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Ms. Marlene Catterall

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Monday, November 22, 2004

• (1535)

[English]

The Chair (Ms. Marlene Catterall (Ottawa West—Nepean, Lib.)): I call to order this meeting of the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage.

Our witness today is the Honourable Raymond Chan, the Minister of State for Multiculturalism.

Mr. Chan, the floor is yours.

Hon. Raymond Chan (Minister of State (Multiculturalism)): Thank you very much, Madam Chair, members of the committee, and colleagues. Thank you for the opportunity to appear before the committee and talk about multiculturalism and its importance to the future of Canada.

I'm accompanied by Eileen Sarkar, who is our Assistant Deputy Minister of Citizenship and Heritage; Bruce Manion, our Assistant Deputy Minister of Planning and Corporate Affairs; Jacques Paquette, Assistant Deputy Minister of International and Intergovernmental Affairs; and Kristina Namiesniowski, Director General of Multiculturalism and Human Rights.

Before taking your questions, Madam Chair, with your indulgence I would like to provide you and your colleagues with an overview of the history of multiculturalism in Canada, the multiculturalism program, successes, key challenges, opportunities, and my priorities.

It is critical to note that Canada is one of the world's most diverse countries. Canada's multicultural society has evolved considerably. During the 1960s and 1970s, we moved from a society largely comprised of aboriginal, French, and English communities to a society comprised of over 200 ethnic groups.

In 1971, Canada became the first country to adopt a multiculturalism policy. This policy helps create a climate in which the heritage of all Canadians is valued. It also supports the creation of a society where all Canadians have the opportunity to contribute to the economy and the social, cultural, and political life of Canada.

In 1988, Canada adopted the Canadian Multiculturalism Act. This act entrenches the Canadian respect for diversity in law, and other acts are in place to form a very robust legal framework that supports the principles of multiculturalism. As the Minister of State for Multiculturalism, I'm responsible for the application and practice of the Canadian Multiculturalism Act, and I provide Parliament with an annual report on its operation in federal departments and agencies.

Canada is more diverse than ever before. According to the 2001 census, visible minorities represent 13.4% of Canada's population, a

figure that is expected to rise to 20% by 2016. Multiculturalism is part of our Canadian identity. The first graph shows that the country will increasingly rely on immigration for its future social, cultural, and economic health. Immigration now accounts for more than 50% of Canada's population growth, and 18.4% of Canadians are born outside the country. Based on current projections, by 2011 immigration is expected to account for all of Canada's labour force growth, and by 2026, for all population growth.

The second graph shows that the countries of origin of immigrants have changed significantly over the past 40 years. Until the 1960s, most immigrants came to Canada from Europe. Since that time we have seen a steady growth in the number of immigrants from Asia and the Middle East. This trend is expected to continue.

Today multiculturalism is a cohesive force in Canada. It encourages all Canadians, regardless of their background, to feel included in our society. Indeed, the mandate of the multiculturalism program is to promote the full participation and integration of Canadians into society. Only by maximizing the full economic and political potential of all Canadians will Canada truly reach its full potential.

To achieve this, the program focuses on four primary, mutually supporting priorities for action: cross-cultural understanding; shared citizenship—both rights and responsibilities; combating racism and discrimination; and facilitating institutional changes that reflect our diversity.

According to recent research, 80% of Canadians have a strong sense of belonging to Canada, and 50% say they have a strong sense of belonging to their ethnic or cultural groups. Moreover, 85% of Canadians agree that multiculturalism enhances the value of Canadian citizenship. These results are encouraging and point to the success of multiculturalism. Many people feel connected both to their ethnic backgrounds and to Canada. This is the goal of our multiculturalism policy.

As Minister of State, I carry out my mandate through a wide range of activities, such as supporting research on multiculturalism-related issues like racism; consolidating the development of a policy framework on multiculturalism and related issues; carrying out public education and outreach activities; developing partnerships with community organizations and public institutions; and informing Canadians, especially youth.

The multiculturalism program provides financial support through project funding to civil societies to resolve issues affecting ethnocultural racial communities, enhance their participation in society, and address discrimination and racism. I also support projects that help public institutions better reflect multicultural principles as they develop policies and programs and deliver services to Canadians.

The multiculturalism program works closely with other federal departments in mutually supporting and complementary roles. Examples include CIC, in the area of integrating newcomers and immigrants into Canadian society; HRSD, in the area of breaking down barriers in the labour market; Justice, in programs related to combating hate crimes and public safety; and Emergency Preparedness, on cross-cultural security matters.

Now I would like to touch on key challenges and opportunities related to multiculturalism.

The first challenge is the issue of racism and discrimination. We know that racism exists in Canada. We only have to read the newspaper to know that. We also have survey results that confirm this. According to the ethnic diversity survey released in 2003, 35% of visible minorities reported that they had experienced discrimination in the last five years due to their ethnocultural characteristics—49% for blacks, 34% for South Asians, and 33% for Chinese surveyed participants. This occurred principally in the workplace.

Another challenge relates to the widening gap between the wages earned by groups such as visible minorities and others. The wage gap between visible minorities and the Canadian average continues to widen. Data shows that the wage gap has widened over the last decade from 11% to 14.5%.

Diversity may also at times be the source of domestic pressures and tensions among communities. Canada is clearly subject to the impact of developments beyond its borders. September 11 events and subsequent developments are good examples.

Cross-cultural and cross-generational misunderstandings have led to children of new Canadians facing adjustments to new values at home and at school. These challenges reinforce the need to manage these developments to continue to leverage the benefits of diversity and the opportunities it presents.

Multiculturalism is a source of pride and strength, and it is incumbent upon us to build on its success. There is growing public and media interest in diversity-related issues. We will continue to support efforts that reinforce fundamental Canadian values, bridge differences, and promote an understanding of who we are as Canadians.

• (1540)

As we look to the century ahead, I believe it is more important than ever for all of us to reach across the divides of culture, religion, race, and ethnicity to foster understanding of and respect for diversity. By recognizing the significance of immigrants and visible minorities to labour-force growth and economic well-being, and doing something about it, such as removing barriers to inclusion, Canada will be better able to leverage the benefits of Canadian diversity.

As Minister of State, I would like to share with you some of my key priorities. There have been a number of calls for a federal framework of action to combat racism and discrimination. The Government of Canada is committed to the development and timely release of a national anti-racism action plan. The Government of Canada will continue to work with all Canadians to combat racism and create a more inclusive and respectful society.

In the spring of 2005 I will be holding a policy forum to equip federal institutions to better serve Canada's multicultural population. In particular, the forum will be aimed at assessing and analyzing the impact of the future demographic landscape of Canada on government policies and programs.

I'm also currently working on establishing a formal federal-provincial-territorial committee of ministers to address issues related to multiculturalism. Such a network will provide a tool to further the implementation of the multiculturalism policy. It will also foster cooperation on common, mutually supporting goals.

Thank you, Madam Chair, for the opportunity to speak to you and your colleagues. I will be pleased to take any questions you may ask.

• (1545)

The Chair: Thank you, Minister.

Who would like to start?

Mr. Obhrai.

Mr. Deepak Obhrai (Calgary East, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chan, for coming in front of the committee.

I'll start by congratulating you on your win. That'll be the only good thing I'll say today.

Anyway, the multiculturalism department has been here for quite a while. We know it started in 1971. In 1988 the Conservative government brought in the legislation for this Multiculturalism Act. The department has been there for quite a while.

