to questions from committee members.

Mr. Dalton, you have six minutes.

Marc Dalton: Mr. Bouchard, as a former chief executive officer of the Mouvement Québec français and generally speaking, based on all your experience, have you noticed a decline in the federal government efforts to promote French since 2015.

Éric Bouchard: Indeed, the promotion of French in Quebec is instead the promotion of English in every respect. Once again, \$100 million is invested annually, through various programs under the Official Languages Act, including to fund anglophone lobby groups that spare no effort in ensuring that everyone in the Quebec health care sector speaks English. If they find a single nurse unable to speak English in a hospital department in Rimouski, which is a 100% francophone municipality, they will demand that this individual learn English so they can provide service in English, in case an anglophone unable to speak French turns up in Rimouski. That's a bit of a caricature, of course, to illustrate my point.

Ultimately, the \$3.6 billion that has been invested over all these years to anglicize Quebec through the Official Languages Act has meant that it's now possible, throughout Quebec, to live without needing to learn French. Consequently, immigrants and people from other Canadian provinces who do not speak French and who come to Quebec can spend their lives there without needing to learn it. This way of doing things has helped to normalize the use of English throughout Quebec. We are becoming more and more like the people of Toronto and Ottawa, Canadian cities where it's normal to live in English. This is particularly true in Montreal, and it's expanding to Longueuil and Laval. Gatineau, which is attached to Ottawa, obviously, is another city where the society is subject to anglonormativity.

So, to answer your question, sir, what the federal government is doing in Quebec, is in no way promoting French.

• (1225)

Marc Dalton: Thank you very much.

Mr. Larocque, does the Association canadienne d'éducation de langue française represent other associations or it is just a single organization?

Marcel Larocque: The Association canadienne d'éducation de langue française is a pan-Canadian organization. Nonetheless, it's quite rare, in the francophonie, to see organizations that include all three territories and ten provinces. We are not a political movement, instead, we support everything being done in the area of learning, education and identity building.

What I really like about our organization is that we have an excellent network. Among others, we belong to the Table nationale sur l'éducation, where 12 organizations meet to talk about how to help students, young people and the community live their identity in a positive way, so that their identity building remains front and centre.

We are not a union network or any other type of organization that represents other groups, but we have many partners. The Table nationale sur l'éducation includes parents, art schools, universities, colleges and school boards, among others. We work with all stakeholders involved in francophone education. Our goal is to provide support. If young people can have positive experiences in French and enjoy living in French, I believe this becomes an added value across the country, whether in the Yukon, Newfoundland and Labrador, New Brunswick, here in Acadia, or in Quebec.

Marc Dalton: I really liked your analogy of the house to illustrate the minority-language education continuum. It's interesting. We could use it in our report.

I presume this situation is unequal across the country. For the remaining minute, could you tell us a little about these differences?

Marcel Larocque: Indeed, the situation varies greatly from one region to another. Even in the region where I live, in New Brunswick, people are considered to be perfectly bilingual. That is not the case where I come from. On the Acadian peninsula, French is really the priority; it is the language of the majority, to the point where some people think that we are a majority community, not a minority one.

The situations are not the same, but when we communicate with our colleagues from regions where French may be less prevalent, I am always amazed to see the desire, the will and the ability to work and create meaningful French-language experiences for young people. We are not at the same level, but when we network, we can learn from each other.

Marc Dalton: Perfect.

Have the Liberal government's policies helped to strengthen the identity of young francophones, or have you noticed a weakening of their sense of belonging?

Marcel Larocque: People from all ministries of education sit on the tripartite committee of which we are a part. We therefore work in collaboration with them.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Dalton.

Before giving the floor to Ms. Chenette, I would ask my colleagues to be brief in their comments, given the time remaining and the number of members who wish to speak. I will try to be fairly strict with the time so that we can complete the question period. That way, I will not need to shorten the speaking time during the last round. I therefore ask for your co-operation.

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

Madeleine Chenette (Thérèse-De Blainville, Lib.): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

I would like to welcome our guests.

Mr. Larocque, the house analogy you used effectively conveys a powerful image of the continuum in minority language education. I see that you are promoting the educational and identity success of francophones.

