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Vice-Chair

Ms. Alupa Clarke

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•(1530)

[*Translation*]

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Alupa Clarke (Beauport—Limoulu, CPC)): Good afternoon, members of the committee, media representatives in attendance, Minister and senior officials of the Department of Canadian Heritage. Thank you for being here.

I will ask for your cooperation today. Our agenda is very full, and we will have two meetings back to back.

I first want to emphasize the fact that the minister is honouring us with her visit today.

Thank you very much. We have been waiting for your visit for a while, Minister.

We will suspend the meeting after an hour and resume it five or ten minutes later in order to conclude our meeting with the candidate for the position of Commissioner of Official Languages, Mr. Théberge. We will likely vote yes or no on his appointment at the end of the meeting.

Pursuant to Standing Order 32(5), we will consider the Annual Report on Official Languages 2015-2016, referred to the committee on Wednesday, August 16, 2017. We are hearing from the Honourable Minister of Canadian Heritage, as well as two witnesses from the Department of Canadian Heritage: Hubert Lussier, Assistant Deputy Minister of Citizenship, Heritage and Regions, and Jean-Pierre C. Gauthier, Director General of the Official Languages Branch, Citizenship, Heritage and Regions.

Minister, go ahead.

Hon. Mélanie Joly (Minister of Canadian Heritage): Mr. Chair, ladies and gentlemen, thank you for having me again.

As the chair pointed out, I am accompanied by Hubert Lussier, assistant deputy minister for Citizenship, Heritage and Regions, and Jean-Pierre C. Gauthier, director general of official languages.

First, I would like to thank this committee for its work on issues that are important to Canadians and to our government.

You have invited me here today to talk about the Annual Report on Official Languages 2015-2016.

[*English*]

This report presents Canadian Heritage's achievements through its official language support programs.

As you know, Canadian Heritage administers two major official language support programs. One is designed to support the development of official language minority communities. Among other things, this program helps us support the provinces and territories providing government services to official language minority communities in areas such as education, culture, justice, and health. The other focuses on promoting the use of English and French in Canadian society.

[*Translation*]

The report includes the efforts made by 72 federal institutions to support the development of official-language minority communities and promote both languages in Canadian society.

It also evaluates the third year of implementation of the roadmap for Canada's official languages, which expires on March 31, 2018. At the time the report was submitted, 96% of the expenses forecast for 2015-2016 had been disbursed.

The next annual report on official languages, for 2016-2017, is in production. It will include all the work accomplished during the consultations held in 2016. For me, this work was crucial. It was the first step toward developing a new action plan for official languages.

I will say more about the action plan in a moment, but I would like to take a few minutes to talk about the latest Statistics Canada data on official languages.

•(1535)

[*English*]

The data released in August show an up-to-date portrait of our two official languages. It is clear that they remain an important tool for unity and inclusion in an increasingly diversified society.

Even so, we can do better. We must continue our efforts. The data highlighted how important it is for our government to continue to promote official languages and official language minority communities.

[*Translation*]

Let's take a look at what is happening in the communities.

The absolute number of francophones living in French-speaking minority communities has increased. Francophone communities are growing especially rapidly in the three territories. What that means is that more and more Canadians whose mother tongue is French are living in minority communities—Canadians who contribute daily to our country's development, diversity and excellence.

Overall, however, the relative proportion of francophones is declining: it has dwindled from 4% in 2011 to 3.8% in 2016. In light of this, the government's support is crucial.

[*English*]

What about linguistic duality? As you know, never before has Canada had so many bilingual citizens: 6.2 million people. However, the situation varies widely from region to region. Francophones are highly bilingual, at 89% outside Quebec and 41.5% within Quebec. Anglophones in Quebec are also highly bilingual, at 66%. However, only 6.6% of anglophones outside Quebec are bilingual.

There is potential for major progress here. Immersion classes are gaining in popularity across the country, and Canadians have frequently told us how attached they are to their two official languages.

[*Translation*]

Our government has taken note of these data and intends to fulfill its official-languages obligations.

In fact, we have already taken action on several files. One of the examples is the new bilingualism criterion in the appointment of judges to the Supreme Court. Another example is the new multilateral early learning and child care framework. There was also the announcement that our government will review the Official Languages Regulations. We should also mention the reinstatement and modernization of the court challenges program. Another example is the establishment of the Mobilité francophone component of the international mobility program and the expansion of the express entry system. Of course, that has to do with immigration. I would also like to remind you of the funding under Budget 2017 that included: additional funding of \$2.24 million for the young Canada works in both official languages program; \$80 million over 10 years for the construction of community educational infrastructure in official-language minority communities; \$7.5 million per year ongoing to improve parliamentary translation services; and \$2 million over two years to improve the ability of federal courts to make decisions available in French and in English. Those are all files on which we have taken action, and the list goes on.

The current roadmap will end on March 31. We will be ready to continue the initiative with a new action plan.

I would like to take advantage of this opportunity to make an important point. The investments linked to the roadmap are now permanent. That is, the project presented in the roadmap will extend beyond March 31, 2018. The new action plan, which will be in place on April 1, 2018, will build on investments made over the last 15 years. I look forward to announcing that, once the plan is ready. In the meantime, I can assure you that we are working very hard to meet Canadians' expectations.

Thank you for your attention.

I would now be happy to answer your questions.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Alupa Clarke): Thank you, Minister.

Without further ado, we will begin the first round of questions.

Mr. Généreux, you have six minutes.

Mr. Bernard Généreux (Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Minister, thank you very much for being here today.

I will later ask you questions about the potential roadmap and the new action plan. Right now, I would like to take advantage of your presence to ask about the process that led to the possible appointment of Mr. Théberge. In fact, his appointment should be approved soon.

Last spring was an absolute mess. Actually, the reason Mr. Théberge is here is the fact that process went so badly in the spring.

Minister, what is the difference between the process that led to Mr. Théberge's appointment and the one that resulted in last spring's appointment?

Hon. Mélanie Joly: We are very proud of the appointment process, which is basically more rigorous and transparent than ever for the appointment of a commissioner of official languages.

• (1540)

Mr. Bernard Généreux: Are you talking about the process that led to the appointment of Mr. Théberge or the process that took place in the spring?

Hon. Mélanie Joly: I am talking about the process in general.

Mr. Bernard Généreux: Okay.

Hon. Mélanie Joly: In July, I had an opportunity to consult various opposition parties and to send a letter to different opposition leaders, as well as to official languages critics. I have received responses to my letters. I then had an opportunity to discuss with two critics—the Conservative Party critic and the NDP critic.

We are very pleased to have a great candidate in Mr. Théberge. Of course, we value the importance of that independent officer of Parliament, and we also value, in a general sense, the importance of official languages.

Mr. Bernard Généreux: During his testimony before the Senate, Mr. Théberge said he was aware of the entire process that led to the disqualification of Ms. Meilleur, which happened in June, and he said he applied for the position of commissioner of official languages on July 28.

His application was in keeping with the principle of transparency, as you say. However, a headhunting firm contracted by the government called him when his application was accepted.

Why contract that kind of a firm when a rigorous and transparent process is in place, if I may use all the nice adjectives you always use to describe it? The firm did not suggest to Mr. Théberge that he apply; he did that on his own.

Hon. Mélanie Joly: We are very proud of our process.

Generally speaking, concerning all government appointments, thousands of Canadians have applied for various positions. A number of Canadians applied for that specific officer of Parliament position.

I'm happy to see that Mr. Théberge was unanimously supported by the Senate. I am sure he will be an excellent watchdog in the area of protecting and promoting language rights in the country.

Mr. Bernard Généreux: For technical reasons, we had to cut our meeting with Mr. Théberge short on Tuesday and postpone the second hour of the meeting. However, Mr. Théberge had the time to answer various questions that were put to him, including one on the bilingualism of Supreme Court judges. We will later have an opportunity to ask him to clarify his position on that.

What is your opinion on what he said about Supreme Court judges' bilingualism?

Hon. Mélanie Joly: Mr. Théberge is a candidate for a position of officer of Parliament that is inherently independent from government.

Moreover, the Liberal government's position on the issue of bilingualism in the Supreme Court has always been clear. I'm surprised to hear you asking me the question, given that the previous Conservative government appointed a number of judges to the Supreme Court who were not bilingual—who could not speak English or French, depending on the case. We have appointed two excellent judges to the Supreme Court, including Sheilah Martin, recently. She was able to answer the questions of members of parliamentary justice committees in French and in English.

We are very proud to support bilingualism in the Supreme Court and will continue to do so.

Mr. Bernard Généreux: In the House, a bit earlier, you answered one of NDP's questions on that issue. I want to talk about it again because it is important. You said that the new leader of the NDP got bogged down when he tried to express his position. Unless I'm mistaken, you said there was a contradiction within the NDP in terms of what some people wanted and what others were saying.

Do you personally support judges' bilingualism? If so, why did you vote against—if I'm not mistaken—Mr. Choquette's bill?

Hon. Mélanie Joly: Concerning your question on the NDP, it would be up to that party to state its position on bilingualism in the Supreme Court.

