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• (0905)

[Translation]

The Chair (Mr. Steven Blaney (Lévis—Bellechasse, CPC)): Good morning. Welcome to the 12th meeting of the Standing Committee on Official Languages. Our hearing this morning is divided into two parts. Within the scope of our study of the broadcasting and services in French of the Vancouver 2010 Olympic Games, we welcome the representatives of the Department of Canadian Heritage.

We are glad to welcome the Assistant Deputy Minister of International and Intergovernmental Affairs and Sport, Ms. Marie-Geneviève Mounier, accompanied by Mr. David Robinson, Director General of the 2010 Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games Federal Secretariat.

[English]

Now I will invite our witnesses to proceed with their opening statements.

[Translation]

We will begin with Ms. Mounier. You have the floor.

Ms. Marie-Geneviève Mounier (Assistant Deputy Minister, International and Intergovernmental Affairs and Sport, Department of Canadian Heritage): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Good morning, ladies and gentlemen of the Standing Committee on Official Languages.

First of all, I wish to thank you for inviting me to appear today. Over the course of my career, I have had the privilege of working in various sectors in Canada and abroad. My attachment to French, my mother tongue, has always been central to my professional path.

Allow me first to remind you of the federal government's role in respecting and promoting official languages in the context of the 2010 Games. First and foremost, the government is acting as a guide, or even a facilitator for VANOC, the Vancouver Organizing Committee for the 2010 Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games. The Federal Secretariat, which is part of the Department of Canadian Heritage, is assuming the duties as leader, advisor, and coordinator on behalf of the Government of Canada.

I would like to take this opportunity to note that the recent creation of an official languages advisory committee is a real example of the government's support to this portfolio. VANOC formed this committee in order to carry out the recommendations made by the Commissioner of Official Languages last December. But VANOC also formed this committee to help make the 2010 Games a truly

bilingual celebration. Some prominent figures sit on this committee, including the former Prime Minister of France, Jean-Pierre Raffarin and the Deputy Minister of Canadian Heritage, Judith LaRocque, who is on this committee as a representative of the federal government. I can tell you that her advice and leadership will be definite assets for this expert advisory group.

As you know, English and French are the two official languages of the International Olympic Committee. This makes our efforts to highlight these two languages during the Games all the more relevant.

[English]

From the time Vancouver submitted its bid to host the 2010 Winter Games, promoting our two languages has been part of the commitments made in support of this bid, in accordance with the Official Languages Act.

Then in 2002 the Government of Canada, along with VANOC and its main partners, signed a multi-party agreement. This agreement confirmed the commitment to emphasizing Canada's linguistic duality during the games. This is the very first time in the history of the Olympic Games that a country has included provisions in this type of agreement that deal with respect for official languages. And I think we can all be very proud of this step forward.

Efforts are also being made within the federal administration to ensure that French and English are fully respected, not only during the games but also beforehand, including during the torch relay. Its journey will connect thousands of communities, both anglophone and francophone. The Federal Games Secretariat is also working with the Commissioner of Official Languages and the Treasury Board Secretariat to remind all federal organizations and signatories of the multi-party agreement of their official languages obligations. We want to make sure, for example, that visitors and athletes will be welcomed in the official language of their choice when they arrive in Canada.

[Translation]

In addition to working with the federal government to implement measures to promote our linguistic duality, VANOC is working closely with the Canadian Foundation for Cross-Cultural Dialogue and the Fédération des francophones de la Colombie-Britannique. These two organizations will represent the Canadian francophonie for the Games. Canadian Heritage has provided funding to these organizations to enable them to fully carry out their role as coordinators with regard to the participation of francophone communities.

This morning, I wish to assure you that from now until the close of the Games, the Government of Canada will continue to support VANOC in its efforts to promote our two official languages. Among other things, VANOC will look after the recruitment of bilingual employees and volunteers. It will ensure that its public and on-site communications are bilingual. It will also see to it that the opening and closing ceremonies of the 2010 Games highlight the presence and influence of French in this country.

As Minister Moore told you last week, the government is aiming for nothing less than making the Games exemplary in the area of official languages. We are fully aware of this goal and are truly committed to respecting it so that the 2010 Winter Games will truly belong to all Canadians.

Thank you very much for your attention. I will be glad to answer your questions.

• (0910)

The Chair: Thank you for your comforting words, Ms. Mounier.

Now let us continue with Mr. Robinson.

Mr. Robinson, are you accompanying Ms. Mounier? Do you not want to make an opening statement?

Ms. Marie-Geneviève Mounier: No. We thought that we would leave more time for questions.

The Chair: All right. Let us begin our first round of questions right away.

Mr. Jean-Claude D'Amours has the floor.

Mr. Jean-Claude D'Amours (Madawaska—Restigouche, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Thank you, Ms. Mounier, for leaving us more time to put questions.

In your opening statement, you said that the Canadian government would act as a guide. Now we hope that a guide is someone whom people will follow. However, there is a bit of a distance between hoping for a service and ensuring that service. Does the government's role not consist above all in ensuring or guaranteeing that services will be provided in both languages?

You mentioned people who will be coming from foreign countries. There is an issue with airports. Canadians already find it difficult to get services in French in Canadian airports. As the current situation already poses problems, how will you go about acting not only as a guide, but also ensuring adequate service in airports? We are very close to the 2010 Olympics; this is 2009.

Moreover, we want to make sure that the service is truly provided, but if you are merely a guide, how will you go about, on the ground, ensuring that service is provided to the thousands, even millions of visitors from overseas, from other neighbouring countries or even from other regions of Canada? How will a unilingual francophone be received in Vancouver? Why are you not present in order to make sure that the service will be offered to the public? After all, the federal government is helping to fund this venture.

In addition, you said that these games are for all Canadians. Here, I am thinking about broadcasting. Since you are a guide, even if the

games are for all Canadians, there is no official guarantee yet that the Olympic Games will be for all Canadians. Some people in my riding in northern New Brunswick do not have cable. For these people, viewing the events in our land will be a challenge if you only act as a guide. You say that you are there for all Canadians, but the neediest Canadians, those with the least resources, will be penalized by your acting merely as a guide.

I would like to hear your answer to my comments.

Ms. Marie-Geneviève Mounier: Thank you very much for your questions.

First, let me refer you to appendix A of the multi-party agreement which sums up and defines all the obligations that the signatories have with regard to official languages, and more specifically the organizing committee for the games. It sets out all the contributions from the federal government for the games. In the agreements regarding contributions, the elements in appendix A are repeated. They set out the obligations with regard to official languages, to make sure that they are met.

We agreed to fund the building of key infrastructures with the Government of British Columbia. The federal government will offer essential federal services for free to the organizing committee. The multiparty agreement is a kind of contract whereby the other parties must make sure that they meet all the obligations in appendix A in exchange for the contribution from the federal government.

Mr. Jean-Claude D'Amours: Ms. Mounier, you mentioned appendix A. It is nice to hear that we have an appendix A in the document and that it has been signed, but how will you make sure that the conditions will be met and that after the games, people will not complain of the lack of services in French? We are relying on the fact that appendix A was signed, however, have any measures been taken to make sure that the obligations will be met?

• (0915)

Ms. Marie-Geneviève Mounier: We are taking care of that in a number of ways. A unit of the federal secretariat is especially dedicated to official languages. Its work is to ensure that the organizing committee respects those agreements. The organizing committee also has an official languages unit. Both groups are in constant contact to monitor the progress made.

We are keenly interested in the issue of services. We want to offer a bilingual interface: when the athletes and visitors arrive in Vancouver, we want them to be welcomed in the language of their choice, one of Canada's two official languages.

We are working in close cooperation with the organizing committee and overseeing its activities. We also made sure that the volunteers' positions were also offered to francophones across Canada. The organizing committee assured us that the applications of 11,000 volunteers with varying levels of fluency in French had been retained. VANOC will begin conducting interviews to ensure that all front-line volunteers can express themselves in both official languages.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. D'Amours.

We will now move on to Mr. Nadeau.

Mr. Richard Nadeau (Gatineau, BQ): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Good morning, Ms. Mounier and Mr. Robinson.

Are you partnering with the Fédération des francophones de la Colombie-Britannique?

