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Mr. Steven Blaney

Standing Committee on Official Languages

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• (0900)

[Translation]

The Chair (Mr. Steven Blaney (Lévis—Bellechasse, CPC)): Good morning, everyone. We are going to begin right away because we have a very full agenda this morning. Welcome to the fourth meeting of the Standing Committee on Official Languages.

[English]

This morning, pursuant to Standing Order 108(3)(f), we are here for our study of the review of the last 40 years of the Official Languages Act.

We have the pleasure and the privilege to have as a witness the representative of the Quebec Community Groups Network. I would like to welcome the president, Mr. Robert Donnelly.

Welcome back to the committee, Mr. Donnelly. It was good to see you at the St. Patrick's parade this Saturday on the streets of Quebec City.

I see you aren't wearing your green hat this morning.

Voices: Oh, oh!

Mr. Robert Donnelly (President, Quebec Community Groups Network): Not every day.

The Chair: It suited you like a glove on that particular day.

Welcome also to Ms. Sylvia Martin-Laforge, who is the *directrice générale* of the organization, as well as the co-chair of the Youth Standing Committee, Ms. Nicola Johnston.

Without any further comments, I would invite you to proceed with your speech.

Thank you.

Mr. Robert Donnelly: Thank you, Mr. Blaney, and thank you, once again, members of the committee. Welcome, once again.

I would like to begin today by briefly summarizing our community's experience with the Official Languages Act. That's the point of the meeting. I would like then to move on to how some of these experiences have impacted the English-speaking community of Quebec, and describe some of the barriers to our collective vitality and sustainability. Finally, I would then ask the chair if I could pass over the speaker's chair to Nicola, who was already introduced as the chair of the QCGN Youth Standing Committee. And all of this in five minutes.

For the benefit of new members, please let me begin by describing the English-speaking community of Quebec in just a few words.

There are a lot of myths surrounding what exactly English-speaking Quebec is. Many continue to conjure up images of wealthy, white, Christian, Westmount elite, who spend their vacations in Georgetown. The reality is that we are the most diverse of Canada's official language communities. Twenty-three percent of us belong to a visible minority, living as a minority within a minority, with all the social and economic consequences that implies. Like other official language minority communities, ours is aging and declining at an accelerated rate compared to the majority. Also, like Canada's other official language minority communities, we experience high levels of out-migration.

Another challenge for our community is the assumption that English speakers have ready access to arts and culture. However, the omnipresence of American generic electronic media does not reflect the experience of our community and cannot be counted on to tell our stories in our voice. The language arts network, ELAN, which is a QCGN member, is trying hard right now to make that point with the CRTC. Neither on CNN, on NBC, nor even on Citytv from Toronto will we see stories in our voice from Quebec.

Another challenge faced by our community is access to health and education services in English. Yes, we do have English hospitals, at least in Montreal and Quebec City, but there is a lack of English language care available in the regions, especially for the elderly members of our community, many of whom are isolated, unilingual, and without the benefit of family and community support structures.

English school boards exist and provide English language education in Quebec—we know that—but in the regions our young people do not have the same types of access or opportunities available in specialized fields of study and pursuit, and so they are drawn away from their homes to pursue other opportunities. We are, in short, a community in need of support to maintain its vitality and sustainability.

Like FCFA in its report of last November, we are critical of the 1991 Official Languages Regulations, which base services on demographic calculations rather than on the territorial principle. Canada's linguistic minority communities are in demographic decline. Rural and isolated communities are especially vulnerable. Framing section 4 in isolation, as the FCFA's report aptly points out, negates the two main purposes of the act: one, “communicating with or providing services to the public and...carrying out the work of federal institutions”; and two, supporting “the development of English and French linguistic minority communities”.

We also fully endorse the FCFA's three-Cs approach to ensuring that the intentions of the Official Languages Act are realized. The act must be understood and applied in a way that is coherent, constituent, and continuous. We would particularly like to establish the need to align the provision of English services with provincial frameworks. The official language minority community should always have the benefit of the most generous program.

The influence of the English-speaking community of Quebec on official languages processes and our inclusion in these are improving but to an extent that is still far from equal to that for the francophone minority outside Quebec. We were appalled and extremely disappointed, for example, that the recent Speech from the Throne failed to include the English-speaking community of Quebec when referring to the "road map for Canada's linguistic duality".

• (0905)

The road map, of course, represents the core strategy that outlines the Government of Canada's major policy decisions regarding linguistic duality and the development of official language minority communities, so there are questions that come to mind.

How is this omission going to be understood by the bureaucrats managing the current road map and those beginning to design the replacement in 2013? Who decided to understand duality as meaning one? Last week I wrote a letter to the Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages on these very questions. We are awaiting an answer.

Finally, we also endorse the FCAF's call for increasing the powers of the Commissioner of Official Languages. It is clear to the QCGN that the English-speaking community of Quebec is best served by an empowered, apolitical guardian of linguistic rights. It is a matter of record that on matters of education, employment, and immigration, the Government of Canada has negotiated bilateral agreements with the Province of Quebec, this without substantive consultation with the English-speaking community of Quebec and without any mechanisms to account for how federal funding supports our community's vitality.

In practical terms, the Government of Canada's responsibilities under section 7 of the Official Languages Act towards our community are scrubbed when federal powers are devolved or funding is provided to Quebec. An empowered Commissioner of Official Languages could play an important role in this process, especially if he or she ensured the Government of Canada met its obligation towards the English community of Quebec in the government's bilateral dealings with Quebec.

In conclusion, we strongly support the francophones in Quebec and in Canada and we understand the reasonable measures necessary to support and strengthen the French language. Our community is certainly not concerned with the health and vitality of the English language, which we expect will continue to do quite well on its own, but the English-speaking community of Quebec is indeed concerned about its vitality and long-term sustainability and identity.

The community's goal is integration, the attainment of French language skills for its youth, and the inclusion of the community in all aspects of Quebec society. A strong, integrated, bilingual, and

engaged English-speaking community in Quebec is the very model of Canadian linguistic duality.

With the permission of the chair, I would now like to introduce Nicola Johnston, who, as you already know, is co-chair of our Youth Standing Committee. Ms. Johnston is a second-year graduate student at Carleton University and is completing an M.A. in public policy and administration.

Thank you, Mr. Blaney.

The Chair: Please go ahead.

Ms. Nicola Johnston (Co-Chair, Youth Standing Committee, Quebec Community Groups Network): Thank you very much, Mr. Donnelly, for that introduction.

[Translation]

Good morning, Mr. Blaney.

Good morning, ladies and gentlemen.

[English]

Good morning, Mr. Chairman and ladies and gentlemen. I feel very honoured to be able to speak to you today as a young English speaker from Quebec. Thank you very much for this opportunity to testify in front of the committee today.

As Mr. Donnelly said, I am an English-speaking youth from the Eastern Townships. I believe that as English-speaking youth, we have a unique identity. We're unique because we live in a dynamic place where we have the opportunity to become bilingual and where we are surrounded by people who are French or English or both.

Because of this, we often feel that when we leave Quebec, there is something missing. We value the bilingual and bicultural home from which we came, and many of us want to stay or come home.

Like many young Quebecers, my hope is to remain a fully engaged member of the province and of my home region, contributing to its future in every way that my talents will allow. To do so, I, like many other Quebecers, have worked hard to achieve bilingual skills. Eighty per cent of English mother tongue Quebecers between 15 and 45 are bilingual. In return, we expect acceptance and the space in which to preserve our English identity, and the opportunity for greater integration into the Quebec society as bilingual, bi-literate, and bicultural Quebecers.

But the reality is that the English-speaking youth in Quebec face lower political participation and representation and higher unemployment rates compared to their francophone counterparts. We are effectively barred from the Quebec civil service, with a participation rate of 0.2%. For example, my master's degree is meant to effectively train me to work in the federal or provincial civil service, but I know that it will be a major challenge, and perhaps even an obstacle, for me to be able to serve in the public service of my own province, because I am an English speaker. In contrast, many of my classmates will return to their home provinces to work in the provincial civil service, building on a sense of identity, belonging, and ownership that is perhaps not available to me and others like me.

As well, for many, the hope of economic well-being and belonging lies elsewhere, beyond the regions in which we grew up. Ironically, our bilingualism is an asset to employers beyond Quebec. At the same time, being an English speaker puts us at an economic disadvantage at home.

For a person like me, who will graduate with two degrees, the statistical likelihood of residing in the province is low. Statistics show that the higher the education level attained, the lower the probability that graduates will stay in or return to Quebec. This further fuels population decline in rural communities, including the Eastern Townships, where I am from and where there is a considerable “missing middle”.

But on a positive note, today's youth clearly express their desire to stay in Quebec and to contribute to Quebec's society. They wish to move away from past conflicts and insecurities as they embrace bilingualism, social cohesion, and an authentic desire to put an end to the two solitudes.

We know that the rate of out-migration is slowing. The bilingual, highly educated cohort has made the effort to gain the linguistic skills needed to fully participate in Quebec's society by seeking and receiving better French language instruction and by linking to our French society. The youth of the English-speaking community of Quebec are a tremendous resource, capable not only of translating the English-speaking world but of acting as organic linguistic brokers able to bridge cultural as well as linguistic barriers.

So today we urge the Government of Canada to fulfill its obligations towards the English-speaking youth in Quebec, to engage us in a formal, meaningful, and sustained way to ensure our success, and to lead the process of demonstrating that we are a valuable and a recognized asset to Quebec and to Canada. We want to stay in Quebec, but often our chances of staying are stacked against us.

But we are more than willing and more than able citizens of Quebec, so I urge you today, for the sake of tomorrow, to help us to live in our own province and to allow us to enjoy our unique background, as well as our unique, contemporary, bicultural context. Allow us both to enjoy and to contribute to this quality of life and to this opportunity.

● (0910)

[Translation]

Thank you once again for giving me this opportunity to speak to you today. I sincerely hope that my own experience and my suggestions will prove useful to you today.