While you have said the right words—the changing face of Canada, the demographic changes, the workforce representation—and of course you've given all the facts and figures in every situation here, the point still remains that there was quite a lot of criticism of your department, that it was used for vote-gathering for your party. I'm just laying it out, okay? That situation was going on there. The feedback everybody had was that the multiculturalism department was actually losing public support because of that perception.

I'll follow that by the actual facts and figures, and you pointed one out just now, about the 35% of visible minorities, but I'll even go further than that. A recent report in Calgary said 50% of the Chinese immigrants at one given time or another felt racial discrimination in Canada.

That is one of your objectives. You said the department has been fighting racism, but it is on the increase.

What stunned me in Calgary also was that second-generation Canadians were facing discrimination in social situations. My own daughter told me, "Dad, this is what happens."

So it brings out a point here. After all these great things that you were supposed to do in other forums, why the department...I feel no dent has been made because the department itself does not have much confidence with Canadians.

I'll go down another level and say that one of your main objectives is, as you just said, to develop partnerships with other departments and to work with federal departments and agencies to reflect the diversity of the nation.

The indication of all these things is that it's miserable. The number of visible minorities in senior positions is very poor. It does not even at all represent anything.

We just had a people's forum. When I was there, and Marlene was there as well, a clear-cut issue was made strongly that visible minority representation in the federal government was very, very poor.

In talking with the private sector in Calgary, a lot of companies are doing it, and I think they're having a far greater success than you are having in the department or in the federal government—

• (1550)

The Chair: Mr. Obhrai, I don't like to interrupt, but you're giving the minister less than a minute to respond.

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: He can use as much time as he wants.

Anyway, these are the points. They are pointed, so let's see what you have to say.

Hon. Raymond Chan: Thank you very much. I appreciate the very important question that needs to be addressed.

First of all, on racism, as shown on the survey, indeed many of the visible minorities are still facing racism in society.

As a department we kicked off an anti-racism program a few years back, the "Racism. Stop It!" program, headed by Dr. Hedy Fry. Also, we have worked very closely with the Minister of Justice and others on hate crime issues to make sure the legislation is in place, and we continue to monitor what else we can do on the legal side. There is the Charter of Rights and so on. There is a whole set of judicial instruments in place to deal with those things, but at the same time we understand that racism cannot be corrected just because of legislation. It is a change of attitude in people that we have to work on. This is why in the department not only do we have programs to promote cross-cultural understanding, but we also fund a lot of forums, educational instruments to allow the community to better understand each other to deal with the racism issue.

I agree it is a continuous challenge. We'll continue to deal with it. At the same time, many of the racism issues, as you point out, are on employment issues, and visible minorities, as new immigrants to the country, continue to have barriers in front of them. Foreign credential accreditation, knowledge about the job market—the deficiencies of that are also part of it.

This is why my department, in answering the second question, is also working with other departments in the government. We have a cross-horizontal responsibility to work with other departments to deal with the challenges of helping to remove barriers for these newcomers. We are working very closely with Human Resources

and Skills Development Canada to come up with a package of programs to deal with those issues. I'm also working closely with the Treasury Board, which is responsible for employment equity in government, and also with Joe Fontana, the Minister of Labour, to deal with equity issues on employment. This continues to be a challenge, but we'll work very hard on those.

Thank you.

The Chair: Mr. Kotto.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Maka Kotto (Saint-Lambert, BQ): Thank you, Madam Chair.

Minister Chan, welcome to the committee. I have three short questions to ask you, but to begin, I have a comment to make.

At issue are the very semantics behind the terms used to identify those who are sometimes called newcomers, or foreigners. Even the term "visible minorities" introduces into the collective unconscious the idea of someone different, or of groups that are different, and they are then seen as such. I make this comment all over, whether it be in Quebec or here.

Would you say that Canadian multiculturalism is more similar to the British experience, as opposed to the French one, where people seem to have opted for secularism and the convergence of different cultures? I am mentioning this because I learned, about three months ago, that a British delegation travelled to France to try to understand how England could have missed the boat, in light of the fact that the country is currently grappling with ethnic and tribal battles on its territory, just like in the Middle Ages. The British are seeking to understand where they went wrong and how France succeeded. Is this of concern to you?

My second question relates to cultural balkanization, which in my opinion is the underpinning of this policy on multiculturalism. I will tell you why. People live in isolation from one another, and there aren't any true exchanges amongst them. Discrimination and racism are encouraged when people do not come near each other, do not understand one another, and close themselves off with prejudices and stereotypes about one another.

You talked about an action plan to fight racism and discrimination. I'm only bringing up the negative points. There are positive points, but we don't have time to bring them up here. You mentioned the fight against racism and discrimination, and you talked about an action plan. Can you provide us with more details? In fact, currently the most significant medium or vector in this hyper-mediatized world is missing. Radio and television have a major impact on the individual and collective psyche, particularly that of young people between 0 and 16 years of age, who are in the process of forming their individual psyche or personality, and in so doing integrate the elements of their frames of reference. And if certain models are absent from these dominant media, even in the new technologies, it is certain that these young people, some of whom will become the business leaders of tomorrow, will exclude entities that did not become a part of their personal psyche during their formative years. If Blacks, Asians, or Arabs come onto the scene, they will be excluded by those leaders, because they never saw any during their formative years. They were never integrated as such, and these models were never internalized.

I refer to this vector, the new media, because even politicians use them, as you know. Even during the first and second Gulf wars, the media were used because people were aware of their impact on the collective unconscious. I would like to hear your comments on this.

• (1555)

[English]

Hon. Raymond Chan: First of all, in the last month I received two delegations. One delegation was from the Polish government. The president of the Senate of Poland brought Polish parliamentarians to have an exchange with us on multiculturalism. Europe has now become quite multicultural because of the border rearrangements, and so on. The second delegation was from the German parliament. In both meetings we discussed what you just raised—what does multiculturalism mean in Canada and how we are handling it?

The way I see it is that the difference in Canada is that we give the different cultures, the different ethnic groups, a level playing field. We don't ask them to assimilate; we ask them to integrate, but not to assimilate. That is the major difference. Because we give them the level playing field, the equality, they feel confidence to be part of Canada. They don't feel they're second class or that their culture is second class or that their presence is second class. They can be as Canadian as anybody else. From the time they set foot into Canada as immigrants, they were equal shareholders. Even though their political rights would come after they became citizens four years later, they can feel comfortable being one of us. I think that's the major difference between our approach and many of the other approaches by other countries. I think that would be a very good moral for others to carry on.

We talked about the action plan. As I mentioned earlier, the legislation could only set the standards and try to guide people into a certain behaviour, but there's still the attitude that we have to change. Attitude is difficult to change. The only way to do it is through more cross-cultural understanding and to have Canadians respecting the charter, respecting that other cultural and ethnic groups are human as well, that they deserve the respect and opportunity, and that we can all be equal and compete on a level playing field.

In order to do that, it takes time and effort. This is where education and exposure to each other's cultures will help. This is why I take your observation that there's not enough intercultural exchange sometimes. I'll take the example of Vancouver. We need to foster more exchanges. I understand that right now there are different ethnic groups that might be having their events. For example, the Chinese celebrate their new year, the Indo-Canadians celebrate their events, and the Filipinos, and so on. At the same time, we need to encourage not only the celebration of the Chinese new year, but also participation in Indo-Canadian events, and visiting the Filipinos when they celebrate their national holidays and so on. This needs to be done, and be done proactively.

