

*Canadian Heritage Languages Institute Act*

various language courses is dwindling at an alarming rate. I have met with a number of high school professors and directors of various language programs. There has been an emphasis to take the three Rs, to do well in mathematics, sciences, and English. Of course, that is of fundamental importance to any student and of particular importance to any graduate from our educational institutions. While pushing the fundamental courses we should not underestimate the capabilities and the values of a young man or woman leaving university at the age of 22 or 23. In addition to being solid in a number of areas of his or her degree, he or she could also be capable and educated in a third or fourth language.

I believe that this institute can play a significant role to try to reverse the trend that is beginning to take place in our high schools, colleges, and universities. It can rekindle a certain value for languages among our students. It can try to impress upon them that it is not only a question of culture but that at the end of academic training the ability to converse in another language also takes on an economic dimension. Students emerging from various institutions need as many advantages today in the competing world as they can possibly afford.

I have a number of concerns with respect to the structure of the institute. For instance, the legislation would create a board of directors numbering 21. However, the staff, as articulated by the Minister of State for Multiculturalism at his press conference when he announced this measure a few weeks ago, suggested that the staff can be as small as three individuals. One question that I obviously have is: What kind of an organization are we going to put in place when there is a board of directors numbering 21 and a staff of three? It is obvious that not only is it top-heavy in terms of directors but also in terms of the responsibilities that the legislation is expecting the institute to carry on. On page 2 of the Bill it states:

4. The purpose of the Institute is to facilitate throughout Canada the acquisition, retention and use of languages, other than the official languages of Canada, that contribute to the country's multicultural heritage by

- (a) promoting, through public education and discussion, the learning of heritage languages;
- (b) providing the public with information about heritage language resources;
- (c) developing programs to improve the quality of heritage language instruction;
- (d) assisting in the production and dissemination of Canadian-oriented materials related to the study of heritage languages;
- (e) assisting in the development of standards for the learning of heritage languages;
- (f) conducting research into all aspects of heritage languages;
- (g) establishing scholarly and professional links between the Institute and universities, colleges and other organizations—

It then goes on to state that it should initiate, finance, and administer programs and activities created to this purpose; support, encourage, and organize conferences; publish and otherwise disseminate information related to this; and establish award scholarships and fellowships.

Those are all fine tasks. I think all Members of the House would agree with every one of them. The question is: Can three people as a staff undertake successfully the tasks that the legislation sets out? I believe that we need to take a very close look in committee at the ability of a staff of three to fulfil the expectations of this legislation.

I also have questions with respect to how the board of directors will be appointed. It states in the Bill that the Government will appoint 13 and the board will make another eight appointments. I think that it might be useful to list some of the qualifications which members of the board possess. I would also like to know where the community input is in terms of those appointments. Will we have the community proposing some names which the Government and the board will take under advisement? Or, will the appointments be made as we have seen in the Canadian Multiculturalism Council in a vacuum? Will there be members of various communities asking themselves who is that person on that board who purports to represent community A or community B when in fact that person is not an integral part of that community?

There are questions with respect to funding. Will the funding proposed by the Government in fact allow the institute to do the kind of job over the long term? The Bill suggests that it wishes the institute over the course of time to be its own fund raiser to keep the institute alive. That also raises a number of serious problems. Many organizations, in particular voluntary organizations and non-profit groups in our society, are always scrambling for funds.

Before I was elected to office I was associated with a number of non-profit organizations. Sometimes as an organization we spent more time fundraising than in fact fulfilling and delivering the programs on which the group was designed. I am somewhat concerned that the small staff of three will be too preoccupied with financial requirements of keeping the institute afloat as opposed to delivering on the expectations set out by Parliament in this legislation.

There is no mention in the Bill about native and aboriginal languages. It is unclear whether native or aboriginal languages will be included within the heritage language programs or whether they are outside it. I think clarification from the Minister would certainly be helpful in clarifying that question. It is an important question, and one that many communities, particularly those in the North, are asking *vis-à-vis* this legislation.

● (1610)

I also ask whether there has been any consultation with the provincial Governments. The question of education and schooling is clearly within provincial jurisdiction. It would be interesting to see if the federal Government has dovetailed or communicated with the provinces, and whether there will be co-operation or any financial assistance from the various provinces, because obviously an institute of this calibre, or potentially of this calibre, can be of extreme help to the various