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Chair

The Honourable Michael Chong

Standing Committee on Official Languages

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• (0850)

[Translation]

The Chair (Hon. Michael Chong (Wellington—Halton Hills, CPC)): Today is Tuesday, October 18, 2011, and I welcome you to the Standing Committee on Official Languages. This is our seventh meeting. We are here pursuant to Standing Order 108(2) to study the evaluation of the Roadmap, to improve programs and service delivery.

We are welcoming two public servants from the Department of Canadian Heritage, Mr. Tom Scrimger, assistant deputy minister of Canadian Heritage, and Mr. Jean-Pierre Gauthier, senior director of the Official Languages Secretariat.

[English]

Before we begin this morning, I think there's some consensus on the committee to deal with the four motions that the clerk and the chair have been given notice for.

So I give the floor to Monsieur Godin.

[Translation]

Mr. Yvon Godin (Acadie—Bathurst, NDP): Mr. Chair, there is a consensus. It involves the motion of Mr. Mauril Bélanger and the motion of Mr. Jacques Gourde.

Also, I don't know if I should say this right now, but we are requesting an adjournment at 9:50 a.m. We have a consensus on that as well. It is because of the report of the Commissioner of Official Languages.

[English]

The Chair: I received four motions.

So, gentlemen, perhaps you could allow us to dispose of these quickly. We'll deal with them in the order in which I received them. We'll begin with the motion from Mauril Bélanger.

Mr. Bélanger, could you move your motion and speak to it briefly?

[Translation]

Hon. Mauril Bélanger (Ottawa—Vanier, Lib.): Does it involve the request to have Mr. Malavoy appear before us?

The Chair: Yes.

Hon. Mauril Bélanger: I oppose Mr. Gourde's motion, Mr. Chair. He wants both people to appear together. I have no objection to Mr. Malavoy's appearance lasting only one hour. But the appearance of the people from Saskatchewan may run longer than an hour. It is very complicated, even controversial. I think that an hour would not

do the francophone community of Saskatchewan justice. I cannot support the idea of having the two appear at the same time. I am going to propose my motion and we will see what comes of it.

I propose that the committee agree to meet with Mr. Malavoy by December 15.

[English]

The Chair: There's a motion.

[Translation]

We have Mr. Bélanger's motion.

Mr. Gourde, you have the floor.

Mr. Jacques Gourde (Lotbinière—Chutes-de-la-Chaudière, CPC): I would like to propose a friendly amendment to Mr. Bélanger. I understand what you are saying but, in a pinch, we can always invite them to appear before the committee again.

We would also like Mr. Yvan Lebel, the president of the Conseil des écoles francsaskoises, to appear at the same committee meeting. I understand your apprehension, but we can invite them again to another session.

My amendment would replace the expression "the request ... to appear" with the expression "the request ... that both appear". So the motion would read as follows:

That the committee accepts the request of Mr. Jean Malavoy, General Secretary of the Table de concertation du livre franco-ontarien, and the request of Mr. Yvan LeBel, President of the Conseil des écoles francsaskoises, to appear before the committee, and that both appear on December 13, 2011.

The Chair: We have an amendment from Mr. Gourde. Is there any discussion on this amendment?

Mr. Bélanger, you have the floor.

Hon. Mauril Bélanger: This is not a friendly amendment, Mr. Chair. We have given the people of Saskatchewan enough of a runaround. Because of some kind of procedural error, they already thought they had been invited to appear. Furthermore, they were here, in Ottawa, and we could have taken advantage of the opportunity to meet with them. The government party refused and said that we did not have to meet with them at that point, when they had nothing on the agenda. We preferred not to hold a meeting and, now, we want to wedge them into a one-hour appearance.

Mr. Chair, the francophone community of Saskatchewan deserves more than one hour. Their situation is very complicated. Giving them just one hour will not do them justice. I cannot accept this. It's minimizing the real problems of an entire community. I do not see why we are sending this message.

I hope that the parliamentary secretary will withdraw his motion to give them one hour, even if we have to combine Mr. Malavoy's hour with another hour at another time. I have no problem with that. I know that file and we won't need two hours to deal with it, I recognize that. But I find the message we are sending to Saskatchewan dreadful.