I would like to know what the criteria are for evaluating progress in terms of identity. How do you evaluate this identity logic?

Marcel Larocque: As you know, the francophonie is no longer the same as it was 10, 20 or 50 years ago. There is increasing talk of a plural francophonie.

At the Association canadienne d'éducation de langue française, we welcome and assist all French speakers, whether they are local, regional or from other countries. At the very least, we hope to contribute a little to the identity building. We accept them into our organization and ensure that everyone feels comfortable with their own culture. We promote accents because accents add colour. That's the message we want to convey: You don't need to speak uniform French, the important thing is to be happy.

It's impressive to see the cultural diversity in schools. We also work with the new criteria of diversity, equity and inclusion to ensure that everyone is comfortable and happy.

• (1230)

Madeleine Chenette: Based on what you are saying, I would say that, ultimately, it is this cultural diversity and these accents that characterize your association.

We know that the world is changing. We have gone from two colonized peoples to a real openness to the world. This is what you have just highlighted when talking about cultural diversity.

In this context, what should the government do at all levels to strengthen not a defensive approach to protect itself from its colonial past, but rather to reinforce and highlight pride in our language and our identity in terms of the francophonie throughout Canada? What do you suggest we do more of, or stop doing?

Marcel Larocque: We are not really demanding as regards our mission. As I said, we focus more on preparing tools and support, and so on. However, we do engage in a lot of dialogue with people in the districts or school boards, as well as with people from the Ministry of Education, regardless of the region we are in. We promote our tools and our work. People are also part of our exchange committees, and for our part, it is important that all the work we do promotes education and identity. We don't knock on the government's door saying they should do more or less. We are fortunate to have Canada-wide funding, and within those parameters, we create and produce materials.

I don't know if Ms. Tanguay, who works much more in the field than I do, would like to add a comment.

Marie-Hélène Tanguay (Executive Director, Association canadienne d'éducation de langue française): Thank you, Mr. Larocque.

In fact, among the opportunities we offer, we aim to enable people to meet within this diverse francophone community, now referred to as the "plural francophonie", to enable people to meet and interact with one another. Reaching out to others can facilitate many aspects of this identity-building process and help people understand and appreciate this language and culture, as well as provide opportunities for exchange and places to meet. I think this is an essential part of identity building.

Madeleine Chenette: Thank you.

Mr. Bouchard, after what has just been said about the meetings and this strong French-speaking diversity in Canada, beyond the legal aspect, how do you see the situation evolving to promote the French-speaking community across Canada, taking advantage of this French-speaking community in Quebec?

Éric Bouchard: The Official Languages Act is designed in such a way that it divides francophones. It pits francophones against each other. The idea of symmetry—

Madeleine Chenette: My question was not necessarily about the legal aspect, but rather about other practices that could be implemented.

Éric Bouchard: I'm getting to it.

Conceptually, we say that it's symmetrical, meaning that francophone minorities outside Quebec should be protected as much as the anglophone minority in Quebec. I know you don't want to talk about the legal aspect, but when it comes to the legal side of things, francophones are fighting each other—

Madeleine Chenette: I insist, sir. We have little time for questions. I want to talk about the practical aspect, not the legal aspect.

Éric Bouchard: I'm getting to it.

When it comes to funding, if we allocate \$100 million a year to anglicize Quebec, why not use that \$100 million a year to make the university network for francophones outside Quebec as powerful as the university network for francophone universities in Quebec? All the money used under the Official Languages Act to anglicize Quebec could be used to improve all the infrastructure for francophones outside Quebec. However, that is not what we are doing. That is where we need to change the Official Languages Act. We must stop anglicizing Quebec with federal money and use that money to support French-language institutions in Canada.

Madeleine Chenette: Mr. Chair, do I have any time left?

• (1235)

The Chair: You have 10 seconds left.

Madeleine Chenette: In that case, I will just ask Mr. Larocque a question. He can answer along with the others.

Mr. Larocque, given the question I asked Mr. Bouchard, in your opinion, what practices should be implemented across Canada to promote this diversity and strength of the French language, while taking advantage of our francophone community in Quebec?