[English]

The Chair: Thanks a lot, Ms. Johnston and Mr. Donnelly, for your testimony.

I would like to remind the members that if they want the full speech it has been provided to you in written form.

[Translation]

Without further delay, we will begin the first round with Mr. Bélanger.

Hon. Mauril Bélanger (Ottawa—Vanier, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

[English]

Mr. Donnelly, Madam Johnston, Madam Martin-Laforge, thank you very much for being here and for these rather thoughtful comments, which I believe deserve a lot of reflection and serious thought.

I wanted to see if I could test with you my understanding of the situation that the anglophone community in Quebec is currently living. Someone put to me recently a phrase that I thought captured it quite well, and I'd like your reaction to this. That individual said, essentially, that in Quebec the English language is not threatened, but the anglophone community is.

That sentence enabled me, I think, to understand what the anglophone community of Quebec is going through, because it allowed me to relate to it as a francophone from Ontario. I became bilingual because I wanted to participate fully in my province's affairs. I had difficulty getting services. As a youth I had to get on picket lines to get my school so I could go to school in French. Getting health services in my own language was near impossible. It was only made possible thanks to the nuns, really, and on and on.

If one tried to describe the situation of the anglophone community, through QCGN's leadership, using the phrase that in Quebec the English language is not threatened but the anglophone community is, how would you react to that?

● (0915)

Mr. Robert Donnelly: I'll just say something quickly, and then maybe Sylvia will also comment.

Mr. Bélanger, I think it's a question of what we keep saying, that community vitality is the big issue. Yes, in terms of languages, as I said in my speech, we live in the reality of North America. Everybody with cable TV and satellite has 200 or 300 English TV stations, so there's no lack in terms of language. However, when it comes to community vitality, especially in the regions—which is not to say there are no problems in Montreal as well, because there are—in terms of institutions and communities, if school populations are dwindling then services are dwindling. Schools are so important in terms of the cultural aspect. They become cultural centres of the communities. When the school numbers are dwindling, that aspect is dwindling.

When youth leave because they have to go away to study, then the problem is that so many now don't come back to their hometowns. That's what we talk about in terms of out-migration.

The last census showed that the number of new people coming into Quebec versus the number leaving seems to have equalized now, but in terms of youth there's a double factor.

So yes, it's not a question of language, but it is a question of community vitality.

Sylvia, I don't know if you want to add to that.

Mrs. Sylvia Martin-Laforge (Director General, Quebec Community Groups Network): From the perspective of youth and other questions, probably Nicola can talk to it a bit more. The renewal of the English-speaking community is a huge challenge. Because we are not a host society anymore for the attraction of new immigrants, which we understand, that puts enormous pressure put on the demography. That's coupled with very important numbers of young people who don't find a place in Quebec even though they are fully bilingual. They leave.

So it's not about language; it's about demographic renewal. It's all throughout the province, from the townships to the Gaspé, from the Magdalen Islands to Asbestos region.

We've lost communities. We've lost in Jonquière and in Alma. The volunteers just got tired. They just closed up. They just didn't see that they could make a difference in momentum in terms of the community.

So demographic decline is huge.

The Chair: You still have 30 seconds.

Hon. Mauril Bélanger: *Trente secondes?* That's not enough.

I will read to you—I have only the French version, sorry—a paragraph from the Speech from the Throne, which you alluded to in your remarks, Mr. Donnelly.

[Translation]

“We are a bilingual country. Canada's two official languages are an integral part of our history and position us uniquely in the world.” The last sentence in the only paragraph that refers to linguistic duality is the one that surprises me. It says: “it [the government of Canada] will also continue to respect provincial jurisdiction and to restrict the use of the federal spending power.”

[English]

I don't know if you noticed that particular paragraph in the Speech from the Throne.

I see Madam Martin-Laforge nodding.

I'd like a reaction to that.

• (0920)

The Chair: We'll keep the answer for your next turn, if you wish.

[Translation]

We will now move on to Mr. Nadeau.

Mr. Richard Nadeau (Gatineau, BQ): Good morning, everyone. Good morning, Ms. Martin-Laforge, Ms. Johnston, Mr. Donnelly.

The reason I am putting on my earpiece now and not when you were speaking is not because I was not listening to you. It is because my friend Mauril has a soft and pleasant voice, but one that is a little lower than Ms. Johnston's. I was able to hear well out of one ear but not as well out of the other. I am just using this to hear better.

Ms. Johnston, earlier you talked about education and how important it is for a community. Could you expand on that? I think that your comments were very interesting.

[English]

Ms. Nicola Johnston: *Merci pour votre question.*

As Mr. Donnelly was saying, enrolment numbers in English primary and secondary schools have been dwindling. That is a main issue. I truly believe that English schools are centres of community vitality for our communities. When enrolment dwindles, those schools can potentially close down. They're not just centres of learning, but places where there are extracurricular activities for kids. They are places where parents and kids forge lasting friendships. They are not just friendships, but also social capital. I continue to draw on the relationships I have with people from the English schools I attended, and I think that's tremendously important.

Schools are also centres of economic activity. They're very important places of employment for our communities. Many of my friends are teachers in English schools. I don't know what they would do otherwise. They would have to leave if those schools closed down. That's one important aspect to consider.

The other important aspect is that we really need greater integration into French society. When I say great integration I'm not just talking about better, more advanced French language skills, because I think there is already an attempt at that. I'm also talking about bridging some divides, so I'm talking about biculturalism as well.

I'll give you an example. I went to a regional high school and there was a French side and an English side. We referred to them as the French side and the English side because there were no attempts to harmonize activities between the schools. A very clear division happened on the playground. This is a testament to what we have referred to as the two solitudes that happen. There needs to be a concerted effort to harmonize that.

The two sides are administered by a French and an English school board, but I don't think that should be a barrier to creating further integration. As Sylvia was saying, language is not the main issue; it's also biculturalism and allowing anglophones and francophones to feel like we get each other, in so many words.

[Translation]

Mr. Richard Nadeau: Fine.

Mr. Bélanger asked a question earlier and I think perhaps I will pick up where he left off and allow you to answer his question, Ms. Martin-Laforge.

Mrs. Sylvia Martin-Laforge: The question was on the devolution of federal powers to the province. In Quebec, we have certainly experienced this devolution visibly in two important areas, immigration and training.

Mr. Richard Nadeau: Did you say training?

Mrs. Sylvia Martin-Laforge: Yes, training.

[English]

I don't think I want to talk about immigration because it's a complicated piece of work for a two-minute answer. But let me tell you about the impact of employment. Right now when an English-speaking person—even though they're bilingual—is looking for a job or for something important in their life, whether it be access to health care or employment, and they want to talk to somebody who has the same understanding of them and the same background as them, there's not enough capacity in the Eastern Townships to refer kids or people to jobs because there has been a devolution. The devolution to Emploi-Québec has meant that there is a lack of employment services in English across the province. Therefore we have a high unemployment rate, which is very well connected to the fact that we can't get services in English.

One of our members of the Youth Employment Services in Montreal has a provincial mandate, but can only work in Montreal. The number of people who go there because they can't go to the other provincial employment centres because they don't feel they get adequate service in English is amazing. So that's a huge example of how, when you devolve and don't ensure that the community is well served as a result of the devolution, you affect the vitality very strongly.

● (0925)

The Chair: Thank you.

[Translation]

Thank you, Mr. Nadeau. We will now continue with Mr. Godin.

Mr. Yvon Godin (Acadie—Bathurst, NDP): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

That sounds like back home, but the other way round.

[English]

on the other side.

You're saying there's no question; it's not the language, it's the community. It's how you develop the community, how you bring people in, and how you get people jobs.

Well, they had a way to fix it down home: the LeBlancs became the Whites,

[Translation]

The Rois became Roy, the Lebruns became the Browns in order to get a job.

[English]

I mean, that's the reality of what happens back home. It's unbelievable. I'm sure you know that happens.

The question or the observation that I have, Madam Johnston, is around what you said about the.... And by the way, don't take me wrong; that's not what I want you to do. I think what happened down home was terrible. People had to change names in order to get a job. Don't take me wrong; even if they were to call me “Good” instead of Godin, don't take me wrong.

An hon. member: Or “God”.

Mr. Yvon Godin: Yes, “God-in”.

I have an observation about what you said, that you see two schools, that it seems they don't want the students to get together, that it's wrong and that we should integrate. But the fact is, when that happens.... It happened down home. They had to separate the two districts—the anglophone district of the school and the French—because when they got in the yard, they were not learning both languages; everybody was speaking English only, and we were losing our French.

Right now I have a bill in the House. I'm asking the Supreme Court of Canada that when it has an appointment, that the person be bilingual—not French, not English, but bilingual. The government is voting against it. This is a fact. When a case is heard in French and the nine judges get together to talk about the case, because one of the nine judges does not speak French, the whole conversation is in English. And that's a fact. I just want to give you how I feel about it.

People are scared that's what will happen and that they will have to do that. I'm sorry to say it this way, but that's.... Anglophones sometimes say to us, “We cannot learn French because you don't give us a chance. Every time we try to speak, you switch to English and we don't have a chance to practise.” That's another fact I want to put in front of you.

When you say it's not the language, on the other hand it is the language. You're saying we cannot get a job even if we are bilingual. I want to understand this, because to me it doesn't make sense. If a person could hire somebody who is bilingual, he could give better service to the population. I'm not saying that's what people are doing; I'm saying that if someone were to hire somebody who is bilingual, when someone calls you could give better service to the population.

Why do you think it's going this way?

Mrs. Sylvia Martin-Laforge: I would like to refer you to an article that came up at Metropolis, a conference that happened on the weekend. It was a document on “linguicism” by Richard Bourhis, a noted researcher who does a lot of international work and worked with the English-speaking community, on some of the reasons an anglophone in Quebec would not get a job.