Ms. Marie-Geneviève Mounier: It is the organizing committee that has a partnership with the Fédération des francophones de la Colombie-Britannique and the Canadian Foundation for Cross-Cultural Dialogue.

Mr. Richard Nadeau: VANOC organized a countdown ceremony one year before the official opening of the games, as part of a well-thought-out process. The Fédération des francophones de la Colombie-Britannique notified VANOC on a number of occasions that it should ensure a francophone representation at that happy and joyous ceremony promoting Vancouver's Olympic Games. However, people realized at the last minute that no francophone component had been planned for the show.

Madam, how serious is VANOC in terms of the programming? Given the genuine commitment to hold the games in both English and French, VANOC did not even have the foresight to ensure that artists perform in French at such a major event as the launch of the countdown.

What is the role of the Government of Canada within that organization? You have just told us that a consultative committee has been struck, and yet no one thought of appointing any elected representatives. A former French prime minister and federal government helper were asked to sit on the committee, rather than people who are diligent and proud of the French fact.

There were no francophone artists singing in French at such a major event as the countdown ceremony, despite the recommendation from British Columbian francophones and members of the Fédération culturelle canadienne-française and Fédération des communautés francophones et acadienne du Canada. They are your partners on paper, but in fact, you ignore their comments.

I know you will try to justify your actions, but I would like to know how serious the project is and to what extent the federal government is committed to making these games bilingual.

Ms. Marie-Geneviève Mounier: Thank you for your question. I would like to point out that the countdown ceremony that was held on February 12 was 1 of 122 events organized as part of the Cultural Olympiad 2009. In the concert you refer to, there was a bilingual master of ceremonies.

• (0920)

Mr. Richard Nadeau: Just a minute! Were there any artists singing in French? Madam, there were none. You cannot justify the situation by saying that the master of ceremonies was bilingual. I could perform that role, but I would not replace a francophone artist. Tell me how seriously this is all being taken. How has this been thought out? Do not tell me what happened there, we all know. This was the subject of news stories in the media, of questions in the House of Commons, and the minister is trying to sort all this out.

I want to know what the role of the federal government is on the advisory committee and VANOC when, here in Canada, people cannot even invite francophone artists, whereas, in China, French was given a place at the Olympic Games. I want to know what the

federal government's role is on the organizing committee in terms of supporting the French fact.

Ms. Marie-Geneviève Mounier: Thank you. I am not trying to justify the situation. I simply wanted to explain a bit of the context. The master of ceremonies—this will allow me to complete my answer—was bilingual. There was also a village dance directed by musician Claude Champagne. Luke Doucet was also there, and there was a choreography by Jean Grand-Maitre.

Obviously, the department recognizes the disappointment felt by francophone communities. It has been shown that there clearly are very different perspectives as to what constitutes representative francophone programming.

Mr. Richard Nadeau: Listen, madam, my time is—

The Chair: Mr. Nadeau—

Mr. Richard Nadeau: That does not answer my question, you can be sure of that.

The Chair: You will have the opportunity to continue during the next round, Mr. Nadeau.

I am told that sometimes two microphones are on at the same time. I would ask that one person speak at a time, with a brief pause between interventions, and that way things will be very clear.

We will continue with Mr. Godin.

Mr. Yvon Godin (Acadie—Bathurst, NDP): Thank you, Mr. Chair. I would like to welcome Ms. Mounier and Mr. Robinson.

I would not want to steal my colleague's idea, but my colleague Mr. Nadeau also talked about the issue.

I am trying to understand. In your statement, you said, and I quote: "It will also see that the opening and closing ceremonies of the 2010 Games highlight the presence and influence of French in this country."

Why does the government not ensure that our country's two official languages are respected?

I am really concerned that we will miss the boat and forget to highlight the presence of English in this country and that everything be will conducted in French. For you to say that, do you feel there is a problem on the francophone side? You could just as well have said that the games will highlight the presence of French and English in this country.

In your remarks, you admit that there is a problem with the French official language, when you say: "[...] will highlight the presence [...]" Are francophones only present, or has the country accepted the fact that there are two founding peoples, anglophones and francophones, and that there are two official languages? I would like to hear your comments on that.

Ms. Marie-Geneviève Mounier: Thank you. I am sorry if my brief opening remarks alarmed you, because really, the objective of the opening ceremonies is to reflect Canada's linguistic duality and diversity. If I may give you some assurances—although the content of the opening and closing ceremonies is, of course, confidential—the people in charge of official languages on the organizing committee, who are well aware of the committee's responsibilities with respect to linguistic duality, met with their counterparts for the opening and closing ceremonies at an awareness and information session. The objective was to ensure they understand what specific measures must be taken to highlight linguistic duality. The Department of Canadian Heritage is investing \$20 million in the opening ceremony, and of course, reflecting the linguistic duality is a priority and a key objective for the department.

An advisory committee has been created to examine and approve the content of the ceremonies, and a senior departmental official sits on that committee precisely to ensure that they don't lose sight of linguistic duality. Another way for us to ensure that official languages are fully respected is through the contribution agreement which contains the same provisions as the multi-party agreement signed with all partners, as regards official languages.

• (0925)

Mr. Yvon Godin: Mr. Chairman, I would like the assistant deputy minister to give us some clarification. The deputy minister, Judith LaRocque, recently told this committee that 96% of the country would receive television coverage of the games, under the contract with CTV. Where did she get those figures from? Is the government using figures from CTV?

Ms. Marie-Geneviève Mounier: As regards the broadcasting of the games, I would like to reiterate that there is a private contract between the International Olympic Committee and the CTVglobe-media consortium.

Mr. Yvon Godin: Mr. Chairman, I understand that. However, we live in Canada, where we have two official languages. I don't give a hoot about private contracts. I am talking about the fact that the Olympic Games will be held in Canada, in an officially bilingual country, and I am told there is a private contract. They come to Canada and disregard official languages. That is what they are doing.

Ms. Marie-Geneviève Mounier: Well—

Mr. Yvon Godin: I want to know where the 96% quoted by the deputy minister comes from?

Ms. Marie-Geneviève Mounier: While the government does not have a specific coercive role to play, the department has been following the situation since the outset. Broadcasting is crucial to ensuring that all Canadians have access to the games, as these games belong to all Canadians. We want fair coverage for francophones and anglophones. We have been in contact with the consortium since the very beginning to ensure that they take coverage for francophones and anglophones to heart.

Mr. Yvon Godin: Where did the 96% come from?

The Chair: Thank you.

Ms. Marie-Geneviève Mounier: The committee of deputy ministers responsible for the Olympic Games asked the consortium to make a presentation on the scope of their coverage. They said coverage is at 96%.

The Chair: Thank you for your answers.

Thank you Mr. Godin.

I will now give the floor to Ms. Shelly Glover.

Mrs. Shelly Glover (Saint Boniface, CPC): Good morning and welcome.

[English]

I want to say that as a Canadian I was thrilled to see in your *allocation* what you said about this historical moment. I'm just going to read it again for members, because I got goosebumps when you said it. I'm going to say it in English: "This is the very first time in the history of the Olympic Games that a country has included provisions in this type of agreement that deal with respect for official languages. I believe that Canada can be proud of this step forward."

Thank you for bringing that to our attention. I hadn't realized just how involved Canada was in making this historic moment a reality.

[Translation]

I'm going to ask you a question in French, if I may. When did the Canadian government begin considering the official language obligations for organizing the games and what steps have been taken?

Ms. Marie-Geneviève Mounier: Right from the outset and even before Canada was awarded the games, official languages obligations were a concern. The issue of official languages was the subject of discussions the entire time the bid was being prepared. Appendix A, which I referred to, is now part of the multiparty agreement and outlines the obligations for the organizing committee. It was developed even before Canada was awarded the games. That was part of the file for the bid.

From the outset, when the federal secretariat was created, the need for the organizing committee to fulfil its obligations on official languages was on the table. The secretariat took on an advisory and oversight role for the Olympic Winter Games. Bear in mind as well that the secretariat can count on the support of the department, since official languages are an inextricable link. Several groups focus specifically on official languages in Canada. Therefore, we have ongoing and very natural support from the department.

• (0930)

Mrs. Shelly Glover: I have a question for Mr. Robinson.

