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Chair

The Honourable Michael Chong

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● (1530)

[Translation]

The Chair (Hon. Michael Chong (Wellington—Halton Hills, CPC)): Welcome to the 66th meeting of the Standing Committee on Official Languages. Today is Thursday, January 31, 2013.

Pursuant to Standing Order 108, we are here to study linguistic duality during the 150th anniversary celebrations of Canadian Confederation in 2017. Appearing before us for one hour is Mr. Hubert Lacroix, the President and Chief Executive Officer of CBC/Radio-Canada.

Welcome.

Before we start, I recognize Mr. Godin.

Mr. Yvon Godin (Acadie—Bathurst, NDP): Mr. Chair, I would like to emphasize that, at his appearance last December, the minister responsible for official languages said that it was up to each department to make sure that the Official Languages Act is enforced and that it was not his job to make his cabinet colleagues comply with the Official Languages Act.

That is why we have introduced a motion. I would like to read it.

That the Committee invite each of the ministers responsible for the institutions covered by the Roadmap for Canada's Linguistic Duality 2008–2013: Acting for the Future, and each of the ministers responsible for National Defence and the Canadian Forces, Veterans Affairs Canada, Environment Canada, and Fisheries and Oceans Canada, to attend a two-hour televised public hearing, respectively, to discuss their official languages obligations by April 30, 2013.

The motion has been submitted to the clerk's office. We can debate it next week.

The Chair: Thank you for your notice of motion, Mr. Godin. We can discuss it next week.

Mr. Yvon Godin: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Mr. Lacroix, the floor is yours.

Mr. Hubert T. Lacroix (President and Chief Executive Officer, Canadian Broadcasting Corporation): Mr. Chair, members of the committee, good afternoon. It is a pleasure to be here this afternoon and to participate in your study on the 150th anniversary of Confederation and linguistic duality.

I know that the committee postponed this meeting last fall when we were in the midst of our CRTC license renewal hearings. I appreciate your understanding.

CBC/Radio-Canada is already planning a number of activities we hope will help Canadian celebrates 2017 in English and French.

I would like to start by sharing with you a little bit about some of the ideas we are looking at in terms of programming. Then I'd like to talk about what we believe is our role as a public broadcaster and how we hope to use the 150th anniversary to facilitate discussions among Canadians about their country, this important anniversary and what it means.

[English]

CBC/Radio-Canada has a mandate to connect Canadians to their country, their community, and each other in English, French, and eight aboriginal languages. We do this every day on our airwaves and increasingly on our digital platforms.

Sometimes we actually combine the talents of our English and French services to present what we call “signature events”, which are events that we believe have important national appeal. For example, a year ago CBC/Radio-Canada presented *8th Fire, 8e feu*. You might actually remember this because we sent each of you a sample DVD of that series. It explored Canada's 500-year-old relationship with its aboriginal communities, with content on television and radio and an interactive bilingual website featuring 20 aboriginal filmmakers from across the country.

We're also proud that our efforts to support linguistic duality have been recognized by the Commissioner of Official Languages. In the past year he granted the Award of Excellence for the Promotion of Linguistic Duality to Bernard St-Laurent, a CBC/Radio-Canada journalist and host of the popular *C'est la vie*, which showcases francophone culture from across the country for English listeners on CBC Radio.

For CBC/Radio-Canada, the 150th anniversary will be the culmination of several years of important Canadian anniversaries. We intend to play a significant role in sharing these events with Canadians and in building the momentum toward 2017.

Our road to Confederation includes the anniversaries of the Charlottetown and Quebec conferences as well as the 200th anniversary of the birth of John A. Macdonald. The year 2014 marks 100 years of Nellie McClung and the women's rights movement in Canada. In 2016, if they stay on the ice, we'll celebrate the centenary of the National Hockey League. Between now and 2017 there are many important anniversaries, like the 100th anniversary of the battles of Vimy Ridge and Passchendaele, the 75th anniversary of the World War II battle for Dieppe, and the 70th anniversary of D-Day and Ortona.

•(1535)

[Translation]

In 2017, we will also celebrate the 375th anniversary of the founding of Montreal and the 50th anniversary of Expo 67.

As Mr. Godin has rightly pointed out to this committee, 2014 marks the 260th anniversary of the deportation of the Acadians.

I would also like to point out our ongoing preparations to bring Canadians the Olympics in Sochi in 2014 and Rio de Janeiro in 2016, and the Pan Am and ParaPan Am Games in Toronto in 2015. We are delighted to be bringing Canadians the Olympics in English and French and, while they are not technically part of the 150th celebrations, our experience has been that these international sporting events are a fantastic way to bring Canadians together.

Over the coming months, we will be making decisions about how our program schedules will mark these important anniversaries leading up to 2017.

A few of you may remember that, in 1967, CBC/Radio-Canada used its presence across the country to engage Canadians in celebrating the centennial of Confederation. We want to do the same thing for the 150th. Last August, we announced “Canada 150/2017 starts now”, a plan for a series of conferences across the country to help generate excitement about the 150th. We want to ensure that there is a public space where communities can gather to share their stories about Canada, and begin planning activities to celebrate this important milestone. It will also help CBC/Radio-Canada gather ideas and content to share on all of our platforms.

[English]

The conferences will be supported through an interactive website where Canadians can join in the conversation regardless of where they live. It will be launched soon, and we'll be asking Canadians to contribute their own content on this site in the months ahead. “Canada 150/2017 Starts Now” is a partnership between CBC/Radio-Canada, VIA Rail, and Community Foundations of Canada. Earlier this week we announced dates and locations for our conferences in every region of the country. The final national conference will be held in Ottawa on June 27, just before Canada Day, which is for us, of course, an important broadcasting day.

These conferences and related activities are also being produced in collaboration with Canadian organizations already at work on planning 2017 celebrations, including YMCA Canada, National Association of Friendship Centres, imagiNation 150, and Charlotte-town 2014.

[Translation]

Strategic partnerships with corporations, communities, and government organizations will help all of us leverage our resources in support of 2017. I am aware that members of this committee have expressed concerns about CBC/Radio-Canada's ability to manage its budget cuts and still provide programming appropriate to highlight the upcoming anniversaries. There is no question that it is a challenge. There is no limit to the programming ideas we would like to pursue, but like all organizations, we need to manage what we have in a time of shrinking resources.

Let me give you an idea of the challenge. Last year, the CRTC's Local Program Improvement Fund, the LPIF that we are all so familiar with, allowed us to be present at the Canadian Francophone Games in Sudbury, National Acadian Day in Tracadie-Sheila, the 2012 Année des Fransaskois in Saskatchewan and the 150th anniversary of the village of St. Albert in Alberta. The phasing out of the LPIF makes finding the resources for these kinds of events a challenge. It is likely that we will no longer be able to cover these kinds of events in the manner that we have in the past.

How much we can do will ultimately depend on the partnerships we can establish, but CBC/Radio-Canada intends to continue to play a leadership role in bringing Canadians together to share in these important national events. We are very excited about the lead up to the 150th and we look forward to offering exciting Canadian programming to our audiences.

Mr. Chair, committee members, I would now be pleased to take your questions.

•(1540)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Lacroix.

We have 50 minutes for questions and comments.

You have the floor, Mr. Godin.

Mr. Yvon Godin: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

First, I would like to extend a welcome to Mr. Lacroix. In most of our meetings, we have had differing opinions about Radio-Canada and about our country.

First, and this may come as a surprise to you, I would like to thank Radio-Canada for finally having appointed a national news reporter for the Atlantic region. We do not thank you often. But will that Atlantic reporter be part of the national news? That is another matter. A reporter is in place. But it remains to be seen whether we are going to hear about the Atlantic region on the national news with Céline Galipeau. We will be watching that closely, Mr. Lacroix.

Mr. Hubert T. Lacroix: I am certain you will, Mr. Godin.

Mr. Yvon Godin: We will talk later about the CRTC, about Radio-Canada's role and about budgets and so on. Right now, let's talk about the 150th anniversary.

In your brief, you mentioned that you were going to recognize the deportation of the Acadians in the celebrations. I am pleased about that, because we cannot forget that event that took place in our country; we want people to know what went on.

I have another concern. Actually, my complaints are my usual ones. You said that Radio-Canada exists for all Canadians everywhere in Canada. But the impression is that Radio-Canada is really Radio-Montreal. The government imposed budget cuts. In your brief, you said that it would be a challenge. You mentioned the elimination of the CRTC's Local Program Improvement Fund. It was that fund that brought us *Belle-Baie*, *Luc et Luc*, *La revue acadienne*, and so on.

As we approach the 150th anniversary, we wonder if we are heading back to Radio-Montreal again. I used to say Radio-Quebec, but people from Quebec City and the Gaspé corrected me. They told me that it was not Radio-Quebec City, or Radio-Chicoutimi or Radio-Sherbrooke. It really was Radio-Montreal. That is a concern.

We love Radio-Canada. It is our public broadcaster; it is close to our hearts. It is the people's broadcaster, but we want it to talk about the people. I do not mean that it has to talk about Yvon Godin; it has to talk about a whole lot of people. When we celebrate this event, will we see the parties in communities all over the country? Will all of our country be recognized? Will we see the same thing on the English side?

Mr. Hubert T. Lacroix: I always really enjoy listening to you, Mr. Godin. In your heart of hearts, you really are a huge fan of CBC/Radio-Canada and of the corporation's role.