This is why, when I took charge of this ministry, I saw that our funding had been decreasing since the 1995 program review and had not recovered back to the pre-1995-96 norm. At the same time, population growth has been outpacing.... Demand has been bigger, yet our budget has been less.

• (1600)

This is why I would like to go back to the government to advocate for increased funding to the department, such that we can encourage the community groups to be proactive and that kind of thing.

On the anti-racism package, we're working, as I said, on preparing a more comprehensive package. We hope that very soon we can announce that package, and we would like to have your input in organizing that.

Thank you.

The Chair: Mr. Khan.

Mr. Wajid Khan (Mississauga—Streetsville, Lib.): Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

I, too, would like to congratulate Minister Chan for his election as well as his appointment as minister.

My preamble will be short, Minister, as I'm not as good as Mr. Deepak Obhrai in the language of English perhaps.

I have two quick questions for you. Is there any consideration being given to student exchange programs? I'll give you an example. Suppose we take 1,000 students from Quebec and Ontario and give them scholarships and encourage them to go to universities in different provinces. That could perhaps be an area into which we can bring the youth to interact and learn about each other.

My second question, sir, concerns the fact that since 9/11 and so on, as there is mention here of foreign events bringing home some unfortunate instances, there's an increase in anti-Semitism and Islamophobia. What can be done about it, and is something being done about it?

• (1605)

Hon. Raymond Chan: Thank you for your questions.

For these events, for example, September 11, that have caused a problem within Canada, the attitude and so on...there are some very unfortunate events that have happened, but we're lucky we have multiculturalism as a platform. Imagine if we didn't have this, if we didn't provide the level playing field, so that Muslims never feel they have an equal footing in Canada just like anybody else, or Jewish Canadians didn't feel they were part of Canada. You know, when these kinds of things happened, it could have grown into a disproportionate problem for Canada, but we're lucky that we have multiculturalism such that there's a level playing field for people to talk about their differences of opinion and so on, so that many of these racial tensions could be dissolved.

I think it's important for us to stand firm on the multiculturalism policy; to have a community approach; to have the community work together on hate crime issues that are targeted to specific racial groups; to have us all work together to see that there is no place in the world, never mind about only in Canada, for attacking a certain ethnic group. There shouldn't be any place in the world, or in Canada, for that. I think continuing to promote our multiculturalism policy is the way to deal with it. At the same time, if a certain ethnic group, because of a certain event, might not feel comfortable, might have some concerns about their place in Canada when they are being targeted, we need to proactively bring our authorities, like the RCMP or CSIS, to meet with that community to gain their trust, so that such community can fully participate and help us on our security issues. I think that's an important point.

Thank you for your question.

On the youth exchange program, there are some programs funded by Heritage Canada and also there are components within those programs on student exchange that guarantees that they respect the diversity of our community. I will be glad to share that information with you.

The Chair: Mr. Khan, you have another 30 seconds.

Mr. Wajid Khan: Very quickly, then, what is being done to facilitate employment in the civil service and federal organizations for visible minorities?

Hon. Raymond Chan: Right now there's an Employment Equity Act that was elected, but at the same time we understand that we have not achieved our goal yet. Right now I'm working with Reg Alcock, President of the Treasury Board, who is primarily responsible for making sure the Employment Equity Act is being followed. I'm also working with Joe Fontana, our Minister of Labour, who deals with the public. I think it's important for us to understand the process under which public servants are being hired right now. The observation we have made right now is that at the entrance level and on the feeder level there are quite a number of visible minorities, so it's in the system right now. We're looking forward to a few years down the road...the feeder system covers those people who are being prepared to take leading positions in the civil servant area. Hopefully, with that in place, in a few years' time we'll try to achieve employment equity for visible minorities.

• (1610)

The Chair: Mr. Schellenberger.

Mr. Gary Schellenberger (Perth—Wellington, CPC): I'd like to thank you, Mr. Minister, for coming today. You've said quite a few

things here so far today, but one thing you said was that there have been some funding cuts. Has this hampered your department? I might say here that it was your government that cut the funding.

It is very difficult to clearly identify the total dollar value of government expenditures on its various multiculturalism initiatives. Are you able to provide the committee with a detailed breakdown of the expenditures by the Department of Canadian Heritage, and the Government of Canada as a whole, on multiculturalism in 2003-04?

Hon. Raymond Chan: Thank you for the question. Yes, in the 1993-94 period, when the Liberals took over the government, there was a huge financial mess. We had a \$42 billion deficit. The GNP ratio was up to about 68%, and Canada was pretty well almost like a third world country in the financial matters of the state. This is where, in 1995-96, there was a program revealed that tried to cut government expenditures by about 15%. That has affected the Department of Multiculturalism. At the same time, the government also recognized the importance of the challenge of multiculturalism. This is why in Heritage, for example, they also have programs that deal with the ethnic diversity, the ethnocultural programs in Heritage, other than in the Department of Multiculturalism, that deal with that. So it is with other departments.

I don't have details. I have to ask our departmental support to answer that question.

Mr. Bruce Manion (Assistant Deputy Minister, Planning and Corporate Affairs, Department of Canadian Heritage): In the grants and contributions area, the department approved just under \$19 million. We do not have figures for the rest of government. To get those we would have to canvass other government departments, in addition to the operating costs of delivering the multi-program within the department, and they fluctuate slightly year to year.

Mr. Gary Schellenberger: Is there a chance that you might be able to do that, and could that be supplied to us at the committee?

Mr. Bruce Manion: I would have to contact counterparts in other departments to do that, but they will also speak to Treasury Board. It's not something that is tabulated annually; it's not part of the regular accounting of government, if you will.

Hon. Raymond Chan: Also, because of the importance of multiculturalism, the diversity we have in Canada...as I said in the presentation, Canada will be getting more and more diverse as we go along. By 2010, by 2015, by 2016, 100% of our population growth will depend on immigration, and 70% of that are visible minorities.

There are more and more challenges in Canada, not only in our economic growth but also in the way the government delivers our services. We have to face that challenge. This is why in early spring I will be hosting a cross-departmental conference, getting the officials of all the other departments to come together to alert them to this challenge that is facing government, such that when they design the programs in their departments they will take into account the reality of multiculturalism. That will affect the expenditures of all these departments grossly.

•(1615)

Mr. Gary Schellenberger: I heard that \$19 million is your budget, the multiculturalism budget. You're saying that in various other departments there is money going toward multiculturalism, such as out of Industry, out of various other things, to help support the effort.

Hon. Raymond Chan: It's to support the effort, but the money doesn't come to Multiculturalism. They would have programs themselves.

As an example, Immigration would have programs to help the different ethnic groups settle, and those programs I would see as facing up to the challenge of multiculturalism.

Mr. Gary Schellenberger: May I have one more quick question?

I must say, I've been very supportive of the exchange programs, and in my riding, especially right now, there is a Sri Lankan-Canada exchange. I was very proud to be there when our Sri Lankan friends came over. I must say that particular initiative is great because it's in my riding, but the Canadian people are from all over Canada, so they've become my friends in this short time.

Again, I'm very supportive of Quebec-Ontario exchange programs. My two daughters were part of SEVEC, and I find that very encouraging.