Now, we don't want to talk about racism out loud, but.... I mean, it's not about racism, but it is about linguicism. It is the fact that the French is never quite good enough. It will never be good enough to get a job in Quebec.

We understand, and we all live.... I think you all heard us speak French.

● (0930)

[Translation]

The language of Quebec is French. The working language in Quebec is French. But, in Quebec, if you have an English accent when you speak French, only very rarely—around .02% of the time—will you be given a position of authority, in terms of employment equity or if...

Mr. Yvon Godin: That is how it is here in Ottawa. For example, in some departments, there are deputy ministers who do not speak French at all, but there is not a single deputy minister at the federal level who speaks French but cannot speak English. Not one.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Godin.

Mr. Yvon Godin: That is why I told you that I understand.

The Chair: Fine, thank you.

We will continue with Mrs. Glover.

Mrs. Shelly Glover (Saint Boniface, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Welcome to all our witnesses. It is a pleasure meeting you today.

Ms. Johnston, it is really good to see young people here who come from a Quebec where English and French can be spoken. Obviously, that is a conscious choice. I hope that we will see you back here often because I believe that young people have a lot to contribute as leaders.

[English]

I want to address very quickly something that Monsieur Godin said about the Supreme Court. I believe there is a little bit of misinformation there, because when English is spoken in the court, the conversation just doesn't go straight to English. Anyone who wants to speak French in the Supreme Court has the ability to speak whatever language they want and there is simultaneous translation.

Now, I think that's very important in the Supreme Court of Canada, because as far as I am concerned, even though we are bilingual, there are times when we don't—

[Translation]

The Chair: Excuse me, Mrs. Glover. Mr. Godin.

Mr. Yvon Godin: A point of order. I would like to make a correction for the record. I never said that the language of the client was not spoken in the court. I said that this happens when the judges meet afterwards and discuss among themselves. I want my comments to be clear and I do not want words to be put in my mouth.

The Chair: Fine, but that is not a point of order, Mr. Godin. That is a point of debate.

Mr. Yvon Godin: It is a correction.

The Chair: We will now pick up where we left off with Mrs. Glover.

Mrs. Shelly Glover: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

[English]

Just to continue on that thought, I believe it's very important that as bilingual people who were born anglophones, who try our very best to learn the French language, we remember that we live in a Canada where competencies and education also mean something. In the Supreme Court of Canada it's not about language, it's about giving the best legal representation that an accused person or a victim deserves.

In saying that, I am bilingual.

[Translation]

You are also bilingual, but there are times when we do not fully understand, because of an accent or the way a language is spoken in a particular region, because of the meaning of a word or an idea.

[English]

That's why it's so important that we not eliminate simultaneous translation in the Supreme Court of Canada, that we not deprive accused people and English-speaking people of the ability to have the best representation. I just wanted to correct that. I know I've used up much of my time. I hope Monsieur Godin's inaccurate point of order didn't take away from my time.

I'm interested in knowing, because I lived what you want to live, Mademoiselle Johnston. I went to a school where there was a francophone base, and they allowed the English-speaking people in my community to go to that school. We thrived. Our French is considered some of the best French in our province. Later on, we did as you've described, we separated them, and I've noticed that the French that's being spoken in my home province is not the same as what I learned. So I worry about that.

I'm curious to know, how do you live in French when you are separated like that? How do you live in French outside your school? Without theatres, without those things, what do you have available to you so you can live in French outside your school?

• (0935)

Ms. Nicola Johnston: Do you mean what opportunities are there available to practise?

Mrs. Shelly Glover: Cultural opportunities like theatres, etc. Do you have access to all those things to allow you, as English-speaking people, not to be pushed aside? I know that happens often, even in my own province, where if you weren't born francophone sometimes there's a tendency to be pushed aside. Do you have that problem or do you have complete access to attend theatres, etc., without being pushed aside, so that you can live in French?

Ms. Nicola Johnston: You mean in French, access to these services in French?

Mrs. Shelly Glover: In French, because I heard a little bit of this linguisticism, right? I know exactly what you mean. There are times when in my community, too, if you weren't born francophone you're pushed aside. I want to know, are you accepted when you go to the French theatres? Do you feel this tension that exists, like in your school?

Ms. Nicola Johnston: I think that's a difficult question to answer.

I would say that anglophone people try the best we can to be able to participate in those kinds of available services. For instance, in the town I come from, we have to go a little further afield to access those. I would say they're not readily accessible in the area I come from.

I don't know, do you want to take that one on, Sylvia?

Mrs. Sylvia Martin-Laforge: Maybe Bob could.

Mr. Robert Donnelly: Yes, I could answer that.

We said in our speech that it's not a question of language. Obviously, language is a factor. Language is always going to be a factor. But feeling at home in your community is not going to be measured, for us, in terms of community vitality in our English communities across Quebec, on how much integration there is in the francophone sector. When it comes to arts and culture, we all go to English movies and French movies. We go to hear French singers and English singers. It's natural to do that in Montreal and in the rest of Quebec.

When talking about the school situation in terms of community vitality, in an English school with a very strong francophone population, the kids are going there as francophones who want to improve their English, but they're not looking to integrate into the English community. When it comes down to after that, when they look for jobs, the reality is that a francophone who has entered an English school and reached a middle level of bilingualism in English is always going to get the job, rather than the anglophone who has reached a middle level with French. That's still the majority language of work, and so forth.

So that's one of the challenges that we face. That's why our youth, for the last year, have been telling us—this is something that is not only a problem in the rural areas but in Montreal as well—that we need to improve the teaching of French in the English schools for the English students.

The good thing is that we get a good population of francophones in the schools and there's already a francophone environment. There's a lot of bilingualism. In terms of rising to a higher level of bilingualism, in our case, meaning French for the English students, we'll help them to get jobs where they live and increase the chances that they'll stay there.

Mrs. Shelly Glover: Being accepted is a part of that.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Glover.

Ms. Johnston was speaking of the importance of school in the community, and not only for academics. A good example is the St. Patrick's parade in Quebec City, which first occurred 60 years ago; it started St. Patrick's school in Quebec City.

We'll now enter our second round, the second and last round of the first part of this meeting.

I would like Ms. Zarac to get us started.

[Translation]

Mrs. Lise Zarac (LaSalle—Émard, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

[English]

I'd like to go back to Ms. Johnston. You talked about jobs in the public service. The English represent 8.2% of the population and yet only 0.08% are in the public service, and most of those people are bilingual.

We had some people from the public service at this committee. They said bilingualism isn't a criterion for hiring people. I would like to have your comments on that. Shouldn't it be a basic criterion for a job?

Ms. Nicola Johnston: Can you repeat the last segment of that question? I'm sorry, I didn't hear it.

Mrs. Lise Zarac: We had the public service here at the committee. They said that when they're hiring people, it's not always a criterion to be bilingual. Shouldn't it be a criterion in Canada when we have two languages? What do you think about it not being a criterion for a job?

● (0940)

Ms. Nicola Johnston: I think it's essential to be able to perform bilingually in the federal public service, but I certainly think that as an anglophone going in with a bilingual background, you're a much bigger asset. For instance, I did a co-op placement with the federal public service last summer. I'm fairly certain I was hired in large part because I had a bilingual background that my English-speaking cohorts at Carleton University didn't have. That's in the federal public service.

In the provincial public service, it's my understanding that it would be more difficult for me. Even though I have some level of bilingualism, it's certainly not adequate enough to get me a job in the provincial public service. To me, that's unfortunate, because I do want to return home. I do want to live in Quebec. I do want to participate.

I certainly hope that it won't be the case, and that I will be able to return, but it's certainly an impediment.

Mrs. Lise Zarac: Thank you.

Mr. Donnelly, you said that you were somewhat disappointed there was no mention in the throne speech of what would be done for anglophones. This government brags about consulting Canadians. I was quite surprised when you mentioned that when the federal and provincial governments met for discussions, you were not part of the discussions, and yet you represent 32 associations.

I'd like to give you the opportunity to talk about what your recommendations would have been had they consulted you.

Mr. Robert Donnelly: In terms of the road map?

Mrs. Lise Zarac: Yes.

Mr. Robert Donnelly: Obviously, if you're not at the table, you're not a serious part of the discussions.

When the non-mention—if I can use that term—in the throne speech of us officially as being one of the two official minority languages communities.... I'm not afraid to say that I'm naive enough to say to my DG, when I found out about it, that, well, maybe it's just a slip; maybe they're so used to saying francophone communities that maybe for once.... But she told me very clearly that nothing in the throne speech is a slip. Everything is there for a reason.

So when we see this strong mention of the support for francophone minorities outside Quebec and how that's going to be a priority, and no mention whatsoever of us, then we think, as the discussions continue....

I mentioned a little bit about ELAN, our English Language Arts Network. We at the QCGN, over the space of the last 12 months, have invested over \$60,000 of manpower and money in developing an arts culture and heritage proposal for using the road map funding. For a whole year we've been getting signals that it's not quite this or we have to change that and they're thinking about it.

Now when you see something like this and you say if we're not even sure that we exist in the throne speech, what kind of signal does that send to a ministry that is administering that money and deciding how and where it's going to be spent? It becomes very frustrating.

[Translation]

The Chair: Thank you.

Mrs. Lise Zarac: That is all...

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mrs. Zarac.

We will now continue with Mr. Nadeau.

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

There is a phenomenon that exists not only in Quebec and Canada but everywhere. Young people go to larger centres to study, if they are not already there. This is about rural areas versus urban areas, or about areas that are further away from urban centres and about the problems in going back to where one comes from, for all kinds of good reasons. We have all experienced that. It was my experience.

This is not simply an issue of being anglophone or francophone, it is an issue of the vitality of communities. I think what I am hearing this morning is a cry from the heart. This goes beyond language. It is an issue of identity.

Would a possible solution be, for example, to offer young people who are doing post-secondary studies a tax credit, for example, as an incentive to go back where they come from? Do you have any suggestions along those lines?