Several committee members and I have had the opportunity to talk about our strategic plan for 2015. The second pillar of the strategic plan is that, as a national public broadcaster, we have to have our roots in the regions. The conferences we have just announced also show how we are reflecting the regions: Vancouver, Calgary, Toronto, Saskatoon, Winnipeg, and so on. The list includes people from the north and from the Maritimes. The object of the conferences is to create public spaces where people will be able to talk to each other. We are also going to ask them what they are going to do for the 150th anniversary. We will have links established with our partners in those communities. We will be asking them for their ideas about how they can arrange to get other people with a similar story in other parts of Canada working with them. The goal of those conferences is to do exactly what you are hoping we will do, to create stories that will bring together Canadians from coast to coast to coast.

Mr. Yvon Godin: Thank you.

[English]

Mr. Tyrone Benskin (Jeanne-Le Ber, NDP): Hi, fellows. It's great to see you.

My question is along the same lines. How have the cuts that the CBC has endured affected the rollout of 2015 in terms of the regions?

Second, with regard to minority language communities, the anglophone community in Quebec

[Translation]

and the francophone communities outside Quebec, how will CBC/Radio-Canada get people involved, not only in the regions, but also in official language minority communities?

• (1545)

Mr. Hubert T. Lacroix: There are two aspects to your question. If I may, I will first mention how our strategy for 2015 has been influenced by the recent events that have changed our budgets.

The plan has not changed. Our objective is still to deliver Canadian programming in prime time, to be a public broadcaster with roots in the regions and to be a leader in technology, especially on new platforms. Our strategy has been affected in the sense that

some of those initiatives have slowed down, but not in the sense that we have changed course.

What we call our local service expansion plan contained plans to get involved in some communities in the west. That has slowed down. In our consistent goal to provide our services to a greater number of Canadians, we are going to use new technological platforms if we are not able to proceed in the way we imagined at the outset. So we are slowing down in the terms of our roll-out and in the number of cities we can go to, but there will be no compromise in our consistent goal to see the public broadcaster well and truly rooted in the regions.

As for future plans, whether for programming or for the conferences and the ideas that we get from them, our objective is for the organizing committee in each community to make it possible on those occasions for everyone who has a significant opinion and for every local organization to have the opportunity to express their ideas. Put together with ideas from other areas, those ideas will give rise to ideas that we at CBC/Radio-Canada can use in our content ourselves.

Do not forget that our objective is to let people express their ideas, to tell us what they want to do. This is not a consultation. It is a matter of knowing what they are doing and how their ideas can then be linked to the ideas that other Canadians are having.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Lacroix.

Mr. Gourde, you have the floor.

Mr. Jacques Gourde (Lotbinière—Chutes-de-la-Chaudière, CPC): Thank you kindly, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Lacroix, thank you for joining us today. I am excited to hear you talk about this platform that will be available to Canadians. Shining the spotlight on their stories, region by region, through a variety of projects, will help many Canadians learn more about our country and discover new places, bits of history and wonderful people. So I think you're on the right track in that respect.

At the beginning of your presentation, you said you wanted to celebrate both in English and in French, and I quite appreciate that. I was wondering, however, whether it might be possible to undertake projects involving both languages, programs for youth or a series of some sort, for example. Both English and French could be spoken, making the program equally suitable for CBC and Radio-Canada. A project like that could give more Canadians exposure to both official languages. It is rare indeed for someone who speaks English in their community to watch an entire program in French. The opposite is also true. But a program that is equally appealing to both anglophones and francophones would make both languages accessible to a broader range of Canadians.

Mr. Hubert T. Lacroix: That was how the series I mentioned earlier, *8th Fire*, worked. We had an English version and a French version, so we were able to broadcast the same program to all Canadians in both languages.

We used the same formula in a wonderful documentary called *1 Day or 1 jour*. The day was April 30, 2012, I believe. The documentary captured 24 hours in the lives of Canadians across the country, from Newfoundland and Labrador, and the Maritimes all the way to Vancouver. The end of the documentary featured two police officers—a francophone woman and an anglophone man, interestingly enough—who work together. They represented the culmination of all the work being done. The program spotlighted Canadian stories in both languages. We support that format very much, and it is certainly an idea we will look at.

Mr. Jacques Gourde: Was that kind of series very popular?

Mr. Hubert T. Lacroix: Absolutely.

Mr. Jacques Gourde: I think the experience could be repeated.

Mr. Hubert T. Lacroix: Yes.

Mr. Jacques Gourde: Canadians, especially the younger generation, have an appetite for that. The statistics show that younger people are more likely to know both languages. Initiatives like this encourage them. I think it's great.

You mentioned an opportunity for people to join or engage in a conversation with you, at CBC, on various initiatives. Will that process get under way this year?

• (1550)

Mr. Hubert T. Lacroix: Yes. The conferences will start in April, with the first slated to take place in Vancouver. We will cover 12 cities in all, with the last stop in Ottawa on June 27, 2013, just before Canada Day.

Mr. Jacques Gourde: Will the conferences serve as a first step, where Canadians will be asked to share their ideas, or will people have to show up with projects already in hand?

Mr. Hubert T. Lacroix: Our goal is to act as a catalyst, to encourage ideas. We will be asking people how they plan to celebrate the 150th anniversary of Confederation in their communities. By bringing people together, we hope they will submit ideas. And through this process, we hope to connect them with other like-minded individuals in their community and thus kick-start some of those projects.

I am certain that Canadians in other cities will share some of the ideas presented. So our goal is to connect them with one another. That is the purpose of the Web site. As I said, we want to be the catalyst in terms of bringing Canadians together so they can follow through on their ideas for celebrating the 150th anniversary.

Mr. Jacques Gourde: And those projects will no doubt receive radio or TV coverage throughout 2017.

Mr. Hubert T. Lacroix: That is one possibility, but these could also be entirely local events at the community level. For instance, a community association might organize an event and take advantage of the local paper. We hope to collect stories like these for our coverage of the country's 150th anniversary. In fact, our aim is to bring together Canadians' ideas like a collection of puzzle pieces, so to speak.

Mr. Jacques Gourde: The anniversary year of 2017 starts in January and ends in December. July 1st will, of course, mark a momentous point in the year, but besides those festivities, have you allocated much programming time to the celebration?

Mr. Hubert T. Lacroix: We have not yet finalized our programming for 2017. The budgets are settled. Our goal is to be as present as we have always been during occasions of this nature and, leading up to 2017, to continue with the signature events approach I mentioned in my presentation.

In 1967, we had 6,000 hours of programming. I don't know what the number will be in 2017. We will see.

Mr. Jacques Gourde: Surely, local stations in every province will play a significant role.

Mr. Hubert T. Lacroix: Absolutely.

Mr. Jacques Gourde: Besides Montreal, you have Quebec City, Saguenay—

Mr. Hubert T. Lacroix: I can assure you that our entire corporation will take into account the importance of the events leading up to 2017. We consider it part of our mandate, so as part of the anniversary celebrations, we will strive to honour Canadians' stories in a fitting manner.

Mr. Jacques Gourde: Have you sensed any excitement among Canadian businesses in terms of their involvement in your programming?

Mr. Hubert T. Lacroix: Oh yes! I referred to VIA Rail and the Community Foundations of Canada, but there are many others. The news release we put out on Monday indicated that we already had the support of some 15 organizations for our conference series.

On the programming side, we are currently looking for partners we can work with to raise enough money—because we can no longer do it all alone—to create programs featuring the signature events leading up to 2017. We have almost reached an agreement with one company, and we hope to find three others so we can meet our budget needs.

Mr. Jacques Gourde: Thank you very much, Mr. Lacroix.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Dion, the floor is yours.

Hon. Stéphane Dion (Saint-Laurent—Cartierville, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you for being here, Mr. Lacroix.

Basically, you are going to conduct consultations and gather suggestions from Canadians to help you figure out what your programming to mark the 150th anniversary will look like.

Mr. Hubert T. Lacroix: We're talking about a whole. There are a number of milestones between now and 2017, in other words, major anniversaries that we will be covering because we consider them part of Canada's history. It is with those milestones and our programming content in mind that we are looking for partners. The idea is to be able to produce high-quality content.

At the same time, the process we launched this week with the help of our partners, the conference series, is designed to give Canadians a public space where they can connect and talk with one another. The purpose is to complement our programming. Our programming will also focus on what Canadians are doing or hoping to do to celebrate the country's 150th anniversary.

The signature events programming and the conference series are two parallel, but complementary, initiatives.

• (1555)

Hon. Stéphane Dion: In the rising crescendo between now and 2017, what role will official language communities play?

Mr. Hubert T. Lacroix: An essential one, a role that is reflected in the conferences being held in various cities across the country, in the groups that will emerge, and in the partners that will be brought together. All of that speaks to the importance we place on those communities. As you may know, half of Radio-Canada's stations are in minority communities, so they play a pivotal role. In fact, Canada's largest regional station is a CBC station in a francophone community in Quebec.

As for the crescendo building up to 2017, I can tell you that we are calling on everyone in those communities to contribute, Mr. Dion.

Hon. Stéphane Dion: This whole exercise may be a bit premature, since the government has yet to say how it intends to celebrate 2017.

But since we're here, let's give you a blank sheet and you can tell us what you'd like our report to say about CBC/Radio-Canada.

Mr. Hubert T. Lacroix: With respect to the 150th anniversary?

Hon. Stéphane Dion: With respect to the 150th anniversary as it relates to official language communities, respect for both official languages and the promotion of those languages.