[English]

It was in 2001 that this began. Can you elaborate on when that happened and when we were guaranteed that we were going to have the games? What happened between the time you put this in place—really a visionary movement—to when we got confirmation that we were going to have the games?

Mr. David Robinson (Director General, 2010 Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games Federal Secretariat, Department of Canadian Heritage): Hosting the games is a big responsibility. It's too big for one federal department. It's too big for one level of government. You have to work together in a collaborative way with all your partners to achieve your objectives around the games.

The government recognized this and wanted to work early with the games organizers' bid committee to make sure they had the full support of the Government of Canada, and as Madam Mounier said, questions of official languages were top of mind when we were doing our preparations for the games. That is one of the reasons why, working with all of our partners, we negotiated the multi-party agreement—to make sure that it was absolutely clear what Canada's expectations were around the delivery of official languages at the games. As Madam Mounier said, the agreement was signed in 2002, in advance of the games award. The games award occurred in July 2003, and all the partners—the future games organizing committee and all of our government partners—are very much aware of the requirements that Canada has made in exchange for our significant contribution to the games.

Mrs. Shelly Glover: That's fantastic.

[Translation]

I would like to talk about the torch relay, because I live in a minority community. How will you ensure that minority communities are able to participate in the torch relay?

Ms. Marie-Geneviève Mounier: Thank you very much.

Earlier, we mentioned the agreement signed by the Organizing Committee for the Olympic Games with the Canadian Foundation for Cross-cultural Dialogue and the Fédération des francophones de la Colombie-Britannique. These two organizations have contributed to compiling the list of francophone communities selected for the torch relay. I believe that VANOC selected 39 francophone minority communities for the torch relay. Of course, the organizing committee encourages community groups to appoint one or more francophones on the committees in their region. Moreover, VANOC sent a message to all official languages minority communities to invite them to join the olympic relay organization, which will certainly be magnificent and emotional for everyone. The Government of Canada, through our department, is coordinating a program to ensure that the promotion of linguistic duality will be taken into consideration during all ceremonies surrounding the torch relay.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Ms. Glover.

I submitted my own name on the Internet to participate in the torch relay when it goes through my hometown, Lévis.

Tell me, are the regional committees looking after the torch relay? You talked about committees, but who has been tasked with this responsibility?

Ms. Marie-Geneviève Mounier: I believe that committees will be organized in each of the communities the torch will go through.

The Chair: Okay. I will check with you after the meeting.

Ms. Marie-Geneviève Mounier: There are 190 communities involved.

The Chair: Do you want to participate in the torch relay in Moncton, Mr. Godin?

Mr. Yvon Godin: Mr. Chairman, if you want to ask questions, perhaps you should leave the chair and be replaced by the vice-chair.

The Chair: Yes, and I will pass the torch from one chair to the other.

We will move on to Ms. Zarac.

Mr. Yvon Godin: However, I always enjoy your questions.

Mrs. Lise Zarac (LaSalle—Émard, Lib.): Good morning.

For me, the Olympic Games are a major event that brings together athletes who excel in their sports and who are role models for young Canadians. This is even more true at a time when we are facing problems with street gangs. Vancouver is an example, but the problem exists throughout Canada. Athletes are role models for our young people, but they should be for all Canadians, of all languages. I hope they will all have an opportunity to see the games and participate.

The Commissioner of Official Languages made 18 recommendations last December. There being so many may be dangerous. I have noted some of the ones that are very important, to my mind. The commissioner called for a regular report as well as a summary of outstanding issues to be subsequently sent to the VANOC Executive Committee and to the board's Human Resources Committee.

I would like to know what has been noted and if there has been any follow-up.

● (0935)

Ms. Marie-Geneviève Mounier: Thank you.

VANOC already provides us with quarterly reports on its accomplishments in terms of official languages. In fact, it has just submitted its most recent report, from January to March 2009. Yes, we are following up on the recommendation of the Commissioner of Official Languages. The federal secretariat is also preparing a report for him on progress accomplished.

Mrs. Lise Zarac: What problem areas are covered in the report?

Ms. Marie-Geneviève Mounier: We have just received it. We are currently analyzing it. We will note all of the progress in the report that we will subsequently write.

Mrs. Lise Zarac: So you cannot give us any details at this point.

Ms. Marie-Geneviève Mounier: I have nothing in particular to point out for the time being, but we are working very closely with VANOC and the Commissioner of Official Languages.

Mrs. Lise Zarac: Thank you.

Will the committee be informed of these issues once you have completed your analysis?

Ms. Marie-Geneviève Mounier: Certainly. We will follow up with the clerk of the committee.

Mrs. Lise Zarac: Thank you.

VANOC signed agreements with partners, including Canadian Heritage, the Fédération des francophones de la Colombie-Britannique, the Canadian Foundation for Cross-Cultural Dialogue, the governments of Quebec, New Brunswick, as well as the Grand Témoin de la Francophonie.

Has VANOC followed up on the commissioner's recommendation about these partnerships? There was to be cooperation with these partners. Was that done?

Ms. Marie-Geneviève Mounier: As regards the Grand Témoin de la Francophonie, VANOC would be in a better position to answer that question. However, I can say that there is ongoing dialogue between VANOC, the Fédération des francophones de la Colombie-Britannique and the Canadian Foundation for Cross-Cultural Dialogue. The new advisory committee that was just created and that will meet shortly will strengthen cooperation among the various stakeholders, to ensure that everything is in place so that the games respect Canada's linguistic duality.

Mrs. Lise Zarac: Thank you.

A commitment was made to closely monitor federal institutions, namely the RCMP, Citizenship and Immigration, the Border Services Agency, the Canada Tourism Commission, and Air Canada. Committee members have heard horror stories regarding the Border Services Agency.

What steps have been taken? Canada promotes itself as a country with two official languages. We will be hosting representatives from countries that do not have two official languages, but where people speak the two, three or four languages taught in schools. What has been done with regard to this commitment?

Ms. Marie-Geneviève Mounier: I thank you for that question.

A collaboration was established. There are a number of stakeholders involved in the official languages, including the Commissioner of Official Languages, the Treasury Board's Office of the Chief Human Resources Officer and the Department of Canadian Heritage. These three stakeholders have joined forces to undertake information and awareness-raising events throughout all federal institutions, so that they can be fully aware of their respective obligations. You are right in saying that Canada must show a bilingual face.

● (0940)

Mrs. Lise Zarac: Are there criteria that have to be met?

Ms. Marie-Geneviève Mounier: The Official Languages Act contains obligations for all departments, particularly with regard to language of service. Through this tour of federal institutions, we are trying to understand and respond to the concerns, and the mechanisms that can be implemented, including a sharing of best practices and review of departments' legal obligations with regard to services.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Zarac.

We will move on to Ms. Guay.

Ms. Monique Guay (Rivière-du-Nord, BQ): Thank you, Mr. Chair. I would like to continue in the same vein as my colleague Richard Nadeau.

Yesterday, I made a statement in the House on the event that occurred in February. We know full well that there was absolutely no intention to have any French representation, because the two texts that were translated into French by francophones, at the last minute, were supposed to be presented only in English. That is extremely insulting. The Olympic Games are getting off to a bad start.

When you talk about the presence of French, I ask myself the following question: Where and how will it be present? Will both

languages be treated equally? I raised that point earlier with my colleague. Will all services really be provided in French?

I have read the recommendations. The Commissioner of Official Languages has asked that VANOC immediately hire at least one more full-time employee to deal with official languages. Has that been done? The event is quickly approaching, as you know. The games will be held in 2010.

I am very concerned and am sure that, if the Department of Canadian Heritage and other VANOC stakeholders do not do their work as expected, you will be getting an earful for a long time after the Olympic Games. Francophones—as we know, we are a French-speaking country—live across Canada, and some will feel quite hurt and upset because they will not have had any services in their language.

Once again, we hear that the government is not responsible if people in certain areas cannot watch the Olympic Games on television in French. It seems unfortunate that the government not expend more efforts to allow people to watch the Olympic Games in their own language. Some francophones might not speak English. Whereas the games will be broadcast in English across Canada, francophones will again be penalized.

I would like you to answer my questions, if possible.

Ms. Marie-Geneviève Mounier: Yes, if I might, I would begin with the recommendation that was made by the Commissioner of Official Languages regarding the hiring of an additional employee. That has been done. VANOC immediately responded to that recommendation.