• (0945)

[English]

Ms. Nicola Johnston: I believe incentives like that are very important, actually. I would just say that, yes, those are the kind of incentives that would be needed to bring people back to their communities.

[Translation]

Mr. Richard Nadeau: Good.

We have introduced a bill on that topic and it is still moving forward.

It is a choice to go back to one's community. Closing down regions is not a solution. Unfortunately, the message is sometimes mixed, because there are no incentives. As a society, that is a job we have to do.

Mrs. Sylvia Martin-Laforge: Mr. Nadeau, may I add something?

Mr. Richard Nadeau: Yes.

Mrs. Sylvia Martin-Laforge: I would like to tell the committee that there is a great program in Quebec called "Place aux jeunes". It is a provincial program that encourages young people to go back to their communities. Rachel Garber, the Director General of the Townshippers Association, managed to implement the program in

the townships, as a matter of fact. However, the program is a provincial one. Do you understand? For anglophones, there is a problem because of representation, the number of young people, etc.

When programs that fall under provincial jurisdiction are created at the federal level, we have problems because we cannot get our community included in the program that has been transferred to the province. You have to understand clearly that the province of Quebec grants rights to anglophones, but, in Quebec, anglophone rights are individual rights. So when the government transfers any program, Quebec will consider the anglophones,

[English]

But it's not a commitment to the vitality of the community, so I would ask you to consider that very, very significantly. We're talking about services. We're talking about services to individuals. We're not talking about the vitality of the community, because it doesn't fit in the provincial framework of Quebec.

The federal government and federal powers can do a lot of different things, but if it is not understood that in Quebec it is not taken in the same spirit around community, you are throwing good money after bad for the English-speaking community.

[Translation]

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Nadeau. We will now move on to Mrs. Glover.

Mrs. Shelly Glover: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

[English]

I just want to finish off what we were talking about before, because I think this discussion about the minority anglophone community or English-speaking community in Quebec is very important. Our government absolutely supports the need to support that community. It has been said many times, not only by the Minister of Official Languages, but by me and many of the members, that this is a necessity: that we must support the English-speaking minority community in Quebec, as we do the francophone minority communities in other places.

I want to ask you very clearly, what do you think of the bill on the judges that demands that all Supreme Court judges be completely and fluently bilingual, to the point where simultaneous translation is not provided?

Mr. Robert Donnelly: When the bill was first announced, we took the issue to our board and supported that approach in principle, except that there has to be an implementation phase, and there are different ways of doing that. You can get a judge who comes in at 50% bilingual. They can be brought up within a period of six months. Or you can make that a binding factor even before the judge is named. That's what's not really clear, but the principle is something that we supported.

Mrs. Shelly Glover: We have said as a government that the principle is a good principle. The problem is that we don't have the ability to hire judges at that rate across the entire country. It would put several provinces in a position where they do not have a large enough pool.

Also, Madam Laforge, I'm going to use you as an example.

Madam Laforge was speaking earlier and couldn't remember a French word. Without this simultaneous translation, judges will miss because of accents, because of capacity to understand different languages, and that is our fear. For those who have the huge competencies in law that we need in the Supreme Court, we do not want to prejudice, for them to not be considered, because, again, competency should mean something.

There are other bills, of course, that focus on some of these things. I'm sure you will be consulted at some point or another on many of them. I welcome your input at any time. My office is always open. We've had a very good working relationship and I look forward to your input on many of those things.

Again, I am very interested in your community, Mademoiselle Johnston. Being a youth who's afraid you won't be able to work in your community is disturbing, because you are what my community considers to be what we strive for. You are a very high-level bilingual person, and it's bothersome to hear that you don't think you can get a job there.

We did a study. Every year in the public service, 5,000 jobs for bilinguals cannot be filled. You and your community could help us fill those positions. But to hear that you don't think you'll be able to fill them because in your province you're never quite French enough...? How do we fix that?

I don't think a tax credit to help you finish your school is going to address the sentiment expressed by Madam Laforge and yourself that you're never French enough. Do you honestly think that a tax credit is going to change the thinking amongst the people who are hiring, as you've expressed, and who don't choose English-speaking people first as a rule because, in your words, they're not quite French enough?

• (0950)

Mr. Robert Donnelly: It's not the answer, but it's part of the puzzle. There could be financial incentives for students to help them come back. We have seen in the Gaspé region very interesting and proactive measures involving getting students from the community to come back.

I used the term "out-migration" in my speech. When students move from Gaspé, Îles-de-la-Madeleine, and Baie-Comeau to Montreal to study because they can't get the programs in English where they live, those are important people to have come back. Now communities are finding proactive and interesting measures to try to encourage that to happen, measures that involve getting them back.

Secondly, in terms of the language—I'll say it again—for the last two years, one of the big things our youth have been telling us time and time again is that we need to improve the level of French being taught to English students in English schools and that will help.

Mrs. Shelly Glover: Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Glover.

We'll now conclude the second round, with Mr. Godin.

[Translation]

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

Let me begin with a clarification. Mrs. Glover says that had she lost some of her time because I interrupted the discussion on a point of order. When that happens, the timer stops, so she did not lose any of her time.

I also want to say that Mrs. Glover's statements are terrible. She says that the bill will eliminate translation at the Supreme Court. Not on your life! That was never the intention of the bill. It is not in the bill. She is given misleading information. She is using scare tactics on Canadians.

It is unfortunate that the Conservative government is not willing to support the bill. It still does not recognize bilingualism in Canada and it does not acknowledge the fact that services have to be provided in both languages.

I am glad that Mr. Donnelly supports the bill in principle. The bill can therefore be drafted in a way that supports both communities.

This shows a lack of respect for the anglophone community. It is as if judges and lawyers were not intelligent enough to learn French. That is an insult to the anglophone community. It is terrible and unacceptable, but I am going to set that aside for now.

With respect to Speech from the Throne, Mr. Donnelly, you say that you do not see the anglophone community in it. I can understand that. Furthermore, if we look beyond the Speech from the Throne, there is the budget. Not only are anglophones not in there, but neither are francophones. There is nothing in the budget. A Speech from the Throne and a vision without any money will not get us very far. Do you agree?

• (0955)

Mr. Robert Donnelly: Yes, but at least you see yourself in the Speech from the Throne.

Mr. Yvon Godin: Fine words and no action, it is not much better.

Mr. Robert Donnelly: That is true.

Mr. Yvon Godin: Would you agree about the fine words but no action, as was the case for the Olympics Games, that were supposed to be bilingual? From a cultural viewpoint, the opening ceremony was not bilingual. We can congratulate the organizers on the competitions, but the opening ceremony was not impressive.

Mr. Robert Donnelly: Implementation budgets are always important.

Mr. Yvon Godin: Right.

Now let us talk about issues that are important for you. With respect to grants and contributions, you apply for money in June...

[English]

Do you remember when we were talking about the red tape? How is it going now? Last year, we promised that it would go better. So I'd like to hear from you on that, because I think it's important.

Mr. Robert Donnelly: We saw your report with the many recommendations from this committee relative to that. We are still in the process now, but yes, things seemingly did improve in the months after we made the presentation here and in the months during which this committee made its report. In his comments, the minister has promised that this is something that will be very much improved in terms of next year's funding. When we're talking about advance funding, normally that comes through in early April.

Mrs. Sylvia Martin-Laforge: I can tell you that the president of our organization was in Florida when there was an important meeting a couple of weeks ago administratively, and I have to congratulate the people who took this to heart and put together some standards. So I have a lot of faith that something will be happening in April of this year, rather than June.

I'm sorry, Bob; I didn't want to cut you off.

We were encouraged by the work of the committee, of the minister, and of the bureaucrats, and we do believe there will be a big difference this year.

Mr. Yvon Godin: Okay, that means the committee has done its job by bringing it into the open and pushing it.

Mrs. Sylvia Martin-Laforge: We think everybody did their job by taking this seriously, and I have to say that we're hopeful.

Mr. Yvon Godin: Good.

In terms of the incentive and that the incentive is kind of a contradiction, because if you don't have a job, you will not go, I think we have the same problem all across the country, where we have people leaving the rural areas, going to the big cities, and they don't want to come back. It's a fact of life. But what you are saying, if I understand correctly, is that with an incentive it will bring the people back into the community; it will grow the community in your language, in your culture, and it won't disappear if you have your youth coming back.

Is that what you are actually saying?

The Chair: Thank you—

Mr. Yvon Godin: Well, she should say yes or no. Give her the chance.

Ms. Nicola Johnston: I think you're right. I think the issue of out-migration is one that is Canada-wide. But I think the issue in Quebec is twofold: there is the rural-urban divide, and there are also some linguistic barriers that are impediments. We have an asset, as bilingual speakers, out of the province. I think the incentive will help bring people back. If there is any kind of hesitation—people are not sure that they want to go back, because they don't know that there will be employment—it's a good incentive. I think it will help minimize any risk people are afraid of.

Mr. Yvon Godin: Thank you.

The Chair: Yes, thank you. Thank you, Mr. Godin.

Thank you to our witnesses this morning for bringing experience and youth to this committee.

Mr. Donnelly, I hope we'll have a chance to see you before you resume your mandate. You remind me that it is my privilege and also my duty to make sure that we provide equal voice and equitable

consideration to the preoccupation of your committee on this committee.

Mr. Robert Donnelly: Thank you, Mr. Blaney. I just wanted to tell you that my mandate as president of the QCGN will end in mid-June with our AGM and new elections. I wanted to say what a pleasure it has been over the last three years to come here.

Last but not least important, I think if we had, as our community groups in Quebec, across Ottawa half the support we've been getting from this committee, we would be a very, very happy organization. So thank you not only for receiving us but for working with us and helping us reach our goals.

The Chair: Thank you, as well, on behalf of the members.

We'll just suspend for a few minutes, and then we'll resume our work. *Merci.*

● (0955)

(Pause)

● (1000)

[Translation]

The Chair: We will now continue our meeting.