Our position is clear concerning the appointment of bilingual judges to the Supreme Court—judges who can speak English and French. As a government, we have appointed two judges to the Supreme Court, and both were bilingual. Not only did we appoint them, but we will continue to appoint bilingual judges to the Supreme Court. We are prepared to look at ways to ensure that judges are functionally bilingual in the context of the Supreme Court appointment process.

Mr. Bernard Généreux: Your government committed to introduce a bill to that effect. When will it be introduced?

Hon. Mélanie Joly: Our government is always ready to do more to protect and promote official languages.

• (1545)

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Alupa Clarke): Mr. Samson, go ahead.

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

Minister, thank you for being here. I also want to thank your colleagues, Mr. Lussier and Mr. Gauthier, whom I have known for a long time.

I would like to come back to a few points you raised. You talked about the government's successes, and it is very important to point them out. They are no doubt numerous, but I would like to talk about two of them. I would ask you to provide us with some information on them.

Historically, an agreement has never existed between the federal government and the Fédération nationale des conseils scolaires francophones under the official languages in education program. The signing of a first agreement led to a major change: priorities are well defined, and that will guarantee, to an extent, good negotiations with the provinces and territories.

There are also daycare centres, which provide a service that is essential to second language learning. Thanks to your leadership, of course, and to Mr. Duclos' leadership, part of the federal funding for early childhood is set aside for official language communities.

Those are really two major successes.

Could you tell us how that could help minority communities?

Hon. Mélanie Joly: Thank you, Mr. Samson. I know that you are an amazing champion of linguistic minorities, especially in Nova Scotia, and that education is important to you, since you are a former school board trustee.

This issue is important to us, as well. We have noted a willingness among francophone school boards across the country to ensure greater transparency, greater provincial accountability in the context of roadmap negotiations. So, we have decided to stand up for francophone school boards and, of course, to include them in our negotiations with the provinces and territories. The goal is to ensure that, when it's time for the federal government to invest in education, school boards can benefit. Ultimately, the provinces and territories must show transparency and be accountable.

As you know, we are the first government to invest as much money in early childhood. In the context of our consultations on official languages, we have heard all over the country about the importance of early childhood. Although we just invested in early childhood and are developing a new action plan for official languages, it goes without saying that we want to ensure that our communities' needs are properly identified and that they can benefit from our investments.

Mr. Darrell Samson: Those two changes, which affect education and minority communities, will practically change the world. You have my sincerest thanks.

Hon. Mélanie Joly: Thank you.

Mr. Darrell Samson: You also had an opportunity to meet with a number of community groups in Nova Scotia, a few months ago. Afterwards, those people said that you shared with them a very relevant approach aimed at ensuring the vitality of communities.

Can you tell me a bit about your trip to Nova Scotia and your meeting with those community groups?

Hon. Mélanie Joly: Yes. Thank you.

I had an opportunity to meet with a number of Nova Scotia's Acadian organizations. They actually all attended the meeting that was held in a francophone school in the city of Dartmouth, next to Halifax. You were there, as was the member for Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, Darren Fisher

We had some good discussions. Essentially, I told those people that, in the extensive consultations we have held across the country, we have targeted issues that were of serious concern to our communities, including the importance of francophone immigration, of early childhood, of support for print media and for community radio stations in minority situations and of increasing community groups' operating budgets. Those are the issues we will address in the official languages action plan. Those are fundamental issues for the future of our communities, basically when it comes to ensuring their vitality.

Mr. Darrell Samson: Okay. I have a number of questions, but here is a final one, which is very important.

A lot of work has been done in the past two years by the government, and also by our committee. The reports that have been presented are very specific and focus on issues that are essential to furthering linguistic duality, which is extremely important.

The Official Languages Act has been around for a long time. We will soon be examining the act very closely to determine how it could be improved. Where are we at in that process? This is very important and is germane to what you said.

• (1550)

Hon. Mélanie Joly: Thank you, Mr. Samson.

It goes without saying that I respect your work a great deal. I appreciate the reports you produce. We are all allies around this table as regards the official languages.

It is true that the Official Languages Act will mark its 50th anniversary in 2019. We have already announced our intention to revise and modernize the regulations for the application of the Official Languages Act. We are prepared to consider how the system and our approach can be modernized. Each time you make recommendations, we consider them.

I know the Senate is also considering the modernization of the Official Languages Act. The senators have to produce a report in 2019.

I am following all of this very closely because it is clear that the Official Languages Act must evolve with Canadian society.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Alupa Clarke): Thank you.

Mr. Mulcair, you have the floor.

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Outremont, NDP): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Madam Minister, you said yesterday with regard to Netflix that your proposal was cultural and not fiscal.

Do you understand that the problem is that your cultural proposal is fiscally unfair and that a staggering number of stakeholders in all parts of Quebec are calling on you to reconsider? That is your responsibility, in fact. You cannot put that on the shoulders of other members of cabinet. It is your responsibility.

Hon. Mélanie Joly: Our government has always been clear: what we put forward through Creative Canada is a cultural policy, not a fiscal policy.

As to the Netflix agreement, I did not negotiate a sales tax exemption. It is a \$500 million investment in original content produced in Canada, in French and English. There is \$25 million agreement to ensure that our francophone producers can get their share of that \$500 million. Netflix will not receive new tax credits and will not have access to the Canada New Media Fund.

One thing is clear, however...

Hon. Thomas Mulcair: Madam Minister, francophones outside of Quebec...

Hon. Mélanie Joly: Mr. Chair, may I finish my answer?

Hon. Thomas Mulcair: Madam Minister, our time is limited and you have already answered.

Hon. Mélanie Joly: I have not finished answering your question.

Hon. Thomas Mulcair: Mr. Chair...

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Alupa Clarke): Please answer briefly, Madam Minister. Mr. Mulcair would like to continue.

Hon. Mélanie Joly: Quebecers and Canadians know that we have invested \$2.3 billion in culture. That is the largest investment in the arts and culture in 30 years...

Hon. Thomas Mulcair: She is not answering.

Hon. Mélanie Joly: ...and we are very proud of that.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Alupa Clarke): Thank you, Madam Minister.

You may continue, Mr. Mulcair.

Hon. Thomas Mulcair: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I know the minister's talent for taking up time. Our speaking time here is very limited. I don't know if she is trying to use up my speaking time, but I will continue asking questions.

We learned the day before yesterday about the proposed appointment of someone as Commissioner of Official Languages who does not understand the urgent need to ensure that francophone litigants can make their case in French and be understood by the Supreme Court. We are very concerned about this.

Although the minister defends the importance of the official languages, on October 25, 2017, she voted against a bill that would require all future Supreme Court appointees to speak both official languages. In reply to a question asked by the official opposition earlier, the minister stalled. She refused to answer.

Let me repeat the question: if the government seriously believes that requiring knowledge of both official languages is necessary in order to achieve legal equality on the Supreme Court, what is it waiting for to put forward another bill, since the minister defeated the one introduced on October 25?

Hon. Mélanie Joly: Mr. Mulcair, have you made this argument to your new leader?

Hon. Thomas Mulcair: I'm sorry, Mr. Chair, but will the minister address the chair or not?

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Alupa Clarke): Ms. Joly, please answer the question. You are not the one asking questions today.

Hon. Mélanie Joly: My question is relevant. I want to make sure that my colleague...

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Alupa Clarke): Mr. Mulcair asked a legitimate question, Ms. Joly.

Hon. Mélanie Joly: So is my question.

Hon. Thomas Mulcair: Your question is a way of refusing to answer the question asked.

Hon. Mélanie Joly: Our position on bilingualism of the Supreme Court is clear.

The question is...

Hon. Thomas Mulcair: I will continue, Mr. Chair, since the minister is not answering.

Hon. Mélanie Joly: ...what the NDP's position on the bilingualism of the Supreme Court will be from now on.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Alupa Clarke): Ms. Joly, you are currently before the Standing Committee on Official Languages. It is not for you to ask questions to the members here at the table. I would therefore ask you to answer the question as you wish, but without asking any others.

•(1555)

Hon. Mélanie Joly: I will be pleased to.

Our position on the Supreme Court and the bilingualism that should be required is clear. I understand that the NDP leader has now disavowed the party's position on bilingualism of the Supreme Court.

I hope the NDP will set the record straight and say the same thing everywhere, both in Quebec and outside that province.

Hon. Thomas Mulcair: Mr. Chair, one thing is clear. On October 25, 2017, the minister and the Prime Minister, who also claims to be in favour of bilingualism on the Supreme Court, both voted against a bill that would have required any judge appointed to the Supreme Court in the future to be bilingual.

No matter what spin you put on it, the minister is still evading the question.

She said she voted against the bill because she had something better in mind. That may be. So when will the Liberals put that bill forward? It will soon be three years since they have been in office—sad but true—and we still have not had the slightest indication from them what they intend to do in this regard.

When will a bill be put forward to make bilingualism a requirement for Supreme Court appointees?

There is something wrong if a lawyer called Dupont feels the need to plead a case in English before the Supreme Court. We want that to change. Our position on that has always been the same.

Hon. Mélanie Joly: Two things are clear. First, the NDP disavowed its position on the bilingualism of the Supreme Court. Second, we have appointed two bilingual judges to the Supreme Court, and we will continue to do so.

Hon. Thomas Mulcair: When will you be introducing this great bill?