I must say, and it was mentioned earlier from my colleague across, that I think exchanges across Canada would be very good, and I hope some of the new moneys the government is going to put into your ministry might be used for some of those cases.

Thank you.

The Chair: Monsieur Lemay.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Marc Lemay (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ): Minister Chan, I would like to ask you several questions, but first I would like to tell you of a very grave concern I have.

You say that there will be more and more immigrants, and that this is important if Canada is to grow, and so on. I agree. However, because of what happened on September 11th, there's a problem I find troublesome, the problem of what is called racial profiling. This worries me. I would like to share my own experience with you. I don't know how you're going to deal with this, but I wish you good luck.

I was at Dorval airport—if you will allow me not to call it the Pierre Elliott Trudeau airport—at the international arrivals gate. It was a flight coming in from Frankfurt. Passengers coming in from Frankfurt were going through customs. What I saw with my own eyes—of course we won't call it racism—were customs officers singling out, in a way that I wouldn't dare qualify as outrageous, Canadian citizens, bearers of Canadian passports, who were of Arab, Maghrebian, Moroccan, Tunisian, or Algerian origin. Currently, such things are still happening at Dorval airport. You can go there around 11 o'clock in the morning, when the flight arrives. My first question is the following: What can you do?

My second question relates to the Speech from the Throne. The February 2004 Speech from the Throne talked about how

parliamentarians were going to modernize arts and culture policies from the multicultural perspective. There is no reference to this in the October 2004 Speech from the Throne. Is this an oversight? Did someone forget about this in the speech?

Arts and culture must be made a priority of the federal government, of the Government of Canada. I like your expression “integration of immigrants”. If this is the case, bearing in mind the gist of my first question with respect to what is going on in airports, how are you going to get there? How are you going to achieve this today with such a small budget?

•(1620)

[*English*]

Hon. Raymond Chan: First of all, definitely, the Canadian government does not have a racial profiling policy, but you don't have to look far. Very often it's the personal reaction of the officers at the spots. I face it myself. I'll share a story with you.

Just last month I went to Regina, Saskatchewan, to host the visit of the President of Mongolia. I and my fiancée and two assistants who are non-visible, the four of us, were going through the security to board a plane back to Ottawa. My two non-visible assistants had no problems, bang, bang, they went through the checkpoints. My fiancée had her purse searched for five minutes and I was screened. But it is not the policy of the government to do that. That was the attitude of that individual. To me, it's sad to see this kind of thing happening, but as I said, from time to time we continue to see people who are visible minorities continue to face discrimination in one way or the other. It's important to continue to educate those in charge of security so they do not behave that way. We need to work with the border agency to provide training and so on to make sure that the attitudes of people will change and that they don't just respond to our ethnic origin.

In regard to the stories that you talk about overseas, I think we have to work continuously with Foreign Affairs and other departments in the UN and so on to make sure that people do not use racial profiling.

In terms of the commitment of the government, in the throne speech it outlined seven principles on which the government priorities should be carried out. Three of those seven principles have to do with equality and multiculturalism. The first one is to make sure that Canadians are all equal; the second is to respect the diversity of Canada; and the third is to make sure that everyone benefits from the economic growth of Canada. So I can say that this government is committed 100% to the policy of multiculturalism to make sure that all Canadians are equal and that all cultures have an equal playing field.

On the integration of immigrants, I think we have to remove barriers for them to participate fully. Racism is a form of a barrier to participation, a barrier to integration. We have to act on it, and this is why we're coming up with an action plan in a very short time. Also, to me, job integration is a very important part of integration, and this is why we're working with HRSD on a job integration program to help new immigrants to integrate.

I think my department is also very important, and multiculturalism must be given enough funding to deal with those challenges and help the new immigrants to build the capacity, not only with civic education but also to advocate for themselves, such that they truly become equal partners in Canada.

•(1625)

Thank you.

The Chair: Mr. Simms.

Mr. Scott Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windor, Lib.): Thank you, Madam Chair.

Mr. Minister, thank you for coming today.

I wanted to start off with something in your presentation. I'll get to the other matter in just a bit. I only have five minutes.

You say you will develop a federal-provincial-territorial network of ministers. Explain to me how this is to be done, because many times we do this and we run into roadblocks. I find that in many cases the roadblocks take down any national incentive we have. Could you explain a little more about what you have seen on a provincial level that works and how you plan to go forward with this one?

Hon. Raymond Chan: Thank you very much for the question.

For the past few months I've been travelling across the country from B.C. to.... Of course, that's where I'm from. I met with the Minister of Multiculturalism and Immigration there, and I was also in Saskatchewan and Manitoba. I was very impressed by the efforts made by the provincial governments on multiculturalism and also on immigration. It is amazing that proactively they have dealt with a lot of these problems.

For example, take the issue of job integration. They see the challenge that was faced by the visible minorities because they are foreign trained. The Governments of Manitoba and Saskatchewan have set some budgets working with the universities to create programs to integrate the foreign-trained engineers. Their program would collect them. They have a pilot program, for example, in Manitoba. They collected about 30 to 40 foreign-trained engineers, and they evaluated the credentials to identify the proficiency they have. There is a university program that has helped every one of them to catch up their deficits in order to get certified by the professional engineering association of Canada of that province. Right now, working with HRSD, we have been talking to the professional engineering councils of Canada, hopefully to help them build a program across the land to replicate or to do something similar to what the Manitoba provincial government is doing.

Also, it is amazing that locally in B.C. there are programs for work in hospitals to provide multilingual support. For example, in the cities of Vancouver or Richmond, for a Punjabi-speaking patient who is admitted to hospital there are a group of volunteers who are organized to provide translation, interpretation, for the patient. Diversity in language did not create a problem of integration.

Those are the things on which provincial governments have risen to the challenges of multiculturalism. By talking to them and by sharing our experiences with each other and working together, we

will be able to provide a better strategy and policy to deal with the challenge.

The Chair: You have a minute left.

Mr. Scott Simms: On this side of the committee it is safe to say that I represent the rural side of things, so I'll beat that drum once again and carry that banner.

You addressed it briefly earlier, but I want to get back to it. I'm from a riding that has a dwindling population. We would love to have more immigrants in our riding, there is no doubt about it. I suppose, as one person said, we don't naturally increase like we used to, but basically what does the department do to promote the regions in this country? I personally think more should be done to match people with certain skills who come from areas of the fishery, say, in my case, or logging, or that sort of thing. What can the department do to promote that more? Are you doing any more?

This may wander into the immigration side of things.

•(1630)

Hon. Raymond Chan: I can't speak on behalf of immigration, but I can share some experiences with you.

In Vancouver there was recently a delegation from Prince Rupert, which is up north. Prince Rupert is about a one-hour flight from Vancouver. They invited the authorities from Prince Rupert to come to present economic opportunities to the new immigrant community. They have higher pay and there are a lot more jobs, yet they don't have enough people to go up there.

I guess communication will be the way to go, giving the new immigrants more exposure to opportunities in the rural regions.

The Chair: Thank you.

Ms. Oda.

Ms. Bev Oda (Durham, CPC): Thank you very much.

Thank you, Mr. Minister, for making yourself available today.

I have five questions, and I'm going to do this very quickly. The first four can be answered yes or no. If you would cooperate here, I can get to my fifth question.

First, could you report to this committee on how many visible minorities, women, and disabled people are currently in the multiculturalism department at the DG level or above? Two, could you report to this committee on how many governor in council appointments to crown corporations and government agencies have been made by this government in the last five years in those target groups?