Pursuant to Standing Order 108, on the study of the official languages policies and programs in the main estimates 2010-2011 of the Department of Canadian Heritage, it is our pleasure this morning to welcome the Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages, the honourable James Moore. He will introduce the witnesses accompanying him, Deputy Minister Ms. LaRocque—welcome again to the Standing Committee on Official Languages—and Mr. Sobrino, the Assistant Deputy Minister for Strategic Policy, Planning and Corporate Affairs. Welcome.

Without further delay, Mr. Minister, I now invite you to make your opening statement.

Thank you.

Hon. James Moore (Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Ladies and gentlemen, members of the Standing Committee, it is a pleasure for me to be here today. With me are Judith LaRocque, Deputy Minister of Canadian Heritage, and Pablo Sobrino, Assistant Deputy Minister, Strategic Policy, Planning and Corporate Affairs, Canadian Heritage.

First of all, I would like to greet the new members of the committee: Mr. Bélanger, Mr. Généreux, who will be arriving shortly, and John Weston. I would also like to thank the committee for inviting me here today to give an update on the official languages file.

The timing could not be better: we are in the middle of the *Rendez-vous de la francophonie*, a wonderful opportunity for dialogue and celebration that we are proud to support, and that brings together Canadians from every part of the country. Today, I would like to reiterate our government's priorities regarding official languages, present an update on the implementation of the Roadmap for Canada's Linguistic Duality, and discuss our government's on-going support for community organizations across Canada.

But first, I would like to say a few words about the Olympic Winter Games that recently ended and the Paralympic Games that ended on Sunday.

The role of the French language and culture in the context of the Games has been a priority for our government from day one. I am proud to say that the Government of Canada made record levels of investment to ensure that both of our country's official languages were incorporated into all aspects of the Games.

● (1005)

[English]

This included the Cultural Olympiad, featuring approximately 650 live performances, over one-third of which were by francophone artists. The Olympic and Paralympic torch relays, all 15 Olympic venues, and every single Olympic site—all fully bilingual, servicing Canadians and visitors in the official language of their choice.

The Olympic and Paralympic games are truly Canada's games, exceeding the standards of the International Olympic Committee and, more importantly, showcasing the best of what our country has to offer in both official languages. This feeling was echoed by senior officials at the games. The Commissioner of Official Languages, for instance, said that he was “impressed by the level of bilingualism at the Olympic Games” and “pleased by the presence of French at the closing ceremony”.

[Translation]

Pascal Couchepin, Grand Témoin de la Francophonie at the Games, said—and I quote—“The Vancouver Olympic Games have been very successfully executed. They are the Games to follow in the matter of linguistic duality. It is difficult to do better”.

[English]

Finally, Jacques Rogge, president of the International Olympic Committee, said that he was “very pleased” with the success of official languages at the games. “The announcements were made in French and English, [and all Olympic venues and signs] are bilingual,” he added.

Mr. Chair, well over 3 billion people from around the world turned their gaze to Canada during the Olympic Games, and I'm pleased to have been part of such an incredible moment in Canada's history.

[Translation]

Canadians who did not have the chance to go to Vancouver and Whistler were able to follow the competitions at home in the official language of their choice, thanks to the broadcasting agreement between CTVglobemedia and its partners. I am delighted that CTV and CPAC collaborated to present French-language coverage of the Games on their stations, as well as RDS and V. The Place de la francophonie greeted thousands of visitors and showed the people of Vancouver and the world the quality of our francophone artists and the vitality of our communities.

In addition, the young journalists who took part in Franco Médias 2010—a project we supported—offered all Canadians a francophone perspective of the Games. The community of Maillardville, the cradle of the francophonie in British Columbia, made great strides in the last year in strengthening its cultural presence within my home

province. Maillardville did us proud, not only during the Games, but also during the celebrations of the town's centenary and the Festival du Bois, an event we are proud to support. I am proud of this community, which adds extra colour to my home province, and of the Games, which inspired enthusiasm in Canadians across the country.

Regarding the opening ceremonies, we believe they were a major performance of great quality. David Atkins and his partners did an excellent job, and I truly believe that everyone enjoyed them. I was disappointed by the level of French during the ceremonies. However, we are pleased with VANOC's work, and we can all be proud that the Vancouver Olympic Games set a new standard for bilingualism on the international scene. The promotion of our two official languages and the support for official language minority communities have been, and will continue to be, priorities for our government.

[English]

The Speech from the Throne leaves no doubt that bilingualism is one of the fundamental values of Canadian society. Our road map for Canada's linguistic duality allows us to make this vision a reality. Currently more than 70% of the road map commitments announced in June 2008 have been confirmed and funded.

Also, in the budget our government maintained our record level of funding for CBC/Radio-Canada. This will allow them to continue performing the important work they do in minority language communities across the country.

[Translation]

My provincial and territorial counterparts play a key role in achieving our objectives. I will be meeting with them at the upcoming Ministerial Conference on the Canadian Francophonie in Yellowknife on June 22 and 23. These sessions give us a chance to work together to support the Canadian Francophonie. Indeed, it was at the last conference—in September 2009 in Vancouver—that we agreed to dedicate one day of the 2010 Winter Games to the francophonie.

The Language Rights Support Program was also announced last year. As we marked the 40th anniversary of the Official Languages Act, I reiterated our government's commitment to delivering a fully operational program by the end of 2009. I am pleased to say: we have delivered. The program—managed by the University of Ottawa—began its activities on December 22. Last fall, I also had the honour of chairing the Conference of Ministers Responsible for TV5 in Ottawa. In fact, it was during Canada's term as conference chair that we announced an additional contribution of \$25 million over five years to TV5, starting in 2009-2010. This conference was a complete success and, thanks to this additional funding, TV5 can help increase the visibility of our creative sector and our artists around the world, while reflecting the cultural diversity of La Francophonie.

● (1010)

[English]

Last year was a very busy one. As you will recall, we also identified a need to revisit our ways of doing things to meet the requirements of organizations that represent official language communities in Canada.

Your committee reviewed the impact of delays in approving funding for organizations representing official language minority communities, and we met in October to discuss this issue. Our government will respond to the committee's recommendations by April 1, but I can tell you that the measures we are taking are producing results. Currently we have confirmed program funding for 88% of organizations representing official language minority communities, and we hope to confirm the rest by mid-April. The other recipient organizations should receive a reply in the next few weeks. As well, changes to service standards for the program delivery will be posted on our website on April 1. Our community partners can rest assured that we are continuing to take action to reduce red tape and streamline the process for their own benefit.

In closing, I'd like to share something that made an impression on me during the Olympic Games: the ease with which our athletes and medallists expressed themselves in both of Canada's official languages. I witnessed this many times and it made me incredibly proud. Our athletes acted as ambassadors on the world stage not only athletically but also diplomatically, and they did so in both of our official languages, representing Canadian culture with great pride.

[Translation]

Canadian athletes are the champions of today and the leaders of tomorrow, and I cannot help feeling that the future of our official languages looks extremely bright.

Thank you. I am ready to answer your questions.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you, Minister. It looks like you broke off just when I was recording the swiftness of your opening remarks.

We can get started with Mr. D'Amours.

[Translation]

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

Minister, this is perhaps the only time that you will be applauded today. So I hope that you enjoyed it.

Hon. James Moore: I did not realize. Was it you?

Mr. Jean-Claude D'Amours: First of all, I would like to begin with two brief comments, Mr. Minister.

You said that official language community organizations had received a confirmation. Do not forget that the committee did not simply look into whether a confirmation had been received. We must also ensure that the money is there. Organizations, even if they have received confirmation, must find the money—the bridge money—to continue their activities. That means that they will have to get out their credit cards yet again, look for lines of credit from financial institutions and pay interest—that you do not want to reimburse. And they do not know exactly when the money will be available so that they can pay salaries. That is one comment. It is not enough to say that they have received an acknowledgement of receipt. More needs to be done.

Next, Mr. Minister, we have to proceed quickly this morning. We had asked for two hours of your company. We know that the trend for some time now has been to put a one-hour limit on appearances

made by parliamentarians before committee meetings, including official languages meetings. I hope that this situation will be remedied in the future.

Now I would like to get to the heart of the matter. You referred to the Roadmap. Mr. Minister, what is the point of having a road map if you do not take the time to listen to the needs of organizations or communities? You will no doubt tell me that this has been done and that you will be doing this and that. I am asking you: what is the point of having a road map if you do not take the time to listen to what the people have to say?

I would like to give you the example of a meeting that we had last week with Mr. François Côté, of ARC du Canada. ARC du Canada asked to meet with you in order to pitch a new initiative for community radio. We are talking about an initiative that would cost, in total, \$4.2 million. One of my colleagues here in the committee asked the following question: "Did you submit your request to the minister outlining your requirements?" The answer was: "Yes, to the Minister of Heritage, a year and a half ago. We submitted a request again, in November, because we had not received an answer. By way of a receipt, we have just been informed that we may get a meeting some time in the future."

Do you find that acceptable, minister? You talk about the Roadmap, but if you do not take the time to meet with organizations as big as ARC du Canada, which is there to ensure the survival of community radio, the voice of communities all across the country, how can you say that the Roadmap is progressing? Meanwhile, are you refusing to meet with such a major organization that represents so many communities from one end of the country to the other?

•(1015)

Hon. James Moore: I was appointed Minister of State for Official Languages in 2008. The first thing I did at that time was to organize round tables across the country. I did not just meet with people who have the money to come here to Ottawa, but I also visited Prince Edward Island, Nanaimo in British Columbia, Edmonton, Regina, and so forth.

I toured the country to speak with the people who create these programs locally in their communities. Some are small organizations made up of two, three or four people. I visited them in their communities to find out what their experience had been with my department and with francophone communities.