As for the show that we were talking about, I believe that it has allowed us to understand that there are different perspectives about what constitutes programming that is representative of francophone culture. As I indicated, there were components, a choreography...

Ms. Monique Guay: That was translated into French at the last minute.

Ms. Marie-Geneviève Mounier: It was completely choreographed.

Ms. Monique Guay: Completely choreographed does not mean it was presented in French. Not at all.

Ms. Marie-Geneviève Mounier: I just mean that it enabled us to see that there were different perspectives and to tighten the criteria under the contribution agreement to be signed for the 2010 Cultural Olympics regarding what constitutes a performance of—

Ms. Monique Guay: I would point out, Ms. Mounier, that French is not choreography; it is a language. That means that people can take part and give their performances in French and not present a choreography.

I can tell you that this is unacceptable and will remain unacceptable for francophones. An extraordinary effort must be made, not only for the opening and closing of the games, but throughout them. There must be events organized so that francophones can participate to the same extent as anglophones. There will definitely be negative repercussions if that does not happen.

• (0945)

Ms. Marie-Geneviève Mounier: With respect to broadcasting, as I mentioned earlier, the consortium made a presentation to the committee of deputy ministers responsible for the games and announced that the consortium also included French television networks such as Réseau des sports, Réseau Info-Sports and TQS. APTN is also a member of the consortium.

The consortium has negotiated agreements for distribution, broadcasting and satellite service to have the signal provided free of charge during the entire period and during the games so that francophones across Canada have equal access. Negotiations are still underway with other broadcasters and satellite service distributors to ensure that coverage is as complete as possible.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Ms. Guay.

I will just mention that when we finish this part of the meeting, we will take a short break, not only to welcome other witnesses, but also to make some adjustments to our communication system.

Mr. Petit.

Mr. Daniel Petit (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Thank you very much.

Good morning, Ms. Mounier and Mr. Robinson. I will begin with a short preamble.

My comment is addressed to you, Ms. Mounier. The questions that you have been asked all deal with how the television system will broadcast the French or English channel to the various provinces in Canada. In Quebec, for example, francophones are in the majority. There is a large English-speaking community in Montreal, but half of anglophones in Quebec live outside Montreal. There is no problem in Montreal. I think that everyone will receive the signal by cable or other means, through CTV. I think they are the ones broadcasting the games.

On the North Shore and even in the Gaspé region, there are villages that are mainly, but not entirely anglophone. The residents are bilingual, but English is their first language. English has been one of the languages used in Quebec since before Confederation. Because anglophones in those areas are not very numerous, they do not necessarily receive English cable and satellite signals.

Has CTV taken any steps to deal with that issue?

Mr. D'Amours made a very good point earlier. He said that there were small groups of francophones in his province that will not receive the signal. In my province, on the other hand, there are places where anglophone groups may not receive the signal. So I am wondering whether all anglophones in Quebec will receive the English signal or only those in urban areas. There are approximately 14,000 anglophones in Quebec City. They will receive the signal without any problem, as will anglophones in Montreal and Sherbrooke. But the situation is different in rural areas. Can you please answer my question on this?

Ms. Marie-Geneviève Mounier: I do not have any specific answer for you. I can only say that CTVglobemedia is determined to ensure that coverage across Canada is as complete as possible and that it is fair for francophones and anglophones. However, guaranteeing 100% coverage everywhere may not be a commitment

that the company can make. If I understand correctly, you have invited CTV representatives to appear before the committee or you intend—

Mr. Daniel Petit: No, I have not yet invited anyone.

Ms. Marie-Geneviève Mounier: —or the committee intends to do so. I believe that they will be able to answer that question. When they made their presentation to the committee of deputy ministers, their intention was definitely to provide the broadest coverage possible and reach all Canadians. The network will also be using new technologies and Internet sites. In addition, it is looking at all the new technologies in order to find ways to increase coverage and access to the games across Canada.

Mr. Daniel Petit: Do I have any time left?

The Chair: Yes, you still have one minute and 30 seconds, Mr. Petit.

Mr. Daniel Petit: Thank you.

I have one other question. A previous witness told us that the satellite signal is not available everywhere, for example, in the western provinces. You know how it works: there is only isolated coverage. Has this problem not been solved for both francophones and anglophones, mainly in northern Saskatchewan and northern Manitoba, where people were having problems receiving the signal? We were told that the problem had been resolved. It had to do with the upcoming 2010 Winter Olympic Games. Has that signal problem been resolved? Is it in the process of being resolved or will it be? Can you give us an answer on that, Ms. Mounier?

• (0950)

Ms. Marie-Geneviève Mounier: I am very sorry but I really cannot answer your question, since anything to do with satellite broadcasting or reception of satellite signals is really outside my mandate. What I can tell you is that there are discussions underway with CBC/Radio-Canada as a follow-up to the CRTC hearings to see how the consortium and CBC/Radio-Canada could work together to fill in possible gaps in the broadcasting of the games. The satellite issue, unfortunately, is outside my mandate.

Mr. Daniel Petit: Do I still have time?

The Chair: No, Mr. Petit, your time has expired.

Mr. Daniel Petit: Thank you very much, Ms. Mounier.

The Chair: We will now go to Mr. Godin.

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

Regarding third party agreements, the government wants to do promotion, but it is clear that it really is promotion and not a commitment to ensure respect for both official languages. In point 4.2.1 of his report, concerning governance of official languages, the Commissioner of Official Languages makes the following recommendation:

That Canadian Heritage strengthen provisions pertaining to services provided by third parties and establish provisions for sponsors to ensure the equal treatment of both language groups.

Do you agree with that statement? Does the government have a role to play in this regard?

Ms. Marie-Geneviève Mounier: We always take the Commissioner of Official Languages' recommendations very seriously and we try to follow up on them the best we can. In the case of this particular recommendation, the issue is a very complex one. We are looking at the various ramifications to see how we can respond to it.

Within the Department of Canadian Heritage, there is a working group that includes the legal services; it is exploring the third party issue to see how we can implement the commissioner's recommendation. That said, where the 2010 Winter Olympic Games are concerned, I must repeat that the multiparty agreement, which is our overall contract with the organizing committee, includes provisions calling on VANOC to urge third parties to take the official languages into consideration...

Mr. Yvon Godin: I would ask you to stop there. You are talking about urging them to take languages into consideration, but do they not have an obligation to do that? This is Canada, which has two official languages, and the Olympic Games recognize these two official languages, French and English. I had to make a complaint to the Commissioner of Official Languages.

[English]

Tourism British Columbia, the official travel website of B.C., Canada.

[Translation]

This organization has a site dedicated to the Olympic Games. Information is provided in a number of languages for various countries, including China and Mexico, but there is no French. I had to file a complaint about that. We are talking about Vancouver, British Columbia, where there are 270,000 people who speak French and English and where there are 60,000 francophones. What about the French, who are major participants in these games?

The Chair: They founded the Games, Mr. Godin.

Mr. Yvon Godin: They founded them! Ms. Glover congratulated you and told you how good you were, and she congratulated the government. She has never seen anything so wonderful in her life. It is very, very good. Personally, I cannot believe this. I am upset to see what the federal government is doing and what our prime minister, Stephen Harper, is doing. When he speaks to the nation, he always starts out in French, and then he abolishes the Court Challenges Program and makes cuts to the CBC. We are losing our news services across the country. My God, I am very upset this morning! I don't know what to do or what to think.

More seriously, I want to know what obligations the Government of Canada imposes on third parties. Do you simply urge them to comply, or do these people have obligations to our country in terms of our official languages, the languages of the two founding peoples?

• (0955)

Ms. Marie-Geneviève Mounier: As I mentioned, the multiparty agreement requires VANOC to urge third parties, its partners, to use both official languages.

Mr. Yvon Godin: That means that they are not required to do so.

Ms. Marie-Geneviève Mounier: VANOC is required to urge sponsors to do so.

Mr. Yvon Godin: Does VANOC say to the third party, "I would like you to do that for me" or "If you are going to promote the Games, here is what I want you to do. We are the ones paying."?

Ms. Marie-Geneviève Mounier: VANOC urges its sponsors to use both official languages and provides them with support services. It offers support to sponsors who need assistance from bilingual staff. It offers information indicating where the resources are available, etc. For example, if sponsors need translation services or...

