



HOUSE OF COMMONS
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES
CANADA

43rd PARLIAMENT, 2nd SESSION

Standing Committee on Official Languages

EVIDENCE

NUMBER 019

Thursday, February 25, 2021

Chair: Mr. Emmanuel Dubourg



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• (1540)

[*Translation*]

The Chair (Mr. Emmanuel Dubourg (Bourassa, Lib.)): I call this meeting to order.

[*English*]

Welcome to meeting number 19 of the House of Commons Standing Committee on Official Languages.

[*Translation*]

The committee is meeting on its study of Government Measures to Protect and Promote French in Quebec and in Canada. This is our first meeting on this study.

Madam Clerk, are there any replacements for members participating in person?

The Clerk of the Committee (Ms. Josée Harrison): There is no one in the room today.

We have Mr. Scarpaleggia, who is replacing Ms. Lalonde.

Mr. Mazier is replacing Mr. Williamson once again today.

The Chair: Thank you, and welcome, everyone.

[*English*]

To ensure an orderly meeting, I would like to outline a few rules to follow.

[*Translation*]

For those participating virtually, I would like to take this opportunity to remind all participants to this meeting that screenshots or taking photos of your screen is not permitted, and also highlight the fact that this was mentioned by Speaker Rota on September 29, 2020.

[*English*]

Members and witnesses may speak in the official language of their choice. Interpretation services are available for this meeting. You have the choice at the bottom of your screen of “floor”, “English” or “French”.

[*Translation*]

Before speaking, click on the microphone icon to activate your own mic. When you are done speaking, please put your mic on ‘mute’ to minimize any interference.

[*English*]

As a reminder, all comments by members and witnesses should be addressed through the chair.

[*Translation*]

When speaking, please speak slowly and clearly.

[*English*]

Unless there are exceptional circumstances, the use of headsets with a boom microphone is mandatory for everyone participating remotely.

[*Translation*]

Should any technical challenges arise, please advise the Chair. Please note that we may need to suspend a few minutes as we need to ensure all members are able to participate fully.

I won't read the information usually intended for those participating in person. We know there is no one in the room today.

I would like to offer a warm welcome to our witnesses and to inform them that they will have a total of seven and a half minutes for their opening remarks, which will be followed by a period of questions from members of the committee.

I am in the habit of using a yellow card to indicate that you have one minute left. When I wave the red card, that means that your speaking time is over.

Our witnesses this afternoon are, from the Association des juristes d'expression française du Nouveau-Brunswick, Érik Labelle Eastaugh, Professor and Director of the International Observatory for Language Rights, Faculty of Law, Université de Moncton, and, from Impératif français, Jean-Paul Perreault, President, who is accompanied by François Côté, Lawyer.

Mr. Labelle Eastaugh, you have the floor for seven and a half minutes.

Mr. Érik Labelle Eastaugh (Professor and Director of the International Observatory for Language Rights, Faculty of Law, Université de Moncton, Association des juristes d'expression française du Nouveau-Brunswick): Mr. Chair, honourable members of the committee, first, I want to thank you for giving me the opportunity to address you as part of your important work on the future of language rights in Canada.

I also want to say I'm glad to see that all of you have turned on your cameras. This is quite different from the courses I have been giving since the pandemic started.

Given my occupation, my comments will address legal aspects of the subjects taken up by the committee pursuant to its motion of November 24, 2020. I propose to address briefly the following three themes: first, the respective constitutional roles of the federal government and the provinces in linguistic matters; second, the relationship between the principle of equality in Canadian law and the concept of asymmetry; and, third, the approach Parliament should take to regulating federal works, undertakings or businesses.

First, language as an area of jurisdiction falls within the purviews of both the federal and provincial governments. Each order of government has the power to legislate on language matters that are ancillary to its areas of jurisdiction.

In addition, the Constitution imposes on some governments, both federal and provincial, specific duties to protect the French language. Accordingly, language planning is not and cannot be the responsibility of a single level of government. To wit, subsection 16(3) of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms encourages Parliament and the provincial legislatures to pass legislation to advance equality of English and French in Canadian society.

The principle of equality of the official languages, including its relationship with the concept of asymmetry, is a frequently recurring issue in recent debates on the modernization of the Official Languages Act. In this regard, I believe some clarifications are in order.

First, no one can deny that English and French are asymmetrical from a sociological standpoint. The enormous appeal of English, stemming partly from its large number of speakers, means that francophone communities—whether they are a minority or majority within a province—must make a much greater effort than anglophone communities to maintain their vitality and develop in their language. This sociological difference leads some to claim that the equality principle enshrined in the Charter and the Official Languages Act puts French at a disadvantage rather than supporting it. They say this principle requires the two languages to be treated equally. This view is mistaken.

It is worth remembering that the official languages system was established in order to strengthen French and protect francophones, who were severely disadvantaged. English needs no law to protect it. While the Official Languages Act is based on the principle of equality between English and French, its very existence is the result and evidence of a recognition that English and French are unequal.

The principle of linguistic equality, as defined by the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism and as recognized by the courts, is designed to give francophone communities the capacity to maintain their vitality and develop despite the sociological asymmetry that exists. It is thus a "substantive" rather than "formal" equality principle. Unlike formal equality, substantive equality requires the government to account for the asymmetries between the two linguistic communities and sometimes apply different standards.

Indeed, the case law on language rights consistently takes into account the sociological asymmetry between English and French. Let me give you some examples. In the Ford decision, which concerns the signage requirements of Quebec's Charter of the French

Language, the Supreme Court of Canada recognized that French is under threat and that the Quebec government has a special role to play in protecting it.

Furthermore, the cases dealing with section 23 of the Charter, including *Solski*, which concerned bridging schools, show that this provision must be interpreted in light of the specific context of each linguistic community. In fact, section 23 applies to Quebec asymmetrically because of an explicit exception in the Constitution Act, 1982. As a result, if Parliament wishes to take additional measures to protect and promote French as a vulnerable language, it can do so within the current system, without breaching its fundamental principles.

• (1545)

For months now, the debate surrounding the promotion of French has been fuelled by the idea that Parliament should pass legislation bringing federal works, undertakings or businesses located in Quebec under the Charter of the French Language. However, since the purpose of such legislation would be to guarantee francophone workers the right to work in their language without facing discrimination and to guarantee the public the right to be served in French, it is neither necessary nor desirable to abandon the current framework. Parliament could easily achieve this outcome by making federal works, undertakings or businesses subject to the Official Languages Act. By contrast, an approach based on the Charter of the French Language would have significant drawbacks.

First, such an approach would apply only to Quebec. Consequently, Parliament would be straying significantly from the federal government's basic linguistic duties. When the official languages system was set up, a "territorial" model—such as that used in Switzerland—in which language rights would vary from province to province, was explicitly rejected. Instead, a "mixed" model was adopted, in which the same rights are granted to francophones across the country, subject to a numerical criterion at the local level. Following this principle, it would be difficult to justify legislation that grants rights to francophones in Montreal but not to those in Moncton or Sudbury.

Second, legislation that draws directly from the wording of the Charter of the French Language, which includes some bills introduced in the past, could contravene subsection 16(1) of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. The Charter of the French Language is based on the principle of the primacy of French, and the wording of the rights it confers reflects that principle. Federal legislation that reprises that structure could be challenged under section 16 of the Charter, as it would give rights to French that it does not give to English.

On the other hand, parts IV and V of the Official Languages Act grant essentially the same rights to francophones as the Charter of the French Language, but without creating a hierarchy between English and French. With that in mind, the Association des juristes d'expression française du Nouveau-Brunswick welcomes the proposals that Minister Joly recently made in this regard. However, we will have to examine the resulting bill before reaching a final position.

With that, I thank you once again for the opportunity to appear before you.

I would be happy to take your questions.

• (1550)

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. Labelle Eastaugh.

You may send us your notes, if you wish. They could be of use to the members of the committee and to our analysts.

We will begin a period of questions and answers, during which each party will have six minutes.

We will begin with Mr. Blaney.

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

Hon. Steven Blaney (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Welcome to our committee, Mr. Labelle Eastaugh.

We were hanging on your every word during your presentation, as your students must do as well.

Are there any points that you would like to go back over.

I was struck by two points in your speech.

First, you said that "no one can deny that English and French are asymmetrical from a sociological standpoint."

Mr. René Arseneault (Madawaska—Restigouche, Lib.): I have a point of order, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Yes, I just realized what's happening.

Pardon me, Mr. Blaney, but we have three witnesses for the first hour. We also have the representatives from Impératif français. My apologies.

Consequently, we will hear from Impératif français and then come back to you.

Hon. Steven Blaney: We'll sit back and listen.

The Chair: Yes.

We now have Mr. Perreault and Mr. Côté from Impératif français. I don't know which of you would like to start.

You also have seven and a half minutes.

Mr. Joël Godin (Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier, CPC): I have a point of order, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Yes, Mr. Godin. I am listening.

Mr. Joël Godin: I'd like to know whether we received the speaking notes from this afternoon's witnesses. I know we haven't re-

ceived any from Mr. Labelle Eastaugh. You requested them from him.

However, I'd like to know whether we've received those from the representatives of Impératif français. My question is for the clerk.

The Chair: As far as I know, we haven't received them, but I will turn the floor over to Madam Clerk.