Mr. Jean-Claude D'Amours: Mr. Minister, community radio stations are organizations with two or three people; often, they do not have even one full-time employee. These people have been asking to meet with you since 2008. It is 2010 now, so that is a year and a half. I am not just referring to ARC du Canada here in Ottawa, but also to community radio stations across the country.

There are three of them in my riding. We could give you figures on the total number of radio stations across the country. I am not talking about a mega-organization, but about an organization that represents these small community radio stations that, in many cases, do not have even one full-time employee. A year and a half ago, these people asked to meet with you so that they could discuss their plans. But this meeting has not yet taken place. They have just received an acknowledgement of receipt of their second letter. It is simply unacceptable.

Hon. James Moore: I have held meetings with a number of people. You can see my agenda; it is available on our website. And if it is that important to you and your key people, why is this the first time I am hearing about it?

Mr. Jean-Claude D'Amours: Because we only heard about this letter that was sent to you a year and a half ago last Tuesday, Mr. Minister.

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

Mr. Jean-Claude D'Amours: If we have to, we will meet with you personally, and then we will see whether things happen more quickly, Mr. Minister.

The Chair: Thank you.

Hon. James Moore: It is important to point out that you have never mentioned this to me before.

Also, Mr. Chair, I want to point out that I was available last Thursday for two hours, but it is you, the committee, who decided to hold the meeting this week. I agreed; I have set aside three hours of my time for this meeting. You are the ones who decided to cancel last week's meeting.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. Minister. That is indeed the case.

We will now move to Mr. Nadeau.

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

Good afternoon, Mr. Minister, Ms. LaRocque and Mr. Sobrino.

We cancelled the meeting for technical reasons. We have always asked that the meetings be televised, and that was the only reason we cancelled the meeting, not because we did not want to see you.

With that said, Mr. Minister, there are three topics I am concerned about. The first is something you have certainly already heard about, and that is the opening ceremony of the Olympic Games. You even stated that you were disappointed in that regard. We discovered recently in the contribution agreement that the federal government had not required VANOC to use French and English equally in the ceremony. That resulted in an unfortunate situation. So the nation of Quebec was not represented equally during the opening ceremony. You may recall that Mr. Charest, the Quebec premier, also expressed his regrets in this regard. We also learned that the Commissioner of Official Languages received some 40 complaints about the ceremony in which French and English were not recognized equally. One could even say that French was virtually absent.

We met with you before the Olympic Games, we heard from you in the House of Commons and we met with VANOC representatives, who basically told us "don't worry, be happy". But then we realized that we had no cause to be.

I wonder if something fishy was going on when you told us that everything would be fine. You seemed to believe that, and yet you did not exert pressure or stipulate in the contribution agreement the importance of having French represented to a degree that would have met the aspirations of the Quebec nation and the French fact in Quebec and Canada. Is that due to political naïveté? What are you going to do to follow up on this situation? The Olympic Games are

over, but I would like to hear your explanation concerning the fact that French did not have its rightful place in the opening ceremony.

• (1020)

Hon. James Moore: I think that the real lesson to be learned from the Olympic Games, as a nation, is that the standards for bilingualism in other countries are not the same as those in Canada. I believe that VANOC made a commendable effort with regard to all aspects of the Olympic Games, including the sporting events, buildings, translation and signage. All of that was completely bilingual. In that regard, I feel that it was a resounding success.

As for the opening ceremony, we were disappointed, as I have said.

[English]

I think VANOC, with all the best intention, wanted to make sure that these games were inclusive of all Canadians. I think that was very clear for the entirety of the games and the entirety of the effort.

But what Canada needs to recognize going forward is that the Canadian standard for official languages is not necessarily the same as the IOC standard for official languages, for example. We need to continue to assert that and make sure that's an expectation that's understood, not only by organizations like VANOC but also by all of our partners in the private sector, public sector, and different levels of government. That's what we need to do.

[Translation]

There were clearly many success stories and overall everything went very well. Unfortunately, in the case of the opening ceremony, the message was less than a complete success.

Mr. Richard Nadeau: I am pleased to hear you acknowledge that there was indeed a problem. It is unfortunate, because it certainly was not an accurate reflection of the French fact.

On another matter, Mr. Minister, we met with a number of organizations last week. They represented media from francophone minority communities, such as the press and radio stations. I come from a francophone minority community and I worked there for some time. Despite that, I learned a few things about the relationships among government departments. Even now, in 2010, organizations—even English organizations in Quebec—are told by the federal government...

The Chair: Thank you, Mr.—

Mr. Richard Nadeau: I would just like to point out one thing and then we will come back to it.

These organizations are told to contact Canadian Heritage, not other departments, if they want to receive assistance.

I will come back to that later, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Hold that question, Mr. Nadeau.

We will now go to Mr. Godin.

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

Minister, I would first like to thank you for being here with us this morning. As for last week, we usually meet with the minister in public, with cameras rolling. That is why you have provided us with an hour of your time today. I think I know you well enough to say that if we asked you to come back again some time soon, you would be able to find another hour to finalize all this. That is, if we need you. Do you agree with that?

Hon. James Moore: Of course, my schedule permitting.

Mr. Yvon Godin: As for the Olympic Games, we have all been clear. No one complained about the signage, the bilingualism at the Games, and so on. The problem was with the opening ceremony. I will repeat what you said: that even the Commissioner of Official Languages, Graham Fraser, said that he was impressed by the level of bilingualism at the Olympic Games and pleased with the presence of French at the closing ceremony. He did not say “at the opening and closing ceremonies.”

You state that Graham Fraser, the official languages commissioner, congratulated you, but can we acknowledge that they missed the boat for the opening? It was not just a question of representing the nation of Quebec properly, but also of representing all francophones in Canada. They could have done better. It cannot be said that VANOC was not really aware of it, because we knew from the outset that the Games were going to be held in Vancouver. The VANOC representatives came before the committee on a number of occasions, as did the Commissioner of Official Languages.

To be brief, I am simply saying that it is unfortunate that, during one of these ceremonies, we felt that French did not occupy its rightful place. It reminds me of the 2003 Canada Games in Bathurst and Campbellton. French was completely absent from the opening ceremony, then people complained throughout the games, and in the end, there was French at the closing ceremony. It is always up to the francophone community. They always have to fight for their rightful place, and I find it a shame.

• (1025)

Hon. James Moore: As I said, I agree with you, I feel that the official languages and francophone communities had a very special place at the Olympic and Paralympic Games, thanks to our investments in the Cultural Olympiad, among other things... There were Acadian artists at the Place de la Francophonie. We invested \$7.7 million. The Maison de l'Atlantique was also a resounding success.

Mr. Yvon Godin: Yes, we recognize that it was a success. However, at the beginning of the Games, during the opening ceremony, French did not have its rightful place. In your own brief today, you state: “I was disappointed by the level of French during the ceremonies.” So you admit it.

Hon. James Moore: I was disappointed, but we need to step back and consider what we were seeing. This was the largest international event in Canada's history.

Mr. Yvon Godin: That is why it is important.

Hon. James Moore: Yes, I know. I simply mean that it is extremely complicated. The event was held in the province of British Columbia, where 1.3% of the population is francophone, and everything we were able to accomplish with the volunteers, the

events, the artists and all our athletes and teams, was a resounding success as regards official languages.

Mr. Yvon Godin: Yes, but I cannot accept being told that it was difficult to achieve because it was in Vancouver. Planes fly across Canada. Artists travel. The opening ceremony was a flop, let us just say that it is over with and move on.

The opening of the Games was a failure.

Hon. James Moore: I said I was disappointed.

Mr. Yvon Godin: Right.

We heard from the anglophone community this morning, and they said that they were very disappointed that the government did not even mention it in the official languages content in the Speech from the Throne.

What happened for the anglophone community of Quebec not to be mentioned in the Speech from the Throne in the context of official languages?

Hon. James Moore: Excuse me, which community did you say?

Mr. Yvon Godin: The anglophone community of Quebec. This morning, we heard testimony from witnesses from that community. They said that they were disappointed to see that they were not included in the Speech from the Throne.

Was that simply a technical oversight or were anglophones in Quebec being told that the government doesn't give a...?

Hon. James Moore: No. Our commitment to and our policy on official languages are clear. We are making unprecedented investments in every region of the country in order to protect, promote and celebrate both official languages, French and English, in each region of Canada, including Quebec.

Mr. Yvon Godin: Why is there nothing in the budget for the official languages? They are mentioned in the throne speech, but when we look at the budget itself, nowhere are there any amounts tied to the official languages. For example, an amount of funding tied to the roadmap—

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Godin.

Hon. James Moore: We are talking today about our expenditures in the area of the official languages. Some \$337 million is—

Mr. Yvon Godin: Is it in the throne speech?

Hon. James Moore: It is in our budget. You said that there was no funding tied to the official languages in our budget.

Mr. Yvon Godin: Pardon me, I meant to say in the budget.

Hon. James Moore: Yes.

The purpose of my testimony today is to talk to you about our investment of \$337 million in the official languages, in the budget.

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

We will move on to Ms. Glover.

Mrs. Shelly Glover: Thank you.

Welcome back, Minister, Ms. Larocque and Mr. Sobrino. We are pleased to see you here again.

Minister, you referred to the roadmap that we often talk about in committee. Since we are talking about a \$1.1 billion investment, which is \$260 million more, I would like to know where we are with the roadmap.

Is it progressing as planned? I would like to have your comments on this, please.

Hon. James Moore: First, I must say that our roadmap has been extremely well followed by our partners in the provinces. Each province is very happy, proud and committed to this project to protect and celebrate our two official languages.

To date, over 61% of the funding allocated for roadmap initiatives has been announced. This represents \$788 million.

This is money going to health care, education and local groups providing services to individuals, for example, new Canadians, in the official language of their choice.

This is extremely important. There are clearly local successes. We are extremely proud of them.

Mr. Godin talked a bit about the budget. But we must understand that this is a five-year project.

We are extremely pleased with this commitment and the success that we have already seen in this area.