Why are you refusing to answer such a clear question?

Hon. Mélanie Joly: Mr. Mulcair, you are not answering the question about the bilingualism of the Supreme Court either.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Alupa Clarke): Madam Minister...

Hon. Mélanie Joly: I am saying that our government considers bilingualism of the Supreme Court essential.

We agree on the end result, but not on how to get there. As to the means, we will find a way...

Hon. Thomas Mulcair: I have another question.

Hon. Mélanie Joly: ...of making sure that, in the end, any other government...

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Alupa Clarke): Mr. Mulcair, you have 30 seconds left.

Hon. Thomas Mulcair: Has the minister called upon...

Hon. Mélanie Joly: ...that comes to power can certainly...

Hon. Thomas Mulcair: Can you respect the chair, Madam Minister?

Hon. Mélanie Joly: ...appoint Supreme Court justices.

Hon. Thomas Mulcair: It is not your turn any more.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Alupa Clarke): Thank you, Madam Minister.

Hon. Thomas Mulcair: Respect the chair, Madam Minister.

Have you called upon exempt staff—that is the term used for political staff here in Ottawa—before nominating the proposed candidate, Mr. Thériault? As an opposition party, we were never consulted about that.

Has political staff in your office, specifically Ms. Caroline Séguin, participated directly or indirectly in the nomination of Mr. Thériault? Has she or other exempt staff in your office contacted candidates or validated information?

Hon. Mélanie Joly: Just as we are very proud of the process for the appointment of Supreme Court justices, we are also very proud of the nomination process for the Commissioner of Official Languages. We received hundreds of applications. I sent a letter to Mr. Mulcair to...

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Alupa Clarke): Please be brief, Madam Minister, because we have to move on to the next person.

Hon. Mélanie Joly: ...hear his views and recommendations during the process. The NDP made three requests. First, the NDP wanted to be consulted, and we did that. Second, it asked us to consult the FCFA and QCGN, which we also did.

Hon. Thomas Mulcair: That is absolutely false. Those people were never consulted.

Hon. Mélanie Joly: Third, the NDP wanted us to propose an Acadian candidate, and we proposed a candidate from the Université de Moncton.

So we responded very well to the NDP's requests.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Alupa Clarke): Thank you, Madam Minister.

Ms. Lapointe, you have the floor.

Ms. Linda Lapointe (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, Lib.): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. Thank you for chairing the meeting again today.

Welcome, Madam Minister.

Thank you for being here, Mr. Lussier and Mr. Gauthier.

[English]

I know that QCGN is with us today. I'm very glad they are there. Recently, the Quebec government appointed a new minister responsible for the relation with the English-speaking Quebecers. Did you have the chance to meet with Mrs. Kathleen Weil?

Hon. Mélanie Joly: I had the chance to speak with the new minister, Mrs. Weil. We agreed on the importance of supporting English-speaking Quebecers, especially the ones who live in different regions of Quebec. Therefore, in the context of our new action plan, we will make sure that we provide the right support to these English-speaking minorities. It's always a pleasure to be able to get the input on the part of QCGN, which is a very important organization, in order to support the vitality of the English-speaking community in Quebec.

Ms. Linda Lapointe: Thank you. I'm sure you're aware that English-speaking people in rural Quebec—we went to the Eastern Townships in September—don't have the same issues as those in Montreal. Are you aware of that to help these people outside Montreal with the vitality of their community?

• (1600)

Hon. Mélanie Joly: Of course, we've heard loud and clear that there was a willingness on the part of the communities to be better supported by the federal government in the context of its new action plan, since a lot of these smaller communities are living in very remote places. In Îles de la Madeleine I also had the chance to meet with some of these communities and to hear their struggles. Of course, I bear that in mind, while preparing the new action plan that will be put in place for April 1, 2018.

[Translation]

Ms. Linda Lapointe: Thank you.

On another topic, I would like to talk about the bilingualism statistics you mentioned earlier. All the studies conducted clearly show that all linguistic minorities have a high rate of bilingualism, both anglophones in Quebec, 66% of whom are bilingual, and francophones outside Quebec, 89% of whom are bilingual.

I consider it a strength that more and more Canadians are bilingual. Moreover, a lot of witnesses told us that they need bilingual staff, whether it is Air Canada or others. I think we have to encourage higher rates of bilingualism, both among francophones outside Quebec and among anglophones in Quebec.

Will that be addressed in the modernization of the Official Languages Act? In my opinion, increasing the rate of bilingualism is very important.

Hon. Mélanie Joly: Your question is very relevant, in fact.

As part of our new official languages action plan, we always provide support to linguistic minority communities since they, very honestly, face a lot of challenges. In the interest of social cohesion across the country, however, it is also essential that we support and promote bilingualism. So the action plan will really address both of these priorities.

Ms. Linda Lapointe: We have heard a number of possible solutions. I am sure you have read our reports. It is clear that grade school immersion programs are in demand. Outside Quebec, anglophones really want their children to have access to those programs.

I would like to hear your thoughts on that.

Hon. Mélanie Joly: That is a good point. Moreover, as I said in my introductory remarks, there is more demand than ever from parents outside Quebec to enrol their children in French immersion programs, which is good news in itself.

We are also seeing breakthroughs in certain provinces. Alberta has developed its first policy to support services in French and the province's francophone communities. I have also had the opportunity to meet with my provincial and territorial counterparts in recent months. We are really seeing that even the ministers of education have mobilized to offer French-language classes and French immersion programs.

That being said, when the provinces and territories want to make an investment, we have to make sure that this does not hurt francophone communities that have their own school system and that face huge recruitment challenges. We also have to offset the effects of being surrounded by an English-speaking majority.

Ms. Linda Lapointe: You mentioned recruitment. There is indeed a shortage of teachers, especially of French teachers outside Quebec. Have you discussed this with the various ministers of education? In upcoming discussions, could you address the need for a sufficient number of teachers of both official languages in Quebec and outside Quebec, right across Canada actually?

Hon. Mélanie Joly: Yes, we have discussed that with the various ministers responsible for francophone affairs. This issue is very important to my counterpart in Quebec, Jean-Marc Fournier.

Ms. Linda Lapointe: I have worked with him in fact.

Hon. Mélanie Joly: Okay.

We are working on that with respect to the official languages action plan. There is a shortage of French teachers right across the country, both in French-language school boards and in majority language schools boards that offer French immersion. We are looking a lot at the issue of teacher mobility across the country.

Ms. Linda Lapointe: Thank you.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Alupa Clarke): Mr. Vandal, you have the floor.

Mr. Dan Vandal (Saint Boniface—Saint Vital, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Hello, Madam Minister.

First, I would like to thank you once again for coming to Winnipeg to visit my community of Saint-Boniface—Saint-Vital. The entrepreneurs and SMEs were very happy to see you.

• (1605)

Hon. Mélanie Joly: I am also very pleased that I was able to visit you, dear colleague.

Mr. Dan Vandal: As you may know, the community that I represent, Saint-Boniface—Saint-Vital, is concerned about the major changes in the French-language education system. The province's Conservative government, which is led by a former Reform Party MP, has abolished the position of assistant deputy minister of the Bureau de l'éducation française, or French-language education bureau, which is very important.

I know that this is under provincial jurisdiction and that you cannot speak about it in detail, but I wanted to share my community's concerns with you. A number of official language minority communities are calling on our government and on you, as minister, to show leadership, which was absent for the 10 years of the Harper government.

Can you comment on that?

Hon. Mélanie Joly: Thank you for raising that matter, which is of great concern. In the coming days, I will be sending a letter about that to my counterpart Rochelle Squires.

In our negotiations with the province regarding investments in education to support the francophone linguistic minority in Manitoba, we want to raise that issue. I hope you will continue to raise the issue in Manitoba because it is important to continue protecting and promoting language rights. Official languages communities need allies right across the country. Every time there are setbacks on the official languages, we must speak out and address them.

Mr. Dan Vandal: Thank you. We will continue working with the community in that regard.

Last week, the FCFA published a report indicating that just 25% of roadmap funding reaches minority institutions and organizations and that 60% goes to provincial and territorial governments.

I know of course that you were not the minister when the roadmap was announced, but can you, Mr. Lussier or Mr. Gauthier, speak to these figures nonetheless? Are these figures accurate? What can we do to make sure that more funding reaches the communities?

Hon. Mélanie Joly: Let me say first of all that I have heard the alarm sounded by various communities across the country. The 10-year freeze on operating budgets is of great concern to the communities. We intend to address that.

We are also very concerned that funding to support the promotion and defence of language rights was frozen or cut.

That is why we have modernized the court challenges program, and that is why we are examining ways to re-establish the structures to support and defend language rights. Organizations across the

country must continue to champion and support efforts related to the vitality of language communities.

I referred earlier to our action plan on official languages. We will be working from the bottom up, or in other words, we will make the same investments as those set out in the roadmap that expires on March 31, and we will be adding new investments. We will also have a governance plan to ensure that the funding is properly redistributed and to make the government accountable.

Mr. Dan Vandal: The governance plan will give us more control over the money that goes to the provinces.

Is it true that the provinces get 60% of the funding under the old plan or the current plan?