The Clerk: As you know, all documents forwarded to the members of the committee must be in both official languages. I cannot distribute them until they have been translated. Consequently, we will have them translated and then forward them to the members.

The Chair: Thank you very much for that clarification.

I now turn the floor over to Mr. Perreault and Mr. Côté.

You have seven and a half minutes.

Go ahead.

Mr. François Côté (Lawyer, Impératif français): Good afternoon, everyone.

I will be speaking since Mr. Perreault, the president of Impératif français, seems to be having technical issues. He will probably join us later.

Good afternoon, Mr. Chair, members of the distinguished committee and citizens of Quebec watching these live or recorded proceedings.

It is an honour for me to appear before this parliamentary committee. Special thanks and a nod as well to Impératif français and its president, Mr. Perreault.

I am going to present three simple, clear and detailed legislative proposals. We believe that they are entirely feasible from a legal standpoint and that the federal government could adopt them as a tangible contribution to stemming the decline of the French language in Quebec in its areas of jurisdiction. All it would take—could this be too big a price to pay?—is the political will to take real action to that end.

The recommendations and legislative proposals that we are submitting to the federal government are set forth in detail in the 60-page brief we submitted to the House of Commons on February 5. Appended thereto are detailed proposals and amendments to the legislative model that the government could readily enact.

We have chosen to focus our recommendations on three specific points. In our view, they are of the utmost importance and do not prejudice the many other language issues involving the Government of Quebec within the federation. They have all evolved...

The Chair: Pardon me for interrupting you, Mr. Côté. I would ask you please to speak more slowly for the interpretation, which is being provided at the same time.

• (1555)

Mr. François Côté: Of course.

All our proposals have evolved from a common core idea: that the individualistic symmetrical equality model of bilingualism long and currently advocated by the federal government merely proclaims an artificial and superficial equality whose actual usefulness to Quebec is debatable in that it absolutely fails to protect the collective language rights of the Quebec nation in respect of its sole common language, French.

In our view, the equality of status and equal rights model in place at the federal level, under which English and French are treated equally, is merely the equality of La Fontaine's iron pot and clay pot in a North American context.

We believe it is time to undo that dysfunctional model and to adopt an asymmetrical and territorial bilingualism approach whereby, in a collective perspective broader than individual claims alone, the French language would be granted distinct, reinforced and special protection to reflect the North American reality and the fact that the language question is not merely an individual one in Quebec. It is a societal issue that calls for the permanent retention of a strong francophone majority within the population of Quebec, a condition associated with the very existence of the Quebec nation. History has shown that this is true, and contemporary reality still does so today.

That being said, our three proposals are as follows.

First, we suggest that the Charter of the French Language be extended to apply to private businesses under federal jurisdiction. The idea would be to extend the Charter fully to embrace private businesses under federal jurisdiction so that Quebec workers employed by those businesses may finally enjoy the same rights as the millions of their counterparts who are already protected by that act in the rest of Quebec's private sector.

In tangible terms, we propose two ways to achieve that end. The first would simply be for Ottawa to allow the National Assembly of Quebec to proceed with this extension on its own, which would be entirely feasible from a constitutional standpoint under the constitutional double aspect doctrine, which was recognized and clarified in the Canadian Western Bank judgment. The federal government could also proceed on its own, and, for that purpose, we would suggest that it amend the Canada Labour Code by adding a provision incorporating by reference the provisions of the Charter of the French Language so that the Code retains the Charter's operative legislative intent.

It is our firm view that, on this specific issue, an amendment to the Official Languages Act would probably be a bad idea. The OLA is a public act, designed to regulate the public service and services to citizens far more so than private-sector labour relations. Remodeling it in that way could cause problems of legislative consistency. Furthermore, extending it, even if only to expand current federal language policy in this field, would not solve the problem but rather conceal it under a legislative veil. What is really necessary is a comprehensive and detailed regime that has proven itself and functions smoothly, a regime such as that of the Charter of the French Language, which would also come with decades of instruction, jurisprudence and legal stability.

Furthermore, in this matter—and we support the territorial approach here—the National Assembly is clearly much closer than Ottawa to the reality of businesses in Quebec and, in our view, is the most legitimate political, legislative and democratic partner in the federation to address these kinds of issues.

Our second proposal would be to amend the Official Languages Act to establish a special regime to protect the French language in Quebec and in Canada's national capital region, given its undeniable importance to the federation. Our second proposal thus submitted would be to amend the Official Languages Act to include a detailed protection regime for the language rights of public servants in Quebec and in the federal capital to fully work and communicate in French in the workplace, based on sections 45 and 46 of the Charter of the French Language, thus precluding all forms of linguistic pressure or discrimination in hiring and employment.

We propose here to adopt, not only the spirit of the Charter of the French Language, and to transpose it to the federal level, but also the legal regime and court access rights that it entails—adapted to the federal context, but along the same lines—to guarantee genuine and effective language rights for federal public servants using French in Quebec, more than 44% of whom are revealed by the recent reports of the Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages as suffering from linguistic insecurity in the workplace in a culture that is transitioning to English. Once again, the Charter of the French Language appears to be the ideal model to combat this situation.

● (1600)

I'll speed up a little but will then be happy to answer your questions.

Our third and final proposal will be to revisit the constitutional issue and to suggest a return to the initial version of the Charter of the French Language as an official statute. The time has come to turn the page on the Supreme Court's judgment in Blaikey, a decision it rendered more than 40 years ago in a different constitutional context from the present one, having since evolved to enable Quebec to establish French as the sole official language of its legislation.

A strange situation prevails in Canada: under section 133 of the Constitution Act, 1867, Quebec alone is subject to a legislative bilingualism obligation, whereas, just next door, Ontario may publish its statutes in its official language, English, and translate them into French. We are merely seeking equality, a symbolic change that would have a powerful effect on generational renewal and immigration.

Lastly, a brief word simply to provide context for my remarks. Our comments focus solely on the situation of Quebec, without prejudice to francophones outside Quebec. We share their concerns but here are focusing solely on Quebec.

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

We are still waiting for Mr. Perreault to join us, but we will now move on to the period of questions.

Members of the committee, as you know, it is my thankless task to manage time, and I therefore inform you that the next speeches will be limited to five minutes.

Mr. Blaney, go ahead for five minutes, please.

Hon. Steven Blaney: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'll skip my brief introduction.

This is interesting because, this time, we're hearing testimony from two individuals and two, at times, contradictory versions.

I'm turning to you, Mr. Labelle Eastaugh, to ask you a question. So you acknowledge that there's a sociological asymmetry and that this proves that the current version of the act hasn't achieved its objectives.

Exactly how do you propose to build recognition for that actual asymmetry?

I'll put the same question to Mr. Côté.

Mr. Érik Labelle Eastaugh: Thank you for your question.

First, Supreme Court precedent is very clear. The asymmetry between the two communities has to be considered in interpreting the rights that already exist. Consider the comment I made at the outset: the very purpose in creating the system of language rights that we have today was to protect French in particular. Consequently, those rights are designed, first and foremost, to protect the French language and the equality of francophones. In my view, to criticize that system for its apparent symmetry is to fail to understand the context in which those measures were adopted and to lose sight of the way the courts have interpreted those standards.

I don't have a comprehensive proposal for you, except to say that the way to meet the needs of each community should be assessed on a case-by-case basis consistent with the provincial context and the linguistic dynamic concerned.

Hon. Steven Blaney: I'll be more specific, Mr. Labelle Eastaugh.

The Standing Committee on Official Languages has always scrutinized the fate of francophone minorities outside Quebec. Based on our current reading, however, we realize that there's a minority that we have neglected for decades. That's the Quebec minority, Quebec, the French Canadian heart of North America as a whole. I thought you would have proposals to make on the subject, and that's the context in which I asked my question.

Mr. Côté, people say that we shouldn't change the act, that everything's fine and that there's a symmetry. You, on the other hand, advocate an asymmetrical approach. How should we go about that?

You've made some proposals for Quebec, but I'd like to hear what you have to say about how we could take that turn and expand the scope of the Official Languages Act to include what I would call the Quebec francophone minority in North America as a whole.

Mr. François Côté: My answer is simple: that wouldn't be the way to go. I don't think the Official Languages Act is the way to go if you really want to protect the language rights of Quebec's majority francophone society.

The individualistic model is the model on which the Official Languages Act is based, and it may have its benefits. I won't comment on the communities that are demographically in the minority in their regions, but the act—it's the way it's made—can't really protect the language rights of a community that forms the majority in its territory but is a minority in a larger region.

To provide better protection for the language rights of the francophone community in Quebec, which forms a minority within the federation, we think that Canada should really defer to the National Assembly of Quebec, delegate powers to it and move toward Quebec's more broadly territorial approach to the law. We think the territorial model is really the one to follow.

• (1605)

Hon. Steven Blaney: I see, but Quebec nevertheless has its challenges, particularly in education.

My last question is for Mr. Labelle Eastaugh.

You propose that federal entities within Quebec's borders should be made subject to the Official Languages Act. Would that apply where numbers warrant, somewhat as the government proposes? Is that the approach you advocate so that the employees of federal institutions in francophone areas can work in French?