Mr. Yvon Godin: Yes, they can do it in Chinese and in "Mexican", but they cannot do it in "Canadien" in British Columbia. What is the problem? What is the Department of Canadian Heritage doing to ensure respect for our country's official languages?

The Chair: Perhaps you could end with a brief response.

Ms. Marie-Geneviève Mounier: The organizing committee's responsibilities are very clearly laid out in the multiparty agreement and, as I mentioned, the third party issue is being explored right now.

Mr. Yvon Godin: Under review... Oh boy! It's been under review since 2001.

The Chair: Ms. Mounier, Mr. Robinson, you told us that the role of the department was to serve as a guide, a facilitator. You also clearly indicated to the committee this morning that the Vancouver Organizing Committee had obligations relating to the promotion of official languages.

Furthermore, I think that all the committee members agree that the opening and closing ceremonies of the Olympic Games will showcase Canada to the world, as the minister told us. Last year, we had the celebrations relating to the founding of Quebec City 400 years ago, and they were an excellent opportunity to promote our culture as well as talented people from here and from abroad. This morning you may have gathered that the role of our committee is to serve as a watchdog. So, we will be monitoring the situation closely to ensure that the Olympic Games are a great success for Canada.

Thank you for appearing before the committee.

Mr. Galipeau.

Mr. Royal Galipeau (Ottawa—Orléans, CPC): Mr. Chairman, I think that we have gone around the table, but during the third round, did a government member have an opportunity to ask a question?

The Chair: In fact, we've done two rounds of questioning, Mr. Galipeau, because we must hear from another witness during the last hour.

Mr. Royal Galipeau: I would like to ask for unanimous consent from the committee so I may ask these witnesses a question.

The Chair: Is there consent?

Go ahead, Mr. Galipeau.

Mr. Royal Galipeau: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman, and I would also like to thank my colleagues on the committee for giving me this opportunity to ask a question.

First of all, I must congratulate the parliamentary secretary for sharing her enthusiasm with us and with our witnesses. I share this enthusiasm too. I must also inform the committee that I am not in agreement with the tone that the member for Gatineau took when he asked his questions.

That being said, I think that out of respect for all the members of this committee and for all parliamentarians from all sides of the House—

Mr. Yvon Godin: I have a point of order, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Royal Galipeau: —it is important that Ms. Mounier answer Mr. Nadeau's question.

The Chair: Excuse me, Mr. Galipeau, we are on a point of order.

Mr. Yvon Godin: Is this a point of order or a question for the witnesses?

● (1000)

The Chair: I may consider your point as a point of order, but I'd like to ask you to put your question.

Mr. Royal Galipeau: My question has already been asked. In my opinion, despite the tone that he took, our friend, Mr. Richard Nadeau, the member for Gatineau, did ask the question. It was entirely relevant, and despite two attempts to get an answer, he did not get one. So I would like to ask Ms. Mounier to give Mr. Nadeau and all the committee members a clear answer to a question that he has asked twice.

I'll ask Mr. Nadeau to repeat it.

The Chair: Mr. Nadeau.

Mr. Richard Nadeau: Mr. Chairman, my question was very simple. What is the federal government's role in terms of making sure with VANOC that French will be respected throughout the entire Olympic Games, starting today—since they have gotten off to a bad start—until the end of the games? How are you going to go about telling VANOC that they must provide services in both French and English?

Ms. Marie-Geneviève Mounier: Thank you.

Obviously contribution agreements are the first mechanism through which we can ensure VANOC complies with its official language requirements. These agreements allow for the inclusion of very specific clauses on these requirements. Moreover, through the Vancouver 2010 Games Secretariat and the two official languages units, which are in constant communication, there is a discussion and oversight process in place. VANOC must also provide quarterly reports and so must the secretariat. Also, VANOC must table its business plan, to be approved by the federal government. The plan includes all official language-related activities and allows the federal government to specify the resources allocated under each official languages heading. This gives us greater control.

Now, there is also the advisory council. Through it we will be better able to advise—

Mr. Richard Nadeau: Yes madam, but will that force VANOC to take action? What if it does not, what will you do? Will you cut off funding? It did not consider the countdown. So, will you cut funding? Is that what I should gather from this?

Ms. Marie-Geneviève Mounier: We can do that. If the contribution agreement conditions are not complied with—

Mr. Richard Nadeau: So, you will cut funding if these people do not do their job. Well, we know they are already not doing their jobs.

Mr. Royal Galipeau: Thank you.

Mr. Richard Nadeau: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The Chair: Very well. We will suspend the meeting. Thank you for being here this morning.

Ms. Marie-Geneviève Mounier: Thank you.

● (1000)

(Pause)

● (1010)

The Chair: As time is flying by, we will get started right away on the second part of our meeting. It is a pleasure for us to welcome the Director General of the Fédération des communautés francophones et acadienne du Canada, Ms. Suzanne Bossé. Welcome. Ms. Bossé is accompanied by the federation's Director of Communications, Mr. Serge Quinty.

Without further ado, I would invite you to make your presentations.

Ms. Suzanne Bossé (Director General, Fédération des communautés francophones et acadienne du Canada): Ladies and gentlemen, members of the committee, I would like to start by thanking you for having invited us to appear this morning. I would also like to say that the president of the FCFA, Ms. Lise Routhier-Boudreau, who was unfortunately unable to attend this morning, sends her regards. My name is Suzanne Bossé.

I am Director General of the FCFA, and I am accompanied this morning by our Director of Communications, Mr. Serge Quinty. We will be pleased to answer your questions following our presentation.

You have invited us to appear before you this morning to share our views on the 2010 Olympic Games. Two areas of a particular interest to us in this regard: the broadcasting of the games and the showcasing of linguistic duality and the French fact in all games-related events. The issue of French-language broadcasting of the Vancouver Olympic Games was a concern to the FCFA as soon as broadcasting distribution rights were granted to the CTVglobemedia consortium, in February 2005. You will recall that at the time, there seemed to be very few measures taken to ensure that francophones outside of Quebec could watch the games in French on basic cable.

Things have changed a great deal since. Over the last few years, the Fondation canadienne pour le dialogue des cultures et la Fédération des francophones de la Colombie-Britannique worked with the consortium to build a capacity for French-language broadcasting of the games throughout the country. I will now provide you with an update as to the situation today. Agreements have been signed with major cable companies: Shaw, Rogers and Cogeco, as well as with Bell TV and Star Choice, to unscramble the TQS and RDS digital signals not only for the duration of the games, but during the months preceding the opening of the games. Shaw will also unscramble the TQS and RDS signals throughout all Vancouver hotels where it provides cable services, in other words all but two hotels.

Clearly there remains work to be done. For instance, discussions are underway with smaller cable companies and we are currently exploring options which would allow subscribers to analog cable to pick up the TQS signal. That said, once this exercise is completed, a large majority of francophones throughout the country should have free access to the broadcasting of the 2010 Olympic Games in their language and we are pleased with that.

I would say if the FCFA were to have one wish for the coming stages, it would be twofold. First of all, I have said that cable companies have agreed to unscramble the TQS and RDS signals one month before the games. That is all very well, but francophones in minority settings will remain shut out from the media campaign which is already underway, at TQS/RDS as well as on CTV, and whose purpose is to arouse the interest of Canadians in the Olympic Games. That is why we stated before the CRTC, last January, that we believed it was important for these two stations' signals to be unscrambled far earlier, in other words six months before the games.

We are also pleased to see that the consortium will be responsible for the production and broadcasting of 800 hours of original French-language programming about the games. What we would sincerely hope would be for this programming to extend beyond Quebec reality. It would be a wonderful opportunity to promote the francophone community in British Columbia, which includes over 70,000 francophones. It would also be an opportunity not only to discuss francophone athletes from all over the country, but also francophile athletes. In short, it is a wonderful opportunity to raise awareness of the span of the Canadian francophonie and of the French fact in Canada.

We are therefore rather satisfied with developments in the area of French broadcasting for the 2010 Olympic Games, although there remains some work to be done. It would also seem that throughout the process new practices have been developed to ensure that when this type of events occur in Canada they are broadcast free of charge in both official languages throughout the country. It would seem to us that the CRTC would gain from exploring the option of codifying these practices into actual policy.

