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The *Réseau en immigration francophone de la Nouvelle-Écosse* (RIFNÉ), which I am formally introducing, is a consultation committee on francophone immigration in Nova Scotia. It has 18 members and partners, of which 14 are community organizations and 4 are government institutions at the federal, provincial and municipal levels. Our stakeholders represent a range of sectors, and each one has a role to play in the recruitment, welcoming, settlement and socio-economic integration of French-speaking newcomers to Nova Scotia.

Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) recognizes that community stakeholders are valuable partners in supporting the Government of Canada's efforts to achieve its francophone immigration objective.

While we agree with the federal government's plan to develop an ambitious national francophone immigration strategy, we at RIFNÉ, along with our many partners in the Atlantic provinces and across the country, want the government to listen to us and consider the solutions we propose. We are very concerned about the 4.4% target that has never been reached.

Our main concern is that the federal government is setting a very low bar for francophone immigration initiatives.

It is content to just tweak the general immigration programs instead of creating new measures and initiatives specifically for francophone immigration. But in this case, one size does not fit all.

The Express Entry program is a good example of where an existing program was reworked to address francophone immigration. To date, it has not yet contributed to reaching the francophone immigration target, and 2023 is the last year for achieving the government's objective.

- The federal government should create a separate francophone economic immigration program and reach out both to communities to promote it and to employers to recruit candidates, particularly in francophone countries.
- Furthermore, the federal government must set ambitious and well-defined targets for French-speaking refugees.
- The Government of Canada should take very clear steps and initiatives to increase the number of French-speaking refugees it sponsors and to increase the number of francophone providers for the French refugee resettlement assistance program.

- We recommend that Canada work more closely with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees on the issue of French-speaking refugees in order to develop expertise in welcoming and selecting refugees from French-speaking Africa, such as Burundi, the Central African Republic, the Sahel and the Democratic Republic of Congo.
- Lastly, I would like to congratulate the federal government on its new Centre for Innovation in Francophone Immigration, which was inaugurated on November 10 in Dieppe, New Brunswick. The new centre seeks to increase francophone immigration to francophone minority communities as part of the Federal/Provincial/Territorial Action Plan 2020–2023.

We recommend that the new centre:

- find real solutions to increase the number of francophone immigrants by establishing programs tailored to French-speaking applicants; and
- work closely with francophone communities and organizations responsible for taking concrete steps and initiatives in the selection of French-speaking candidates.
- As community stakeholders, we have already worked with the FCFA to establish a restorative target, and the FCFA is open to having discussions with the federal government on establishing a new federal target and the francophone immigration policy to achieve it.

Since my time is short, I will leave you with one question: when will you expand the Welcoming Francophone Communities initiative to other communities across Canada, since this approach has already proven its value?

Thank you for the invitation.