• (1610)

Hon. Mélanie Joly: Large amounts of money are transferred for education. It goes without saying that we work with the provinces and territories. There is also money that goes directly to the organizations.

In our new action plan, we want to focus on the services offered by and for the communities.

Mr. Dan Vandal: Thank you.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Alupa Clarke): Ms. Kusie, you have the floor.

I think you will be sharing your speaking time with Mr. Mulcair, is that right?

Mrs. Stephanie Kusie (Calgary Midnapore, CPC): That's right.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Alupa Clarke): Okay.

Please go ahead, Ms. Kusie.

Mrs. Stephanie Kusie: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Thank you, Madam Minister. It is always a pleasure to see you.

For the rest of my life, I will remember the first day we met. It was my first day in the House. It was wonderful.

Hon. Mélanie Joly: By the way, thank you for your French.

Mrs. Stephanie Kusie: Thank you very much. I am very proud to speak both official languages. I know I make a lot of mistakes, but I am very proud.

Hon. Mélanie Joly: No, you are doing very well. Congratulations!

Mrs. Stephanie Kusie: You are very kind, thank you.

I read that \$77,000 had been spent on the nomination process for Ms. Meilleur as commissioner of official languages. I would like to know if the government spent the same amount on the nomination of Mr. Théberge, even though he applied for the position himself.

Hon. Mélanie Joly: We received many applications from right across the country. We are very pleased to have an excellent candidate. For the first time, it is someone who is not from Ontario or Quebec. Mr. Théberge is a Franco-Manitoban who has worked in Acadia. We are confident that he will be a strong watchdog for the official languages.

Mrs. Stephanie Kusie: Of course.

I am very fond of people from Manitoba. My husband is from Winnipeg, and he also speaks French. I am really proud of that also.

With regard to bilingualism on the Supreme Court, Mr. Th  berge said that we agree on the principle, but not on the means. You said that there is value in having a law that imposes bilingualism on the Supreme Court of Canada.

In your opinion, are those not the same means?

Hon. M  lanie Joly: As to what Mr. Th  berge said, he could answer your questions.

As to our government, our position is clear: we support the importance of bilingualism on the Supreme Court of Canada. The Prime Minister mentioned this in a letter to the editor that was published in all the major newspapers. The Minister of Justice took her instructions very seriously. So we have named two very good bilingual judges to the Supreme Court, and we will continue to do so.

Mrs. Stephanie Kusie: Thank you very much.

I will let Mr. Mulcair have the floor.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Alupa Clarke): You have 3 minutes and 20 seconds left.

Hon. Thomas Mulcair: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

I would like to go back to something the minister said earlier. It is not true that the QCGN or Quebec Community Groups Network was consulted. It was not consulted. I checked that right before this meeting.

Hon. M  lanie Joly: Listen, Mr. Mulcair, I spoke with members of the QCGN...

Hon. Thomas Mulcair: I would also like to explain to the minister...

Hon. M  lanie Joly: ...and I even had the opportunity to introduce the candidate to them...

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Alupa Clarke): Madam Minister, please wait until he asks his question.

Hon. M  lanie Joly: Perfect, go ahead.

Hon. Thomas Mulcair: I would also like to point something out to the minister. We live in a society governed by the rule of law and, under the Official Languages Act, the parties recognized in Parliament must be consulted.

My question is very simple: does the minister think that consulting someone means telling them that the government has already selected someone?

To our mind, that is not consulting, but informing. Yet the act requires consultation.

Hon. M  lanie Joly: We are pleased to have been able to work with representatives from various organizations. For instance, I met with people from the FCFA on several occasions and had conversations with them more than once, specifically about the process. I also spoke with QCGN representatives a few times. Further, my parliamentary secretaries spoke with various community stakeholders.

Mr. Mulcair, I sent you a letter and received a reply, which included three conditions that you spelled out clearly. You pointed out the importance of consulting organizations, of consulting opposition party leaders, and of appointing someone from Acadia. The official opposition, which is made up of Conservatives, said it was satisfied with the process.

• (1615)

Hon. Thomas Mulcair: But not us.

Hon. M  lanie Joly: Those people said they were satisfied with the candidate

Hon. Thomas Mulcair: But not us.

Hon. M  lanie Joly: So we are satisfied with the process and the candidate.

Hon. Thomas Mulcair: We do not agree with your statement that there was consultation. Informing a recognized party which candidate the government has chosen is not consultation. That makes no sense. It is obvious.

I will put that aside for the moment.

The minister referred earlier to a document. According to a 100-year-old parliamentary tradition, when a minister refers to a document, the minister is required to make the document available. In answering a question, the minister referred earlier to an agreement with Netflix. Francophones outside Quebec would really like to know what it has in store for them. In accordance with this tradition, the minister must therefore provide the Netflix agreement.

When will we get it?

Hon. M  lanie Joly: The document I clearly referred to, Mr. Mulcair, is the letter I sent you. I will gladly provide it, it is right here.

Hon. Thomas Mulcair: You referred to the Netflix agreement. There is no point in denying it since it will appear in the record of our meeting today. You specifically referred to the agreement with Netflix, and we want to see it.

Hon. M  lanie Joly: The Netflix investment falls under the Investment Canada Act, pursuant to which everything is confidential.

Hon. Thomas Mulcair: Three seconds ago, it did not exist; now that information is confidential. It is mind-boggling.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Alupa Clarke): Mr. Mulcair, I'm sorry, but your time is up.

Mr. Lefebvre, you now have the floor.

Hon. M  lanie Joly: Mr. Mulcair, I have the letter I sent you...

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Alupa Clarke): Your time is up as well, Madam Minister.

Mr. Lefebvre, please go ahead.

Mr. Paul Lefebvre (Sudbury, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Madam Minister, thank you for being here with us today.

You have raised a number of topics. For my part, I would like to ask you two questions.

You just announced that the roadmap will be extended beyond March 31, 2018. Why did you announce that? Why is that important for communities?

Hon. Mélanie Joly: A number of organizations were worried about future federal support for the official languages. I want them to know that we understand their situation and that we will be investing more in the official languages. The former Conservative government, on the other hand, had made many cuts.

We want to modernize our approach. Knowing that some of the concerns pertained to immigration, we want to make sure that new francophone immigrants are integrated into linguistic minority communities. It is complex. Moreover, the communities do not necessarily have all the tools they need to integrate these newcomers for the long term.

As to early childhood, we have to make sure that children can start learning the minority language quickly, right from the start. We have to prevent the assimilation that can occur in linguistic communities. These situations are part of the new reality of linguistic communities. They are facing tremendous challenges, to be sure, and we want to help them.

Mr. Paul Lefebvre: Thank you for making that announcement today.

You also listed your department's investments and the concrete steps it has taken in the past two years. On page 4 of your introductory remarks, it says, "and so forth". There is actually one thing you have not talked about: the investments in cultural spaces. For 10 years, the previous government slashed those investments. I am from a minority community in Sudbury, in northern Ontario, and I know how vital these cultural spaces are for minority communities.

What investments has the current government made and does it intend to make in cultural spaces across the country to continue to support these communities? These investments are very important.

• (1620)

Hon. Mélanie Joly: I was pleased to be with you to announce the government's investment of over \$12 million in the Place des Arts de Sudbury. A hundred or so people were there for the announcement. It was the best news of the day in Sudbury. The francophone community had been waiting for that investment for years.

We have made other investments in cultural spaces for linguistic communities, such as the Centre culturel Aberdeen, in Moncton, which is crucial for the francophone community. We also invested in the land of la Sagouine, in Bouctouche, New Brunswick. Who is not familiar with la Sagouine? We also invested in the new arts district in Chéticamp, Nova Scotia. There is a nice French-speaking Acadian community in that part of Nova Scotia, in Cape Breton. We wanted to support it.

These are four great projects to which we have provided millions of dollars in support.

Mr. Paul Lefebvre: And that is just in the last two years. Congratulations!

Mr. Chair, I would like to give the rest of my time to my colleague, Mr. Arseneault. So we are going back to Acadia.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Alupa Clarke): No problem.

Mr. Arseneault, you have two minutes.

Mr. René Arseneault (Madawaska—Restigouche, Lib.): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Madam Minister, before I get to my question, I have to tell you that a few seconds ago, representatives of the QCGN wrote on Twitter that they had indeed been consulted during the nomination process for the commissioner of official languages, contrary to what our colleague suggested.

After the holidays, we will be conducting a study that will include the topic of early childhood across the country. Our committee will also be travelling out west.

In your consultations in the field, what have you heard about how we can improve conditions for official language minority communities?

Hon. Mélanie Joly: As I said earlier, we have good allies on the official languages around the table, whether they are from the NDP, the Conservatives or the Liberals. We review all of your reports. Right now, we are reviewing your report on Air Canada, and we will be providing the government's response on that.

The committee's work helps me exercise horizontal leadership, in the same way as our government does.

As Minister of Canadian Heritage, I work constantly with my colleagues—and sometimes I push them a bit—to make significant investments in the official languages. Regardless of the subject, whether it is immigration, early childhood or even the reality of community organizations across the country that do their utmost to support the vitality of our linguistic communities, we have to examine the situation. I look forward to reading your work.