Mr. Érik Labelle Eastaugh: Yes. I think that's the approach that should be taken. It's also the one that has been adopted for federal services: services are not provided uniformly across the country, but solely in regions where there is significant demand. The question of the specific characteristics of the private sector should obviously be examined to determine the kind of geographic division that should be adopted. However, that approach would be similar to the one adopted for federal services.

Hon. Steven Blaney: That's perfect. Thank you very much.

I believe my speaking time is over. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: That is indeed the case. Thank you, Mr. Blaney.

Mr. Arseneault, you have the floor for the next five minutes.

Mr. René Arseneault: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I would have liked to speak to the president of Impératif français, Mr. Perreault. Is he with us?

The Chair: No, he's having technical difficulties.

Mr. René Arseneault: All right. In that case, my questions will be for Mr. Côté.

Considering my surname, where I'm from and my accent, you can probably guess that I'm one of those francophones outside Quebec who unfortunately has had more than 400 years' experience struggling against assimilation and the decline of the language of Antonine Maillet.

Yvon Barrière, the first vice-president for the Quebec region of the Public Service Alliance of Canada, appeared here two days ago. He told us a story about what you and I were discussing that I'd like to pass on to you.

Mr. Barrière sat on a committee of a dozen or so senior federal public servants, all but one of whom were francophones, Quebecers for the most part, or French speakers, including the committee chair. Simultaneous interpretation service was proactively offered for those meetings, and all the elements necessary to honour language rights were in place. Mr. Barrière said that he suddenly realized at one of the meetings that everyone was speaking English, despite the simultaneous interpretation service. As it turned out, since all the francophones were speaking English, the interpreters had to interpret their comments into their mother tongue, rather than the other way around.

I've experienced that as well. However, the circumstances the witness described were striking: since all the participants were francophone, with the exception of a single unilingual anglophone, they were under no obligation to speak English.

How do you explain that phenomenon?

Mr. François Côté: Thank you for that question.

We certainly wish that was just an anecdote. Unfortunately, we hear a lot of stories of that kind. In reality, the symmetrical equality of official language rights and status in the public service is only a superficial equality. French is presented as just an option, equal to English, and...

Mr. René Arseneault: Pardon me for interrupting, Mr. Côté, because I only have five minutes.

Mr. François Côté: That's fine.

Mr. René Arseneault: Here is a striking example.

According to one of the documents we received from Impératif français, the Official Languages Act has a dominant share of responsibility for the decline of the French fact in Quebec.

I cited that example of the francophones, most of them Quebecers, who weren't forced to speak English in any way. Everything was in place to ensure respect for bilingualism. And yet English was used during the meetings. How can you say the Official Languages Act has failed to achieve its purpose in that case?

Mr. François Côté: In fact, you just said it: that's just another example.

There's a culture of transitioning to English under mere passive pressure, an actual institutional culture in which English is the language of business, the language of success and the dominant language that naturally asserts itself in the presence of asymmetrical equality of rights. Why does this situation occur? Because the Official Languages Act doesn't provide differentiated or enhanced protection for the fundamental right to work and develop in French in the public service.

• (1610)

Mr. René Arseneault: Mr. Côté, what you're saying is completely contrary to the example I gave you. I share your concerns over the decline of the French fact in North America, both in and outside Quebec, but there was no urgency in the case I mentioned. Nothing compelled anyone to speak in the other language. So I don't understand.

Mr. François Côté: That's exactly the problem. You're entirely right. We regret that kind of situation. That's why we should...

Mr. René Arseneault: Yes, but how do you explain it? The act doesn't explain it. It's not the protection...

Mr. François Côté: It's North American geopolitics.

Mr. René Arseneault: Do you agree with me that the legislative and regulatory protection of language rights didn't cause that?

Mr. François Côté: No, Mr. Arseneault. The protection isn't great enough to allow for the Canadian and North American context. We need more.

Mr. René Arseneault: If I transposed that same example to Quebec, where people live in francophone culture much more than I do, would that mean that even Bill 101 had failed to achieve its objective?

Mr. François Côté: May I answer, or is my time over, Mr. Chair?

The Chair: You have 15 seconds left in which to respond, Mr. Côté.

Mr. François Côté: Bill 101 is an attempt to achieve that objective, but it's unfortunately weighed down by a certain amount of case law, against which measures will have to be adopted at the provincial level. However, its spirit is there. Bill 101 has definitely made major progress possible. The present situation is not at all comparable to the situation before it was passed. The federal government would do well to draw from it.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Côté.

I saw that you raised your hand, Mr. Labelle Eastaugh. You will definitely be able to speak when other questions are put to you.

I would now like to turn the floor over to Mr. Beaulieu for the next five minutes.

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

Mr. Côté, you made the following statement: the federal government's language policy derives from an individualistic and symmetrical conception based on portable individual rights, as it were, whereas Bill 101 is based more on a territorial model. In other words, an asymmetrical model would result in a more efficient administration of the act.

Allow me to explain that in my own way. With respect to language planning, we can see that no minority languages are assimilated into the majority language in any country, such as Switzerland and Belgium, that has a more territorial model of bilingualism. The contrary is true in Canada, where the minority language is being assimilated. In fact, minority languages are being assimilated in every country in the world that has a system based on individual and symmetrical bilingualism, as in Canada.

Is that consistent with what you're thinking?

Mr. François Côté: I would say yes, absolutely.

International studies have even been done on the use of official languages. Here's an interesting example. In the international organizations, when several official languages are declared equal and are left to each person's individual choice, the result is that English systematically dominates. That's the case at the United Nations and the Council of Europe, where English is used as much as 70% of the time, which is also particularly ironic now that the United Kingdom has left the European Union.

The idea of declaring an individualistic equality of choice of language always benefits English. It's unavoidable, at least in North America.

So I absolutely agree with your interpretation of the situation. It's partly for that reason that the territorial model must be favoured. The federal legislator would therefore do very well to draw from its Quebec counterpart and adopt at least the spirit, if not the text, of the Charter of the French Language. Measures are needed to provide genuine protection for the collective right to use French in federal businesses and the public service, not to mention our constitutional law.

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: I'd like to go back to the example cited by the first regional vice-president for Quebec of the Public Service Alliance of Canada, when he appeared before the committee. He said that conferences were often conducted solely in English and that documents were often in English only. I think that's just a matter of habit. Many federal employees have reported to us that, whenever they have a contact outside Quebec, it's very hard to work in French.

You propose that amendments be made to guarantee the right to work in French in federal institutions in Quebec. However, I can't think of any measure in particular. Could you discuss that with us a little more? As I see it, the majority language, English, will tend to predominate as long as French is not the common language in a given place.

Ms. Joly has previously said that measures would be taken for that purpose. What measures are you thinking of in particular? Exactly what are your suggestions?

• (1615)

Mr. François Côté: I can't comment on measures that the minister will ultimately propose. We can get a vague idea from reading public news releases, but we're waiting to see the content of those measures, as it were.

As for specific measures that should be adopted, I want to go back once again to the Charter of the French Language. Sections 45 and 46 offer effective and efficient protection for the genuine right to work and communicate in French in the workplace, without prejudice to English, of course. Differentiated and special protection for Quebec based on those provisions would be entirely appropriate.

In the brief that we submitted, we propose a legislative amendment that would consist of three clauses. The idea is simply to take the regime of the Charter of the French Language and integrate it into the Official Languages Act in order to regulate the federal public service and offer effective remedies, which is to say the possibility of litigation, instead of simply complaining to the Commissioner of Official Languages.

We really need to draw on a model that has been in place for more than 40 years, has proven itself and can carry real weight in the courts, and that's the Charter of the French Language. The federal government would do well to draw from it if it genuinely seeks to protect the language rights of its employees who work in Quebec and in the federal capital.

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

Thank you, Mr. Beaulieu; you only had a dozen seconds left.

We will now go to Mr. Boulerice for the next five minutes.

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thanks to the witnesses, Mr. Labelle Eastaugh and Mr. Côté, for being with us today. It's much appreciated.

I'll begin with you, Mr. Côté.

All last week, the Liberals and Minister Joly communicated extensively about a possible modernization of the Official Languages Act. We were expecting a bill, but what we got instead was a working paper that will bring forth a committee, which will bring forth a recommendation. And yet the Liberals have been in power for five years. The act hasn't been amended for nearly 30 years.

Do you view this approach as a kind of last-minute electoral manoeuvre by a minority government aware that none of its proposals will be adopted?

Mr. François Côté: Yes, that's absolutely correct. We think it's a purely dilatory tactic designed to buy time so it can push back the introduction of a bill or the release of a white paper.

By the way, a professor at the Université de Moncton whose name escapes me has tracked the number of times since the first Trudeau government that the Liberals have discussed making amendments to the Official Languages Act: it's more than 150. The government talks about it, but does nothing. In my opinion, continuing to discuss it, conducting studies and proposing white papers are dilatory tactics enabling them, with their fine-sounding words, to postpone the matter until after the election.

Incidentally, I'm very pleased that you asked me that question because it's an opportunity for me to tell all the members of this committee and, more broadly, the House that it will be essential that all the political parties in Ottawa clarify their official positions and offer specific proposals before the election. It is absolutely out of the question that they postpone that until afterward. They have to stop trying to buy time.

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice: Thank you, Mr. Côté.