Mr. Hubert T. Lacroix: CBC/Radio-Canada has a very clear understanding of its role as the public broadcaster. The corporation is applying that understanding to its mandate of connecting Canadians by sharing stories and providing a historical portrait of where the country has been and how it came to be what it is today. With that in mind, the corporation has arranged a series of conferences, in collaboration with major partners such as VIA Rail and the Community Foundations of Canada, as well as many other contributors across the country. All of those players understand the importance of firing Canadians with enthusiasm for the upcoming 150th anniversary of Confederation.

Hon. Stéphane Dion: You told us that your programming and your strategies to communicate with Canadians will indeed reflect different celebrations. Do you have some sort of process or mechanism that enables you to learn from past performance? I mean a record of your performance in terms of marking the War of 1812 and the coverage delivered.

Can we expect that, over time, CBC/Radio-Canada will get better and better at using its resources to mark these events? Come 2017, will it do a better job than it does today?

Mr. Hubert T. Lacroix: I like to think so. I hope we are learning. Whenever a program of ours is introduced, we always do some research. We look not only at how the program was produced and funded, but also at what impact it has and whether it appeals to Canadians.

Now, Mr. Dion, the great thing is that Twitter allows us to make all kinds of determinations in relation to performance indicators. For instance, we can see how much traffic we have on our digital platforms and whether the programming we delivered was of interest to Canadians. We are constantly looking at that.

As you saw, a lot of major milestones will take place between now and 2017. We are going to have some decisions to make. We will have to decide which events to cover, how to cover them, what types of programs to offer and what the content should look like, always staying within our means, of course.

Hon. Stéphane Dion: Thank you.

I'm not a big TV buff, in that when I do watch, it's usually Radio-Canada. I saw a little bit of your coverage of the War of 1812, and what I saw was more or less annoyed reporters wondering what the point was of marking such an occasion. One historian said he couldn't really understand why we bothered marking the event. You may have had more in-depth coverage, but that is what I saw.

Could you give us a quick overview of Radio-Canada's War of 1812 coverage?

Mr. Hubert T. Lacroix: Mr. Dion, there is no way I can comment on that because I am not the person in charge of programs, nor am I the one who monitors programming changes in detail. But I've made a note of your comment and I am going to make sure that we do—

Hon. Stéphane Dion: I am bringing it up because I don't want the same thing to happen in 2017. The attitude came across as sulky.

I personally believe the War of 1812 was a historic event. The government did not necessarily do a good job of conveying that message, but it was a historic event. I would have liked to see more in-depth discussions. Perhaps there were some. In the few current affairs programs I saw, the mood was terrible. The people were wondering why the subject was on the table.

I certainly don't want that to be the case in 2017. I hope the coverage will be neutral, of course, but also show some enthusiasm.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Dion. You're a patriot, to be sure.

[English]

We have two new members on our committee, Mr. O'Toole and Monsieur Galipeau.

Welcome to you both. We'll continue with Monsieur Galipeau.

• (1600)

[Translation]

Mr. Royal Galipeau (Ottawa—Orléans, CPC): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

I am delighted to be back in my old haunt. I would also like to welcome Mr. Lacroix. He already knows what a big fan and supporter of Radio-Canada I am and have been for the past six decades. I prefer the radio. Actually, my duties and activities rarely allow me to sit in front of the TV, but my radio is always on no matter where I go. I usually listen to Radio-Canada and CBC the rest of the time.

I am well aware of your mandate, that is, connecting Canadians with their country, their community and one another. Back in 1967, when I was 20, I can remember Radio-Canada firing my enthusiasm for my country. No matter where I would travel in the country, I would always try to find a Radio-Canada station I could tune into. There was always a lot of passion.

In 1992, when Canada turned 125, Radio-Canada did not have much of a presence in the celebration.

In 2012, people on public affairs programs scoffed at the War of 1812 whenever it was mentioned. In 2012, they scoffed at it. It was as though they had no clue that that moment in history gave birth to our consciousness as a country; at that moment in time, Canadians decided they wanted to be a distinct people, separate from the Americans. Radio-Canada readily scoffed at the event. If it mattered to the evil government in Ottawa, it was, by definition, bad.

I really appreciate programs on the English network, CBC, that endeavour to promote French. Bernard St-Laurent deserved his award. Jim Corcoran deserves one as well; he helps English-speaking Canadians gain an appreciation for Canada's French music, especially music from Quebec, and he does a wonderful job.

What's more, I agree with Mr. Godin. The Montreal mindset, rather than the cross-Canadian one, that is rife all over the airwaves, even on radio stations that are not in Montreal, is a problem. The most blatant example of that is the ice storm coverage in January 1998. I listened to the radio all day and all night, and I never heard a word about St. Isidore, Ottawa or St. Albert, but I would hear all about Montreal. I asked people how they found out what was happening in their communities and they said they were listening to CFRA. The secretary at the Notre-Dame-des-Champs church told me she was listening to CFRA. That's unacceptable.

In addition, 15 years ago, I put together a thick file and I sent it to the Radio-Canada ombudsman. The file was on the terminology that was used when discussing the Canadian state and relations between the country and its various provinces. I am particularly irritated when the topic of Quebec and English Canada comes up. I have to tell you I was satisfied with the ombudsman's decision. In the end, three ombudsmen had to get involved before I got an answer. But I was satisfied, as I was with the implementation of that response for five years. Since then, however, the response has been disregarded. The same terminology is being used again. I am from St. Isidore, Ontario, and I am not an English Canadian. The people who live in Shawville, across the river, are not francophones. They are part of English Canada even though they are also Quebecers.

• (1605)

In four years' time, we are going to celebrate Canada's 150th anniversary, and with that in mind, we must not minimize the value of the French fact or the English fact across Canada. I have always stood up for the French language in Ontario, but now I have to stand up for the English language in Canada. On CBC, it's gotten to the point where you frequently hear announcers using American English. They don't say "lef-tenant" but rather "loo-tenant", which is quite common on American television.

Radio-Canada, on its end, should show some language integrity, like Henri Bergeron used to. And the same goes for the English

network. The fact is if we cannot manage to protect Canadian English in Canada, attempts to safeguard the French language will fall by the wayside.

I had wanted to ask you questions, but I ended up making a speech instead.

The Chair: Fine, but you're out of time.

Mr. Royal Galipeau: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Thank you for your comments, Mr. Galipeau.

Mr. Royal Galipeau: I hope you will give Mr. Lacroix 15 seconds.

The Chair: We're moving on to Mr. Trottier now.

Mr. Bernard Trottier (Etobicoke—Lakeshore, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you for appearing before the committee, Mr. Lacroix. You mentioned some upcoming anniversaries that will mark historical events. But I think the 150th anniversary of Confederation—or Canada's 150th birthday, as some prefer—is a bit different. We won't be celebrating a moment in history, but really Canada, its 150 years as a country. History should, of course, factor into the celebration and programming, but so too should our present and our future.

How do you intend to strike a balance in Radio-Canada's programming between the past, in other words, historical events, the present and the future?

Mr. Hubert T. Lacroix: You are absolutely right, Mr. Trottier. We see the 150th anniversary of Confederation as the culmination of a journey that begins with major milestones in Canadian history and ends with the 150th anniversary celebrations.

The last event of this magnitude that was celebrated was the 100th anniversary of Confederation. Back then, Canadians' eyes were very much opened to just how far the country had come. The big difference today is social networking and the means we have to communicate directly with the public and involve them in our programming. None of that was possible 50 years ago. All we could do back then was offer programs to people. Today, we have the ability to know what interests them, solicit their help, and give them spaces where they can share their stories or connect with someone in another part of the country. That was the goal at the outset, the vision for the 150th anniversary that the conference series will focus on.

I really want to thank VIA Rail and the communities. Some of the meetings will take place in train stations. Others will be held in our studios or community centres. This gives us a chance to really embed ourselves in the regions and bring people together to tell us about their projects. We aren't consulting them on what we are going to do for the 150th anniversary, but on what they want to do. This is also a chance to see if one of their ideas can help us and to connect them with others. That is our vision. Social networking and digital platforms will help us to establish much stronger ties between Canadians.

Mr. Bernard Trottier: In other words, the programming will come from Canadians in the regions, and you are facilitating that process.

•(1610)

Mr. Hubert T. Lacroix: These people will fuel our activities and share their stories with us. The important thing is capitalizing on Canada's diversity. We must celebrate that and showcase it in a different way. What matters is making people all across the country realize that Canada is really and truly a country of diversity.

Mr. Bernard Trottier: Let's talk about history for a moment. My family and I watched a program on the life of John A. Macdonald. It was a great show. My children, who were just 11 and 10 at the time, found it dramatic and quite fascinating. It was really well done. Are there other similar projects? It is worth talking about. Even if it doesn't focus on Confederation, a program could feature Canadian stories that unite us and that matter.

As my colleague Mr. Galipeau said, sometimes we hear more about U.S. history than Canadian history, especially in English Canada. Some young Canadians know more about Lincoln or Washington than they do about Canada's historical figures. How will you heighten that awareness around our own history?

Mr. Hubert T. Lacroix: As I see it, only we can produce these major historical programs like the one about Sir John A. Macdonald. In response to Mr. Dion earlier, I said there were two types of events: the upcoming conferences on the one hand, and these signature events on the other. What is important is how we share those events with the public, what programs will focus on those moments or tell those stories.

Right now, we need partners because it costs a lot to do this. To achieve the same quality as that of the John A. Macdonald program, we need to convince other organizations to invest so that, together, we can make those programs. We are currently seeking funding. I told you earlier that a major company would be joining us. We are very hopeful that we'll be able to meet our budget needs. That, in turn, will enable us to produce high-quality programming on the events or milestones I mentioned during my opening statement.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Lacroix.