In short, the next generation is strong. In 2019, the Official Languages Act will be 50 years old. That means three generations of children who have grown up under the act. I have seen some continuity across the country, but it is fragile. I hope you will be able to meet a lot of young people working in this field.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Alupa Clarke): Thank you, Madam Minister.

Mr. Généreux, you have six minutes.

Mr. Bernard Généreux: Madam Minister, I would like to go back to Netflix, because there is something that concerns me.

You said earlier that there will be \$25 million to create content in French. Twenty-five million out of \$500 million is 5%. Is that right?

Hon. Mélanie Joly: Actually, \$500 million will be invested in the production of original Canadian content in both English and French. An additional \$25 million will go towards market development to give francophone producers greater access to the \$500-million, five-year, investment.

Mr. Bernard Généreux: What is the percentage of francophones in the country?

Hon. Mélanie Joly: I know that we have great artists, whether we are talking about Jean-Marc Vallée, Denis Villeneuve, or Xavier Dolan. Our creators are among the best in the world when it comes to television—

Mr. Bernard Généreux: That wasn't my question.

Hon. Mélanie Joly: —and film production. I have no doubt that francophones will receive—

Mr. Bernard Généreux: Ms. Joly, my question—

Hon. Mélanie Joly: —their fair share of the investment.

Mr. Bernard Généreux: What is the percentage of francophones in the country?

I'm not asking you for a list of artists. I know who they are. I am asking you what the percentage of francophones in the country is.

Hon. Mélanie Joly: As I repeatedly said, the Netflix investment isn't perfect, but—

Mr. Bernard Généreux: It isn't perfect?

Hon. Mélanie Joly: —as a government, we have the courage to tackle difficult issues that the previous government—

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Alupa Clarke): Please, Ms. Joly, the member is asking you for the percentage of francophones in the country. You are the Minister of Canadian Heritage, so I think you should be able to tell us.

•(1625)

Hon. Mélanie Joly: What is the percentage of francophones in the country?

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Alupa Clarke): That is the question you are being asked.

Mr. Bernard Généreux: It's the question I've been asking you for a while now but you haven't answered.

Hon. Mélanie Joly: What is the percentage of francophones in Canada? We have 8 million francophones.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Alupa Clarke): Thank you.

Hon. Mélanie Joly: Therefore, they would make up 22% or 23% of the population.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Alupa Clarke): Please carry on, Mr. Généreux.

Mr. Bernard Généreux: How is it, then, that the deal you signed with Netflix provides for just 5% in francophone content and not 22%?

Hon. Mélanie Joly: As I mentioned, the agreement with Netflix isn't ideal, and I am aware of the sector's concerns.

However, in terms of support for francophone production, we have just invested millions of dollars in the Canada Media Fund, which supports all of the country's television production. Do you know how much the fund allocates to francophone production? Even though francophones make up 22% or 23% of the population, 30% of the fund goes to francophone production.

We were extremely mindful of the importance of French television production, so we reinvested in the Canada Media Fund, knowing that the revenues of the country's cable companies were dropping, thus reducing those companies' contributions to the fund. We heard

the concerns of francophone television stakeholders and we made the necessary reinvestment.

Mr. Bernard Généreux: What is the next American company with which you plan to sign a deal setting aside 5% for francophone production?

Hon. Mélanie Joly: That's a valid question. We chose, as a government, to have the courage to modernize the Broadcasting Act, which dates back to 1991, in other words, pre-Internet. Nothing in the existing act, nothing in our current legislation, allows us to deal with the issue of digital platforms, from a communication systems standpoint.

Mr. Bernard Généreux: I will repeat my question.

Hon. Mélanie Joly: Consequently, we are going to modernize the act, and I am hopeful that we can work together to protect our culture and our francophone culture on the web.

Mr. Bernard Généreux: I will repeat my question.

What is the next American company you will be signing a deal with?

Hon. Mélanie Joly: Our focus is on modernizing our legislation. I plan to work with my counterpart Minister Bains to simultaneously modernize the Broadcasting Act and the Telecommunications Act. I have also asked the CRTC to examine how we can ensure support for the creation, production, and distribution of Canadian content.

Mr. Bernard Généreux: As we speak, Minister, are you negotiating agreements with other American companies?

Hon. Mélanie Joly: That is not one of our priorities at the moment. Our priority is truly on making sure we are able to modernize our legislation.

I hope to engage the sector in the modernization process.

Not only are we reviewing the Broadcasting Act and the Telecommunications Act, but we are also modernizing the Copyright Act as part of this major reform process. The last reform of the act created significant inequities and frustration across the cultural community. We believe in a much fairer treatment of our artists.

Mr. Bernard Généreux: What do you make of the statements and arguments of the 100 people who put down their signatures because they objected to the deal you signed with Netflix? No one cares whether it focuses on culture or taxes. What matters is that the people who represent today's industry say that they are extremely worried, and even more so, about the agreement.

What's more, they fear that, if other agreements are signed, it will somewhat mark the end of francophone production in Canada.

Hon. Mélanie Joly: Do you know what artists and members of the country's cultural sector remember, Mr. Généreux?

They vividly remember the cuts the Conservatives made to the cultural sector.

Mr. Bernard Généreux: What a shame.

Hon. Mélanie Joly: They have an especially clear recollection of the Radio-Canada cuts—

Mr. Bernard Généreux: Minister, you are—

Hon. Mélanie Joly: We therefore reinvested \$2.3 million—

Mr. Bernard Généreux: Minister, you have been in power for two years—

Hon. Mélanie Joly: —and we are very proud of having done so. We invested \$675 million in CBC/Radio-Canada—

Mr. Bernard Généreux: Madam Minister, Madam Minister, Madam Minister!

Hon. Mélanie Joly: —and we increased the funding envelope for the Canada Council for the Arts.

Mr. Bernard Généreux: You're talking too long, Minister.

Your party has been in power for two years, and has been very generous with its wallet. Despite all that generosity and the money you doled out to all those fine folks, how is it, then, that those 100 people who put down their signatures are—

I was about to curse. My apologies.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Alupa Clarke): They are ticked off?

Mr. Bernard Généreux: Very good. Let's use the term "ticked off". It's acceptable.

Ms. Linda Lapointe: How about "hopping mad"?

Mr. Bernard Généreux: How is it that those folks are hopping mad or cheesed off at you?

"Cheesed off", that's a good one, isn't it?

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Alupa Clarke): You have five seconds left.

Hon. Mélanie Joly: We invested \$2.3 billion, and we are very proud of protecting Canada's culture.

Mr. Bernard Généreux: I would congratulate you if—

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Alupa Clarke): That's it.

Mr. Mulcair, it is your turn.

Hon. Thomas Mulcair: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

We know that the selection committee for the Commissioner of Official Languages had someone from the Privy Council Office, someone from Justice Canada, someone from the Treasury Board Secretariat, someone from the Prime Minister's Office, and someone representing the minister and the Department of Canadian Heritage, but it also had a member of the minister's staff.

Who was the minister's political representative on the selection committee?

• (1630)

Hon. Mélanie Joly: Mr. Mulcair, we are very happy with the nomination process and, above all, the selected candidate. I hope you have the opportunity to ask him all the important questions. He will make an excellent officer of—

Hon. Thomas Mulcair: Mr. Chair, I hope he will provide clearer answers than the minister.

Hon. Mélanie Joly: He will make an excellent officer of Parliament.

Hon. Thomas Mulcair: I asked her a clear and simple question, Mr. Chair.

Hon. Mélanie Joly: Mr. Chair, I would just like to finish—

Hon. Thomas Mulcair: She is not at all answering the question.

Hon. Mélanie Joly: The reason is—

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Alupa Clarke): Quickly wrap up, please. The member will rephrase his question.

Hon. Mélanie Joly: In the letter I sent you in July, I explained the entire selection process for the nomination, including the main stages of the process. I can provide you with it again, if you like.

Hon. Thomas Mulcair: The question I am asking the minister is this. Who was the political representative from her office who sat on the selection committee? She knows what I mean. It's a valid question, given the topic. Can the minister tell us who her political representative was?

Hon. Mélanie Joly: The entire time, we, of course, made sure that the process was sound and that everyone on the selection committee was free of any possible conflict of interest. We are very glad that we now have an excellent nominee who will actually—

Hon. Thomas Mulcair: Now that she's had time to think about it —

Hon. Mélanie Joly: —make an excellent officer of Parliament.

Hon. Thomas Mulcair: —can the minister tell the committee whether she is going to provide us with the agreement she signed with Netflix?

Hon. Mélanie Joly: As I said earlier in response to the question, Mr. Chair, that investment was made under the Investment Canada Act.

Hon. Thomas Mulcair: How can we know that?

Hon. Mélanie Joly: The agreement has to remain confidential.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Alupa Clarke): So that is a no.

Hon. Thomas Mulcair: Furthermore, Mr. Chair, since the minister did not answer that question either, I will repeat—

Mr. Darrell Samson: Point of order, Mr. Chair. We are already over time.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Alupa Clarke): No, we have a minute left.

Mr. Darrell Samson: We started at 3:30 p.m.

Hon. Thomas Mulcair: I just want to make sure that he isn't eating into my time, Mr. Chair.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Alupa Clarke): No. His comment will not come off your time.