• (1030)

Mrs. Shelly Glover: As was mentioned, you were invited to take part for two hours. It's unfortunate that this meeting was unable to take place, because I know that the roadmap has done a lot for minority language communities, including the anglophone community in Quebec.

I would like to know what the \$260 million in additional funding—something we often repeat—means for the roadmap? What more does this bring?

Hon. James Moore: This funding is in addition to the funding provided under the program put in place by the former Liberal government that preceded our government. We increased funding because we believe that Canada's two official languages is a real gift that we must protect and that we can celebrate. This really gives us an advantage both nationally and internationally.

Furthermore, we want to invest in our young people. We have created a new fund within the program for our artists. For example, this exists in Acadia. We also saw, during the Olympic and Paralympic Games, that culture and official languages go hand in hand with official languages promotion.

This is extremely clear to all those who understand the importance of the culture associated with each official language.

New programs have been created, there is new funding for our artists, for our young people, for our education system. This is a five-year commitment and a 20% increase over the old program.

These are clear and undisputed successes. I am extremely proud of what we have accomplished.

Mrs. Shelly Glover: I am extremely proud as well.

I would like to take advantage of your appearance here to tell you that, yes, last week we heard from groups representing francophone media, and they were pleased with the changes they have seen within your department. The APF, in particular, published a press release stating that the Canada Periodical Fund was extraordinary. They believe that this will help them to meet a number of the challenges they faced.

What is the Canada Periodical Fund replacing?

Hon. James Moore: We decided to change the program and also make sure that the funds are available for francophone communities and newspapers serving minority language communities, because this is extremely important.

I often talk about our roadmap for linguistic duality, but it is also essential to understand that federal investments relate to the official languages roadmap, the Canada Media Fund, the assistance for newspapers and our funding for a number of other things. It always includes funding specifically for our official languages. That is always taken into account in the government's decisions.

Mrs. Shelly Glover: Good. Thank you for your answer.

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

We will now begin our second round and begin with the vice-chair of our committee, Mr. Bélanger.

Hon. Mauril Bélanger: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Minister, Deputy Minister, Mr. Sobrino.

We will have an opportunity to return to the roadmap. We will look at this issue because we need to understand that the figures we are talking about barely take inflation into consideration. If we go back to the very beginning from the action plan right up to the roadmap, we will see that what is being done for those communities gives them no increases. We will have an opportunity to get back to this.

Minister, I would like to return to the issue of the Olympics. I was delighted with the fact that you recognized that, in fact, during the opening ceremonies, there were shortcomings. In turn, I too will recognize that, in terms of the organization, signage, announcements, it was quite well done, but let's take things a step further. This situation reflects an unease, a difficulty that I could qualify as "national". It is true that the Olympics were being held in Vancouver, but they were the Canadian Olympics. I hope that we agree on that.

What happened is a reflection of the fact that French was treated like a language of service, a utilitarian language instead of, and contrary to, what it truly is and what it should be, a language of identity, a language of communities, a cultural language in which a population expresses a collective will.

Minister, I, as a francophone, in watching the opening ceremonies, was unable to identify with them. I can imagine why Premier Charest had the reaction he did. I can understand him and I congratulate you on the way you reacted a few days later when you said that there hadn't been enough French. I think that this is a reflection of the unease that exists not only because of the opening ceremonies of the Olympic Games. It is a reflection that we all recognize, that French, instead of being a language of identity, is becoming a language of service or a utilitarian language.

As Minister of Heritage and Minister responsible for Official Languages, do you understand the significance of this difficulty?

● (1035)

Hon. James Moore: I understand the difficulty and I agree. As I said, we were disappointed with what happened during the opening ceremonies, but I totally reject what you said about the fact that French was a language of service at the Olympic Games, that is completely untrue.

Were you at the Olympic Games? Were you in Vancouver?

Hon. Mauril Bélanger: No, Minister. I saw it on television.

Hon. James Moore: There were those who were there during the Olympic Games, francophones and anglophones from across Canada who went to Vancouver. There were over 300,000 visitors in Vancouver and they saw a huge celebration in both of Canada's official languages.

Let us consider our investment, as I said, in the Place de la Francophonie and all the volunteers. When we look at the government's commitment, and I know that we talked about it here, in the House, we note that an additional \$20 million was invested for VANOC. We listed 15 specific issues that we wanted to see on the ground, not only in terms of services, but also with regard to celebrating Canada's official languages. I can tell you that at Atlantic Canada House, at the Place de la Francophonie, volunteers and events were fully bilingual and respected the official languages. It was a celebration of the francophone fact.

So, when people say that the Olympic Games were not entirely held in both official languages, I disagree. You said that French was a language of service. It is truly sad that this is your perception because it is completely untrue.

Hon. Mauril Bélanger: Minister, I said that the signage and communications were very well done. However, what billions of TV viewers saw—including 31 million Canadians, who, like me, did not go to Vancouver—was not a reflection of biculturalism.

Hon. James Moore: I do not agree with you. Both official languages had an even greater presence on TV than they had ever had before in Olympic history. One hundred percent of the country had access to the games in both official languages. This issue was an important matter during this committee's meetings. People wondered whether francophone communities outside Quebec would be able to watch the games. Well, they were able to. These were the most bilingual games in Olympic history. It was a huge success, not only in terms of services provided, but also in terms of the celebrations.

Hon. Mauril Bélanger: Minister, we do not agree. We will stop, because we do not share the same perception of the importance given to French in Canada.

Hon. James Moore: Yes, but my perception is based on fact, because I was at the games. I met with and spoke with francophones who attended the games. If we look at what was broadcast on TV, on Channel V, on RDS and on other channels, you have to admit that these were the most bilingual games in Olympic history. It was a resounding success.

Hon. Mauril Bélanger: That is true with regard to communications.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Hon. Mauril Bélanger: It was true with regard to communications, Minister, but with regard to the language of identity, there, we have a serious problem.

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

We will move on with Ms. Guay.

Ms. Monique Guay (Rivière-du-Nord, BQ): Thank you very much.

We are happy that you are here, Mr. Moore, now that the Olympic Games are over. I know that you are always willing to appear. I am sure we will have other questions to ask you.

We need to take stock of the Olympic Games. I was not there, but what I saw of the opening ceremony disappointed me tremendously. I heard a lot about it as folks called me to tell me that they were disappointed, and that it did not make any sense that francophones were not featured. I did hear however that things ran more or less smoothly on the ground. That there were good services provided, but that it was not perfect. There were complaints, some action, some people were dissatisfied. That also has to be acknowledged, you cannot turn a blind eye to it. They will have to make sure they go to even greater lengths next time.

Think about what took place in Quebec City over the weekend. I was there on Saturday for the Red Bull Crashed Ice. There were over 150,000 people, including a lot of anglophones from all around Canada. No one complained that they did not get good service. Services were provided in both languages and there was no problem. This was an international event that ran smoothly. Perhaps it can serve as an example.

Let's talk about our concerns regarding local media, community radio and everything at a community level. These folks have been fighting for years to get funding, and I know several of them in my riding. They are underfunded, they often lose their premises, they have had to be accommodated by community groups in order to keep up and running. And that is increasingly what we are seeing. I would like you to reassure us that these media, whether they be radio stations or newspapers, are going to survive, because they are extremely important to small communities. There is a lot of volunteerism, but if they do not have a small and yet solid base upon which they can count, they will simply disappear.

● (1040)

Hon. James Moore: I am aware of this issue and of its importance. I am a former British Columbian radio host and I am fully aware of this. In that particular province, 1.3% of the population is French-speaking. Several of my former colleagues are French-speaking, in Prince George. I do not know if the percentage can be any lower than zero, but that is more or less the French-speaking population in that area. So it is crucial for that type of organization and radio broadcasting to exist in the region. I have had regular dealings with them and I am fully aware of the situation.

I would also like to talk about the first decision I made when I was appointed minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages. Mr. Bélanger is well versed in these matters. I held discussions with the CRTC on broadcasting here, in Ottawa, to make sure that the francophone community was well represented.

Ms. Monique Guay: So you are giving us a guarantee here, today, that you are going to make sure that these community-based organizations, newspapers and our radio stations, are going to survive?

Hon. James Moore: I will do my absolute best to make sure that there are policies and that there is funding that make that happen.

Ms. Monique Guay: That is perfect, it is what I wanted to hear.

I have noticed that you have doubled the allocation for TV5MONDE, which is really good. It is one of my favourite TV channels and it is also interesting for the population. On the other hand, I see that you have cut back support for the official language communities development program, though not by very much. We are talking about \$10,000, but it is a cutback nevertheless.

Hon. James Moore: You are referring to TV5? What budget envelope are we talking about?

Ms. Monique Guay: I'm referring to support for the official language communities development program. In your 2008-2009 main estimates, there was an amount of \$202,000 and in 2010-2011, it is \$192,000. So you cut back your support by \$10,000 and I just wanted to know why.

Hon. James Moore: I don't know. Perhaps it is an agreement that was entered into several years ago.

Ms. Monique Guay: Not to worry. Somebody else can give me the answer.

• (1045)

Mr. Pablo Sobrino (Assistant Deputy Minister, Strategic Policy, Planning and Corporate Affairs, Department of Canadian Heritage): In last year's main estimates, there was \$336 million in grants and contributions. There was a \$3.5 million reduction in grants with the axing of the interdepartmental partnership with the official language communities. The bulk of this money, \$2.8 million, was funnelled back in contributions to the new cultural development fund, which provides support for the roadmap, for example.

Ms. Monique Guay: In other words, it was a transfer. I see.

Mr. Pablo Sobrino: Indeed.

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

Mr. Weston now has the floor.

Mr. John Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Welcome to our committee, Minister.