Mr. Dionne Labelle, go ahead.

Mr. Pierre Dionne Labelle (Rivière-du-Nord, NDP): Good afternoon, Mr. Lacroix. I am very pleased to meet you.

I, too, am a fan of Radio-Canada. But when I hear Conservative members call themselves friends of Radio-Canada, I can't help but have my doubts. During a press conference, you talked about the fact that between 1,350 and 1,400 people will have lost their jobs at CBC/Radio-Canada as a result of the various cost-cutting measures that began in 2009. Friendship is earned.

I took a close look at the process you put in place as far as your conferences go and the 18 partners you chose. When you were organizing the conferences, did you consider including organizations that work directly on protecting linguistic duality? The Standing Committee on Official Languages regularly meets with francophone federations. The Fédération culturelle canadienne-française, the Fédération des aînés et aînées francophones du Canada and the Fédération des communautés francophones et acadienne du Canada come to mind, among others. Did you think about adding a similar organization, one dedicated to protecting linguistic duality, to the 18 members you call participants or participating organizations?

Mr. Hubert T. Lacroix: You have the list, so I won't repeat it. You are quite familiar with it, for that matter.

Mr. Pierre Dionne Labelle: Yes, I have it here.

Mr. Hubert T. Lacroix: We have an objective. When we or the local committee organizes the conference, we hope that all the organizations you just mentioned can take part. Those who help us organize the conferences are facilitators. What comes out of the conferences will depend on the level of interest and preparation of the people invited. Those are the people who will make the stories, not us. Those people will certainly be invited.

Mr. Pierre Dionne Labelle: Reading the list, I wondered whether

Mr. Hubert T. Lacroix: Those people will be invited all over the country, to every conference.

Mr. Pierre Dionne Labelle: Would it not have been desirable for them to be part of the process?

Mr. Hubert T. Lacroix: They will obviously have their say.

Mr. Pierre Dionne Labelle: I noticed that your 12 conferences will basically take place in the various capitals. One of them will take place in Montreal, which is the only officially francophone city among those selected. This means only one francophone city out of 12. Do you think this is enough to reflect the presence of francophones across Canada and what they hope to see in the programming of the 150th anniversary? Would it not have been appropriate to include other francophone cities as well?

•(1615)

Mr. Hubert T. Lacroix: If you look at the cities that have been selected, you will see that there is one city per province. That is how we decided to organize our conferences. Each conference is inclusive. There won't be one conference for francophones and one for anglophones. In Moncton, for example, we are hoping that not just francophones will show up at the conference. We would like people from Moncton who speak English and who are concerned about those issues to participate. We want to see people from all over New Brunswick participate in the conference.

The conference will take place in Moncton; people can get there the same way they can from here to Montreal. On the day of the conference, the idea is to have a structure in place that will succeed to attract people and to provide them with an opportunity to talk to each other and to talk to us. Our selection was not based on language, but rather on the major cities in the provinces so as to reflect Canada as a whole.

Mr. Pierre Dionne Labelle: On your website, you mention that the conferences will take place in both official languages. Is each conference going to be bilingual? How will things work?

Mr. Hubert T. Lacroix: Based on what we are anticipating to happen on those days, people will be invited once again. I assume that some of the conferences will be held in both languages if the people in the room speak both languages. If not, the language that the people speak will be used. Once again, our goal is to include people, not to exclude them. We will also have official interpreting services at some of those meetings.

Mr. Pierre Dionne Labelle: At some?

Mr. Hubert T. Lacroix: Let me say this again: we are going to ensure that all the people who speak either French or English will be able to communicate in the language of their choice, that they will be very well understood by everyone else and that the organizers will provide them with the tools they need to do so. That is certainly how things will be done.

The Chair: Okay, thank you.

[English]

Mr. Chisu, you have the floor.

[Translation]

Mr. Corneliu Chisu (Pickering—Scarborough East, CPC): Mr. Lacroix, thank you for joining us at the Standing Committee on Official Languages.

French is my fifth foreign language. If you don't mind, I would like to continue in my fourth foreign language.

[English]

The 150th anniversary of our Confederation is a celebration for all Canadians. A sizeable number of Canadians are recent immigrants who are more or less unilingual. How do you plan to involve this multicultural mosaic of our country in promoting our treasured linguistic duality, so important for the future development of our country? Are you contemplating involving the ethnic audiovisual media? The promotion of our linguistic duality is very important for the multicultural community.

Mr. Hubert T. Lacroix: Let me go back to some of the things I was saying about these conferences. These conferences are about asking Canadians, what are you going to do about the 150th? They're going to be so regional, so local, that in every one of these communities we hope we will be able to bring in.... Because the organizing committees will be organizing committees of the regions and of those municipalities, we would like to think they'll be able to draw in the people who have an interest, either a personal interest or an interest through an association of some kind, a collectivity of some kind. They will be asked, what are you going to do about the 150th?

The Canada of 2017 and the Canada of 2013, as we do these conferences, is a Canada that is mixed with diverse Canadians. I can't see that happening without a reflection of the points of view of the people you're referring to.

Mr. Corneliu Chisu: The linguistic duality is very important for the future development of our country. I think this multicultural mosaic should be involved at the early stages of our 150th commemoration. I'm just mentioning that.

Maybe you know that in Toronto, which is one of the largest cities in Canada, there are 174 spoken languages. For the cohesion of our country, it is very important that the linguistic duality is achieved and continues as a vivid preoccupation of all Canadians.

• (1620)

Mr. Hubert T. Lacroix: That's why in Toronto, on April 26, I hope the people who represent those communities will come in and have a conversation with us, have a conversation with the people who are in that room, and that they will be able to voice the projects they would like to see happen and that they will take control of. It's

not about their telling us, here's what we should be doing; it's about us facilitating, and that is the big difference here.

We are trying to facilitate the organization. We're trying to spark ideas. We're trying to generate, to act as a facilitator through Canadians. We're not asking Canadians, what should we do? That's going to come through the ideas that are going to come from all over the place. This is about the communities: what are you going to do to celebrate the 150th? By having that input and impact in the rooms in Toronto on that day, I hope those 174 languages will in some way be represented. We're going to invite these communities, these opinion leaders, to the room on that day, with their communities, and say, what are you going to do about this?

The Chair: Thank you very much. We are going to have one last questioner for this panel. Then we'll take a five-minute suspension to allow our next witness to appear. We'll continue.

[Translation]

Ms. Michaud, you have the floor.

Ms. Éline Michaud (Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier, NDP): Mr. Chair, I am going to let Mr. Benskin take the floor.

[English]

The Chair: Mr. Benskin, you have the floor.

Mr. Tyrone Benskin: Thank you.

For the most part, we've been speaking about providing services in various communities, be they official language minority communities or.... But part of our mandate, and by extension part of your mandate, is the promotion of our official languages. That's what I want to ask you about now.

I'm asking if there's any kind of programming involved, and this is speaking particularly to French.

[Translation]

Is there any specific programming?

[English]

Is there programming that introduces or exposes the rest of Canada, as we're referring to it now, to French programming? Is there anything in the works that will allow anglophones, basically, in Alberta to access French programming as part of that celebration of this is who we are, as opposed to isolating it into English communities in Quebec, French communities outside of Quebec? Is there any programming that lends itself to that?

Mr. Hubert T. Lacroix: Mr. Benskin, we don't see the programming that's going to come as being differentiated from province to province, from story to story. What we hope will happen is that these ideas will generate a mosaic. I like the word "mosaic"; I think it's a good one. A Canadian, either through access to the websites that are going to be built or the programming or anything we're going to do, will be able to enjoy a public space where stories about Canada are being told, where he or she will be able to contribute his or her story about Canada and start a conversation about where we're going. What's going to be the Canada of the future? What are we doing now? What are some of the concerns we have, some of the great things we're doing?

In the context of programming and what we do now—because I think that's also important—as you know, section 41 of the Official Languages Act says we have to report every year on what we do. If I can, I'll send you the reports we file there. Every year we list all the programs we do for francophones who are outside of Quebec, for anglophones who are in Quebec, and the associations we support, the projects. All of this would normally continue and explode in the context of the 150th.

• (1625)

Mr. Tyrone Benskin: Okay, but what I'm speaking to more directly is the exposure of French programming in Alberta, for example, encouraging anglophones in Alberta, in Manitoba, in Saskatchewan to seek out French programming and gain that exposure. We're not simply talking about language; we're talking about culture as well. To better understand Canada as a whole, one of the best ways is to introduce them to the culture.

Mr. Hubert T. Lacroix: I think you have a very important point. I would like to think and hope that's what we do through our presence in the regions, with the stations we have kept open. In the context of all these challenges we've had with respect to budgets, CBC/Radio-Canada has made a choice not to impact its geographical footprint, to keep its stations open, and to make choices somewhere else. We know that when we are in a community, whether we are there through our digital presence, as we are in Hamilton right now, or

[Translation]

on the north and south shore close to Montreal,

[English]

or whether it's the opening of a new station in B.C., like the one in Kamloops, or whether it's a television station in Regina or with the expansion of our services in Saskatoon—all of these promote the French and English services of CBC/Radio-Canada and their delivery in both languages. So if you're an anglophone in Alberta right now, you have access to Radio-Canada in French, and we'd like to think that the cross-promotion and the work we do to promote ourselves in the programs will cross this famous divide.

[Translation]

The Chair: Okay.

Thank you, Mr. Benskin.