Hon. Thomas Mulcair: Thank you.

The question on Bill C-203 was put to the House on October 25. Entitled An Act to amend the Supreme Court Act (understanding the official languages), the bill sought to ensure that all justices appointed to the Supreme Court going forward would be able to understand both official languages. Never, in its history, has the Supreme Court had a unilingual francophone judge. The main idea behind the bill, then, was to prevent the appointment of unilingual anglophone justices going forward.

The minister voted against the bill. Earlier, she claimed that she did so because she had a better proposal and that another bill would be forthcoming. When are we going to see it? The Liberals are now in their third year of power.

Hon. Mélanie Joly: Mr. Mulcair, my understanding is that, if your leader had been in the House that day to vote on the private member's bill, he would have voted against it.

Hon. Thomas Mulcair: I, however, know that the minister voted against it.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Alupa Clarke): Mr. Mulcair—

Hon. Thomas Mulcair: I know the minister voted against the bilingualism of Supreme Court justices.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Alupa Clarke): Mr. Mulcair, we're out of time.

Minister, thank you for being here today and answering the committee's questions.

We will now take a quick break, after which, we will spend the next hour of our meeting with Raymond Thériège.

• (1630) _____ (Pause) _____

• (1635)

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Alupa Clarke): Good afternoon. We will now resume with the appearance of Mr. Thériège, the nominee for the position of Commissioner of Official Languages.

I would again like to apologize for the technical difficulties that occurred last time.

We received a request from the Bloc Québécois for permission to ask questions at our last meeting. Since we don't have any Bloc Québécois members here today, it will save us a bit of time.

We will, therefore, continue with Mr. Thériège's appearance.

The first minute will go to Mr. Gagné, followed by Mr. Lefebvre. We will go as quickly as we can.

Mr. Darrell Samson: No, I'm supposed to go second.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Alupa Clarke): Forgive me, Mr. Samson will speak after Mr. Gagné.

Actually, I wasn't mistaken. Mr. Gagné will have a minute, and then, it will be Mr. Lefebvre's turn.

Mr. Darrell Samson: I was fourth last time.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Alupa Clarke): I'm sorry, Mr. Samson, but you're mistaken.

We will now go to Mr. Gagné for one minute.

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

I would like to thank you, as well, Mr. Thériège. Please accept our apologies for making you appear before the committee twice. Unfortunately, people had an opportunity to react to what you said the first time you were here. We hope to move along expeditiously.

I'm going to pick up on the question I asked you on Tuesday, before the meeting came to an end. It had to do with four federal institutions: Public Services and Procurement Canada, the Privy Council, the Treasury Board, and the Department of Canadian Heritage. The Minister, who was here up to mere moments ago, told us that government institutions no longer operated in isolation and that a whole-of-government approach was now in place. The fact of

the matter is that the number of complaints in those organizations went up.

Against the backdrop of this new style of governance, how will you make sure your recommendations are heard and addressed?

Mr. Raymond Thériège (Nominee for the position of Commissioner of Official Languages, As an Individual): At one time, that interface was described as "interdepartmental". When I was involved with community groups, we would be asked to communicate with a variety of departments, depending on the request.

When the responsibility for official languages is spread out among different organizations, it may indeed raise questions about who is actually responsible. I think that, going forward, it would be advisable to determine who, in the government, should assume the responsibility or leadership as regards official languages.

Mr. Bernard Gagné: We know, Mr. Thériège—

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Alupa Clarke): I have to stop you there.

It is now Mr. Lefebvre's turn.

Mr. Paul Lefebvre: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Alupa Clarke): My apologies, Mr. Thériège. You were certainly making an interesting point.

Mr. Paul Lefebvre: Yes, but I think one of my fellow members is going to want to come back to his question.

Mr. Thériège, I, too, would like to thank you for being here today. It is clear that your experience with minority communities is extensive, whether in Manitoba, Ontario or, of course, New Brunswick. There is no doubt that you have the experience and education necessary to fight for official languages.

That said, as Mr. Gagné mentioned, a bit of time has elapsed since you were first here. You may know that the committee recommended to the House of Commons that steps be taken to ensure that Supreme Court justices are bilingual. You made a comment about that at Tuesday's meeting. I can't recall your exact words, but, essentially, you said that, despite being a worthy objective, it would not be easy to achieve. I was, of course, a bit taken aback to hear the nominee for the position of Commissioner of Official Languages say that. You are the top dog, the champion, the leading advocate.

I found your remarks somewhat troubling, so I'd like to give you an opportunity to elaborate or better explain what you meant.

• (1640)

Mr. Raymond Thériège: Very well.

I do, indeed, recall what I said. There were two parts to my answer. The first was right, but the second was less so.

In the first part of my answer, I said that the principle of Supreme Court bilingualism was essential, of course. Not only is it essential—which is indisputable—but it is also part of our linguistic duality. The Supreme Court has to be able to respect that duality.

If we look at how Supreme Court justices are selected, we see that the process is based on conventions and practices. One convention holds that the justices on the bench should reflect a certain geographic distribution. The practice in the Supreme Court is to rotate between judges from the civil law tradition and those from the common law tradition. Another convention exists around language. What I was trying to say, but rather unsuccessfully, was that the selection process is now coming under some pressure. The last time around, it was repeatedly said that it may be time to appoint an indigenous justice.

The argument for bilingualism, however, was raised. As I see it, the process should rely on more than just convention. In other words, in order to ensure that Supreme Court justices are bilingual going forward, it will be necessary to codify the requirement, that is, enshrine it in law. I know the New Democratic Party had introduced a bill to that effect. Was it the right one? I don't know. I do know, though, that, if we want to guarantee the bilingualism of Supreme Court justices, as Canada continues to evolve, we need a much more robust mechanism than simple convention.

Mr. Paul Lefebvre: Thank you, Mr. Th  berge.

At the same time, the new leader of the New Democratic Party criticized that very practice. It's a bit odd what's going on on that side of the House.

Given your background, you will be on the job for seven years, in other words, until 2025. What will your legacy be? What will you have done to leave an imprint?

Mr. Raymond Th  berge: In the years ahead, I think we will first have to focus on the modernization of the Official Languages Act, more specifically, part VII. Work is already under way on part IV, which deals with service delivery, among other things.

Part VII holds tremendous possibilities. It addresses the vitality of minority communities. What constitutes a positive measure is, however, not defined.

If we go by the writings of such people as Michel Doucet,   rik Labelle, and Pierre Foucher, part VII of the act does not define vitality, development, or positive measures. We therefore have to improve part VII of the act.

What's more, the upcoming action plan is already more or less complete. Giving part VII a more meaningful impact will mean redefining the relationship between the government and minority communities in the next action plan.

On the one hand, we will have to find a way, over the next seven years, to slow the gradual and historical erosion of francophone communities outside Quebec and the anglophone community within Quebec. To do that, the act has to set out the obligations and necessary actions in a much more clearly defined way.

On the other hand, we need to tackle the language of work issue in the federal government. A recent report noted how difficult it was for employees to use French in the federal public service. How is it that, half a century later, we are still dealing with the same challenges?

The study laid out some recommendations. The Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages met with the Public Service

Commission to explore options for progress. Five issues were identified in relation to leadership, culture, and training.

• (1645)

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Alupa Clarke): Mr. Th  berge, I'm going to ask you to wrap up your answer, please.

Mr. Raymond Th  berge: All right.

The Official Languages Act has to be modernized, and the official languages action plan has to be much better aligned with the needs of minority communities. It's important to make sure that everyone working in the federal public service can do so in the language of their choice.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Alupa Clarke): Thank you, Mr. Th  berge.

Mr. Lefebvre, your time is up.

Mr. Paul Lefebvre: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Alupa Clarke: Ms. Kusie, you may go ahead.

I gather that you will be sharing your time with Mr. G  n  reux.

Mrs. Stephanie Kusie: How many minutes do I have?

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Alupa Clarke): That is up to you.

Mrs. Stephanie Kusie: Very good. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Th  berge, it's nice to see you again.

[English]

Here is my first question.

I'm a big fan of Morton Blackwell of the Leadership Institute. He has 25 principles, which conservatives tend to follow. One of my favourites is "personnel is policy"; that is to say, the people whom you employ will certainly act out your will.

My question is, how do you intend to organize your office, and in particular your senior personnel? The previous two assistant official language commissioners were both French. Do you intend to include anglophones among your senior personnel? Historically, of course, political parties have had the pattern that when you have an anglophone leader, you have a francophone deputy, and when you have a francophone leader, you have an anglophone deputy. I'm curious as to how you will construct your senior personnel in regard to linguistic capabilities.

Mr. Raymond Th  berge: To answer your question, first, there are many people who are in acting positions currently in the office. One of the first things to do is to get a handle on who's actually working there and doing what.

Mrs. Stephanie Kusie: Fair enough.

Mr. Raymond Th  berge: Second, I'm sure there are people who will be leaving. As people leave, I think what we have to do—and Mr. Fraser was very eloquent on this. He said he worried more about HR than he worried about policy. He really worried a lot about HR.