I think that for any Canadian, but especially for me, it's quite interesting that a member from British Columbia is asking questions in French of a minister who was also originally from British Columbia. Last week, witnesses from the Alliance des radios communautaires du Canada and from the Association de la presse francophone appeared before us. We spoke about the Olympic Games. Having had the experience of being right at the heart of the games, in West Vancouver and in Whistler, I remarked how amazed I had been by the

influence of the French language. We asked questions on this issue. Mr. François Côté, secretary general at the Alliance, said the following in response:

The Franco Médias project was a success across the board. It was an absolutely fantastic project, both for the communities concerned and the participants. It was an extraordinary experience for the participants who, probably for the only time in their life, were able to attend the Olympic Games and cover them in a different manner. They covered the sporting activities, but it was much more than that. It also involved the daily life of folks from British Columbia [...]

Mr. Potié went on to say the following:

I'd say the same thing. Based on what our members and the participants and coordinators on-site said, it was a tremendous success.

Minister, how can we ensure that this success story helps promote the French language in the various media, among students, and the general public?

Hon. James Moore: Franco Médias 2010 was an important project for many reasons. As a government, we're always looking for projects and key investments at a grassroots level. I'm not just talking about major projects, but also, from time to time, more modest projects which may help young people to learn and to speak the official languages in regions of Canada where it is a little more difficult to find employment or job opportunities. It may be a way of enabling storytelling about mainly anglophone communities and of speaking about these anglophone communities in the francophone media which are available countrywide electronically. That's important.

[English]

One of the things you always look for, I think, with new media, as a government with regard to official languages, is you try to find these opportunities. I used to say all the time that it was a sad thing, I remember, when I first got involved in politics, that in rallies, for example, in Quebec, you would see young people so enthusiastic about Quebec leaving Canada. They were talking about leaving a country they had never seen, never read about, never heard about, they've never had it reported on in their media because it wasn't available. Because when you have a tragedy, such as a shooting in Prince George, or if you have a great success, like an Olympic Games, or if you have a great moment, all Canadians should know about that. All Canadians should know about our own shared experiences, our tragedies, our triumphs, our successes, our failures, our struggles. We should all know about this.

But when there's that barrier of language between one region of the country and another, it doesn't help the future of this country if we don't get to have those shared experiences, good and bad. So when you have this project, Franco Médias 2010, the idea of this again is to take a few young kids who want to become reporters, give them a little bit of money, and let them talk about the Olympic Games. Not just the sporting aspects of the games but the adjacent events associated with the games—the volunteers, the infrastructure things, successes that were put in place, the things that matter on the ground that often don't get talked about—and have them be told in French to Canadians from around the country, so that it's not just the filter of the official broadcasters of CTV, that you can get around that through different projects like this so we can have these shared experiences understood in both official languages.

Take the horrible floods in the province of Quebec about 10 years ago; it doesn't serve this country if people in Port Moody, where I'm from, can't witness that and experience that and understand it in their own language. We need to understand the tragedies and successes in other parts of the country, and when the barrier is language, the role of government, in our view, is to make investments into magazines, into media, into projects like this for kids so that we can break down those barriers, so that we can have these shared experiences and bind ourselves together as a country.

[Translation]

Mr. John Weston: Thank you.

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

Before handing the floor over to Mr. Godin, I'd like to give you the opportunity, Minister, to comment on the question Mr. Nadeau had started asking concerning the meeting we had last week with representatives from the newsprint and radio broadcasting sectors which are to be found in francophone minority settings. The representatives said that when they spoke to officials at the Department of Canadian Heritage, they were told that there were programs for them, but when they spoke to people from other departments, they were referred back to the Department of Canadian Heritage.

And that comes back to the spirit of the Official Languages Act which stipulates that all departments must offer services to organizations in minority settings. I'd invite you to comment on this.

• (1050)

Hon. James Moore: Sadly, that isn't a new concern, nor an unprecedented one. I'm aware of that. We are still working alongside our partners in other departments. Perhaps Judith can speak about the need to address this problem.

Mrs. Judith LaRocque (Deputy Minister, Department of Canadian Heritage): That perception is clearly still out there, but under the roadmap, 15 departments did in fact get funding. They have obligations. That's just for the roadmap component. But nevertheless, every department has obligations.

At the Department of Canadian Heritage, we kind of play the role of champion for these organizations, and we're happy to do so. I meet often with these groups. That happens in health care. The RDÉE, the coordinating group on economic development and employability, came to see us recently in an attempt to reach out to certain departments. And we're pleased to play that role. We really see ourselves as official languages champions in dealing with federal government departments.

When I hear from the minister that there's a problem, I call my colleagues and counterparts from the other departments directly. So we'll persevere, and I think we'll continue to attempt to chip away at that perception for as long as we're here. And that happens on a daily basis.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Mr. Godin.

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

Minister, you said that all Canadians were able to see the Olympic Games. That's not true. And I'll tell you why. Channel V doesn't

broadcast throughout Canada. RDS isn't available with every cable company and isn't broadcast by every satellite. The same is true of CPAC. It's not available Canada-wide. There are regions in Canada where CPAC isn't available and it's not mandatory to have it.

Hon. James Moore: For example?

Mr. Yvon Godin: I'll give you an example. In northern Ontario, CPAC is not on cable. It isn't mandatory. You can check. What's more, a lot of people work out of and are more or less forced to live out of their suitcases. They stay in hotels, and CPAC isn't available in hotels. Nor is Channel V. RDS is available most of the time because of the sport component, but I can tell you that it's not 100% of the time. We heard in committee that it is not available in 100% of cases.

Minister, I'd like to hear you say that it is good for people in Quebec to be able to see what's going on in British Columbia and in other cities on television.

Hon. James Moore: Are you talking about judges?

Mr. Yvon Godin: No, I'm not. You have good foot soldiers fighting for judges who are spreading untruths, but that's okay.

Back to what you were saying, the only broadcaster who can give us 100% of all of that, nationwide, is not Channel V. Channel V isn't interested in broadcasting Vancouver-based news in Montreal. You can be sure of that. It's not obligated to do so.

And yet, that's the CBC's mandate. So aren't you worried about the CRTC decision to exclude the CBC? Perhaps you have a good reason for being so. You don't want the CBC to say, as a result of not being able to collect fees from cable companies, that it's going to withdraw from certain regions. I don't think that it should be entitled to withdraw. It should provide a service to all Canadians in every way it can. I don't want it to be able to opt out.

But how will the government support the CBC if there are financial woes? They spoke about that last night and this morning on the news, and it worries me.

Hon. James Moore: You should ask Mr. von Finckenstein to testify before the committee on that subject.

Mr. Yvon Godin: Who?

Hon. James Moore: Mr. Konrad von Finckenstein, the Chairman of the CRTC. You should ask him to appear as a witness and ask him these questions. It is his decision to make.

As far as I'm concerned, the Société Radio-Canada/CBC is very important in the area of official languages for the very reasons I have just set out.

If the SRC did not exist in Vancouver, there would be no broadcasting in French throughout British Columbia. It is the third largest province in Canada in terms of population, one that is increasingly diversified given the large number of new Canadians. It is very important to protect the French fact.

• (1055)

Mr. Yvon Godin: When the flame arrived in Vancouver by plane, I watched the ceremony on CTV. On Radio-Canada television, because the station was not included in the agreement, the door to the plane had yet to be opened whereas the ceremony was already underway on other channels. Canal V wasn't there nor was RDS. No one was there.

I can assure that 100% of Canadians did not see the ceremony live.

Hon. James Moore: These were the most highly televised Games in the history of the Olympics. It wasn't perfect—

Mr. Yvon Godin: Earlier, you said it was 100%.

Hon. James Moore: Pardon me?

Mr. Yvon Godin: Earlier on you said it was 100%. It was not 100%.

Hon. James Moore: It was more highly available electronically, on TV, on the radio, as was the advertising, than ever before in the history of the Olympic Games.

Mr. Yvon Godin: Now, with respect to funding—

Hon. James Moore: I would like to add that it was certainly not perfect.

Mr. Yvon Godin: All right.

Hon. James Moore: There has been criticism of CTV and much of that criticism is accurate.

Mr. Yvon Godin: Let us now get back to transfers to communities.

Hon. James Moore: Very well.

Mr. Yvon Godin: You alleged that there was "red tape". That is what the anglophone community said this morning. Things changed and I congratulate you on that. That is what had been called for.

Now, with respect to the money, will it get there on time? Will communities once again be forced to use their credit cards?

An hon. member: That just makes no sense.

Mr. Yvon Godin: That is why we need an answer.

Hon. James Moore: We would never want to have people personally taking on expenditures for one of our key organizations, for instance a francophone community up North.

Mr. Yvon Godin: In Newfoundland.

Hon. James Moore: Yes.

We never want to see that happen. That is the reason why we enquired about the concerns and are constantly trying to find the best way to ensure that the money is spent effectively and responsibly on behalf of taxpayers and for the good of these organizations.

We brought some changes to the method by establishing the 50% rule. That will remain our government's policy. If concerns arise, we will find ways to address them.

Mr. Yvon Godin: You are supposed to establish a system allowing people to call, for instance, Canada Post, to find out the status of their application. Madam LaRocque, you're the one that mentioned this. Where do things stand at the moment?

The Chair: Thank you.

Mrs. Judith LaRocque: I would say we're halfway there, as we will be publishing our service standards on April 1 on our website, with will give our clientele some certainty.

We're also working with them to issue cheques. Eighty per cent of them have received notice that they will be receiving funds.

Mr. Yvon Godin: Eighty per cent?

Mrs. Judith LaRocque: However, that is not all. We must issue the cheque as quickly as possible while ensuring due diligence.

The Chair: Very well.

Mrs. Judith LaRocque: We are currently also working on establishing a direct deposit system. We are certainly trying to modernize our methods.

Mr. Yvon Godin: These are their credit cards.

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

We will be able to find out what your reaction is to the committee's recommendations as to approval times.

We have now gotten to the end of our meeting.

Thank you very much, Minister, for your attendance and that of your representatives.

Thank you to everyone.

Hon. James Moore: Thank you.

(The meeting is adjourned.)

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