As you know, we in the NDP have always been in favour of granting the same language rights to individuals working in Quebec businesses under federal jurisdiction. This is a demand that we support. The situation is absurd: you have certain rights if you work for Mouvement Desjardins, notably the right to communicate and work in French, but you don't have those same rights if you work for the Royal Bank. It clearly makes no sense.

On the other hand, Mr. Côté, I'm quite surprised to see you're not really concerned about the rights of francophones outside Quebec. Perhaps they're in your blind spot or you're less sensitive to them. However, it seems to me you should show some solidarity.

I'd like to speak to Mr. Labelle Eastaugh on the subject.

You said we could show some consistency by granting the same rights, such as the right to communicate with one's employer and to work in French, using federal tools. I'd like you to explain that to us a little further.

• (1620)

Mr. Érik Labelle Eastaugh: Thank you, Mr. Boulerice.

I'll relate this to a matter I'm involved in. When I put on my lawyer's hat, I'm part of the team that represents Andrée Dionne, a Quebec public servant who worked for the Office of the Superintendent of Financial Institutions for 20 years and who is currently defending his right to work in French before the Federal Court of Appeal.

We noticed in his case that the Treasury Board Secretariat and the Department of Justice long ago adopted a very narrow interpretation of the rights that are conferred by part V of the Official Languages Act, which concerns language of work. This problem was also highlighted by former Supreme Court Justice Michel Bastarache. Public servants' rights are robust, but they aren't implemented because the government interprets them too narrowly.

One of the measures I would propose, if Parliament wanted to take action in this regard, would be to amend the wording of the act to clarify current obligations respecting language of work. I believe that those obligations, if correctly interpreted, would be enough to protect the rights that *Impératif français* is claiming.

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice: As I have only a few seconds left, I'll ask you one final question.

Minister Joly proposes to increase the powers of the Commissioner of Official Languages. Do you think that's enough? Should we also impose monetary penalties? That doesn't seem to be done at the present time?

Mr. Érik Labelle Eastaugh: I think that would be a step forward.

I would remind you that the Federal Court has the power to impose monetary penalties in respect of public law damages. The option is available but rarely exercised.

So it might be a good idea for Parliament to give the Commissioner a clear mandate in that area.

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice: Thank you very much, gentlemen.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Boulerice and Mr. Labelle Eastaugh.

I saw that you had raised your hand, Mr. Côté, but Mr. Boulerice's speaking time was unfortunately over. Let's hope you get a chance to speak later in response to the next questions.

I now turn the floor over to Mr. Williamson for four minutes.

Mr. Joël Godin: Mr. Chair, I think there's some confusion about the speakers list, since Mr. Williamson isn't present. With your permission, I'll take the floor.

The Chair: Please, go ahead, Mr. Godin.

Mr. Joël Godin: I'd like to share my speaking time with Mr. Dalton.

I'm going to expand upon my NDP colleague's comments on the importance assigned to the French language.

Mr. Côté, as you put it so well, we need to respect the French language and stop using this subject to tug at people's heartstrings only during pre-election periods. Indeed, it's important for every party to clarify its position.

My view is that Canadians will know what to do about the French language in the first 100 days of the Conservative Party leader's term of office. Official languages and language minorities are important in Quebec and elsewhere in Canada.

You spoke about a symmetrical system for official languages. Here, we're in a federal forum with representation for several territories. The Quebec government administers the French language within the province of Quebec, whereas our study is on government measures to protect and promote the French language in Quebec and Canada.

I would therefore ask you to be more receptive and not to see things only from the Quebec perspective in seeking a solution. Let's stop putting French and English in opposition to one another and work together to promote French. I'm more interested in promoting a language than in isolating it by being content with solidarity in a small area. I prefer the bigger picture and extending the French language across Canada.

I'd like to hear your opinion on this, Mr. Côté.

Mr. François Côté: Thank you for your question.

In fact, I share your broader approach.

In response also to Mr. Boulerice's earlier question, I would say that if we focused our study and our proposals on the Quebec situation, it was simply because it fit into the framework of our intellectual research project. We are definitely not opposed to the idea of extending the measures we are proposing beyond Quebec. The truth is that New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Ontario and Manitoba could take a cue from the measures we are proposing in our brief. They would be applicable in Quebec for all areas of federal jurisdiction. Indeed, there is absolutely nothing to prevent the federal government from applying analogous measures in other provinces. We are in a federation, not a unitary state. In a federation, the provincial distinctions within each of the provincial states deserve differentiated treatment.

We are recommending differentiated treatment for the territory of Quebec, the seat of the francophonie and the only province in which francophones are in the majority. However, there is absolutely nothing to prevent the federal government from extending such measures outward to also protect francophones outside Quebec. If this were to be the case, we would be very pleased. There would be no opposition from us.

• (1625)

Mr. Joël Godin: Thank you, Mr. Côté.

How much time do I have left, Mr. Chair?

The Chair: You still have 45 seconds.

Mr. Joël Godin: I'd like to give my remaining time to my colleague, Mr. Dalton.

The Chair: You have the floor, Mr. Dalton.

Mr. Marc Dalton (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge, CPC): I want to say that I really liked Mr. Côté's comments. He has argued his point very well.

The Standing Committee on Official Languages had asked the government to introduce a bill before Christmas, but that never happened. As you mentioned, all we ever get from the government is empty words. There are projects and plans, but what we really want is concrete proposals. We want a bill before the next election. That's the problem we were facing at the moment.

The Chair: Unless you can answer in under 10 seconds, Mr. Côté, your speaking time is over.

Mr. François Côté: Whether or not Justin Trudeau and Mélanie Joly are happy about it, the act doesn't believe in Santa Claus and we need concrete measures, before the next election, at least.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Côté.

Mr. Duguid, you have the floor for the next four minutes.

[English]

Mr. Duguid, go ahead.

Mr. Terry Duguid (Winnipeg South, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I apologize. My computer crashed. I had to reboot and get back in.

It's good to see everyone again.

I think my question would be directed at Mr. Labelle Eastaugh.

Two of the members of this committee are from Manitoba, which I have said many times to this committee has a very vibrant and historic francophone community which, of course, has been there for centuries.

There is evidence that French is in decline in western Canada. Across western Canada there is a shortage of French teachers and a shortage of spots for being educated in the French language. This compromises communities' constitutional right to education in the minority language. Communities are having to resort to the courts to assert their rights.

I wonder if you might expand on your reading of the white paper released by Minister Joly not too long ago, and whether you see an improvement in that vein, where communities do not have to resort to the courts. What advice might you have to keep us out of the courts for these communities to realize their constitutional rights?

Mr. Érik Labelle Eastaugh: Thank you, Mr. Duguid.

One comment that is positive in relation to the white paper is that the government, for the first time, is clearly and openly recognizing the importance of institutions to the survival and development of minority language communities in Canada. That's a point that minorities have been litigating in the courts for 40 years, and it's a welcome development to see the federal government commit to supporting it.

In the future, if there is any hope of reversing the trends that you noted in your comments, it is going to have to go through a substantial investment in developing minority community institutions, which are the spaces within which a language lives. If it doesn't have those spaces, the language will simply die out.

With respect to keeping out of the courts, I would say that governments could start by implementing their obligations in the spirit of generosity, rather than adopting the restrictive interpretations that their departments of justice pose to them.

I would recommend that if Parliament wants to help communities avoid that kind of a problem, it could try to minimize ambiguity in the law and legislate clear obligations when it comes to developing minority community institutions, although I realize that's a challenge because you want the obligations imposed to be adaptable from one context to another.

You might also consider reversing the burden of proof when it comes to the judicial process in litigating language rights issues. Right now, if somebody thinks that their rights have been violated under the act, they file a complaint, and the commissioner prepares a report, but then if they feel they need to turn to the courts to solve the issue because the institution is refusing to comply, they then have to build the case in Federal Court.

One thing you might consider is creating a reversal where, if there is a report from the commissioner concluding that there has been a breach, it is up to the institution to challenge that finding in court rather than individual citizens, who often don't have a lot of means with which to do so.

• (1630)

Mr. Terry Duguid: Maybe there is a quick comment from Mr. Côté.

The Chair: Yes, in 15 seconds, please.

Mr. François Côté: Thank you.

The charter of the French language actually does that. It imposes a burden of proof on the employer to prove that there is a necessity to speak in English, to alleviate the burden on any plaintiff to have to prove that his language rights were infringed. By transposing the legal regime of the charter of the French language into the federal legislation, it would achieve precisely that objective.

[*Translation*]

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

Thank you, Mr. Duguid.

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

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

One of the proposals we've been hearing about is to amend the Official Languages Act to meet Quebec's demands. It's important to understand that the territorial model Quebec is trying to implement is designed to make French the common language in the workplace, the common language in the province, and the language of newcomers. However, this is not the objective of the Official Languages Act, which instead offers a free choice and guarantees a form of bilingualism. This proposal is impossible in the rest of Canada, where francophones really are in the minority.

The reason why preference should be given to the intent of Bill 101 rather than bilingualism, is that its goal is to make French the common language. By promoting bilingualism, the message sent to newcomers is that they don't need to learn French to integrate into our society, because they can do so equally well through English.

What are your thoughts on this, Mr. Côté?