● (1015)

We are far less satisfied however with the presence of French throughout the celebration and events currently underway in preparation for the Games. We were rather displeased to hear that the French-language component for the February 12 countdown to the Olympics show consisted of one musician who himself admitted that he had probably been chosen because of his francophone name.

We were also quite puzzled by the composition of the national touring program currently underway within the 2009 Cultural Olympiad. There is very little or perhaps nothing at all to clearly showcase linguistic duality in Canada. Among the participants there is the Quebec base group *Beast*, which sings in English, *Bell Orchestre* which is a Quebec instrumental group that has a unilingual English website and the *Manitoba Métis Music and Dance* group which we've heard present a video of Louis Riel over the course of its performance. You will however admit that this is insufficient, grossly insufficient.

We are, however, pleased to see that VANOC created an advisory committee on official languages of which Jean-Pierre Raffarin, the

former French Prime Minister will be a member. The francophone community in British Columbia and the *Fondation canadienne pour le dialogue des cultures* will also be represented.

This is important to us because the Games are now less than 11 months away and we have already witnessed two large scale cultural events during which French representation was a problem. We hope this committee will be able to contribute to measures being taken to correct the situation. It is essential for all upcoming activities, the Olympic Flame Relay, the 2010 Cultural Olympiad and all other events surrounding the Games to show Canada and the entire world the bilingual face of this country. Nothing short of that will do.

Thank you, I am now prepared to answer any questions you may have.

● (1020)

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Bossé, for that clear and concise presentation.

Mr. D'Amours, you have the floor.

Mr. Jean-Claude D'Amours: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you, Ms. Bossé, and Mr. Quinty. I would first like to congratulate you, Ms. Bossé, for having been appointed Director General of the *Fédération des communautés francophones et acadienne du Canada*. I would also like to make special mention of the fact that you are originally from my riding, Saint-Quentin, the maple capital.

Ms. Suzanne Bossé: Thank you.

Mr. Jean-Claude D'Amours: You raised a number of points that worry me. I do not know if you got the chance to listen to the representatives from Canadian Heritage who were here earlier. It would have been a good idea for them to stay a few minutes longer at least to listen to what you had to say. It may have shown some desire on their part to improve the situation. In any case, there do not seem to be too many people here.

Two things are of serious concern to me. First of all, the Cultural Olympiad. Ms. Mounier told us earlier on that, if there were any errors in schedule A of the agreement on the Games, changes would be made. At the end of the day, there is no purpose in having a schedule A if changes are made to the Cultural Olympiad but there are no improvements with regard to the Games as such.

I did not get the opportunity to raise the point that worries me, but it has to do with the level of French. People from Canadian Heritage mentioned earlier that volunteers had been recruited. I can not recall the exact number, but I think she mentioned 11,000 volunteers. I do not recall whether that was 11,000 francophones, but she did say that these people could express themselves in French to varying degrees. When you have a car, you do not ask whether or not it has brakes. In this case, either people speak French or they do not. How can we talk about varying degrees of French? Either we offer the services or we do not. How will we make sure these services are offered?

I wonder if this implies that francophones understand French to varying degrees. People may have different ways of speaking. Mr. Godin and myself, as well as other francophones throughout the country, may express ourselves differently at times, but we remain francophones. We do not speak French in varying degrees.

I would like to know whether this situation with respect to the volunteers seems acceptable to you.

Ms. Suzanne Bossé: I will answer your first question with regard to volunteers, and I will let my colleague Serge respond to the question on schedule A.

Clearly, we have to be able to welcome visitors completely in French, beginning when they arrive in Vancouver. After all, we are expecting a fairly significant number of visitors. They need to be able to receive services in French from the start of their stay to the end, and this applies to all services, be they at Games venues or at their hotels. We expect visitors to be served in French.

Mr. Jean-Claude D'Amours: Do you find it acceptable to say that there will be francophones who will express themselves in French to varying degrees? A francophone from France and a unilingual francophone from New Brunswick express themselves differently in French. These French speakers might not be understood by these francophones with their varying degrees of French. The service will not be adequate. Do you agree?

Ms. Suzanne Bossé: Absolutely, I think that good French must be spoken.

What do you think, Serge?

Mr. Serge Quinty (Director of Communications, Fédération des communautés francophones et acadienne du Canada): I agree with you, Mr. D'Amours. To answer your question, we have to focus on the result. So what is the result we are looking for? We want all services to be provided in both languages. This is the how we should judge the volunteers' ability to speak French. We have to determine whether they are able to provide service in French to French-speakers.

• (1025)

Mr. Jean-Claude D'Amours: Period.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. D'Amours.

We will continue with Mr. Nadeau.

Mr. Richard Nadeau: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Good morning, Ms. Bossé and Mr. Quinty. It is refreshing to hear what you have to say. It is a change from government yes-men, who have told us not to worry because everything is on track for the Olympic Games. They practically put French on a pedestal, or at least they said it was on the same footing as English in VANOC.

But let us get down to business. We know that there are some problems, particularly in broadcasting. In its response to the fifth report of the Senate Standing Committee on Official Languages on August 13, 2007, the government said the following about the broadcasting of the games: "The government is of the view that incomplete OTA coverage does not constitute an equitable access issue and that the existing legislative framework does not necessarily require free universal access to broadcasting signals." That is the position of our Conservative government. It is very ugly, thank you.

I would like to know what you think of the television broadcast of the Games.

Further, I would like to talk about the "Countdown" show. It must be said that the master of ceremonies is not responsible for pointing out that we have French artists.

I would like to know what you think about the radio and television broadcast of the "Countdown" show. What do you think of VANOC's attitude towards French at the Olympic Games?

Ms. Suzanne Bossé: It is clear that there has been progress, fortunately, since the government made that statement in 2007. As we indicated in our presentation, we are fairly satisfied with the broadcasting as presently planned, apart from the fact that we would have liked coverage to start six months before the Games, and not only one month before. Last January, it was still a problem, but fortunately a lot of progress has been made.

As for the Olympiad show, we find it unacceptable that no French-speaking groups were invited. There are many such French-Canadian groups. We could easily provide information on that, if it is needed. However, VANOC has not shown any real interest in including French in its program, at least not until now.

Mr. Richard Nadeau: Well, that is clear.

Mr. D'Amours talked about something that is included in the documents we received from the committee's research analysts. As it now stands, approximately 15% of volunteers speak French, and 10% have some knowledge of French. If a person knows the words "cheveux" and "cheval", but does not know that one means "hair" and the other means "horse", that is a problem. In China, we can be sure that Chinese athletes have access to services in their country's language. The same applies to France and Australia. However, Canadian francophones do not have access to services in one of their country's languages.

Have the Fédération des francophones de la Colombie-Britannique, the Fédération culturelle canadienne-française and the other organizations heard about the efforts that VANOC must undertake to ensure that French is placed on an equal footing with English?

The Chair: You have about 30 seconds left, Mr. Quinty.

Mr. Serge Quinty: We have a lot of discussions with VANOC, but, as we can see, the results are not always convincing.

• (1030)

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Thank you, Mr. Nadeau.

Mr. Godin.

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

Thank you to our witnesses.

There have been discussions with representatives from VANOC, but what have they said about the opening ceremony? Are we ready? Artists do not only come from Quebec, but from everywhere in Canada. We certainly know of artists from where we come from who would like to gain some exposure. When the winter games were held in Bathurst, the French part of the opening ceremony was broadcast at two in the morning. Will the same thing happen again? Who is going to broadcast the ceremony? Will it be given the same degree of importance? It should be opened six months in advance, not one month. That concerns me.

What do VANOC representatives tell you when you meet with them? I have no problem with the fact that it is hard for them to do some things, but it is not hard to find artists.

Mr. Serge Quinty: You talked about artists. If I understood correctly what the Fédération des francophones de la Colombie-Britannique told me, after the February 12 show, VANOC recognized that there were shortcomings in that area. The choice of artists for the Cultural Olympiad tour is fairly complex and involves provincial and territorial governments, as well as the Canada Council for the Arts. Nevertheless, in our view, VANOC has a role to play, which, at the very least, is that francophone artists should not have to jump through hoops to get a spot in the Cultural Olympiad.