Mr. Yvon Godin: Mr. Chair?

The Chair: Yes, Mr. Godin?

Mr. Yvon Godin: I just want to be assured of one thing.

Mr. Lacroix, you talked about the report of the Commissioner of Official Languages. Please make sure that you forward it to the committee so that we have a copy.

Mr. Hubert T. Lacroix: Yes, absolutely. Actually, it is on our website, Mr. Godin.

[English]

Can I plug something?

The Chair: Yes, you can, Mr. Lacroix.

Mr. Hubert T. Lacroix: On Friday something really important, a fun thing, happens. Remember the book, *Two Solitudes*, by Hugh

MacLennan? It's a great book. *Homerun*, which is a drive-home show in Montreal on CBC, is doing a remote from one of the Chapters bookstores, where Jay Baruchel, who is an actor in the U. S., is going to cross...we asked him and he said, yes, absolutely. They're going to talk about growing up as an anglophone in a francophone environment, in the same way that the *Two Solitudes* book was written 50 years ago.

We've had a "Canada Reads" week, and we've challenged people to reread that book and tell us, in 2013—on Friday—how they feel about growing up in English, if they're an anglophone, à Montréal, or in French

[Translation]

in an anglophone environment.

[English]

The Chair: Is it in the Chapters on Saint-Laurent Boulevard?

Mr. Hubert T. Lacroix: It is on the corner of McGill College and Sainte-Catherine Street.

I'm saying this because it's just an interesting example of some of the stuff we do to actually promote *Two Solitudes*.

Mr. Tyrone Benskin: I just have a correction for the record. Jay is a friend of mine; he is a Canadian actor who works in the States.

Mr. Hubert T. Lacroix: Yes, that's exactly right. I hope I didn't say he was an American actor. Actually, his wife is also a Canadian actor, Alison Pill. They were married in the States.

Mr. Tyrone Benskin: Yes.

[Translation]

The Chair: Mr. Lacroix, thank you for your testimony. We greatly appreciate it.

[English]

We'll suspend for five minutes.

• (1625)

(Pause)

• (1630)

[Translation]

The Chair: We will now continue the 66th meeting of the Standing Committee on Official Languages.

The witnesses appearing in the second hour have now joined us.

[English]

We have Mr. Ostola, who is the vice-president of the heritage conservation and commemoration directorate of Parks Canada.

Welcome. You may begin with your opening statement.

Dr. Larry Ostola (Vice-President, Heritage Conservation and Commemoration Directorate, Parks Canada): Thank you very much.

• (1635)

[Translation]

Thank you, Mr. Chair, vice-chairs, honourable members of Parliament on the House of Commons of Canada Standing Committee on Official Languages.

[English]

Thank you very much for the invitation to appear before you today.

[Translation]

As the Official Languages Champion of Parks Canada, I am pleased to share with you our plans for promoting linguistic duality as part of the activities we will offer Canadians on the “Road to 2017”, which will lead us to the 150th anniversary celebrations of Canadian Confederation in 2017.

I should rather say the activities we are offering, since one of the first themes of these celebrations, the bicentennial of the War of 1812, already constitutes one concrete example.

Before getting to the heart of the matter, allow me to provide a quick background regarding our agency which, with its 44 national parks, four national marine conservation areas and 167 national historic sites, is present in hundreds of communities, including many linguistic minority communities across the country. This presence makes Parks Canada one of the major players of the country's tourism industry.

[English]

The mandate entrusted to Parks Canada on behalf of the people of Canada is as follows:

...protect and present nationally significant examples of Canada's natural and cultural heritage, and foster public understanding, appreciation and enjoyment in ways that ensure the ecological and commemorative integrity...for present and future generations.

Our vision further states that:

Canada's treasured natural and historic places will be a living legacy, connecting hearts and minds to a stronger, deeper understanding of the very essence of Canada.

Thanks to the hard work of our team of dedicated men and women and their genuine passion for our collective heritage, Parks Canada is recognized nationally and internationally as a leader in heritage protection and conservation.

Through its presence in hundreds of communities across Canada, including many official language minority communities, our agency's overall national economic impact is estimated at more than \$3 billion, according to recent figures, which benefits all Canadians from sea to sea.

Connecting hearts and minds to a stronger, deeper understanding of the very essence of Canada requires that we reach out to Canadians and engage them in their own official language.

[Translation]

For Parks Canada, the recognition and even the promotion of the linguistic duality goes well beyond a simple legal requirement. For our agency, linguistic duality constitutes one of the defining features that make Canada, Canada.

That is why we have, for example, quickly adopted new technologies.

Thanks to new technologies, we are now in a position to promote the linguistic duality of our country by reaching many individuals,

including Canadians in official language minority communities, and by interacting with them not only in large centres or in places where we are present, but also directly in their homes.

The opportunities offered by these new media have quickly taken a strategic importance for us and have become an indispensable tool to reach new audiences in both official languages.

[English]

To give you a sense of our reach, Parks Canada's national YouTube channels, in both English and French, have more than a million videos viewed, with close to 1,500 viewers, and about 150 videos published from across the country.

The Parks Canada national Twitter feed has surpassed 30,000 followers.

Parks Canada's national brand channel on Facebook has more than 13,000 friends, who collectively have two million friends.

Be it Twitter, YouTube, Facebook, or our website, or even our intranet site, everything we publish, everything we communicate, is done simultaneously in both official languages.

Thanks to new media, we can now reach and engage more Canadians than ever—young Canadians, new Canadians, urban Canadians, and Canadians in official language minority communities—and share our passion with them in the official language of their choice.

As we embark on the road to 2017, these new media will again help us promote the linguistic duality of this country. However, our efforts are not restricted to new media only.

[Translation]

Canada's linguistic duality was already at the heart of the celebrations that marked Parks Canada's centennial in 2011. And this is again the case as we make our way on the “Road to 2017”. Already, the activities and events celebrating the bicentennial of the War of 1812, one of the milestones of our history, are evidence of our commitment to give equal place to Canada's two official languages.

[English]

From Newfoundland to Ontario, Parks Canada administers more than 20 of the most important national historic sites associated with the War of 1812. We will keep those sites at the forefront of the Government of Canada's commemorations until 2014, and keep telling the story of how anglophones, francophones, and aboriginal peoples, working together, successfully defended their land and way of life, laying the foundation for the bilingual Canada that we're proud of today.

In each of these places, Canadians are invited to come celebrate with us through activities and events that make equal place for both official languages. This will continue as we reach and celebrate other important milestones leading to the 150th anniversary of Confederation.

Another major part of Parks Canada's contribution to these celebrations will be an increasing emphasis on connecting young Canadians with their national heritage places before, during, and after 2017. Our aim is to connect youth with their heritage for life, while exposing them to the other official language. This, we believe, will contribute to building the next generation of stewards who will comprise our future visitors, supporters, and employees in a true reflection of Canada's linguistic duality.

When he appeared before you last December, the Commissioner of Official Languages stated that linguistic duality was an integral part of Canada's history and identity, and that the Fathers of Confederation, and those inspired by them, saw the question of language in terms of a founding principle of respect.

We at Parks Canada totally agree. Linguistic duality increases our appeal to visitors from all parts of Canada and many parts of the world. Our brand personality is to be welcoming and warm, and linguistic duality doubles the warmth of our welcome.

● (1640)

[Translation]

Members of Parliament, ladies and gentlemen, for over 100 years, Parks Canada has not only been protecting, but also telling stories and bringing to life our heritage and history. We will be committing all the experience, all the leadership and, mainly, all the passion that drives us to offer Canadians exceptional opportunities to take part in this huge celebration, which is theirs, and reinforce, along the way, the Canadian linguistic duality.

Thank you for the kind attention you have given me. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.

[English]

Thank you very much. I'd be pleased to answer any questions you might have.

The Chair: Thank you, Dr. Ostola.

[Translation]

I have talked to the members of the committee and I have decided that we are going to discuss the motions I received at our meeting next Tuesday.

[English]

We have about 45 minutes for questions and comments.

We'll begin with Monsieur Godin.

[Translation]

Mr. Yvon Godin: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Good afternoon, Mr. Ostola. Welcome to our meeting.

The Commissioner of Official Languages conducted an audit from May to October 2011 to determine to what extent Parks Canada was meeting its linguistic obligations to visitors. The final report was released in September 2012. The Office of the Commissioner was not entirely satisfied with the implementation of one of its recommendations regarding consultations with official language minority communities. According to the Commissioner, Parks Canada must "establish a formal mechanism as quickly as possible

for regularly consulting official language minority communities at the national, provincial and regional levels to become aware of their specific activity and programming needs".

Since September 2012, when the report of the Commissioner of Official Languages came out, have you taken any steps to consult official language minority communities more regularly?

Dr. Larry Ostola: Thank you for your question, sir.

We worked closely with the Commissioner of Official Languages over the course of the entire audit. We were actually very pleased to have the opportunity to participate in the audit, because we feel that it gave us an opportunity to review our official languages activities as we are heading toward 2017. It is always interesting to receive an outside perspective on our activities and the way they are conducted. So we feel that the audit per se came at the right time. We are well aware of the recommendations of the Commissioner of Official Languages and, of course, we are especially aware of the recommendation that you mentioned regarding more regular consultations with official language minority communities.

Our field units, meaning our people on the ground, have had an opportunity in the past to consult those communities. There have also been opportunities for official consultation. For example, we are currently developing management plans and consultation opportunities on the ground. Based on the recommendation made by the Commissioner of Official Languages, we definitely intend to continue on that path and to continue to develop strategies to have more consultations with those communities.