Mr. François Côté: I completely agree with you. That's the essence of it. It's central to the proposals we submit to the House of Commons. A territorial model is required to genuinely confer a specific and distinct status on the French language. We are proposing it in Quebec, but nothing prevents it from being extended elsewhere.

In Quebec at least, the French language really needs to be the common language, and not simply an individual entitlement. It's the territorial model that will enable us truly to defend a collective language spoken by the majority, while it remains a minority within the federation.

We need to make a clean break with the idea of symmetrical bilingualism and espouse asymmetrical bilingualism, with a territorial structure, in keeping with the intentions of Camille Laurin and the Charter of the French Language. It's the only true way of achieving language protection in Quebec.

Mr. Érik Labelle Eastaugh: I'd like to add a comment, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: You have 10 seconds.

Mr. Érik Labelle Eastaugh: I simply want to say that Mr. Côté is giving a rather unrealistic picture of the impact of Bill 101. I worked for almost two years in a large firm in Montreal and I can tell you that the pattern described earlier by Mr. Arseneault is very widespread among private companies. It's therefore inaccurate to

claim that Bill 101 is clearly more effective than the Official Languages Act.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Labelle Eastaugh.

Mr. Boulerice, You have the floor for the next two minutes.

• (1635)

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

We've certainly seen that the witnesses today are presenting different visions. That's okay, and only to be expected. But I'm glad to see that our two witnesses agree on one thing, and that is the asymmetrical status of the two languages. I believe that it's interesting, and that we should be able to put it to good use in this study in connection with the forthcoming report.

Mr. Labelle Eastaugh, we recently looked at the minister's proposals and working paper. They deal with the language rights of francophone workers outside Quebec, but with due regard to concentrations of francophones, that vary in size from region to region. Some people find this worrisome.

Mr. Arseneault, I recently met some francophone Acadian artists from New Brunswick who did not want New Brunswick to be divided up into small regions, because the rights of francophones would become unequal.

Mr. Labelle Eastaugh, you spoke about federal criteria. What could be proposed to ensure that francophone workers in minority language communities have their rights complied with to the greatest extent possible?

Mr. Érik Labelle Eastaugh: Thank you for the question, Mr. Boulerice.

For workers, the federal government could begin by drawing upon the existing system in the public service. Under the Official Languages Act, some regions are designated bilingual, which is to say that people have a right to choose to work either in French or English. It seems to me that this system could be adapted for private companies. Since a system already exists, I don't see why we wouldn't use it.

We would be worried if the federal government suggested conferring these rights only in majority francophone regions. This would exclude a very significant segment of the Canadian francophonie.

The Chair: Thank you.

That's all the time that we had—

Mr. René Arseneault: I have a point of order, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Go ahead, Mr. Arseneault.

Mr. René Arseneault: What it be possible to remind the witnesses that if they have additional information, they shouldn't hesitate to pass it on to the committee?

The Chair: There, you've just heard the message. Please don't hesitate to send any information to our clerk.

Do you have a point of order, Mr. Beaulieu?

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: Well, Mr. Perreault seems to be there now, so I was wondering whether he was going to be able to speak.

The Chair: We have another group of witnesses waiting for the second hour, and we need to do some sound tests. Unfortunately, we have to manage our time carefully.

Mr. Labelle Eastaugh and Mr. Côté, On behalf of the members of the standing committee on official languages, I would like to thank you sincerely for your evidence. It's important for the study that we are conducting.

And thanks to you too, Mr. Perreault, even though we didn't get to hear you.

I'd like to remind you that Mr. Labelle Eastaugh is the Director of the International Observatory for Language Rights, and a Professor in the Faculty of Law at the University of Moncton. He is also a member of the Association des juristes d'expression française du Nouveau-Brunswick.

Mr. Côté, who is representing Impératif français, spoke to us in the absence of Mr. Perreault, who was experiencing technical difficulties.

Once again, I'd like to thank you and ask you to send us your briefs or reports, because we have just barely begun our study.

We are going to suspend the meeting for a few minutes, and then welcome the next witnesses.

• (1635) _____ (Pause) _____

• (1640)

The Chair: The meeting is called back to order.

The committee is meeting today on its study of government measures to protect and promote French in Quebec and in Canada.

[English]

I would like to make a few comments for the benefit of the witnesses.

[Translation]

Before speaking, please wait until I call your name. When you are ready to speak, click on the microphone icon to activate it. Members will specify to whom their questions are being addressed.

[English]

I would remind everyone that all comments should be addressed through the chair.

[Translation]

Interpretation in this videoconference will work very much as it does in a regular committee meeting. You have the choice, at the bottom of your screen, of either Floor, English or French.

[English]

When speaking, please speak slowly and clearly, and when you are not speaking, your mike should be on mute.

[Translation]

I would now like to welcome the witnesses.

You will have seven and a half minutes for your opening remarks, followed by a round of questions and answers.

As usual, I will advise you when you have a minute of speaking time left and when your time is up.

We will be hearing from the Honourable Serge Joyal, jurist and former senator, appearing as an individual.

We also have with us the Honourable Marlene Jennings, the president of the Quebec Community Groups Network, and Ms. Sylvia Martin-Laforge, the director general of the QCGN.

Mr. Joyal, you have the floor for seven and a half minutes.

Hon. Serge Joyal (Jurist and Former Senator, As an Individual): I will try to use my seven and a half minutes as efficiently as possible.

I would like to thank you for having invited me this afternoon.

I have 45 years of personal experience with Canada's Official Languages Act.

It began in 1976, when I filed a lawsuit in the Quebec Superior Court against Air Canada, which was a Crown corporation at the time, before the Honourable Justice Jules Deschênes. The purpose was to enable Air Canada employees to work in French, and more particularly to obtain an injunction to require Air Canada to translate all its maintenance manuals so that French could really be a language of work.

After that, I was behind the creation of the Standing Committee on Official Languages, of which you are the honourable members today. It came about when I introduced a bill in 1981 with my colleague Mr. Pierre De Bané.

I was also the architect of the Court Challenges Program for sections 16 to 23 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, which delineate the status of French and give it the protection we know today.

I intervened in the Montfort Hospital case in 1997. There is no need for details about this since I believe most of you will remember it.

I also intervened with the president of the Treasury Board in 1998, when Francophone communities were suffering the consequences of the budget cuts decreed by the government of the day. Every single government budget item was affected, except for those pertaining to indigenous groups and for which an exception had been made. There was no exception for official language minority communities, on the other hand. I therefore intervened to have this decision reviewed.

I moved the amendment to part VII of the Official Languages Act in 2005. When our late colleague, Senator Jean-Robert Gauthier retired, we were able to continue the debate and have the amendment to part VII adopted. I will return to this later.

I intervened in 2007 to prevent the elimination of the Court Challenges Program by the government of the day. I supported the Fédération des communautés francophones et acadienne when it threatened to take action against the government to reverse its decision to eliminate the program.

I contributed to the study of the Senate Standing Committee on Official Languages for the 2018 review of the Official Languages Act.

Lastly, in 2019, I responded to a request from the Superior Court of Quebec with respect to the application of section 55 of the Constitution Act, 1982, to adopt an official French version of the Constitution Act, 1867. We are currently defending this in court.

I therefore thank you, given my background, for having invited me here this afternoon.

I will give a brief presentation, but I would imagine that during the round of questions, we will have an opportunity to go into more detail about the points I will have raised.

I'd like to begin by clarifying things for everyone.

My first point pertains to immigration, which is to say that a critical mass of French speakers needs to be maintained. This goal is essential to the vitality of French in Canada. Why? Because the fertility rate has not been keeping pace with the death rate. This is also true in Quebec, my home province. There would be a net annual decline without immigration.

My second point is that Quebec is the province in which people are aging most rapidly. Globally, we are virtually *ex æquo* with Japan. According to the statistics, 25% of Quebecers will be 65 years and over by 2030. This means that 25% of the population will have left the workforce or will no longer be participating actively. It's extremely important to take this statistic into account for any workforce planning.

• (1645)

I would refer you to the editorial in yesterday's, February 24, *Le Devoir*, which reported that the Institut de la statistique du Québec had found that immigrants held 12.2% of all jobs in Quebec 10 years ago, but now held 18%. This means that 250,000 of the jobs were held by immigrants whereas the number held by residents of Quebec declined by 110,000.

It further means that without the demographic resources of immigration, the ratio of francophones to anglophones in Quebec will decline. It is going to drop so much that in some regions, everyday living in French will become extremely difficult.

My view is that this is a key question if we want to understand the dynamics in which we are collectively caught up, as Quebecers and Canadians, on matters of immigration. It's essential to ensure that people who wish to immigrate have access to financially supported training, not only for workers, but also their families, and those who are part of the family unit. This could restore the balance, which in my view is essential in our country.

In closing, I believe that it's extremely important to ensure the discoverability of French works on digital platforms. The new generations are highly influenced by the English language on that in-

strument that every one of us uses these days. I think that the issue of anglicization is a much more important priority and that it requires government initiatives. Otherwise the few random measures we might take will not succeed in reversing the pervasive shift towards English in all spheres of everyday life.

Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'd be happy to join your discussion this afternoon.

• (1650)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Joyal. That's quite the track record.

We'll now move on to the representatives of the Quebec Community Groups Network.

Ms. Jennings and Ms. Martin-Laforge, you have the floor for seven and a half minutes.