Twenty years ago, and I hate to say this, I actually sat on an advisory committee advising the President of the Treasury Board on employment equity in crown corporations and the public service.

Three, could you please report to this committee on the number and representation at the levels in every government department and crown corporation and the change you've seen in the last five years?

Four, could you please provide us with the dollars spent on government programs throughout the entire government, not only this department, that you see are contributing to the objectives of the Canadian Multiculturalism Act in the government? I do believe that if there were in fact government cuts, then hard decisions would have to be made. I would like to see that we place emphasis on certain aspects of the program that are more important. If they have to be done in other departments, then I would like to see where those dollars were spent.

My fifth question is this. Would it be fair, after a period of three or five years, if the people of Canada used the following criteria to establish whether success in the multiculturalism programs has been achieved: if we see not an increase but a decrease in the incidence of racism; if we see a decrease in the wage gap; if we see that the representation of visible minorities and ethnicity in the workforce has increased and at what levels; and if we see that the representation of the target groups has increased in crown corporations and the public service? Would you say that these are fair criteria for the people of Canada to use to decide whether the government's program of multiculturalism is a success or not? Are there any other criteria that you might suggest?

• (1635)

Hon. Raymond Chan: Thank you for your questions. Those are very important questions.

I will answer your fifth question first.

Those indicators you proposed are reasonable and legitimate indicators of assuring success of the department, of the policy, but at the same time, we must take into consideration the environmental change in the country during that time. When you have a September 11 incident, of course, that raises some issues to the table. If you used just that to gauge the success of the policy, it wouldn't be fair.

At the same time, when I answered the question earlier about the incident, about the response, if we had not had multiculturalism in practice for 30 years, we would have been less equipped to deal with those hate crime issues when such events arose.

To me, the bigger challenge, the better indicator, is to look at the communal performance as a whole. Even though I, myself, have faced racism issues, incidents, in my time in Canada, while I travel across the world I can say that Canada is the least racist among all the places to which I have gone so far. To me, the fact that 85% of Canadians agree that multiculturalism is not contributing to segregation, that it is contributing to the integration of the nation, is a very good indicator that multiculturalism is working.

If I can again relate my experience in Richmond, the population changed, the ethnic minority changed from something like less than 10% to 60% or even 70% over a span of 15 years. If this happened anywhere else in the world it would be chaotic; there would be lots of problems. But because we have multiculturalism, because every ethnic minority group feels confident in being Canadian, in having a level playing field, and because all the government and community agencies had to come up to the challenge of dealing with the issues

that came with diversity over that last 10 or 15 years, Richmond continued to be a very harmonious community. I think we have to give credit for the philosophy and ideology of multiculturalism.

As for the other four questions, we'll try our best to give you answers for the first and second. For number three, we'll have to chat with the Treasury Board on the employment equity. I agree that this continues to be an issue we have to be vigilant about. For number four, about the money spent on multiculturalism, sometimes it is very difficult to judge whether a program is contributing to multiculturalism or not, but we'll try our best to get that information.

Thank you.

The Chair: May I add to the request that Ms. Oda has made in terms of employment statistics that you break down the statistics by male and female? You noted that the disparity in wages between visible minorities and non-visible minorities is close to 15%. It's still 25% between men and women.

Would you also review hiring in the last couple of years to see what proportion of visible minority applicants got hired versus non-visible minority applicants? I note that the Public Service Commission also reports through the Minister of Canadian Heritage.

Finally, I know the answer is impossible to get, but can we start the process of finding out how many people working for the government on contract, term, temporary, or casual status are visible minorities?

Thank you.

• (1640)

Hon. Raymond Chan: Thank you, Madam Chair.

We'll have to work with the Treasury Board to get a lot of that information.

The Chair: And the Public Service Commission.

Hon. Raymond Chan: And the Public Service Commission.

The Chair: I think next on my list is Ms. Bulte.

Hon. Sarmite Bulte (Parkdale—High Park, Lib.): Thank you.

Actually, Mr. Lemay, you got an extra question in last time, because it would have been the NDP, and then it should have come to us. Since the NDP wasn't here, it should have come to us.

The Chair: No, actually he got the BQ question in the last round. The NDP didn't have a question.

Hon. Sarmite Bulte: Okay.

The Chair: But he's going to have to skip one more round before we come back to him.

Hon. Sarmite Bulte: I want to ask a question, because I think as much as we here in this room are talking about the importance of programs about multiculturalism, there are many people who think the whole department of multiculturalism is retro, that it's a time when we don't need that anymore.

How do you get that message out? It's one thing around the table, but to Canadians in general, how do we establish the importance of multiculturalism? I think you're speaking to the converted around here, but how we get that message out to Canadians is key, and I think we need a strategy for that.

So if you're looking at a plan of action, how do we do it?

Second, I gave a speech in Ottawa recently to the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association on an integrated framework for combating racism and xenophobia. I used our Multiculturalism Act and the whole policy, basically, as a best practice internationally. When I was doing my research, I also found that at one time—and according to the act—there was the ability of a minister to set up an advisory group. To my surprise that was one of the things that went with the 1995 cuts—well, I guess it doesn't surprise me.

Today we see the increase of racism, we see the increase of intolerance in this country, in light of world events, and the phobias Mr. Khan was speaking about. Is it not time to reinstate that advisory group?

And again, I know this is all going to have to do with getting more money, convincing the government we need more money, but shouldn't that be part of your action plan, to have those types of round tables on a regular basis, to have the outreach there in communities, both rural and urban, as Mr. Simms said? We forget about the rural communities when we deal with multiculturalism.

Again, what is our plan to make the case to Finance that this is more important than ever and that this department is not retro?

Hon. Raymond Chan: It's amazing, particularly after September 11, when we see some of the editorials and columns from all the different newspapers, that when something happens, when there is some racial conflict, it's because of multiculturalism, rather than that because of multiculturalism we have less of that kind of attack. So I agree with you that right there, there is still a lot of misperception and misunderstanding of what multiculturalism is all about.

Very often, for example, when I do my round tables across the country, some of the non-visible minorities will say, "Minister, I hope you make sure that we, the non-visible minorities, are included in multiculturalism." Of course they are. I then have to go back in history and show them that multiculturalism was there when less than 1% of our country's population were visible minorities. So multiculturalism was in fact policy, not because of the visible minorities but because of their non-visible minorities, whether it be the Ukrainians, the Germans, the Jewish community, and everybody else who was in Canada in the 1960s, before the visible minorities started to come en masse.

So one thing we have to appreciate is that the policy of multiculturalism has only been in place for 30-some years. It takes time to change people's attitudes, and so on. This is why we still have to be very vigilant with anti-racism.

I'm glad to report to the committee that there are quite a number of programs on educational approaches that we are taking towards anti-racism. For example, I mentioned that on March 21 we have an anti-racism day. We call it "Racism. Stop It!" We have a national video competition, an annual event where we ask people across the country to come up with video programs that combat racism. We also have the Mathieu Da Costa Challenge, which is a writing contest that we ask students and people across Canada to contribute to. We also have Asian Heritage Month every May. We also have Black History Month in February. So these are ways in which we try to combat racism through education and create more understanding from the public at large.