● (1645)

Mr. Yvon Godin: We are told that you have replaced the interpretation services in the parks with signs. Could you provide the committee, by March 1, 2013, with the list of all the sites that no longer have interpretation services? Some time ago, people were on site. I don't really see how a sign can answer questions. It can provide information, but not answer questions. When visitors went to the parks, they would find people on site. Now, signs have apparently replaced those people.

Dr. Larry Ostola: We would be happy to provide you with the information you have requested.

Some of our sites have been converted to a non-personalized service, and I believe that that is what you are referring to. There are various methods. For instance, the new technologies can help us with the interpretation.

As I said, we would be happy to provide you with the information.

Mr. Yvon Godin: Mr. Ostola, if we are talking about a sign on a site that shows a tiger and its country of origin in Africa, that is not a big deal. But if we are in a park and we are losing young interpreters, I think that is another story. As we know, the government has made cuts. But the 150th anniversary celebrations of Confederation will take place soon. We have heard a lot about the celebration of the War of 1812. I don't know how many millions of dollars have been invested in that, but I feel that we are losing something somewhere.

Another suggestion has to do with access to the parks. Let me give you an example. There are special days when access to parks can be free. Since the 150th anniversary celebrations will soon be here, free access would be one way to invite people to get to know our country better.

The Grand-Pré national historic site is another example. It has been recognized by UNESCO, which is important to Acadians. To this end, I would like to congratulate the Société Nationale de l'Acadie for doing a great job.

It might be equally important to share the history of Acadians and to invite those who speak another language to take part in that. In this fashion, everyone could contribute. What do you think about that?

Dr. Larry Ostola: First of all, I would like to thank you and tell you that I completely agree with you. The Grand-Pré national historic site and its inclusion on the World Heritage List make us very proud. That was a very important event, not only for the agency, but also for all Canadians who have heard the news.

Mr. Yvon Godin: In the maritime provinces, there are 20 historic sites that promote Acadian history. We are concerned, among other things, by how these sites may be affected by the cuts.

Dr. Larry Ostola: In the context of Budget 2012, Parks Canada had to do its share, but the fact remains that from one end of the country to the other, in our historic sites and national parks, we have a professional and dynamic team that is ready to serve Canadians with enthusiasm in the language of their choice. That aspect remains unchanged.

Mr. Yvon Godin: Yes, but Mr. Ostola, you refer to language of choice, and to signs. Cuts have been made and signs have been put up. I know that you want to do your share, but there have been some losses. I have no doubt that the on-site people are doing their best. I absolutely am not calling into question the work that is being done in the parks. Rather, I am talking about the cuts that were made and the consequences they are going to have.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Godin.

You may answer briefly, Mr. Ostola.

Dr. Larry Ostola: We are confident that we will be able to continue to provide high-quality services to Canadian men and women throughout the country. That is what we have been doing for 100 years.

The Chair: Very well. Thank you.

Mr. Gourde, you have the floor.

● (1650)

Mr. Jacques Gourde: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Ostola, thank you for being here with us this afternoon.

In your presentation, I noticed statistics on social networks that promote Parks Canada. That is interesting.

How long did it take you to reach that traffic level? Do you have any projections for the period leading up to 2017? Could we reach 80% of Canadians through these networks?

Dr. Larry Ostola: Thank you for the question.

As I mentioned in my presentation, we think that in our case—and indeed in that of other organizations—the use of social media is very promising. However, I must tell you right now that I am not an expert in new technologies. My children may be, but I am not. That said, Parks Canada has been getting into this for several years. We think we are leaders in the use of social networks such as YouTube, Twitter and Facebook.

For the moment, I cannot provide you with projections for the coming years, but I am taking note of your request. I will ask our specialists to provide you with information on future growth.

Mr. Jacques Gourde: You said a few years. Would that be about five years since...

Dr. Larry Ostola: I would say between three and five years.

Mr. Jacques Gourde: So this is already a success, right from the outset. It's like a snowball—the more it rolls, the bigger it gets.

I also noted that 20 sites promoting the War of 1812 would remain operational. Can you tell me what will remain operational until 2014?

Dr. Larry Ostola: As concerns the War of 1812 Bicentennial Commemoration, as I mentioned in my presentation, we are responsible for approximately 20 very important sites directly related to the events of that time. I'm thinking of the Fort George national historic site of Canada, in Niagara-on-the-Lake, Ontario, or of the Queenston Heights national historic site, not far from there. We administer these sites. There has been important programming in these places. That was the case in 2012 and this will continue until 2014. In addition, special activities or initiatives are organized in other places.

I can give you some examples. In consultation with Heritage Canada and Official Languages, we have developed a six-part audiovisual product on historical figures such as Brock, Tecumseh, Laura Secord and Charles-Michel d'Irumberry de Salaberry. They have been seen on television. We are continuing to cooperate with Heritage Canada and Official Languages on new-media-related projects. Internationally, we are cooperating with the U.S. National Park Service to produce a booklet together with *National Geographic*. It will be used as a guide for citizens who visit the sites related to that era's events.

Another initiative is entitled *1812 On Tour*. It is a type of travelling exhibition that will be presented in over 40 sites in the course of the next few years. People will be able to obtain additional information on the bicentennial of the 1812 events.

Mr. Jacques Gourde: What are the best sites to visit to remind us that anglophones, francophones and first nations all got together to face the arrival of the American army?

Dr. Larry Ostola: Several sites are extremely important and moving. For instance, last October, a big ceremony took place in a site I mentioned earlier, that is the Queenston Heights national historic site of Canada. That ceremony took place on the very day of the 200th anniversary of the death of General Isaac Brock. Over 15,000 Canadians and visitors from abroad were on the site for this event. It is a very special place. However, there is another site that emphasizes this cooperation among the various populations of that time. I'm referring to the Battle of the Châteauguay national historic site of Canada close to Montreal, where major events took place in 1813. That site is also administered by Parks Canada.

There are also several other such sites.

Mr. Jacques Gourde: I want to take this opportunity to thank the representatives of Parks Canada for the work they do in connection with the Bicentennial Commemoration of the War of 1812. That part of our history was not well-known in Quebec. I think that Canadian society is rooted in these historical facts and that we must indeed promote them. Parks Canada has done its work very well in this regard. We want this type of activity to be even better recognized over the next few years.

We are told that on the American side, this is more or less important. They do not necessarily wish to publicize this war which they lost.

• (1655)

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Dion, you have the floor.

Hon. Stéphane Dion: I think that the propaganda aspect of the government's approach was a great hindrance, but it remains an important event. We can learn from that and try to do things better in the future.

I want, first of all, to thank Mr. Ostola for being here and to tell him how much I feel that as representatives of the population, it is important for us to work with him so that the parks and historic sites remain jewels. We believe in this a great deal.

What do you want to do, exactly, for 2017? If we want to celebrate, special things have to happen in our parks. I understand that you are doing good work, but what do you want to do for 2017?

Dr. Larry Ostola: In reference to the historic sites and national parks you mentioned, for Parks Canada, 2017 is a golden opportunity not only to celebrate the 150th anniversary of Confederation, but also to really take the time needed and the opportunity to generate interest and passion for our heritage, be it cultural, historical or natural. I think that Parks Canada is in a good position to support that effort and really encourage people to experience their heritage in an active way, take part in activities and learn about our natural history.

If we can do that and attain even part of that objective, this will be job well done.

Hon. Stéphane Dion: Let's be precise. This is difficult because the government has not given any indication of the way in which it wants to celebrate 2017. Our exercise may thus be a little premature, but let us try to be imaginative, with an eye to the report we have to

write. If we gave you a blank page, what would you like to see on it so that we feel that we are launching something?

We have to get ready. If we wake up in 2017 and start then without having laid the groundwork and without having prepared Canadians, we may fail.

What would you like to see us include in our report that is missing as we speak? What would you like us to recommend to the government?

Dr. Larry Ostola: We would like Canadians to seize the opportunity, as I mentioned earlier, to really live and experience their heritage, and we would like to encourage them to do so, not only in 2017, but in the years leading up to it.

As we emphasized earlier, it's a process. Not only is it the commemoration of a given year, but there will be a series of events and anniversary commemorations of that will ultimately lead up to 2017.

Hon. Stéphane Dion: At this time, both the government and you are making efforts to ensure that Canadians know where the parks are and take advantage of them. You have information on the historic sites. What more must be done so that we do not fail in 2017?

Dr. Larry Ostola: People talk a lot about anniversaries, commemorations, and so forth. I am thinking about the anniversary of the beginning of the First World War, of the War of 1812 or of Confederation. I think that there may be a way of linking these anniversaries and commemorations to draw a portrait of the country by taking a look at where we started, where we went and where we are going. I think that there is a way of using these celebrations to reach that goal.

Hon. Stéphane Dion: What type of player do you want to be in all of that? Would you recommend to the government that it set up a new structure in that regard? Are we already well-equipped? Will this happen naturally?

Dr. Larry Ostola: Parks Canada is the ideal institution for these anniversaries and commemorations. As you know, we are present in all of the provinces and territories, either through our national historic sites or parks. I think that we are in a good position on the ground to really encourage Canadians to celebrate together, to celebrate with us and to see all of the changes that have taken place over these 150 years.

Hon. Stéphane Dion: What are you missing at this time?

Dr. Larry Ostola: I think...

Hon. Stéphane Dion: Do you simply want the government to express its wish that this be done in a very active way?