[*English*]

Hon. Marlene Jennings (President, Quebec Community Groups Network): Thank you very much.

Good afternoon, members of the committee. My name is Marlene Jennings, and I am the president of the Quebec Community Groups Network. Accompanying me is director general of the QCGN, Sylvia Martin-Laforge.

For the past decade the Government of Canada has been under pressure from official language minority communities to modernize the Official Languages Act. Led by the QCGN, English-speaking Quebecers have actively participated in numerous consultative processes, which led to the Honourable Mélanie Joly's proposals last week on a way forward.

The QCGN's brief on modernizing the Official Languages Act, which was submitted to this committee in November 2018, was developed with the co-operation of a broad segment of the community sector serving English-speaking Quebec. We thank the organizations that took time to contribute.

What are English-speaking Quebec's expectations regarding a modernized act?

It remains that a central guiding principle of the Official Languages Act must be the equality of status of English and French. It must categorically guarantee this equality of status in all institutions subject to the act across Canada.

We're fully aware that the term "equality" has specific legal meaning. That is why the QCGN understands and supports an approach to implementing federal commitments to Canada's English and French linguistic minority communities that is adapted to the specific context and needs of different official language minority communities.

We understand that the French language requires special attention, and we acknowledge the data that demonstrates a national decline in the use of French and the demographic peril of francophone minority communities. We have just heard from Senator Joyal with regard to some of that demographic reality.

In the past, I have issued a statement, shared with the members of this committee, reaffirming our organization's commitment to respecting French as the official language of the province of Quebec and the ongoing work that we do to support and defend French in Quebec and in the rest of Canada.

However, we reject the notion that in the federal sphere, protecting and promoting French necessitates restricting the language rights of English-speaking Quebecers. Too often our community is scapegoated or ignored. Enough of this. The majority of English-speaking Quebecers remained in Quebec after the turmoil of the 1970s. We call Quebec home, and we understand our responsibility to learn and use French in the public space.

After all, it was a group of concerned English parents from Saint-Lambert who, in the 1960s, invented French immersion to ensure that our children could remain and be integrated into French-speaking Quebec. We are so perplexed that our schools were not even mentioned in the government's plans to increase support for French immersion.

Our community institutions—hospitals, libraries, post-secondary institutions—serve all Quebecers, both in English and in French. After all, Jean-François Lisée famously learned English by joining a Scout troop in Thetford Mines. Paul St-Pierre Plamondon attended McGill University, as did Laurent Duvernay-Tardif. Harmonium got its start on CHOM FM.

Our community is not a threat to French. We are not “the others”.

• (1655)

Ms. Sylvia Martin-Laforge (Director General, Quebec Community Groups Network): The Government of Canada's proposals capture important demands made by Quebec's English-speaking community during consultations related to the modernization of the Official Languages Act.

There is a reason for optimism around proposals to strengthen the role of Treasury Board in the coordination of the act and expand the powers of the Commissioner of Official Languages to ensure compliance.

We also welcome the transfer of the court challenges program into the act, thus securing this important mechanism for protecting language rights before the courts.

There are opportunities for increased support to our communities' institutions and provisions for more transparency on federal transfers directed toward our vitality, proposals that are tempered, unfortunately, by the need for provincial co-operation in our province.

Frankly, Quebec does not have a good track record on either front. Centralizing the management and control of health and social services institutions has severely impacted community participation in the leadership of our hospitals. Bill 40 attempted to strip us of

section 23 minority language education rights, a fight that continues before the courts.

Now the Government of Quebec is floating the idea of placing enrolment caps on English CEGEPs, which will have a direct impact on resources available to those colleges.

Quebec has never agreed to binding linguistic clauses or transparency provisions on federal transfers. There is no reason to think it will do so in the future.

Hon. Marlene Jennings: We note that the Government of Canada's proposal represents a fundamental shift in the federal commitment to official languages, and the interpretive effects of this shift on Canadian's official language rights is unclear. This is new ground and, at first blush, could imperil the rights of English-speaking Quebecers down the road.

QCGM and the English-speaking community of Quebec are bitterly disappointed that Minister Joly's proposal document did not address the serious problems facing the members of the English-speaking community of Quebec. Our unemployment rate is chronically higher than that of the majority. We have significantly lower median incomes than French Quebecers and the lowest median income of any of Canada's official language communities. Almost one in five English-speaking Quebecers lives below the poverty line.

The federal government can play a positive role in addressing these realities. We desperately want your committee to recommend to the federal government that they address these issues with the modernization of the Official Languages Act. To not do so would be to tell English-speaking Quebecers, “We're going to let you on the bus, but you gotta sit in the back.”

Thank you.

• (1700)

[*Translation*]

The Chair: I'd like to thank the witnesses for their presentation.

We now have two rounds of questions. In the first round, every member will have five minutes.

Over to you, Mr. Dalton.

Mr. Marc Dalton: Thank you very much.

I very much enjoyed your comments, Senator Joyal. We can learn a lot from you.

You underscored the importance of immigration and the demographic decline in La Belle Province. Quebec already has powers in matters of immigration.

What more can the province do? You mentioned the importance of controlling this. Doesn't the province already have control over it?

Hon. Serge Joyal: What you say is absolutely correct.

As you know, Quebec has had the initiative in matters of selecting immigrants since the 1978 Cullen-Couture agreement, which was renewed by minister McDougall and is still in force. This is important from two standpoints.

On the one hand, there is French-language training for immigrants. I don't know whether you are familiar with the Quebec auditor general's report on the unfortunate ineffectiveness of the French-language training programs for immigrants. In my view, responsibility for the program needs to be redefined. It's absolutely essential.

On the other hand, the Quebec government—and I'm not playing partisan politics here—has reduced the rate of immigration to Quebec. Quebec can reduce its immigration rate by disqualifying or not selecting certain applicants. But in doing so, it is reducing its relative influence in Canada, and this affects you, in the House of Commons.

I'm looking at Mr. Beaulieu. When electoral boundaries are being redistributed, the population ratios in the various regions of the country are always taken into consideration. Look what happened the last time the boundaries were redistributed. Most of the additional members were for Ontario and the western provinces, and only three for Quebec. However, in practice, what happened was not commensurate with actual population increases.

For Quebec, then, determining the quantum of immigration is a very strategic decision if it is to maintain its influence as the main centre for living in French in Canada and North America, as some witnesses said earlier. We are all aware of this. To strengthen the societal leverage of French Quebec, it is important for the population of Quebec not to decline and get steadily smaller, but rather have a steady flow of immigration that is integrated into a French-speaking community—

Mr. Marc Dalton: Excuse me, I have only a few minutes left.

The Chair: You have one minute remaining.

Mr. Marc Dalton: Okay. I'll ask a short question and then address Ms. Jennings.

Is it true that shortly after arriving in Quebec, many immigrants head to Toronto and Vancouver?

Hon. Serge Joyal: I can't give you the details, or provide inter-provincial migration rates, meaning the number of immigrants who arrive in Quebec, become Canadian citizens, and after a while decide to go and settle elsewhere...

• (1705)

Mr. Marc Dalton: Thank you, Mr. Joyal.

I have only a few seconds left and would like to ask Ms. Jennings a question.

The Chair: You have 15 seconds, Mr. Dalton.

[English]

Mr. Marc Dalton: Ms. Jennings, when you came in December you were asked if the government had consulted you regarding the *livre blanc* and you said no. I'm just wondering if you've been contacted since that time. You made some commentary at that time.

Hon. Marlene Jennings: When I appeared in December, QCGN had not been consulted. However, that may have been an impetus. Since then, QCGN has had ongoing discussions with the minister's staff and at times with the minister herself.

The Chair: Thank you so much. Your time is over.

The next MP is Ms. Lattanzio for five minutes, please.

Ms. Patricia Lattanzio (Saint-Léonard—Saint-Michel, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

First off, I would like to thank the witnesses for being present here today. Do know that your input is critical for us.

I would like to start off by directing my questions to QCGN.

We often tend to gloss over the reality of the English minority community in Quebec. I would like for the members around this table to get a good snapshot of this English minority community in Quebec.

Ms. Jennings, I know that you did in your introductory remarks, but more specifically, can you give us examples in terms of their employment opportunities, median income, the question with regard to the retention of their schools, and factors that will assure the vitality of this English minority community? Can you give us a snapshot to the best of your ability?

Thank you.

Hon. Marlene Jennings: Thank you very much for your question.

We all know that being employable and being employed are key indicators and factors for ensuring the vitality of any minority community. Guess what? Here in Quebec, the major employer is the Government of Quebec. The drawbridge of that château has been pulled up against English-speaking Quebecers. Barely 1% of the public service of Quebec are English-speakers.

Then we look to the federal government, saying that maybe we can get our jobs there. Guess what? In all of the federal institutions operating in Quebec that come under the Official Languages Act as it is right now—which is over half of them—English-speaking Quebecers are under-represented. At Correctional Service Canada, of 3,800 employees in Quebec, 110 are English speakers.

If we look at our unemployment rate, it's higher than the majority population. Our median income is the lowest amongst all of official language minority communities in Canada. Eighteen per cent of English-speaking Quebec lives below the low-income cut-off, compared to 12% for francophones in Quebec. Primary and secondary enrolment in English schools is down 60% since the 1970s, yet our bilingualism rate is 69%. It goes as high as 82% amongst our young people.