I would take your advice about the advisory committee to see how we can go about getting more people to contribute and give us more recommendations on how to deal with this issue. At the same time, I think we might use our program to start more forums among youth and also in the communities, such that we regenerate the kind of debate that created multiculturalism, so that people will understand it more.

Thank you very much.

• (1645)

The Chair: Ms. Oda has asked to be on for the second time, before Mr. Obhrai asked.

According to my schedule, as agreed to by the committee, another Liberal will be next. If there are no other Liberals who want some time, I will put on Monsieur Lemay.

Ms. Oda.

Ms. Bev Oda: Mr. Obhrai would like to ask a question. How many more rounds do we have?

The Chair: It depends on how late the committee wishes to sit.

Ms. Bev Oda: I'll let my associate go first, and then I'll follow later.

The Chair: Sure.

Mr. Obhrai.

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: Thank you, Minister.

Minister, as to what Sam said on the other side and what Bev said, the question we are trying to find an answer for is, are you relevant or are you irrelevant? Of course, you have stated that multiculturalism is the face...and you've stated all of those things, the changing diversities and all of that. This is a land of immigrants and we are always going to have changes over here.

Are the multicultural aspects of the country going out of your hands because communities are doing it themselves or things are moving by themselves?

The problem I see, which I want to leave with you as an impression, is not to do with your objectives. Objectives are fine and are nicely written, but it's the delivery of those objectives that we are questioning today. The feeling is left behind that those objectives are way, way behind because your department is not that aggressive in implementing the objectives you have outlined. That's the questioning that is coming here. We seem to feel that if your department is not going to be that aggressive in going after these objectives—and I don't even mean getting extra money, as you still have enough money to reach even those objectives—you could easily be put in another government department without being called a department of multiculturalism.

So give us an assurance that you are relevant to us—not the usual stuff that the face of Canada is changing and that there are immigrants coming in. We all know that is happening. What I'm trying to say is that the multicultural communities themselves are taking the ball and running themselves, and you may be becoming irrelevant. For example, I asked CBC the other day how many visible minorities they had in management, and he said they had a very poor record.

I'm going to leave that impression with you and hear your response to it.

• (1650)

Hon. Raymond Chan: To me the ministry is relevant because we have a program that has been very effective, I would say, in achieving its objectives. If you go back and take a look at the success of the ethnic minority groups, in the first phase of multiculturalism we talked about cross-cultural understanding. But at the same time, who were those minority groups that faced the challenge of multiculturalism in participating in Canadian society? They were the Ukrainians, Italians, and the Jewish community, who felt they were disadvantaged in our society before the policy of multiculturalism, before the Charter of Rights, and so on. After we had the implementation of the policy of multiculturalism, many of those groups—and I would say all of those groups—have fully integrated and achieved...politically, economically, and socially in Canada.

So I would say that the policy and the department are very relevant to that fact. As I mentioned earlier, even though we still have steep hills to climb and there's still racism in society, Canada as a whole is one of the least racist societies in the world. To me, that has to be a tribute to the policy of multiculturalism, which has made a tremendous contribution to that reality.

And like any other government department, there's always not enough money. I don't think there's any government department that would tell us they have enough money. We can use more, and we can be more effective, no doubt about it. But at the same time, we have to realize that the issue of multiculturalism is not something like health care or education, where you can put people through a system like a factory and then you see a product coming out. We're dealing with the perceptions of people, the attitudes of people, and it can only be achieved with the support of the people.

I'm very glad to say that because we are all immigrants and never started with a monoculture, and because Canadians are willing to adapt to changes and support the ideology of multiculturalism or a level playing field for all, the policy becomes successful. So I think

it's important that the Canadian government continue to have a ministry of multiculturalism, to have a ministry in charge of it, and be provided adequate funding to influence all the other departments to highlight the policy of multiculturalism. I think it's very relevant and very important for us.

The Chair: Monsieur Lemay.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Marc Lemay: Like my colleague, Mr. Simms, I only hope for one thing, Minister Chan: I hope that your department does not merge with Immigration Canada because if this occurs, we will have big problems.

My colleague said earlier that we should invite immigrants to settle in small communities. I agree with him completely. Here is the problem caused by your colleague. It is sometimes said that the left hand does not know what the right hand is doing, and this is a fine example.

You invite immigrants to come to Canada, you have policies, and immigrants settle in our country. For your information, I live 845 kilometres north of here, in Rouyn-Noranda. No later than last week, your colleague, the Minister of Immigration, forced an immigrant to travel all the way to Hull, pardon me, Gatineau, for a five-minute interview. I brought this issue to the attention of Ms. Sgro so that she could set up immigration offices in the regions. When immigrants awaiting status are obliged—and we know how these things work—to go to the immigration office, it is perhaps never easy, but it's much easier in Vancouver, Richmond, Montreal and Toronto. However, an immigrant who is a pastry chef in Abitibi—Témiscamingue must spend six hours on the road for a five-minute interview. I can guarantee that it was only five minutes, because I have the file. The department representative said that he had to see the person's face. How do you expect us to integrate our immigrants in our regions as we should?

Secondly, is there a program that I am unaware of that integrates immigrants to Canada through sports?

• (1655)

[*English*]

Hon. Raymond Chan: On your question about the service from the immigration department, I guess I'll have to refer it to Minister Sgro.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Marc Lemay: Tell her I'm coming. You have more chances of speaking with her by tomorrow than I do. Tell her I'm coming with a good file.

[*English*]

Hon. Raymond Chan: I also want to raise the point that the immigration settlement program has given a big budget to the provincial government. I think the Quebec government will have a big amount of money to deal with settlement issues. But if there are multicultural issues in the riding, I'll be very glad to help you out.

[Translation]

Mr. Marc Lemay: What about my question on sports?

[English]

Hon. Raymond Chan: On the sports issues, we'll get Minister Owen to deal with them.

Mr. Marc Lemay: All right. I'm going to ask the question, don't worry.

The Chair: Since one of my Liberal colleagues didn't take their turn, I'm going to ask the committee to indulge the chair.

I also share the concern that it's very difficult, from the department's plans and priorities report, the performance report, to find out exactly what's being done for multiculturalism, even in this particular department. The plans and priorities report has exactly five lines on multiculturalism, including the title line "Multiculturalism Program". There's nothing in the actual dollars allocated that tells me what's allocated specifically to your responsibility.

It does seem to me that as minister responsible for multiculturalism you should have a watching brief on what is being done in any department of government on multiculturalism. That policy should be integrated—whoever is delivering it—under your mandate. Otherwise, I don't see how we can have the most effective use of the resources available.

On the report on the Multiculturalism Act, for instance, it's nice for them to tell me we're not doing very well on employment equity, but where is the critique of the kinds of questions Ms. Oda and I posed? Why aren't we doing very well? How bad or how well are we doing? I keep hearing that we have to attract more applicants. In fact, that's not the problem. The problem is that the applicants are there, but the hiring is not. So I would like to see your role, Minister, as having that overview of multiculturalism.

That leads in part to the next question. Is it time to review the act? Is it time to simply look at how we can see your mandate take on that umbrella role? Do we even have a look at the budget from the point of view of how it impacts on a diverse society?

● (1700)

Hon. Raymond Chan: For the expenditure budget allocation issue, I would refer to corporate affairs. At the same time, I appreciate your question, Madam Chair. You raise some very legitimate questions. If the ministry has a horizontal cost responsibility to alert the other departments to deal with the reality of multiculturalism within their departments, then maybe we should be given the authority or the responsibility to give them a pat on the back if they achieve it.