I think it's very important in the commissioner's office to get the right linguistic mix. As I mentioned before in responding to a previous question, it is really important that the anglophone minority not be forgotten in our way of doing things, and so it's important that we find people who can articulate their vision within the office. We have to look at who's available, who the best person is, and maybe try to have a better balance.

Mrs. Stephanie Kusie: That sounds very reasonable to me.

Paul asked one of my favourite questions, which was on your first issue to focus on, so I'll go to another question that I thought was very interesting.

The Commissioner of Official Languages has more than one role: ombudsman, auditor, promoter, watchdog, educator, intervenor before the courts, rapporteur, etc.

Which do you believe is the most important? I ask that because I've only been on this committee for maybe six months, and it seems we are very much focused on the watchdog, but when I hear some of the statistics as quoted by the Minister of Canadian Heritage, I wonder if we should be working more on promotion. Which aspect, which role, is the most important to you and why?

Mr. Raymond Th  berge: I think there are two key roles of the seven that you mentioned. One is what I'll call the audit function, the compliance function. It's extremely important to make sure that if we get complaints, we act on them, we investigate. We have to ensure that the act is respected and implemented.

The other piece is the policy research and communication piece, which is very important because even today the concept of duality is misunderstood. We have to convince people that it's a fundamental part of Canada. Research should drive policy, and I'm not saying it always does, but evidence should drive policy. I think as we try to work towards modernizing the Official Languages Act, working with committees and parliamentarians, we need good research. Research also gives you the kinds of messages you need to speak to people.

It's a yin and yang thing. You have to have compliance, but then you also have to be able to promote and to educate and to research.

Mrs. Stephanie Kusie: I appreciate that response, and I also think that we as Canadians need to look at a realistic definition of "duality", so thank you very much for that.

[Translation]

Now, I'll hand the floor over to Mr. G  n  reux.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Alupa Clarke): You have 40 seconds left.

•(1650)

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

[English]

Mrs. Stephanie Kusie: Sorry.

Voices: Oh, oh!

[Translation]

Mr. Bernard G  n  reux: Lucky me, I have a whole minute and 40 seconds. It's okay, I'll have another turn during the next round.

Mr. Th  berge, I want to come back to something we discussed on Tuesday: the tools Parliament can equip you with so that you can require institutions, whatever they may be, private and public alike, to abide by the act. If I recall correctly, you said it was essential for you to have tools.

I'll come back to the question in a moment, so I'd like you to think about your answer.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Alupa Clarke): You'll have to wait for an answer, because you are unfortunately out of time.

Mr. Bernard G  n  reux: Our vice-chair is too strict.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Alupa Clarke): We now move on to Mr. Mulcair.

You may go ahead for three minutes.

Hon. Thomas Mulcair: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'd like to follow up on something Mr. Th  berge said when he was discussing the practices and conventions around Supreme Court justices.

It is not practice or convention that dictates that three of the seats be held by judges from Quebec. It is prescribed in the Supreme Court Act. Further to a recent decision we all recall, the Supreme Court called it quasi-constitutional.

Mr. Raymond Th  berge: All right.

Hon. Thomas Mulcair: Very good.

I'm going to try to sum up in one sentence what you said earlier, as I understand it.

Mr. Th  berge, you are telling us that we need to find a clear way of establishing, by law, that justices appointed to the Supreme Court have to be bilingual.

Did I interpret that correctly?

Mr. Raymond Th  berge: Yes.

Hon. Thomas Mulcair: Wonderful. Already, we're off to a great start.

Now for the next question I wanted to ask you. You are described as a person of experience—which I know you have a lot of—so I'd like you to tell us about a time in your career when you had to take a very public stand against a government or minister on a particular issue. Could you explain how you are going to do that as Commissioner of Official Languages?

It concerns me that the minister included deputy ministers on the selection committee that chose you. A deputy minister's job is to make a minister's job easier, not to challenge them. Your job will be to challenge them.

Give us a good example, of your choosing, to show how you stood up to fight for a public issue.

Mr. Raymond Th  berge: From 1983 to 1985, I was the head of the Soci  t   franco-manitobaine during Manitoba's language crisis.

Hon. Thomas Mulcair: I remember it very well, having been in charge of the translation of Manitoba's statutes at the time.

Mr. Raymond Th  berge: I was in charge of the Soci  t   franco-manitobaine, and we stood up to the government. We confronted the majority of people, who were completely opposed to the French-speaking minority. As I said in my opening statement on Tuesday, it was a time of plebiscites, public hearings, and death threats against francophones. Insults were hurled at us every single day.

Mr. Dan Vandal: There was the fire.

Mr. Raymond Th  berge: Yes, there was also the fire at our office.

I would say that that was when my ability to stand up to a government really came through.

Hon. Thomas Mulcair: I know, Mr. Th  berge; I just wanted to hear you say it.

I am very familiar with that chapter in time, since I was there right from the Supreme Court's decision in *Forest*. I was fortunate enough to see it unfold up-close, being responsible, at the time, for the drafting and revision of the French versions of Manitoba's statutes. The experience you shared with us bodes well for the future.

Nevertheless, we believe the nomination process is flawed. I don't want you to think that comment is aimed at you. The Minister did not follow the law. Just as the Supreme Court Act requires that three justices be from Quebec, the law requires that the opposition parties be consulted. I wanted to tell you that.

The Minister never consulted us, so we have a problem with that.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Alupa Clarke): Thank you, Mr. Mulcair.

It is now Mr. G  n  reux's turn.

Mr. Bernard G  n  reux: Mr. Th  berge, now, I'm going to come back to my earlier question.

It was about the tools that the government could give the Commissioner of Official Languages to enforce the act and, even, bring certain offenders to justice, or at least fine them. Those offenders might include formerly public organizations that were privatized. We know a few of those. Air Canada, for instance, is subject to the act, as are government departments. There are a number of organizations, for that matter—many, indeed.

If I'm not mistaken, on Tuesday, you said you thought it was important that the commissioner have tools. In fact, the former commissioner, Mr. Fraser, repeatedly complained about the fact that he lacked tools with teeth, ones that would truly allow him to ensure the act was implemented.

Air Canada is an oft-cited case. Do you think it's a good idea to impose fines or some sort of penalty on companies subject to the act? Everyone agrees on that, even Air Canada. The company is actually making great strides. The appearance of Air Canada's president before the committee last year received major media coverage. Since then, Air Canada has embarked upon a path of ongoing improvement, and that process continues within the company. Even before last year, those efforts had gotten under way.

Nevertheless, do you think the commissioner should have those powers?

• (1655)

Mr. Raymond Th  berge: The short answer is yes.

Mr. Fraser frequently said that it was always possible to conduct investigations and make determinations. What consequences would they have, however?

In my first appearance before the committee, on Tuesday, I asked what was the point of having an act without consequences. There is a lot of talk about giving the commissioner more powers. What we need, though, is an act with more teeth.

Mr. Bernard G  n  reux: In that case, what would you suggest? In light of our report, what tools would you like to have under the act?

Mr. Raymond Th  berge: Yes, the committee submitted a report. I think we should seriously consider the last recommendation, which is to give the commissioner the authority to impose sanctions or fines.

I know it might be perceived as creating some type of language police, but, as I often say, there have to be consequences. That means the commissioner must have the necessary tools and mechanisms.

Mr. Bernard G  n  reux: We will soon begin a study for the purposes of revising the Official Languages Act, which has not been done in a while. At least, that's what you told us. The committee would like to be involved in that revision. You would appreciate it if the necessary tools were provided under the revised act.

Do you already have your mind made up in terms of your preferences? I don't remember exactly how many, but there were three or four options. Do you have any suggestions?

Mr. Raymond Th  berge: I haven't really chosen my preferences. The four proposed options bear a more in-depth review to determine their potential impact.

Mr. Bernard G  n  reux: I see.

The committee heard from many witnesses before we submitted our report. If the commissioner were to issue fines or penalties, the government would be taking the money out of one pocket and putting it back in the other, would it not? Would you agree with that?

Mr. Raymond Th  berge: Yes, that's true.

Mr. Bernard G  n  reux: Our discussion led us to the conclusion that, if departments are fined in a public arena, they will have no choice but to comply with the act to avoid further penalties.

That was one of our guiding principles, to a certain extent, even though, when government departments are concerned, the money is more or less going from the right hand to the left hand.

Mr. Raymond Th  berge: I think the commissioner's office will need time to examine the options, to do an analysis in order to see exactly what repercussions options A, B, C, and D will have.

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

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Alupa Clarke): Since we have only a few minutes before 5:15 p.m., and we may be called for a vote and perhaps a debate, each person will have five minutes. Your time is up, Mr. G  n  reux.

Mr. Samson, you may go ahead.

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

Thank you, Mr. Th  berge.

We are happy to see you again. I have four or five questions for you, and I'd like you to answer briefly.

You said that we should have a method to ensure that judges are bilingual. You personally believe that Supreme Court justices should be bilingual?

Mr. Raymond Th  berge: Absolutely.

Mr. Darrell Samson: Thank you.

Your mandate includes three important objectives: the equality of French and English in Parliament, in the Government of Canada, in federal institutions, and so on; the equality of French and English in Canadian society; and, in my opinion, an extremely important objective, the task of maintaining and supporting the development of minority official language communities. So it's a matter of enrichment.