• (1700)

Dr. Larry Ostola: As I said in replying to another question, we already have a team in place throughout the country. These are people who are passionate about the history of Canada or about its natural history. They are ready to welcome Canadians. I think that we have everything we need to take part actively not only in the events of 2017, but also in the events leading up to it.

Hon. Stéphane Dion: So you are not asking for anything. That's good.

Could we think about something very striking that would get people's attention? For instance, we could decide that in 2017, people could get into the parks for free. Could we do something like that? There would be 10 times more talk about national parks if we did something like that.

Dr. Larry Ostola: As it happens, we are actively discussing not only the possibilities for 2017, but also the possibilities for the years leading up to it with Heritage Canada and Official Languages. What are the initiatives and activities we could undertake to inspire people to discover their heritage?

Hon. Stéphane Dion: You are looking for new initiatives.

Dr. Larry Ostola: I must say that we are always open to suggestions. Indeed, we receive some from the population and from our colleagues in other agencies and organizations. This ongoing reflection will lead us to 2017.

Hon. Stéphane Dion: As you gather these suggestions, what is your relationship with the official language communities?

Dr. Larry Ostola: As I mentioned, in the past, in the parks and sites, we have had the opportunity of working and talking with specific language communities. We will surely have the opportunity of doing that again in the future. We want to know their point of view. These consultations will feed into our reflection on the approach we are going to adopt for 2017.

Hon. Stéphane Dion: Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Galipeau, you have the floor.

Mr. Royal Galipeau: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

[English]

Thank you very much for coming here today, Dr. Ostola.

I want to tell you that I very much appreciated the tone and the drive of the questions that were just addressed by Mr. Dion. Unless I'm mistaken, Parks Canada already gives free passes for one year to all new Canadians. So what he's suggesting for all Canadians—well, the thin edge of the wedge is already there.

My first job was with Parks Canada, in Prince Albert in Saskatchewan.

[Translation]

I used to do interpretation in the museum.

[English]

I also answered the fan mail that Grey Owl received. He died in 1938, and in 1965 he was still getting fan mail. I read all his books and I answered the mail. Much of it had to do with conservation of the environment. That was always something very important with Parks Canada.

The Rideau Canal is something that's very close to us. It was built in the late 1820s basically as a military asset to protect us from a potential new attack from the United States, because 1812 was still pretty clear in our minds then. The Rideau Canal has now been designated as a World Heritage site. What's the consequence of that? Does it attract more visitors?

As well, mostly in areas of the province where there are not many francophones, what do we do to help visitors in both official languages?

• (1705)

Dr. Larry Ostola: Thank you very much for the question.

First, let me say that I'm delighted you had the opportunity to directly experience Prince Albert National Park, which is a wonderful jewel in our system of national parks.

When the Rideau Canal was designated a World Heritage site a few years ago, that was indeed, as it was in the case of Grand Pré—

Mr. Royal Galipeau: I was there.

Dr. Larry Ostola: —yes, you were—a very significant occasion. Again, as was the case with Grand Pré, it was a source of great pride to us all.

In terms of the question you asked about reaching out to linguistic minority communities, in all of our activities—interpretive activities, the communications we make, the publications we produce, and so on—we make every effort to make sure we're reaching out to people in the language of their choice.

We greatly respect the fact that there are different language communities in different parts of Canada, and we do everything we can to ensure that we're respecting not only the intent but also the spirit of the Official Languages Act in our efforts to reach out to them. People have access to interpretive programs in the official language of their choice and so on.

We want to continue to be able to provide that service so that people know, when they come to our places, that they will in fact be greeted warmly, in terms of our brand personality, in the official language of their choice.

Mr. Royal Galipeau: I thank you, and I'm satisfied with the answer you gave me, but I just want to remind you that I'm not altogether satisfied with the answers you gave Mr. Dion. As soon as you can put some flesh on those bones, I hope you'll let us know.

I'd like to share my time with my colleague.

The Chair: Mr. Chisu, go ahead.

Mr. Corneliu Chisu: Thank you very much.

Thank you very much, Dr. Ostola, for your presentation.

As I understand it, Parks Canada is mandated to protect and present Canada's natural and cultural heritage. Parks Canada is very much renowned in the world and is an example of preserving nature and heritage. Congratulations also for your recent 100 years celebration.

Dr. Larry Ostola: Thank you.

Mr. Corneliu Chisu: Is linguistic duality one of the elements of cultural heritage that Parks Canada will celebrate during events marking the 150th anniversary of Confederation, and if it is, how will this be reflected in the new national urban park, Rouge Park, which will be well on its way to being established in 2017?

This park will be easily accessible by many Canadians. With 100 kilometres, you will reach 20% of the Canadian population.

How will this park be used to promote our bilingualism, and not only our bilingualism but also our cultural heritage and our other national parks?

Dr. Larry Ostola: There are a few things I would say in response. Certainly to address the first point you raised, it is our intention to make sure that linguistic duality is actively reflected and respected in the context of everything we do for the 150th anniversary of Confederation.

One of the effective ways we are going to be able to do that is by ensuring that when Canadians come to our places to visit us, whether they be national historic sites or national parks, they have the possibility to experience the places in the language of their choice, in a way they feel welcome, and in a way that encourages them to discover more about their heritage. That's a very important way we can contribute to the promotion of linguistic duality in the context of the 150th anniversary celebrations.

You also specifically raised the case of the Rouge National Urban Park, and you quite rightly pointed out that it represents a phenomenal opportunity. It's in the heart of Canada's largest urban area, and there is really an opportunity to reach out to different communities, and to communities that in many cases may not in the past have had the opportunity to directly experience our national parks and national historic sites.

We have the opportunity not only to promote linguistic duality, which is a reality of Canada, but also, through the programs and initiatives we undertake at the Rouge, to really help people. Again, these are people who may have come from different places and different backgrounds, who may not have had the opportunity to experience Canadian heritage first-hand. We will have the opportunity, I think, to excite and inspire them.

If the Rouge is their first stop, maybe next summer they will choose to go to the Fortress of Louisbourg, in Cape Breton, or maybe they would like to visit the Rocky Mountain National Parks. There is an opportunity for us to use that first stop as a basis upon which people will then be encouraged to really learn more about our common heritage.

• (1710)

Mr. Corneliu Chisu: Are there any plans already in place for the Rouge Park regarding the celebration of 2017, or is it too early to address that? I am just asking this question because my military background is telling me that you need to plan ahead.

Dr. Larry Ostola: As I mentioned earlier, discussions are actively under way with a number of partners in terms of developing activities and initiatives that might be undertaken on the road to 2017 and in 2017. There is nothing specific I can say about the Rouge Park at this point, except to say that it clearly will be integrated into the planning we do as we head towards 2017.

Mr. Corneliu Chisu: Thank you very much.

[Translation]

The Chair: Thank you.

Ms. Michaud, you have the floor.

Ms. Éline Michaud: Thank you very much, Mr. Ostola, for joining us today. I have several questions for you.

Your presentation has led me to understand that we all think Parks Canada must showcase our two official languages and provide a pan-Canadian vision of linguistic heritage. Yet it's clear that the cuts you have suffered in the last budget affect official language communities. Has Parks Canada assessed the impact of that \$29-million cut on official language minority communities?

Dr. Larry Ostola: Thank you for your question.

As I said earlier, budget 2012 resulted in some cuts. We are well aware of those cuts and the changes that have taken place, but, as I already said, we are keeping the team and the people we currently have in place because—

Ms. Éline Michaud: I apologize for interrupting you, but I have several questions to ask. I would like to know whether Parks Canada has really assessed the impact of cuts on official language minority communities.

Dr. Larry Ostola: We have considered the situation as a whole, but no specific study has been conducted.

Ms. Éline Michaud: Is that something Parks Canada is planning on doing?

Dr. Larry Ostola: When the question was asked regarding an official languages assessment, one of the things I mentioned at the outset was the whole minority language community aspect. I think it's possible to consider that aspect.

Ms. Éline Michaud: That would be very useful. The committee should look into that, and your assessment would be very important to us. Could you please send it to us as soon as it is completed?

Let's stay roughly on the same topic. We already know that the cuts have a direct impact on official language communities. I am thinking, among others, of the closing of the Riel House National Historic Site of Canada, in Manitoba. That site no longer has a guide to talk about heritage, the importance of the house and about the role Louis Riel played for the Métis and francophones in other parts of Canada.

I am also thinking of the Laurier House National Historic Site of Canada located here, in Ottawa. In the near future, that site will also no longer have a guide. Six hundred jobs across the country have been cut, and the department is even thinking about increasing park entry fees.

How can Parks Canada really prepare for a major celebration like the 150th anniversary and do so with fewer employees? In addition, some historic sites that are important to official language minority communities are no longer accessible. How can all of our community heritage be highlighted in this context?

Dr. Larry Ostola: As I said earlier, sites across Canada will be converted to provide what we call non-personalized services.

Ms. Éline Michaud: However, that's currently already the case at some sites.

Dr. Larry Ostola: It's important to point out that these are not closures.

Ms. Éline Michaud: However, no information is available aside from what is on the panels. Information is not provided actively and there are no longer any previously available services to properly explain things and go beyond the short description on the panels.

On-site guides can highlight everything that is important for communities, provide explanations and answer the questions of people who may not understand. I'm thinking, among others, of Louis Riel, who is often little known in the anglophone community. That's unfortunately a flaw of history. However, no such possibility exists.

How can we make sure to really recognize these historic figures who are important to our communities?

• (1715)

Dr. Larry Ostola: That's a very good question. Two things should be mentioned.