I take your recommendation that maybe we could set out to collect those programs they have implemented because of the challenge of multiculturalism and claim credit for those activities.

The Chair: At the same time and in the same context, how is expenditure review being conducted with respect to programs that affect multiculturalism? By that I don't mean only your narrow budget, but the budget throughout Heritage and across government. How can we track how a very segmented approach is having a cumulative impact on what we're trying to achieve for a diverse society?

Hon. Raymond Chan: In the process of program review they have not come up with the reallocation yet. So we do not have an idea which program is being affected by the program review. Yet in every cabinet meeting where the issue is brought up, my responsibility on multiculturalism is to make sure they are aware of the impact of the new program, or the program that's being affected. My job around the cabinet table is to make sure the cabinet ministers are aware of whatever action they took or are going to take on the multiculturalism policy.

Madam Chair, if I have some time, I would like the department official to respond to your earlier question.

Mr. Bruce Manion: On the question of what resources are allocated for the heritage department's multi program for 2004-05, the number is just over \$28 million.

I'll answer the question of the chair on the issue of the accounting or the forecasting for multi programs across government. That is something that is recognized currently by the Treasury Board Secretariat as being a failing of the estimates process.

Next year, you will see, in the main estimates as well as in the planning documents, a different activity structure, an architecture that's being put forward. We've started to work on that, and it will start to link some major policy thrusts horizontally. For instance, they're currently examining how that mapping works with things like the aboriginal file and the aboriginal programming component. Similarly, they're looking at clean water, they're looking at the security. Those will be broadened out.

Ultimately, the goal is to have better information by ministry, as well as better information horizontally by major policy or programming area. We don't have that information presently, but it is being developed. It is in the game plan over the next two or three cycles of estimates submissions.

● (1705)

The Chair: May I say I'm glad the Treasury Board is finally catching up with the parliamentary committees that recommended exactly that eight years ago.

Thank you.

Ms. Oda.

Ms. Bev Oda: I was going to pursue a similar line of questions.

I just want to make sure, because it does concern me that after thirty years—in some terms that's not a long time, but in other terms it is a long time—we see that there has been an increase in racism. With some of the terminology and in the way we look at this, multiculturalism isn't just in immigration; it's not just new immigrants. As we see our population's demographics change, multiculturalism is about Canadians. When we look at taxpayers' dollars and resources and moneys, and if we have to make hard decisions....

Mr. Minister, you and I come from a culture—and it's true of many cultures—in which, if there was no support, we would still continue on with our festivals and we would still continue on with our traditions. If we can't get support, the community will do that. But I think we have to address the fact that this racism, this kind of racial profiling at an airport and at a government agency, is not acceptable.

Who will be the advocate? Who is the advocate within government for these people, for these communities, to make sure our immigration policies are going to make sure they feel welcome and they're treated the same? In our transportation department, are our security measures unfairly or unreasonably targeting certain groups? In official languages, who recognizes that this particular community has a double barrier, a threshold to pass through, before they can thoroughly participate and be part of doing what you and I do, and that's represent their country in one official language?

I ask the same question as the chair. Is it time when we have to stand back and say that we are now thirty years down the road, we can forecast what's going to happen with the demographics, and that we have to look at what the needs of the community are, what the needs of Canada are, and maybe approach and meet these needs in a different way? When you go to court, if a child is involved, there's a child advocate. Do we need an advocate within government to make sure every department...?

It's frustrating for me when I hear that the Treasury Board will report back or that this or that department will report back. Is there some place we can look to—and hopefully it's multiculturalism—to which we can say, can you come and report to us about how we're doing as a country, how we're doing as a government, to service the people we're trying to address here, to make sure that we as a country evolve in a way that reflects properly the makeup of the country?

We have a Constitution and a charter that recognizes who our founding peoples were, etc., but Canada is changing. We have to recognize that Canada now is a different being and it's evolving continually. I truly believe that we do. We would benefit from a step back to say, what are the needs going forward, and are we best equipped to use our resources and our facilities, etc., in the best way?

Hon. Raymond Chan: Thank you very much.

I agree with you that this is a big challenge that is facing us today, but we have to recognize that the change is steep in terms of history. As I said, yes, we've been here for thirty years—

Ms. Bev Oda: Mr. Chan, when I sat on the committee twenty years ago, we forecasted the change that was going to happen.

Hon. Raymond Chan: Madame, you have to put things into perspective. Thirty years ago, less than 1% of the population was visible minority. That is a steep change in the population.

Again, take the example of Richmond. Ten years ago, if we had put that Richmond situation or the Canada situation in Europe or Hong Kong.... Imagine if Japan's or Hong Kong's population all of a sudden changed, with 50% of that population being no longer of that ethnic group. Things would have gotten way out of hand.

Racism is everywhere. I remember when I was a kid in a public swimming pool in Hong Kong. It doesn't happen all the time, but one day there was a Caucasian in the swimming pool, and all of a

sudden everyone was round about him, poking fun at him. Just imagine if the Hong Kong population were changed so that 50% became Caucasian. What would the reaction of that community be?

We have to take that same perspective in Canada. This is what's happening in many parts of Canada right now. All of a sudden, in ten years' time, the population changed from 0% or 1% or 2% Asian or visible minority to 30% visible minority.

At the same time, we have a program. The fact is that we have a ministry of multiculturalism, with programs to create cross-cultural understanding. We have the Charter of Rights and Freedoms to give people level playing fields and to set a moral standard within Canada. All these policies have contributed greatly to the harmony we experience today in Canadian society.

So I disagree with you that the situation is deteriorating. The situation is improving. We're dealing with the situation. Yes, statistics would tell you otherwise, but we have to put them in the perspective of the evolution of our society.

At the same time, I appreciate that we'll continue with our efforts. It's important that we be vigilant and not take things for granted. Racial profiling is still deep in the minds of the public for a lot of people. They still look at our ethnic origin and make prejudgments on us, and we have to be vigilant to deal with that issue. But I don't think we should use these kinds of statistics to blame or to say we're not making achievements and we're not moving ahead. Canada is seeing great success in our approach to dealing with the diversity we have in Canada.

• (1710)

Ms. Bev Oda: Madam Chair, just to correct the record, as a point of order—

The Chair: You're out of time, but does anybody disagree with giving Ms. Oda another minute?

Ms. Bev Oda: I just want to clarify that I did not say it was deteriorating, etc. I said there is a concern when we see certain indicators increasing. That's not to take away from the work of multiculturalism historically in the department. I just don't want to be portrayed as—

Hon. Raymond Chan: Okay, thank you very much. I appreciate your clarification.

The Chair: It is now 5:15 p.m. Can I raise one issue with the committee?

I hope I'm not repeating myself from a previous meeting, but I have become aware that the industry committee plans to begin a study on foreign investment. I have asked the chair of the committee to let me know when and how they'll be integrating any consideration of foreign investment in the cultural field. We should be aware of that and perhaps have some joint meetings, if they're going to be proceeding with it. I only wanted other members of the committee to be aware of that.

Secondly, I'm sure all of you have been getting requests, as I have, from numerous groups to meet with them and hear about their concerns, particularly today, since a number of cultural organizations were appearing before the finance committee. I wonder if it might be wise to mail our schedule of meetings for the next month, plus our longer list of priorities, to the various cultural groups that I'm sure our clerk has on file, so they'll know what we're doing and not doing between now and probably June. Would that be agreeable to the committee?