The Chair: Your time is up. Thank you, Ms. Chenette.

Mr. Larocque, you may have an opportunity to respond in a future round. I must now move on to the next member.

I now give the floor to Mr. Beaulieu for six minutes.

Mario Beaulieu: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Bouchard, I would like you to tell us a little more about the concept of the English-speaking minority in Quebec and how it is conveyed by English-speaking pressure groups, which are funded by official language support programs and attempt to portray English speakers as a minority in difficulty.

Éric Bouchard: About a hundred groups are funded by various programs under the Official Languages Act. Among them is TALQ, formerly the Quebec Community Groups Network, which was preceded by Alliance Quebec. Those groups are funded; their mission is funded. By funding their mission, continued funding is ensured, which allows the development of a narrative that, in parliamentary committees and English-language newspapers, presents anglophones as a minority victimized by a francophone majority that seeks to eliminate them. We often see this approach, particularly in the parliamentary commission on Bill 96.

Furthermore, these same organizations are featured in *The Gazette* and continue to promote the same narrative of victimhood among anglophones. They try to make francophones feel guilty because they want to implement Bill 96 and shape society to promote franconormativity in Quebec. Francophones want two speakers with different mother tongues who meet in Montreal to use French naturally and effortlessly, much the way two people with different mother tongues meeting in Toronto use English effortlessly.

This whole conversation undermines efforts to maintain the health of French in Quebec and Canada, because if French declines in Quebec, it is clear that minorities outside Quebec will suffer. A Quebec that is strong in terms of the French language will benefit minorities outside Quebec.

Mario Beaulieu: We are currently studying the continuum in minority-language education. Can you tell us more about English-language post-secondary institutions? Experts testified before the committee that these institutions contribute to the anglicization of Quebec, but their testimony was dismissed. Can you tell us more about how this occurs?

Éric Bouchard: That is according to Statistics Canada. One of Statistics Canada's researchers, Étienne Lemyre, says that studying in English leads to working in English, which leads to speaking English in public, which leads to speaking English at home. When you are born francophone and use English fluently at home, it is English that you pass on to your children. Children therefore end up with English as their mother tongue, and that's when it happens. There are 130,000 assimilated francophones in Quebec—not in provinces outside Quebec, but within Quebec itself.

The funding of English-language institutions, particularly the English-language university network in Quebec, makes these institutions extremely attractive to francophones and allophones who want to rise to the top of Montreal's anglonormative world. In fact, you must be perfectly bilingual to get a good job in Montreal, which structures the anglonormativity of society. To illustrate how investments in English-language institutions have an anglicizing effect, francophones outside the Montreal area do not want to live in Montreal because they are convinced that they will not find work there. Clearly, any emphasis on post-secondary institutions in the continuum has an anglicizing effect in Montreal.

• (1240)

Mario Beaulieu: Where does this overfunding come from?

Éric Bouchard: It makes no sense. Anglophones make up 8.8% of Quebec's population, yet 29% of funding goes to English-language institutions: It's not double or triple, it's 3.4 times the demographic weight of anglophones. Do we see the same situation in re-

verse for francophones in English Canada? Does the University of Ottawa have as much funding for its French-language faculties? The answer, of course, is no.

Mario Beaulieu: What is the federal government's role in that regard?

Éric Bouchard: The federal government's role is clear. The Official Languages Act is a bad thing. Through its laws, its money, and its Constitution, the federal government promotes the anglicization of Quebec. Today, we know that you, as legislators, are responsible for voting for \$100 million each year. Quebec is becoming anglicized, French is in decline, but despite this, \$100 million is voted for each year by Ottawa's Parliament to anglicize Quebec. This is a genocidal act against the French language.

The Chair: I'm sorry, Mr. Beaulieu, but your time is up.

We will now move on to the second round. To ensure that we finish on time, I will have to shorten the speaking time for each member. The Liberals and Conservatives will have four minutes per member instead of five, and you, Mr. Beaulieu, will have two minutes.

Mr. Bélanger, you have the floor for four minutes.