As to signage, I have some information which you might find interesting.

Mr. Yvon Godin: I would like to hear it.

Mr. Serge Quinty: Based on my conversations with my colleagues from the Canadian Foundation for Cross-Cultural Dialogue, I have learned that, as it now stands, at the Olympic Oval, one of the new venues for the 2010 Olympic Games, signage is mainly in English. VANOC has assured us that everything will be in both languages by the time the Games open, but that is not the situation now.

Mr. Yvon Godin: I know you are not responsible. You are the federation that represents francophones and Acadians in Canada.

I do not understand. How can VANOC say that the official language will be English, whereas the Olympic Games are bilingual? We are not talking about French-Chinese or French-Japanese here, we are talking about French-English. Why is this still an issue at VANOC? The Olympic Games are less than a year away and people are still debating which language information will be posted in.

Mr. Serge Quinty: That is an important issue, Mr. Godin. And that is why we are here today.

Mr. Yvon Godin: Should the Department of Canadian Heritage not tell VANOC and Olympic organizations, once and for all, that if they want to get money from the Government of Canada, a government that has agreed to our country being bilingual—we do not want to be difficult, we do not have time for that—there are guidelines to follow, and if they will not follow them, their funding will be cut, it is as simple as that.

Ms. Suzanne Bossé: Earlier, I heard Ms. Mounier's answer about the mechanisms in place. It seems a whole host of mechanisms had been put in place to make sure that VANOC properly complies with the contribution agreement. However, what I would like to know—in any case, it is one of the questions we will certainly be asking—is

what are the timelines? What would be the point in issuing a report six months from now? That would be five months before the Games. I think it is clear it needs to be done right now.

Mr. Yvon Godin: It is worrisome because, earlier, I was discussing third parties and the government says it will insist on them doing what was agreed to. Insisting is not enough. Either they do it or they do not.

Ms. Suzanne Bossé: That is right.

• (1035)

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

We will continue with Mr. Lemieux.

Mr. Pierre Lemieux (Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, CPC): Thank you very much. Good morning and thank you for your attendance here today.

This is not the first time we have discussed the Olympic Games here. To me, it is a complex and complicated issue because of the size of the organization and because some parts of it do not report to the Government of Canada. For instance, when we discussed broadcasts, the contract is looked after by

[English]

the Olympic committee, not by Canada. It's sold to a television station as a package. And so we don't have a direct role to play. What I do like

[Translation]

is that we are able to work together in a spirit of cooperation here, I hope, but also with government, associations such as yours, broadcasters. We are able to come up with solutions without legislation, without penalties, etc.

[English]

I am very encouraged to see what's been accomplished through working together. We see that particularly with television, where a real effort has been made to better serve the official language minority communities across Canada. But it's also tied to results or, more exactly, expectations.

[Translation]

Mr. Quinty, you referred to results and expectations. Expectations need to be realistic.

[English]

We need to focus on what can realistically be achieved through this spirit of cooperation. We can have all sorts of expectations, but not all of them are realistic, or achievable. It's important to be realistic, to concentrate on what can actually be accomplished.

[Translation]

I would like to ask you one question. What do you think would be realistic expectations for the way in which the federal government and the organizations work together to obtain realistic results; as opposed to all the results and expectations we would like to see met?

Ms. Suzanne Bossé: I think, as we mentioned in our presentation, that the cooperation and openness on the part of cable companies has made a difference to date. I think you described what is really needed, a real effort. All that we are asking of VANOC is to make a real effort to deliver services in French. I think that is very realistic. It is so realistic that the government itself included the requirement in the contribution agreement.

I think it is important to discuss schedule A. The question was not fully answered earlier on. Perhaps there are two versions of this schedule.

Mr. Serge Quinty: To add to what Ms. Bossé just said, you raise a good point, Mr. Lemieux.

In 2005, we ended up in a somewhat strange situation whereby the consortium, having obtained the contract as the official broadcaster for the Games, did not have the necessary infrastructure in place to ensure that everyone would have free access to the signal to watch the Games.

Since then, best practices have been implemented. Obviously, we would ideally like 100% of francophones to get the signal. It is very important for everyone involved in the process, including CBC and the consortium, to continue to try to find solutions so we can build on this momentum.

Aside from that, I would say results are important. Francophones attending the Games need to be served in their own language; they need to feel that the Games are happening in their own country, and that they feel represented throughout the programming and events. People coming from abroad to attend the Games need to see all the richness of Canada's two official languages.

Those would be our real expectations.

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

Ms. Zarac, you can do the honours and start the second and final round.

• (1040)

Mrs. Lise Zarac: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

In my view, realistic expectations in a country with two official languages would be to offer services in both official languages. That would be the foundation upon which to build. There is an expression in English: *to walk the talk*. I think VANOC has had some difficulty in walking the talk recently. If you look at the events held on February 12, the 2009 Olympic Tour, they really missed the boat when it came to the francophone reality.

A lot of work remains to be done. And there is little time to do it in. I do not know if you find that worrisome. You mentioned the advisory committee. Does your organization sit on that committee?

Ms. Suzanne Bossé: No. However, the Fédération des francophones de la Colombie-Britannique does.

Mrs. Lise Zarac: Fine.

Do you have concerns? Have you conveyed them through the advisory committee? Do you believe this committee will help address the current issues?

Mr. Serge Quinty: The Canadian Foundation for Cross-Cultural Dialogue was mandated by the FCFA and the Fédération des francophones de la Colombie-Britannique to look after contacts, specifically with VANOC and the consortium, and to arrange for the development of a francophone presence.

In addition, the foundation sits on the advisory committee. This is clearly an important tool, but certainly not the only one. Do we have concerns? I think that is the reason why we are here this morning. We want to express them.

Mrs. Lise Zarac: Thank you. Do I have any time remaining, Mr. Chair?

The Chair: Yes.

Mrs. Lise Zarac: A little earlier, you referred to one wish you had, a media campaign. I mentioned to the other witness just now that I believed it was a very important event, not only because of its international nature, but because it is a model for others. Our athletes excel in various disciplines and serve as role models to Canadians, young Canadians. I see that as very important.

You referred to a media campaign which should also be free of charge and offered to all Canadians. Can you tell us a little more about that? It seems equally important to me.

Ms. Suzanne Bossé: Yes, indeed, I think that a media campaign to get people enthusiastic does much more than that. It contributes significantly to identity, of course. It contributes to the development of a feeling of belonging among our youth and helps to develop and strengthen the Canadian identity.

That is the reason why we are asking for the broadcasting to begin six months before the Games, not just one month before.

Mr. Serge Quinty: I would like to add that, as part of my job as director of communications, I watch a number of television stations, A-Channel, CTV, Radio-Canada, TVA and others.

Every time I see one of those spots about the 2010 Olympic Games called *On the Road to the Olympics*, I think it is fun. That said, it is unfortunate that francophones outside Quebec cannot take part.

Mrs. Lise Zarac: We are missing the boat on that. Would that not also contribute to the success of the Olympics?

Ms. Suzanne Bossé: Certainly.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Ms. Zarac. We were referring to linguistic duality throughout Canada, not just to the reality in Quebec.

Ms. Monique Guay: I am sorry, but I do not understand what you were explaining.

The Chair: It is important to reflect the linguistic reality all across the country.

Ms. Monique Guay: I find what has been going on from the beginning to be appalling, and I told VANOC so. I have major concerns for the future. I do not think that they will be able to change the signage around the skating rink in nine months. You are a non-profit organization but they are paid to take care of things.

I would like to quote from the first paragraph of rule 24 of the Olympic Charter:

English and French are the two official languages of the IOC.

Why should we have to fight for this? Why do we always have to be an afterthought? Why should francophones in New Brunswick and across Canada have to beg for their rightful place? It is shocking and insulting. I hope you will continue to apply pressure for things to improve.

Have you also called upon francophone groups in Quebec? There are many francophone artists in Quebec who can put on shows. It would be very interesting for them. We have a lot of culture, as you know.

Have you called on groups who could support you further so that French can really be a part of the Olympic Games?

● (1045)

Ms. Suzanne Bossé: I agree with you that it is quite incredible that we constantly have to fight for such a basic issue as this one.

Ms. Monique Guay: It is in the Charter.