We're graduating and we're educating them. They are fluently bilingual, but when they try to get a job here, the provincial government closes the door on them. The federal government opens it up a crack. The proposal of Minister Joly doesn't even address that issue. That's a key issue for the vitality of our community. It doesn't address any of those issues.

Ms. Patricia Lattanzio: On my follow-up question, I'm going to ask you to be a little bit clairvoyant. Where do you see this community going in the next five to 10 years? What are some of the biggest challenges you foresee? It begs the question of what the Government of Canada can do to ensure its vitality.

Hon. Marlene Jennings: One, the first thing the Government of Canada can do is confirm linguistic duality and the equality of the two official languages, English and French.

Two, we recognize and support that French is the official language of work in the province of Quebec and that it is the common language in the public sphere. We say to the state, get out of our bedrooms and our homes, please. The language that's spoken in a home is the business of that family. The question is, what language are they speaking in the public sphere outside of the home and what language are they speaking at work? The overwhelming majority of English Quebecers are bilingual, can work in French, and want to work, but the doors have been shut to us.

Unless the federal government addresses some of the key issues that we've talked about, I foresee a very dismal future for the English-speaking minority communities of Quebec. That's number one. Number two is that if our own provincial government continues to refuse to address these issues and instead makes us a scapegoat, I see an even more dismal future.

• (1710)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Patricia Lattanzio: Mr. Chair, my next question is for—

The Chair: Ms. Lattanzio, I'm sorry, but you have no speaking time left.

Ms. Patricia Lattanzio: Thank you. I hope I'll have more time later.

The Chair: Time flies.

Mr. Beaulieu has the floor for the next five minutes.

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: Good afternoon.

Ms. Jennings spoke earlier about equality of status. Outside Quebec, English is the acknowledged common language, the language of integration for immigrants. Allophone language transfers are overwhelmingly towards English, perhaps as high as 99%. Each year, the assimilation of francophones outside Quebec grows apace.

In Quebec, it's the other way around. Anglophone educational institutions are overfunded, at both the primary and secondary levels. Anglophone CEGEPs receive approximately 17% of the funding, even though only 8.1% of the students' mother tongue is English. In university, the gap is even wider.

Without following the lead of what is done in English Canada for francophones, don't you think it would be equitable to strike a better balance? Bill 101 has always aimed at maintaining anglophone

institutions, but for anglophones, not for the entire population, because that would promote language transfers towards English.

What's your view of this, Ms. Jennings?

Hon. Marlene Jennings: To begin with, I don't think the anglophone community should be used as a soccer ball to promote identity politics.

I further believe that the education system under anglophone school boards in Quebec is limited to primary and secondary under section 23 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. All the data, year after year, show that our fifth-grade secondary students achieve the best results on the compulsory provincial examinations. We have therefore proved that we are capable of teaching French properly, and 82% of our cohort of young people are perfectly bilingual.

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: That's true, but only in Montreal.

Hon. Marlene Jennings: When these young people become adults, it's up to them to decide in which language they wish to pursue their education. I began university at McGill and did complete my degree. In my 30s, when I decided to return to school, I chose the Université du Québec à Montréal. I was an adult. If I were to adopt your point of view and the ideology you are propounding, I should have kept to anglophone postsecondary institutions because my primary and secondary education was in English.

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: Ms. Jennings, that's not what I said at all.

The very fact that there are anglophone institutions that can meet the needs of the anglophone community is already much more generous than what is happening in English Canada for francophones. Wanting equity and equality does not amount to playing soccer.

I'll give you another example.

We know that to maintain the demographic weight of francophones in Quebec, newcomers need to integrate into Quebec society, with language transfers proportional to the demographic weight of francophones. Whenever newcomers settle in a country, it's only natural for them to integrate with the majority.

Eighty-five per cent of newcomers go to Montreal, and when they do they tend to gravitate towards the English Canadian majority. With respect, that's why French should be the common language, the official language, and the language of inclusion for everyone, including anglophones.

We fully agree with maintaining anglophone institutions to help the anglophone community to thrive.

You said that you agreed that French should be the common language. That means that it is only natural, even for Anglophones, for French to be used as the common language, which is to say—

• (1715)

Hon. Marlene Jennings: Yes, in the public space.

The Chair: Could you answer in 15 seconds, Ms. Jennings?

Hon. Marlene Jennings: I think that the federal government needs to do a lot more than it is doing at the moment on behalf of our francophone brothers and sisters outside Quebec, and I mean the various governments that have succeeded one another, no matter what political party was in power.

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: I agree with you.

Hon. Marlene Jennings: The Quebec Community Groups Network is pleased to see that the government intends to do more to protect and promote French both within and outside Quebec

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Mr. Boulerice, you now have the floor for five minutes.

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

My first questions are for Senator Joyal.

Mr. Joyal, you probably don't remember this, but the first time we met, I was attending the CEGEP in Saint-Jean-sur-Richelieu. It was 1990, and our discussion was about Meech Lake.

I really liked your intervention on the importance of immigration to ensure that there is a critical mass of francophones in certain communities. Otherwise, the population could shrink and it would become difficult afterwards to maintain resources and services in French.

Quebec controls—you spoke about this earlier—all economic immigration. As Quebec assigns a lot of points to people who know French, this facilitates the arrival of francophone immigrants. We saw this with the people from Maghrebian communities who have settled in Quebec over the past few years.

I'd like to hear what you have to say about what the federal government might do to attract more francophone immigrants to communities outside Quebec to maintain these critical masses.

Hon. Serge Joyal: Thank you for your question.

I remember the 1990s very well. Perhaps we'll have an opportunity to reminisce at some point.

I can tell you that the Canadian government can do a great deal to encourage people from outside Canada to immigrate to regions where francophone communities are short of workers and resources. I understand that your colleague from British Columbia has an enormous need for French-language teachers. I think this is also the case in several other provinces, as shown by the numbers. One particular situation in Saskatchewan was recently brought to my attention.

There are categories of jobs in these regions designated as essential to the vitality of French in the community. To support the recruitment of such resources, I think that the Canadian government can do a lot more with countries from which newcomers either al-

ready know French, or have agreed to take training in French and then accept a job commensurate with their new language skills. I believe that the government could be much more proactive than it has been to date.

I believe that in your exploration of ways to amend the act, you should consider amending the preamble, and in particular subsection 2(b), which says the following about the purpose of the act:

...support the development of English and French linguistic minority communities and generally advance the equality of status and use of the English and French languages within Canadian society...

There is an acknowledgement *technical difficulties*...

• (1720)

The Chair: Mr. Joyal, your microphone is off.

Hon. Serge Joyal: Sorry.

I believe that the act should be amended in a way that would specify the Canadian government's obligations much more clearly with respect to promoting this equality and allowing it to develop.

Mr. Boulerice, the problem is very straightforward. If your right to work in French or to be served in French is infringed, you can apply to the federal court. However, if your status as a francophone is not sufficiently supported by the Canadian government, you have no legal recourse.

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice: There's one minute left, senator.

You mentioned one very important aspect, which is the discoverability of francophone content on the major platforms of the web giants. During this pandemic, we've been able to see just how central they are to our lives.

According to you, are the measures provided for in bill C-10 adequate for the time being?

Hon. Serge Joyal: No. They clearly are not.

Canada needs to take an initiative in concert with the government of Quebec, as it did in 2005 when it negotiated the UNESCO Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions. Canada, together with Quebec and the other member countries of the francophonie and the European Union, must negotiate a new treaty to enhance the discoverability of French works on the platforms.

Canada did it in 2005. Why would it not? Why would bill C-10 not make it a government obligation? I read the bill and I'm still waiting for "a bigger splash".

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Joyal.

Mr. Godin, You have the floor for the next four minutes.

Mr. Joël Godin: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'm going to share my speaking time with Mr. Blaney, my honourable colleague from Quebec's South Shore .

I'll begin with a comment, and then ask Ms. Jennings a brief question.

Ms. Jennings, you said that you were delighted with what the project presented by the current government said with respect to official languages. Allow me to tell you that I am not happy about it and that it does not do anything to protect official languages. I wanted you to know this, because we're not on the same wavelength.

You also made a very interesting comment. I like the fact that according to your organization, anglophones are not a threat to francophones. I like this point of view, which I find constructive. I believe that we need to learn from the treatment given to anglophones in Quebec, and to use it as a model that could be exported to Canada.

I believe that if we promote French, Canada will become even stronger in terms of bilingualism. That's my comment. I will now turn over my speaking time to my South Shore colleague Mr. Blaney.

Hon. Steven Blaney: Mr. Chair, I'd like to thank my colleague through you. I must say the time is winding down.

I'd like to welcome the witnesses and thank them for appearing before the committee. We have some former parliamentarians, Ms. Jennings and Mr. Joyal, an eminent senator.

It's truly a privilege to have you with us. I was able, as the minister of the francophonie, to underscore the 40th anniversary of the Official Languages Act.

Mr. Joyal, You spoke about immigration, but we see francophones in Quebec gravitating towards English. What can we do to have the Official Languages Act offset this sociological asymmetry and the fact that we are in an anglophone sea? How can we do this while respecting the anglophone minority, which expressed itself very commendably today? How can we prevent this decline, which I would not dare call ineluctable, but which is nevertheless a reality?