It's important to point out that various topics can be covered at various locations. For instance, you talked about Louis Riel, whose story can be told at a number of Canadian sites.

However, I must also say that this is not just a matter of interpretation panels. We think that new technologies create opportunities for using different tools to provide additional information related to the history of a site. That's something we are currently looking into.

Ms. Éline Michaud: I will stick to the examples I already have.

Do you have any idea of how that could apply to the Riel House National Historic Site of Canada as part of the 150th anniversary?

Dr. Larry Ostola: I can give you an example, which is hypothetical because we have not yet identified any solutions.

At the Riel House National Historic Site of Canada, we could have a self-guided tour and provide information to people who visit the site. We could provide an electronic device, such as those used during art gallery exhibit visits, for instance. That's one possibility, but a number of other technologies could also be used.

Ms. Éline Michaud: I assume that requires more staff. Additional budgets are needed.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Michaud.

Dr. Larry Ostola: In my presentation, I mentioned that we make extended use of new technologies. We think we can apply the knowledge we already have to those situations.

[English]

The Chair: Mr. O'Toole.

[Translation]

Mr. Erin O'Toole (Durham, CPC): Mr. Chair, I will yield the floor to Mr. Galipeau for one minute.

[English]

The Chair: Okay.

Monsieur Galipeau.

Mr. Royal Galipeau: First of all, I'd like to welcome my colleague and my friend Erin O'Toole. This is his baptism today.

[Translation]

I have a question for Mr. Ostola.

Do you have the statistics on the number of visitors to the Laurier House National Historic Site of Canada and the Riel House National Historic Site of Canada?

Dr. Larry Ostola: I am sorry to say that I don't have those statistics on hand, but we do have them.

[English]

Mr. Royal Galipeau: I have been to Laurier House at least once a year for the last 50 years. Laurier House last year, counting four visits from me, had fewer than 5,000 visitors.

I'm done.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. Galipeau.

Mr. O'Toole.

[Translation]

Mr. Erin O'Toole: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you, Mr. Ostola.

I have only one question, which I will ask in English.

[English]

I know that the Trans Canada Trail Foundation is coming up with a fundraising initiative and a 150th initiative. I'm wondering whether there's potential for an expansion of the trail to help connect our system of parks from sea to sea to sea, and whether discussions with a group like that, with a conservancy mandate, connecting Canadians through all regions, could not work together with our parks system to allow Canadians to explore and traverse the country.

Have any partnerships like that been discussed?

Dr. Larry Ostola: You raise a very interesting question. I think in terms of partnerships generally, there are many exciting opportunities on the road to 2017.

There has been work done with the Trans Canada Trail Foundation in the past, and I would not at all be surprised to see work continue to be done in the future. There are opportunities through partnerships with organizations such as that one to really find ways to effectively link citizens to our places.

That's just one example, but there are others. These are all partnership opportunities that I think are going to have to be explored in the context of what we might do with respect to the 150th anniversary of Confederation. I think you've raised a very good example.

The Chair: Do you have any other questions? Okay.

We'll now go to Mr. Benskin.

Mr. Tyrone Benskin: Thank you.

I guess I'm just thinking about Mr. Galipeau's comment. I come from the world of the arts. I'm an actor. I've done a massive amount of theatre in my life. Theatre doesn't pay. It doesn't pay you as an actor, and it doesn't pay theatre companies, but it's extremely important because that live contact with an audience is something you'll never get in film and television. When I go out into schools, I say it's like the difference between buying Justin Bieber's CD and seeing Justin Bieber live. They get the difference.

Although I understand the pragmatism of it, I'm a bit concerned, I guess, about the reliance on technology. I'm fine with social media and so forth and everything else, but there's nothing like being able to walk into a museum and see a Van Gogh hanging on the wall. You can look at the picture. There's nothing like walking into *la Maison-Riel* or Laurier House and being able to tangibly ask questions of an individual, who can then give you answers.

I'm a bit concerned about whether or not the technology is going to drive people away from visiting sites. If you can look at it on YouTube, then what, as we say in theatre, will get more butts in the seats?

How is Parks Canada addressing that?

• (1720)

Dr. Larry Ostola: I appreciate what you've said with respect to the direct contact, but there's another aspect that I would raise as well.

If I take Laurier House in Ottawa as an example, Laurier House is also an extraordinary environment, where Canadians have the opportunity to walk in the steps of historical figures who've occupied Laurier House at different times and to really absorb the atmosphere in often a very personal and a very tranquil way. In fact, it's not unusual for visitors to say "I really just want to contemplate this and soak in the atmosphere".

That's another dimension of the experience that I think is very important, and that dimension of the experience will not change. People will go to Laurier House and they will be in the authentic environment, which is the historic environment of the house and the furnishings and so on, which I think people will find very, very appealing.

Mr. Tyrone Benskin: But are there any efforts in place to try to get more people out? What action is being taken to try to get more people out into both historic sites and our parks?

Dr. Larry Ostola: We feel it's absolutely essential to make sure that we are relevant, to make sure that our national parks and national historic sites are relevant, and that we are finding creative, innovative, inspiring, and exciting ways to connect Canadians with these places.

When I say "connection", what I'm talking about is a profound, deep, and meaningful sense of personal attachment—I've alluded to this several times—of Canadians to the heritage that they should be proud of and that they need to experience firsthand.

You're absolutely right that in terms of promotion, we need to make sure that Canadians are aware of these places. Once we've made them aware of them, we have to make sure that when they visit them they can enjoy these powerful personal experiences that will both attach them to these places and hopefully encourage them to come back and tell their friends.

Mr. Tyrone Benskin: Thank you.

I'd like to give you kudos for the work that Parks Canada did in and around the Lachine Canal. The Lachine Canal is in my riding; I share it with one of my colleagues. I was quite impressed with the efforts of Parks Canada to bring people to the Lachine Canal. The

Lachine Canal and that whole area is the heart of the industrialization of Canada.

Are there other areas you'll be looking at in terms of promotional work, to get people into the parks and so forth?

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Benskin.

Dr. Ostola.

Dr. Larry Ostola: We want to make Canadians across the country aware of our network, so it's not focused on a single geographic area, a single region, or a single park or site. We want to find creative and innovative ways to do that. I pointed to social media as one way that we're getting the word out already.

I'll digress for a moment to give you one small example. We recently established—and this speaks to our use of technology—a Twitter feed related to archeology. Our archeologists and specialists can communicate to Canadians with respect to the work they do. You may agree that Canadians, people generally, find archeology to be a fascinating subject.

With regard to your point, we want to find ways to interest and inspire people about the network generally. So it's not just one particular site or region, but what are these amazing national treasures that Parks Canada administers on behalf of all Canadians, wherever they may be located?

• (1725)

The Chair: Thank you.

Our last couple of minutes go to Mr. Trottier.

[Translation]

Mr. Bernard Trottier: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

With regard to Parks Canada, I have always liked the fact that Canadians from across the country would work in national parks. That's a national unity mechanism.

Could you talk to us about your hiring and human resources practices? How do you select employees for national parks? Young people often do that kind of work, especially in the summer.

Dr. Larry Ostola: If I may, I will begin by telling you a bit about my personal experience.

I started working as an interpreter guide for Parks Canada when I was a student. That was a summer job. I started working for the department and I was—

Mr. Royal Galipeau: What park was it?

Dr. Larry Ostola: It was the Fort-Témiscamingue Historic Site in northwestern Quebec. I later worked in Old Montreal and elsewhere. As a historian, I was so impressed and inspired by those sites that I decided I would like to work within that organization. I'm still there, 25 years later.

You are perfectly right. Many people across the country have already had the opportunity, like Mr. Galipeau, to work for Parks Canada. We continue to hire students. Their expertise and skills vary. They work at our historic sites and national parks. Many of those young people stay with us, but even though some of them leave, we will at least have had the opportunity to educate them and expose them to their national heritage—be it cultural, historic or natural.

Mr. Bernard Trottier: Thank you. I'm finished.

The Chair: You have a few minutes left.

Mr. Bernard Trottier: I thought I had only two minutes.

So I'll talk about minority language communities.

Do national parks undertake projects to celebrate the contribution of language communities? Here, I'm thinking of my experience as a francophone in the west. I lived in Alberta, and my heritage was from Manitoba.

What are national parks doing to celebrate that aspect of the country?

Dr. Larry Ostola: The most important thing we can do—and I think this is already being done—is to recognize this reality in a genuine and consistent manner. In all of our activities—be it programs we offer, consultations we hold or communications products we make—we abide by the spirit of the law. I talked about that earlier. I think that is a very important way to highlight the reality of our language communities across the country.

Mr. Bernard Trottier: Regarding the celebration of the French fact in the west, for instance, do parks have any specific projects? I am not too sure what is happening with regard to this in Manitoba.

I assume that historic sites pay tribute to Louis Riel and Manitoba's francophone community. However, are there any historic sites of that kind elsewhere in the west?

Dr. Larry Ostola: Yes, and different aspects of our history are celebrated at different locations. We are talking about a history and a sort of a portrait of Canada in all its diversity—be it cultural or linguistic.

In response to a question asked earlier, I said that Louis Riel's story or parts thereof are provided at a number of sites. We also highlight topics such as the history of voyageurs or other aspects of Canadian history at various locations where it applies. I think that is also a way to recognize not only the diversity of our history, but also the reality of our linguistic diversity.

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

Thank you, Mr. Trottier. I also want to thank all the members of the committee.

● (1730)

[*English*]

This meeting is adjourned.

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