Jim Bélanger: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Bouchard, I'm going to continue asking you questions because I'm quite intrigued by your remarks. At first, I wasn't sure I agreed with you, but now I think I am beginning to.

You say that anglophones are not a minority in Quebec. Is that correct?

Éric Bouchard: That's obvious. Conceptually, they are part of the Canadian state, so they are part of Canada's majority. In Quebec, they are fewer in number, but they are an extension of the Canadian majority. They therefore belong to the Canadian majority within Quebec territory.

Jim Bélanger: In your opinion, there should be no funding for anglophone institutions in Quebec. Is that what you're saying?

Éric Bouchard: Exactly.

Jim Bélanger: I'm not sure I understand. I'm speaking to you from my perspective as an Ontarian. My ancestors come from Quebec. The province of Quebec is very important to us, since we see the province as a support network for francophones outside the province. It is therefore important that the predominant language in Quebec remain French. We agree on that.

For the other provinces and territories, the problem seems to be that funding is given to provinces before being distributed where it is needed. It should be an advantage for you in Quebec if the province decides where the funds for official languages go, shouldn't it?

Éric Bouchard: It's not an advantage, because the Quebec government is forced to add money. For example, an English-language high school and a French-language high school, each with 1,000 students, receive the same operating budget. Federal government money is then added to the Quebec government's money, but only for English-language institutions. So, in Quebec, English-language institutions receive more funding, even at the elementary and secondary levels.

Why should we receive this money to anglicize Quebec? It would be better if Franco-Ontarians received it. Seriously, you need quite a bit more money for your universities and your elementary and secondary schools. In order to make the French language attractive in a minority setting, you need money to have strong institutions, highly trained teachers, and medical schools, for example.

At the University of Ottawa, medical students who speak French are told to "speak white." Marianne Dépelteau of Francopresse revealed that last spring. It is unbelievable that such words are spoken in a country that is supposed to be bilingual. These words are directed at Franco-Ontarians. Franco-Ontarians say they feel embarrassed to speak English as a result. It makes no sense. Instead, money should be spent on explaining to anglophones that you don't say such things to francophones, especially in a place like the University of Ottawa.

• (1245)

Jim Bélanger: You've converted me.

In Sudbury, a medical program is available, but not in French. It is offered only in English. And yet, the region's francophone population is still rather significant.

Thank you very much.

Éric Bouchard: Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Bélanger.

I now give the floor to Ms. Mingarelli for four minutes.

Giovanna Mingarelli: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you to all the witnesses for being with us today.

Ms. Tanguay and Mr. Larocque, the lack of francophone teachers is a problem affecting every region in the country. How does the Association canadienne d'éducation de langue française support teacher training, succession planning and promoting their profession in a minority situation?

Marcel Larocque: The Association canadienne d'éducation de langue française offers training in every French-language faculty of education, among other things, to promote identity building. We dare believe it helps future teachers become interested in working in French throughout the country. We are also working with the Canadian Teachers' Federation, which is campaigning more on the union side.

I'd like to take 20 seconds to reiterate our work's collaborative and creative aspects. One of our bodies, the strategic orientation committee, includes people from all over the country. At that table, we have 13 ministries of education; those from the three territories and the 10 provinces are represented. This is real cross-Canada representation. Once they're in the room, there are no more titles; ev-

eryone works together. We talk about what we like and what we want. For someone coming from the outside, it would be very hard for them to tell who comes from a department, who comes from a university and who is a parent for whom French-language education is important.

Giovanna Mingarelli: Thank you very much.

The continuum of French-language education cannot be limited to passing on language. It must also feed a feeling of belonging in the francophonie. How do your programs, your research or your work with schools support this aspect of identity?

Marie-Hélène Tanguay: First, I'd like to very quickly come back to your previous question. We also offer two other programs. One of them is a teaching internship for students to discover the provinces and territories and learn how to teach. It is part of the budget envelope to address the teacher shortage. We also work with the Fédération nationale des conseils scolaires francophones to offer training within the initial learning framework, as well as support teaching staff working with students aged 0 to 5 years old.