I know that this question falls outside of the framework of the Official Languages Act. You spoke about culture and language. I'm going to use the first part of my speaking time to ask this question. Thank you for being with us.

Hon. Serge Joyal: Would Ms. Jennings like to make any comments? Is the question for Ms. Jennings?

Hon. Steven Blaney: The question is for both of you.

The Chair: You each have a minute to answer.

• (1725)

Hon. Steven Blaney: Thank you, Your Honour.

Hon. Marlene Jennings: Mr. Godin, if you are under the impression that the anglophone community and the Quebec Community Groups Network are delighted with minister Joly's document, then I expressed myself poorly. The document has some good features and we are pleased that the government is proposing direct measures, and promoting French and the vitality of francophone communities.

However, we condemn the fact that no measures have been proposed to deal with all the problems affecting Quebec's English-speaking language community.

I will now hand over to the eminent senator Mr. Joyal.

The Chair: Thank you for your kindness, Ms. Jennings.

Mr. Joyal, you have 30 seconds remaining.

Hon. Serge Joyal: Thank you, Mr. Blaney.

Any approach to strengthen the use of French must be comprehensive. There is an English term, which has been translated into French, which also describes it. That term is "holistic," which means roughly that it addresses all aspects of life. This applies as much to the quality of oral French as it does to the protection of historical heritage, training in future-oriented fields, whatever they may be, and even the use of what I mentioned earlier, which was how the new tools were in fact insidious instruments for latent anglicization.

We simply need to look at the new generations and what they have access to. Previously, we had access to one satellite and 50 television stations. These days, every aspect of our everyday life is covered and influenced by the device we all carry with us. The new generations will in the coming years have nothing but their phones. We need to give this a great deal of thought.

Hon. Steven Blaney: Thank you, senator, for your outstanding contribution to this file.

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

I know that time is going by quickly.

Ms. Martinez Ferrada, You have the floor for four minutes.

Ms. Soraya Martinez Ferrada (Hochelaga, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

These four minutes will go by in a flash with Senator Joyal, our guests his evening, and our witnesses.

Mr. Joyal, I'd like to return to the issue of demographic decline. Could you tell us more about this?

Before handing over to you, however, I'd like to make a brief comment about your proposals on bill C-10, the francophonie and discoverability.

I'd like to remind my colleagues and the people listening to us that the government took Canada to UNESCO and provided funding for cultural diversity in 2018. It was when my colleague Ms. Joly was in Paris that we addressed digital issues. I know that these discussions have been progressing for three years now. You might even speak about it to our colleague, Minister of Canadian heritage Mr. Guilbeault. There were in fact many international discussions and you are right to say that that is the right direction to take.

Nevertheless, there is an extremely major challenge in terms of francization and immigration. Would you agree that if we focused solely on language of work without doing anything about francization and immigration, and without encouraging immigration corridors within and outside Quebec, the demographic weight of French would decrease in North America?

What's missing is the francization process and the immigration corridors.

You spoke about teachers, but are there other things to mention?

Hon. Serge Joyal: I believe that it's essential for the Canadian government to further strengthen its immigration officers' profile abroad. That's for both Quebec and the Canadian government. I know that there was a time, for Quebec at least, when the size of the offices was reduced and several were even combined.

For Quebec and Canada alike, it's essential to ensure that the best efforts are made in Canada's embassies and consulates, and at Quebec delegations, to try and target groups that might be interested in the possibilities offered by Canada, and Quebec in particular.

Look at what's happening in the hospital sector. Almost 10,000 people left their jobs during the pandemic.

Look what's happening with the childhood education centres (CPEs) in Quebec; the government was unable to keep its promise, because there were not enough early childhood educators.

Look at what happened in the agriculture sector last summer.

There are all kinds of opportunities. However, we get the impression that all of these many opportunities in Québec, like those elsewhere in Canada, are insufficiently understood and do not use enough arguments to take advantage of the immigration resources that exist in other countries

• (1730)

Ms. Soraya Martinez Ferrada: Are you saying then that we not only need specific immigration corridors, but that we also need promotional efforts in the places where we wish to recruit immigrants?

Hon. Serge Joyal: That's it exactly—

Mr. Joël Godin: I have a point of order, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: You have the floor, Mr. Godin.

Mr. Joël Godin: Excuse me Mr. Chair, but there appears to be a technical problem. I switched on the French channel and can hear interpretation in English at the same time.

The Chair: Before checking this with the clerk, I'd like to ask Mr. Duguid whether the interpretation towards English is working properly when the conversation is in French.

[*English*]

Terry, do you have any problem with translation?

Mr. Terry Duguid: No.

[*Translation*]

Mr. René Arseneault: For your information, Mr. Chair, after deactivating the function, I can hear what's being said in the language being spoken without any interpretation.

The Chair: Could you check that please, Madam Clerk?

Mr. Joël Godin: Mr. Chair, I can still hear the interpretation towards English.

The Clerk: I've been told that the English interpretation is on the French channel. Is that right?

The Chair: Yes, that's what Mr. Godin told us.

The Clerk: I'll check it out.

The Chair: The problem has been solved.

Thank you.

Three and a half minutes out of the four minutes of speaking time for Ms. Martinez Ferrada have gone by.

Let's continue the discussion.

Mr. Joyal, it's back to you again.

Hon. Serge Joyal: As I was mentioning before, the government needs to adopt a comprehensive approach. You heard about it in the discussions with the previous witnesses. The comprehensive approach was mentioned here and there in the act, but there was never any formal recognition. Nor does the act provide any accountability on how the government assumes this responsibility. That, very precisely, is the aspect which in my view you need to focus on *technical difficulties*.

The Chair: Thank you.

We have just two minutes to continue the discussion.

Mr. Beaulieu, you have the floor.

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: I'll be brief.

Ms. Jennings, you said just now that you wanted to hop on the bus, but did not want to be sent to the back. I hope that's not a reference to the kind of racism that occurs in the United States.

Quebec francophones are often blamed for their determination to secure the future of French. In my view, it's the francophones who are now seated in the back of the bus, and French that is in decline. I just wanted to check that with you.

Do you consider that francophones are entitled to secure the future of French in Quebec and Canada?

Are francophones in Quebec entitled to make French the common language?

• (1735)

Hon. Marlene Jennings: Mr. Beaulieu, I can't make it any clearer than I already have. You heard what the QCGN's position was. The organization is an ally for our fellow brothers and sisters outside Quebec, for our fellow citizens who live elsewhere in Canada, in terms of promoting and protecting not only the French language, but also the vitality of their communities.

What we're asking is for people here in Quebec to stop making us the scapegoat every time there's a problem. Senator Joyal has given excellent advice on how to strengthen the vitality of our francophones everywhere in Canada, including Quebec, whether in terms of immigration, policy formulation, social media, or cultural content. Stop making the anglophone minority in Quebec a scapegoat—

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: Do you consider our wanting to make French the common language amounts to scapegoating anglophones?

Hon. Marlene Jennings: Mr. Beaulieu, we already said—

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: That's just more intimidation and blame.

The Chair: Excuse me, but it's getting difficult for the interpreters.

You have 10 seconds left.

Hon. Marlene Jennings: As we said before, we are the most bilingual group, and that's thanks to the education system we control and administer.

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: Far less than francophones outside Quebec.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

For the final intervention, I'm going to give the floor to Mr. Boulerice.

Mr. Boulerice, you have two minutes.

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Ms. Jennings, my question is for you.

In the NDP, when we speak about language proficiency or rights, we don't consider it a zero-sum game. It's not a matter of one player winning and the other losing. We want everyone to grow and advance together. You spoke earlier—and I was very pleased with what you said—about the special attention needed for the French fact, given that it is such a small minority in the North American context.

The previous witnesses spoke about the difference between formal equality under the act, and real equality, sociologically speaking, in fact. You, on the other hand, did not use the word "asymmetry". Do you believe that the French language, in Quebec and Canada, is in an asymmetrical position with respect to the English language, even though equality in practice is recognized?

Hon. Marlene Jennings: I believe that the constitution is very clear on this subject: there are two official languages in Canada, English and French, and they have equal status. In reality, we know that the status of the French language is unique and that measures are required to protect it and promote it to preserve the vitality of Francophone communities outside Quebec and ensure that French, in Quebec, is the language of work and in the public space.

We recognize that. What we are saying, to you and to the federal government, is that the anglophone language minority in Quebec, which has problems, ought not to be forgotten. Nowhere in your document are there any proposals that would look into and address the issues we are encountering on an everyday basis. The vitality of our communities is also at risk.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

That's all the time we have for this meeting.

On behalf of all the committee members and myself personally, I thank you for having accepted our invitation and for having contributed to this study. I thank lawyer and former senator the Honourable Serge Joyal, who appeared as an individual; the Honourable Marlene Jennings, the president of the Quebec Community Groups Network, and Ms. Sylvia Martin-Laforge, the director general of that organization. Please send us any other documentation you feel might be useful to us for this study.

In closing, I would also like to thank the whole team that was with us for this meeting: the clerk, the analysts, the interpreters and the technicians.

Thank you for your contribution.

The meeting is now adjourned.

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