Your mandate states that not only must you ensure follow-up of complaints, investigations and reports, but you must play that role while launching investigations on your own initiative.

I know that you are not yet in the position, but do you have any investigations in mind that you would undertake on your own initiative?

• (1700)

Mr. Raymond Th  berge: I think it is important to measure the impact of the action plan for official languages. It is also important to know where the funds are going. Accountability is extremely important in the implementation of the action plan.

Certain matters, such as immigration, were raised by the current commissioner and they deserve to be followed up. Targets have been set, but are we reaching them? Immigration is one of the keys to the future of minority francophone communities, and anglophone communities in Quebec.

A report was published two years ago that stated that we would do better, but we have to continue to be vigilant with regard to these targets.

Mr. Darrell Samson: Very well.

Let me speak to you about two other important points I believe in.

The first one is this: the government owns some real estate, lands that are not being used. So it decides to sell them. I will give you the example of British Columbia where the government sold federal lands to other parties. Francophones are entitled to French-language schools and have been waiting for land to be acquired for 10 years. Under the Official Languages Act, francophones in minority situations should have access to those lands.

The second point concerns agreements between the federal government and the province. We are always told that these agreements are a matter of provincial responsibility, but subsection 16(3) of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms reads as follows:

16(3) Nothing in this Charter limits the authority of Parliament or a legislature to advance the equality [...]

This is something for you to think about.

I am going to ask you some brief questions, and I would like your answers to be brief, because I only have three and a half minutes left.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Alupa Clarke): You only have 45 seconds.

Mr. Darrell Samson: How many minutes do I have left? That's not possible.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Alupa Clarke): No, but...

Mr. Darrell Samson: Could you comment on this: "equal does not mean equitable"?

Mr. Raymond Th  berge: Equality is not equity. For instance, if you want a minority group to be equal to another group, that is matter of equity.

You have to take proactive measures. For instance, when you look at employment equity, this means that for certain groups, you have to put in place special measures to ensure that they will eventually reach equality.

Mr. Darrell Samson: Thank you.

I have one last question.

Some people have circulated rumours that you may possibly be appointed Commissioner of Official Languages, but feel that you may not be as forceful as they would like.

Do you think you are forceful?

Mr. Raymond Th  berge: I think that forcefulness is strategic and that you have to use it in the right way.

As I already said, if someone goes to the barricades every day, sooner or later, people will stop listening. I think you have to be strategic. As a rector, when you work with governments, you negotiate. In a context like this, since this is an activist's role, I am returning to my activist roots.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Alupa Clarke): Thank you very much, Mr. Th  berge.

Mr. Mulcair, you have the floor.

Hon. Thomas Mulcair: I'd like to go back to the point that I was discussing earlier with Mr. Th  berge, so that he understands that our opposition is based on the way in which the government made its choice.

We are one of the recognized parties in the House of Commons. We have 44 members, although you only need 12. The law requires that there be a consultation. Like my friend and colleague Guy Caron said the context of a response to the Prime Minister, for a consultation to occur, you have to ask for the opinion of the person being consulted. For that to happen, the government would have had to submit its choices and proposals and justify them, and so on. Based on the jurisprudence, we believe that a government that claims to consult a party by presenting the person it has chosen has not consulted the party; it has informed it. That is clear to us.

And so I wanted to say that we are going to maintain our position, because we think that the work that must be done by the Commissioner of Official Languages is too important to be tainted by procedural defects in the nomination process. We are not changing our minds on that. Nothing in the non-responses of the minister has changed our point of view in this regard.

Before Mr. Caron drafted his comments, I had written a very similar letter. The minister replied that we had asked that francophones outside Quebec and anglophone Quebecers be consulted and that an Acadian candidate be considered. She forgot one thing, which is that the primary purpose of my letter was to point out to her that she had never consulted our party, the NDP. And yet it was clearly stated in the letter. I wanted to clarify that point. It is part of our work as parliamentarians to see to it that laws and the rule of law be respected. We live in a society governed by the rule of law. This position is crucial, in our opinion.

That being said, I want to go back to the current provisions of the Official Languages Act. I know that Mr. Th  berge knows them very well. Aside from the issue of what happens to the recommendations, there is the concrete case of Air Canada, a company which is in a way, the dunce of the class when it comes to official languages. The previous commissioner, Graham Fraser, said so on many occasions and produced a thick report substantiating his analysis.

I would like to know what tools the Commissioner of Official Languages should have, in your opinion, to obtain compliance from a delinquent like Air Canada, which obstinately refuses to comply with the Official Languages Act.

• (1705)

Mr. Raymond Th  berge: The conclusions of the committee concerning Air Canada do lead one to think that there are not many measures left to apply, and that perhaps the time has come to consider fines and sanctions. Air Canada wants to avoid its responsibilities in terms of official languages, and in order to do so, would like to see them assigned to Transport Canada.

As I was saying, it is therefore extremely important that there be consequences. Air Canada has large budgets, but the fact remains that for a private company, it's often a matter of money. I don't know what means should be used to get this enterprise to respect the law, but I think we have to find ways. There has been some progress, but for the moment, the objectives are not being met.

Hon. Thomas Mulcair: To conclude, I'd like to tell you a brief story. This is something I experienced myself on a Porter Airlines flight, to not mention its name. An important announcement was made and a woman who was seated two rows ahead of me could not understand it. Since she wanted to know what it was about, she asked for help, and people answered her in English. But this lady did not speak English. I went to help her but I also asked the flight attendant why she had not spoken French to the woman. She replied that she was bilingual, but since the Official Languages Act did not apply to Porter Airlines, she had been asked not to speak French.

Do you think that a situation like that one could be examined by the Commissioner of Official Languages?

Mr. Raymond Th  berge: Absolutely.

Hon. Thomas Mulcair: Thank you.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Alupa Clarke): Mr. Arseneault, you will be the last speaker. You have five and a half minutes.

Mr. Ren   Arseneault: Am I the last one? Oh my!

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Alupa Clarke): We did that on purpose, Mr. Arseneault.

Mr. Ren   Arseneault: Mr. Th  berge, I know that some people are questioning the process, but the process does not concern you. You went through all of the steps successfully to be nominated.

You appeared before the committee on Tuesday for an hour, but unfortunately the meeting had to be adjourned because of technical problems. So you are with us for a second hour today.

I come from Acadia and I am a graduate of the University of Moncton, but I never met you there because you arrived some time after me.

There have been some excellent official language commissioners from Quebec and Ontario. I am pleasantly surprised. From your CV, I see that you have also worked in Ontario. You left Manitoba and you went to McGill University. And so you understand the reality of anglophone minorities in Quebec. You also spent time in Acadia.

I think this gives you a host of advantages. You are aware of the challenges this vast country of Canada faces with regard to minority official language communities. I am really impressed and I only have good comments to make, but I am going to stop here.

Mr. Chair, I would like to move the motion I sent you. It can be distributed. We were supposed to do this last Tuesday but it was not possible because of the technical problems.

• (1710)

I nominate of Mr. Th  berge as candidate to the position of Commissioner of Official Languages. The motion reads as follows:

That the committee report the following to the House:

Your committee has considered the Certificate of Nomination of Raymond Th  berge, the nominee for the position of Commissioner of Official Languages of Canada referred to the committee on Thursday, November 30, 2017, pursuant to Standing Order 111.1(1).

Your committee has considered the proposed appointment of Raymond Th  berge as Commissioner of Official Languages of Canada and reports its recommendation that he be confirmed by the House of Commons as Canada's Commissioner of Official Languages.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Alupa Clarke): Everything is as it should be. This motion was tabled more than 48 hours ago. Everything is in order. We will begin our debate. If anyone has any comments to make, either to express support or oppose the motion, now is the time to do it.

Ms. Lapointe, you have the floor.

Ms. Linda Lapointe: Mr. Chair, I will be here tomorrow morning and will be available to present the recommendation regarding the Commissioner of Official Languages to the House.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Alupa Clarke): That's very honourable of you, Ms. Lapointe.

If I understood correctly, Madam Clerk, we are going to vote now, in the nominee's presence.

Mr. Samson, you have the floor.

Mr. Darrell Samson: Mr. Th  berge, I've always been impressed by your work in the past. Your presence at the past two meetings has confirmed that you are going to do an excellent job of representing francophones outside Quebec, and anglophones in Quebec.

Mr. Raymond Th  berge: Thank you.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Alupa Clarke): I see that no one else wants to speak.

Mr. Th  berge, thank you for appearing before the committee. I wish you good luck and continued courage for the events that you may encounter after this vote.

As for the bilingualism of Supreme Court judges and the coercive power this committee would like to grant you, remember that it is not up to you to determine whether this is practical, that is our job. However, if ever you have this power, what we ask is that you use it.

We will now vote. My colleagues will be voting, but I do not have the right to vote, unfortunately.

(Motion agreed to.)

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Alupa Clarke): Now that the vote has been held, we can move on to the rest.

Ms. Lapointe, you will therefore be entrusted with reporting to the House of Commons on the number of yeas and nays.

We are going to suspend the meeting and return in a few minutes to discuss next week's agenda.

Thank you, Mr. Th  berge.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

[Proceedings continue in camera]

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