To answer your last question, all our programs integrate identity building. We organize a national French-language education conference that brings together people working with children and students in early childhood education, as well as at the primary, secondary and post-secondary level. It includes school principals and cultural facilitators to inspire, train and exchange ideas on identity building. We also offer professional development internships throughout the summer. All the barriers are broken down, and people sit down for a week to see how they can better help children and students make room for French in their lives. We presented a booklet, booklet no. 15, but we have 17 that focus on identity building. All the Association canadienne d'éducation de langue française programs focus on identity building.

I don't know if I properly answered the question, but that is what we do, while working with different stakeholders throughout the country.

Giovanna Mingarelli: Thank you, Ms. Tanguay.

I just have a little question for you, Mr. Bouchard. Based on your experience at Mouvement Québec français, would you say the majority of newcomers arrive in Quebec intending to learn French and integrate into francophone society?

The Chair: Please excuse me, Ms. Mingarelli, but I must interrupt you and be strict with time.

The answer could be sent to the committee in writing, but I must give the floor to the next member.

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

• (1250)

Mario Beaulieu: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

What I wanted to say earlier, Mr. Bouchard, is that Frédéric Lacroix's studies say that Canadian research funds contributed to overfunding English-language universities to the tune of well over \$100 million a year. How do you think this trend could be reversed?

Éric Bouchard: I could give you a very simple answer, but I'm not sure this is the place to do it, because the simple answer is to not be part of Canada anymore. Funding is obviously invested to overfund English-language universities in Quebec. It's also a fact that all research is done in English. They contribute directly to anglicizing Quebec. The only way to overcome this trend is, therefore, to no longer be part of Canada, or to abolish this form of funding. It goes beyond the Canadian government's jurisdiction, which uses its spending power to anglicize Quebec, especially in leading fields like medicine and medical research.

Mr. Chair, would you allow me to come back to the question asked earlier?

The Chair: Mr. Beaulieu, it's up to you to allow it.

Mario Beaulieu: It's on my time, so I'll allow it, Mr. Bouchard.

Éric Bouchard: Thank you, Mr. Beaulieu.

When people emigrate to France, it's all set up for them to use French. In Italy, same thing; it's all set up for immigrants to learn Italian properly.

In Quebec, it's not like that because of federal government funding, federal legislation, the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms and the Canadian Constitution. It's not all set up for newcomers to speak French. It therefore becomes a choice based on their trajectory in life. If they meet a French-speaking friend, maybe they'll become interested in French. If they work in a French-speaking environment, they may become interested in French or want to follow francization courses if needed. However, they aren't required to learn French, because we live in an anglo-normative environment. It allows any immigrant and any English speaker in Canada to live their entire life without having to learn French.

The Chair: Mr. Bouchard, I must interrupt you.

Thank you, Mr. Beaulieu.

Mr. Gill, you have the floor for four minutes.

[English]

Dalwinder Gill (Calgary McKnight, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I have a question for Mr. Bouchard.

Mr. Bouchard, like you, I believe that investment in French-language education is a matter of our national identity. In light of current relations with our neighbours to the south, and Canada's intention to diversify economic partners, I want to know how you think budget 2025 reflects the Liberal government's commitment to French-language education and where you would like to see improvements.

Éric Bouchard: In Quebec or outside of Quebec?

Dalwinder Gill: How about both.

[Translation]

Éric Bouchard: In Quebec, the first thing to know is the federal government mustn't invest in French. Instead, it should simply stop giving money to business associations, to rights associations fighting Bill 101 and all the health organizations trying to make everything bilingual. As Mr. Beaulieu was saying, the federal government must stop giving money for research at universities.

The starting point must therefore be to stop investing. Transfer the money that would have been invested in Quebec and put it in programs that support high-level French-language institutions or outside Quebec. The federal government must therefore completely stop investing in Quebec to anglicize Quebec.

[English]

Dalwinder Gill: Okay.

Mr. Larocque, I want to ask you about the impact of social media on French-language education. I have read that French-language speakers in provinces outside of Quebec feel uneasy about their accents. Actually, I have even heard stories from Montreal of children experiencing linguistic bullying for not speaking English.