Ms. Suzanne Bossé: Exactly, The FCFA works in close cooperation with the Fondation canadienne pour le dialogue des cultures, the Fédération des francophones de la Colombie-Britannique and the Fédération culturelle canadienne-française. The advisory committee has just received its mandate and we will be watching it closely. We expect it to take quick action, because time is running out.

I will let Serge answer the second part of your question.

Mr. Serge Quinty: Your question brings me back to the Cultural Olympiad currently underway and that will also take place in 2010. We know we have many allies in Quebec. We have a number of contacts within Quebec civil society. The Fédération culturelle canadienne-française and the FCFA have already begun discussing the 2009 Cultural Olympiad with VANOC and seeing what exactly happened. It seems the process to take part in this tour is very complex. Provincial and territorial governments are involved and so is the Canada Council for the Arts.

Clearly, there is room for discussion and we would be quite open to looking into this matter with the Fédération culturelle canadienne-française. We also have to see how we can cooperate with VANOC and with government to streamline the process so that francophone artists can apply for the Cultural Olympiad as well.

Ms. Monique Guay: There are a number of artists in New Brunswick and all over the country.

As a federation, if things do not move quickly enough, can you denounce that? Will you? There are other groups; you are not alone. In Quebec you are going to be hearing a great deal about this. If the changes that have been suggested are not made for the 2010 Olympic Games, are you going to denounce that?

Ms. Suzanne Bossé: Certainly. As I mentioned, the FCFA and its partners continue to monitor the progress made by VANOC on this point. We expect them to take concrete action.

Ms. Monique Guay: Can you take a public stand on that?

Ms. Suzanne Bossé: Absolutely.

Ms. Monique Guay: Very good; that's what I wanted to know.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Ms. Guay.

We will now move to Ms. Glover.

Mrs. Shelly Glover: Thank you for being here, Ms. Bossé. I congratulate you on your appointment.

I would like to point out that I will be splitting my time with Mr. Petit.

My colleague Mr. D'Amours brought up the question of volunteers and I would like to get back to that. I fully agree that the volunteers are responsible for offering services in French and in English. However, I do not agree with Mr. D'Amours when he says that francophones born in Canada all have the same ability to speak French and to understand it. Some of them do not have as good an understanding of French if they did not continue their studies in French or for other reasons. I know a number of them who have a difficult time understanding other francophones in Canada.

I would like to know whether you agree with me when I say that it really is an advantage to have volunteers from various parts of the country who can speak French to varying degrees. French spoken in Manitoba is not necessarily the same as that spoken in Quebec or New Brunswick. Do you not think that would be an advantage to have volunteers with varying linguistic abilities given the different degrees to which people learn and understand French?

● (1050)

Ms. Suzanne Bossé: Obviously, there are regional differences in Canada, in Quebec and even in France. However, we always come back to the goal, in other words, the end result. We have to ensure that visitors will be served by a person who has the capacity to provide the service in French.

Despite the regional differences in language, we understand each other rather well here. I am from New Brunswick where four different types of French are spoken. So you can imagine how many there could be across Canada.

What is important is for the person to have the capacity to offer services in French.

Mrs. Shelly Glover: I agree with you completely.

You also said that you would like 100% of francophones to have access to the Olympic Games on TV or on the radio. I would also like all Canadians, anglophones and francophones, to have access to the Games. But is that not unrealistic?

Some people will not have access to it because they do not receive the necessary signals. As Mr. Petit mentioned, some anglophones do not have access to the Games because they do not have the technology, is that not true?

Ms. Suzanne Bossé: Yes, indeed, but the Official Languages Act must be upheld.

Mrs. Shelly Glover: I agree. I would like to offer that to everyone, but some people, because of a lack of technology, do not have the capacity to receive Games broadcasts in French and in English.

The Chair: I am sorry, Ms. Glover.

People are raising their voices, and I cannot concentrate. I am sure Ms. Glover and the witnesses are also having some difficulty in concentrating. I would invite committee members to keep their thoughts to themselves.

Ms. Glover, you said you wanted to split your time. I would point out that you have 1 minute and 30 seconds left.

Mrs. Shelly Glover: I simply wanted to raise that point. Technology is not accessible to everyone. I do not believe it is realistic to expect 100%.

I will offer the floor to Mr. Petit now for the remainder of my time.

Mr. Daniel Petit: My question is for Ms. Bossé, from the Fédération des communautés francophones et acadienne du Canada.

You referred to signage earlier on. We know that the Vancouver Airport will be the reception area for VANOC at the Olympic Games. It is on federal land.

In my province, under Bill 101, French takes precedence and English comes in second. Has VANOC provided something, or are both languages treated equally? Earlier, your colleague said there was nothing in place whereas you said "there may be". Will announcements be made equally in French and English, or mainly in English and half in French? In Quebec, under Bill 101, signage would be mainly in French, but British Columbia does not have a Bill 101.

Ms. Suzanne Bossé: You said I used the words "there may be", but I simply do not know what you are referring to.

Mr. Daniel Petit: You referred earlier on to the Olympic Oval and to signage which, for the time being, is only in English. In the representations you made on our behalf to VANOC, have you asked for French and English to be given equal standing? In Quebec, it would French first and English second. What did you recommend?

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Petit.

I do not know whether you want to answer the question or whether you are in a position to do so. Either way, representatives from VANOC are coming to testify before our committee. Perhaps they could answer that question.

Mr. Daniel Petit: Mr. Chair, could she provide me with a written answer?

Ms. Suzanne Bossé: Alright. We will take care of that.

The Chair: Thank you. We will now move to Mr. Godin.

• (1055)

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

Ms. Glover said earlier on that it was unimaginable or impossible—I do not know exactly what words she used—for the Games to be broadcast in both official languages throughout the country. But do Radio-Canada and CBC not broadcast across the country?

Ms. Suzanne Bossé: Yes.

Mr. Yvon Godin: They should do. Radio-Canada has an antenna in the North. That is what I had understood. We will ask the people from Radio-Canada.

Apparently, 95% of people will be able to receive the signal. Are you satisfied with this figure? Do you think it is accurate?

Mr. Serge Quinty: I heard 96%.

Mr. Yvon Godin: From whom?

Mr. Serge Quinty: If I am not mistaken, it was in the CRTC report which was issued yesterday. This report follows up on the CRTC's review of services for minorities.

Mr. Yvon Godin: Is that exactly what CTV said or is it a percentage the CRTC is in a position to guarantee?

Mr. Serge Quinty: What I am telling you is in the CRTC report. It remains to be seen whether the CRTC was simply referring to comments made by a witness. Either way, the situation has evolved a great deal in four years, clearly. We intend to continue to apply pressure so that we can get as close to 100% as possible. We are pleased to see that the CRTC has recommended to the consortium that it continue to discuss this matter with Radio-Canada/CBC.

Mr. Yvon Godin: That depends on the budget cuts. We will see how things evolve.

We are referring to Radio-Canada and CBC. I know you represent francophones and Acadians throughout the country, but Mr. Petit said earlier that anglophones from the Côte-Nord did not receive the signal. I think the CBC broadcasts on the Côte-Nord. That could be broadened.

In the Commissioner's recommendations, he refers to translation and interpretation expertise at a reasonable cost. Do you agree that the government has a part to play in this? It already has translation expertise, for one, and is currently active with VANOC in this area.

Ms. Suzanne Bossé: Certainly. The government has a responsibility and an obligation and we would like that to be expressed through another announcement on the Roadmap for Canada's Linguistic Duality. We hope these skills will continue to develop.

Mr. Yvon Godin: Do you not think this situation may soon resemble what happened with television? We are looking at a period of less than six months.

Ms. Suzanne Bossé: This is why we will be keeping a very close eye on everything that is done in the next little while.

The Chair: Thank you.

Are you finished, Mr. Godin?

Mr. Yvon Godin: Yes.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Ms. Bossé, I would like to thank you on behalf of committee members. Before we adjourn, I would like to quote something you said about the Olympic Games; you said they provide a wonderful opportunity to showcase the scope of spoken French and of the French fact in Canada. I would add to that the linguistic duality of committee members. You have our support in this respect. Thank you.

Ms. Suzanne Bossé: Thank you.

The Chair: I will see you all again on Thursday.

The meeting is adjourned.

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