Voices: Yes.

The Chair: Ms. Bulte.

• (1715)

Hon. Sarmite Bulte: I have another thing to add to the committee. I apologize for not being here at the last meeting when you discussed future business, but I was called to cabinet to be with the minister.

I had the honour and privilege of being in question period last Friday when Mr. Kotto asked a question about the UNESCO Convention. For clarification purposes and for the record, I understand that the Government of Canada's position is now on the website. I only want to thank Mr. Kotto for raising that in the House on Friday.

The Chair: I know you had some concern that this wasn't on our agenda before the Christmas recess.

[Translation]

Mr. Maka Kotto: Yes. I'm not an expert in procedural matters, but I would like to table a motion fairly quickly in order to study this position. It is important and imperative that we consider it quickly because things are moving rapidly and the matter may get beyond our reach at any given time.

At issue is the definition of Canada's position and whether or not this position allows for this restraining instrument, which would fall under the mandate of UNESCO and not of the WTO, and which would eventually lead to the trade tribunals, the latter being the only institutions allowed to define what constitutes an acceptable cultural policy.

The Chair: What do we want to do?

[English]

Hon. Sarmite Bulte: I agree, Madam Chair, if we could have it before Christmas. I know that the drafting committee is meeting on December 15, and I know the next intergovernmental meeting will be in Paris in February. We will be gone.

Madam Chair, I'd like to add to Mr. Kotto that I don't believe we should only have the department. We should have witnesses give their opinions on it as well. If our researchers could do so, we have various opinions. There are a number of articles that I think we have to look at and which are in dispute. I think it would be important that we have a department, plus witnesses, so that we could decide based on the witnesses who were here.

The Chair: I agree the timing is important. I also think parliamentary committees should generally have more input into reports that we're making internationally. I think we tend to be a little more straightforward than the administration is likely to be. Does

this mean the committee wishes to schedule an extra meeting or replace one of our existing witnesses, especially if we want additional witnesses?

Hon. Sarmite Bulte: I looked at it. With the committee's consent, could we not wait to hear from the CBC vice-president in February? I don't think anything is going to happen between now and February.

Mr. Lemay, I know you had asked for that. I don't want to overrule you, but could we not bring in the CBC for the first meeting in February? I think this is more important.

The Chair: If we can look at it overall, what we have scheduled is Minister Owen, the CBC, and the National Capital Commission. I'm getting the sense that nobody wants to cancel the Minister of Sport, especially with the budget coming.

Hon. Sarmite Bulte: No.

The Chair: Okay. It is either the senior management of CBC or the National Capital Commission.

Hon. Sarmite Bulte: Maybe we need both meetings. If we have the officials, and then if we could have... Perhaps if our analysts could do round tables of the various opposing groups on this so that we truly have a representation, we could postpone the NCC. I know, Ms. Oda, you wanted it, but I think time is of the essence on this convention.

Ms. Bev Oda: The NCC is not a timely...

The Chair: Could we put both of those off to the new year, then? We'll keep the ministerial one, put off the National Capital Commission and another hearing on the CBC, and instead do two meetings on UNESCO, especially if we want to have witnesses.

[Translation]

Mr. Marc Lemay: Is it the 6th or 15th of December?

[English]

Is it December 6 and December 15?

• (1720)

[Translation]

The Chair: We can start on December 6 with public officials.

Hon. Sarmite Bulte: Yes.

The Chair: We can also invite witnesses for December 6.

[English]

Mr. Marc Lemay: And on December 15 we'd finish the rest.

[Translation]

The Chair: On December 1st, we can have a short discussion on the two witnesses we wish to hear.

[English]

This Thursday we could take a few minutes deciding what witnesses we want, but invite the officials for December 6.

Hon. Sarmite Bulte: Do the researchers have enough time? To be fair to them I think we should make it as broad a list as possible. Do we hear from civil society as well? I think that's very important. There are a number of coalitions: the INCD; the coalition led by Monsieur Pilon on cultural diversity in Quebec; and Gary Neil, who has done extensive work in this area and represented our position at the NGO meetings, is one I would suggest.

Again, I think we should have as many as possible. I just want it to be thorough. I don't want to rush our analysts, so I would ask—

The Chair: I would like it to be thorough, too, but unless the committee is prepared to have an extra meeting.... We only have two meetings, and that's obviously going to limit what we can do. We could be—

Hon. Sarmite Bulte: We could begin perhaps on Wednesday.

The Chair: Do you mean this coming Wednesday?

Hon. Sarmite Bulte: Yes. Who are we having Wednesday?

Oh, it's the minister, Madame Frulla.

The Chair: Can I ask that each party get in touch with Joe and indicate which witnesses you would like? Then we could set up our meeting next week—December 6, our first meeting—with the officials and perhaps one or two witnesses. If we want to have, say, half a dozen witnesses, do we want to do more of a round table so we can get more of an exchange?

Hon. Sarmite Bulte: I think that's a great idea, Madam Chair. As we're thinking here, I'm thinking out loud: perhaps we could have some of the trade officials come too.

The Chair: Perfect.

Because we're doing this fairly quickly, let me suggest that you get in touch with our researcher about what witnesses you would like from each party. We can have a brief discussion on it, perhaps Wednesday after the minister leaves.

Mr. Gary Schellenberger: Could I just ask one thing? Whatever the clerk needs, whatever our officials need, could there be a request come to our office—

The Chair: Yes.

Mr. Gary Schellenberger: —for each party? Then it could be distributed that way—what's required of us. I would appreciate that.

The Chair: Yes.

You can get that out right away.

Thank you. I think that's it. Should I now declare the meeting adjourned?

Thank you, Minister. I think you're excused. Thank you very much for a very thorough discussion.

I'm sorry, I forgot to ask about other business.

Mr. Gary Schellenberger: I have one brief thing I'd like to bring up. It's about the briefing notes. I know so many times it's difficult for our experts or our research people to get some of these things out, but I received mine today at 1:37 p.m. Especially with the minister coming on Wednesday, it would be nice if I could get them tomorrow, even if they're not quite complete and even if the complete ones came at 1 o'clock. At least early in the morning of the day would be nice, though it doesn't give you a lot of time when you have to go to question period and then come here. There's a lot of good stuff in here, believe it or not.

The Chair: I am told they are at translation. They will not be back until Wednesday morning, when, as you know, we are all in our caucus meetings and have absolutely no time to look at them. I guess I would ask to what extent a delay in translation is the problem and whether we need to write to the Speaker about the adequacy of translation services for committees.

• (1725)

Mr. Gary Schellenberger: Right.

The Chair: That's a question to you.

Mr. Joseph Jackson (Committee Researcher): It's just a question of time, when we have two meetings a week; it takes time to pull the material together. Often we don't know who the witnesses are until quite a late moment. They come out as fast as they can.

Mr. Gary Schellenberger: My point is just to say that right now we have an agenda. Last week we didn't have an agenda. Now we do have, roughly, an agenda, so we should know what's coming down the pipe.

Mr. Joseph Jackson: It's quite certain that for future meetings they'll be ready sooner. I plan to have all of the notes written this week for forthcoming meetings. As long as you don't change the topics on us, they'll be ready.

Mr. Gary Schellenberger: I understand, and I give you full credit.

The Chair: Thank you. We are adjourned.

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