How do you view social media's impact on French-language education among our youth? Do you have any ideas for how social media can be channelled to have a positive impact for French-speaking youth?

• (1255)

[Translation]

Marcel Larocque: During our conferences—among other things, because those aren't our only events—we always have a cross-Canadian delegation of young people, 25 to 35 years old, from the education sector. They are the real linguistic and cultural ambassadors. We all know these young people use social media; they practically invented it. Yes, some things are still done in English, but I'm on a few social media platforms too. What I see is that it's possible to flaunt one's French and promote one's culture, be it francophone, Acadian, Maghrebien or Caribbean, with French as the common element. We're trying to create spaces to promote it.

Indeed, social media represents a danger, but by setting positive examples and promoting those who dare to flaunt their French, they often become good ambassadors, as I was saying initially.

[English]

Dalwinder Gill: Mr. Bouchard, on Tuesday, we heard witnesses say that the Liberal government tends to throw money at the wall and hopes it sticks. What I mean by that is that the government will make announcements for tens of millions of dollars without having a solid strategy for the implementation of accountability measures.

In your experience, what can be done to ensure that Canadian tax dollars are used to provide French-language education in the most effective way possible?

[Translation]

The Chair: Please answer in one or two sentences, as there's only five seconds left.

Éric Bouchard: Stop spending Canadians' money anglicizing Quebec, full stop.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Gill.

I now give the floor to Mr. Deschênes-Thériault for four minutes.

Guillaume Deschênes-Thériault: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Larocque, as well as being ACELF's president, you've been a teacher and a principal in the Acadian peninsula. You've held many leadership positions within the Association des enseignants et enseignantes francophones du Nouveau-Brunswick. I therefore have a question for you, Acadian to Acadian.

As you know, two years ago, we proceeded with an ambitious modernization of the Official Languages Act, an extremely important statute for all francophones from coast to coast. As part of this modernization, we added a clause stipulating that the federal government would reinforce learning opportunities for francophone minorities outside Quebec, from early childhood to post-secondary.

This commitment was reaffirmed in September when we announced a new bilateral agreement between the federal government and New Brunswick. The federal government is investing \$133 million over four years to support French-language learning in New Brunswick. I'd like you to explain the importance of the federal government's investment.

Marcel Larocque: Thank you very much. We saw each other last week in another setting. It is a pleasure to see you again.

Indeed, that investment is important for us in New Brunswick. ACELF is a Canada-wide organization, but I can use a local example. For us, getting that financial support is important for our work with French-language school districts in the province. It also ensures that French-language schools in New Brunswick and throughout the country have the tools and materials required to implement and promote their programs.

I am a retired teacher, but sometimes I still go back to school and see great things being done, especially on a cultural level. I'm a grandfather too, and I'm especially fond of that role. When my

grandchildren come home from school, they tell me all about what they did. They tell me they could talk about or see one thing or another.

If we don't have the required financial support and human resources, it becomes dangerous, because we're in a minority situation. The majority can easily take over. So, I thank the government for helping us on that level. We will try to use it well. As I said, we are always working with people from ministries and school boards.

Guillaume Deschênes-Thériault: Thank you very much for your answer. It reflects the importance of the investments the federal government is making to support French-language education in Canada, in accordance with the Official Languages Act.

Recently, ACELF held its 78th conference in Ontario. One of the priority topics was identity building. We know that schools in a francophone minority situation have a double mandate: promote both educational success and identity building. Could you speak briefly about the importance of having the required resources to fulfill the identity-building mandate?

Éric Bouchard: Indeed, various regions host our conferences, be it Winnipeg, Laval or Markham. Halifax is next, so it covers all of Canada.

As I was saying earlier while answering another question, identity building is not the same from one region to the next. It all boils down to working on the child. We want the child to be happy, able to flourish, able to live and express an identity—all with a dash of local colour. That's what we're trying to do, and it usually leads to beautiful results.

• (1300)

Guillaume Deschênes-Thériault: Thank you very much.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Deschênes-Thériault.

On my colleagues' behalf, I want to thank all the witnesses for offering the committee their expertise.

Meeting adjourned.

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