The Chair: Would any other committee members like to speak to this amendment?

[English]

Okay, I'll call the vote. All those in favour of the amendment moved by Monsieur Gourde?

Mr. Dykstra, you cannot vote.

There's a tie. I'm going to break the tie in favour of the government, because that's normally what would happen here.

(Amendment agreed to [See *Minutes of Proceedings*])

The Chair: Now we're back to the main motion as amended.

Is there any discussion on the main motion as amended?

Yes, Monsieur Godin, on a point of order.

• (0855)

[Translation]

Mr. Yvon Godin: I would like to check whether tilting the balance to the government side in the event of a tie is the normal procedure. The chair is supposed to be impartial and, in this case, he must make a decision. It is too easy to simply say that it's automatic.

The Chair: It is a normal procedure. I spoke with the clerk before we went to the vote. Other people also told me that, in these situations, the decision is up to the chair.

Hon. Mauril Bélanger: Do you always support the government?

[English]

The Chair: No, normally you break a tie to continue debate in the House, to continue the functioning of the status quo.

In this particular situation, because there's no relevance to that rule, I'm trying to do what's less disruptive to the committee. The fact is that the government has the majority on the committee, so in my view the proper way to proceed is to vote with the government because that's normally what would happen in this situation.

Hon. Mauril Bélanger: I would hope that would not stand as an unsaid rule of the committee, Mr. Chairman, because then we know what we're in for.

The Chair: I would hope you'd have more faith in your chair than that, Mr. Bélanger.

Hon. Mauril Bélanger: I used to.

The Chair: If you wish to challenge the chair, you can go right ahead.

Hon. Mauril Bélanger: No.

The Chair: Okay.

Monsieur Lauzon.

Mr. Guy Lauzon (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry, CPC): I don't think that you, as a chair, have to explain when you

vote. I don't explain why I vote and I don't think you should have to either.

The Chair: Well, I—

Mr. Guy Lauzon: I think if we have to question procedures, etc., every time we lose a vote, we're going to have an awfully uncooperative committee. I think we have to get together here, and let's advance the agenda. Let's not nitpick on every decision; let's move forward.

The Chair: Members have the right to raise points of order if they have questions about the decision of the chair, and I respect that. I'm trying to be fair here. Mr. Godin was perfectly within his rights to raise that point of order.

Monsieur Bélanger.

Hon. Mauril Bélanger: Mr. Chairman, I will challenge the chair on that, because I think the interpretation you give to the rules is not an accurate one.

The Chair: That's going to present a circular argument.

Hon. Mauril Bélanger: Yes.

The Chair: All right, the chair has been challenged.

I'm going to pass the floor to the clerk to conduct the vote to see whether or not the chair's decision will be sustained.

[Translation]

The Clerk of the Committee (Mr. Simon Larouche): It is proposed that the chair's decision be sustained.

[English]

The Chair: Okay, we have a tie. The chair will break the decision in favour of sustaining my own decision, to be consistent.

(Ruling of the chair sustained)

The Chair: We'll move on now. We have the motion as amended on the floor.

The motion reads as follows:

That the Committee accepts the request of Mr. Jean Malavoy, General Secretary of the Table de concertation du livre franco-ontarien, to appear before the Committee and that this meeting be held on December 13, 2011.

Is there any discussion?

Seeing none, I'm going to call the question on the motion as amended.

(Motion as amended agreed to)

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We'll now move on to the second motion I received, which was from Monsieur Gourde.

[Translation]

Mr. Gourde, you have the floor.

• (0900)

Mr. Jacques Gourde: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I would like my motion to be put to a vote. It reads as follows:

That the committee invite the Commissioner for Official Languages to appear regarding the Annual Report on Official Languages 2010-2011 and that this meeting be held on October 20, 2011.

The Chair: Okay. Would anyone like to discuss Mr. Gourde's motion?

Mr. Bélanger.

Hon. Mauril Bélanger: Mr. Chair, since there is so much confidence here, I would like to move an amendment.

I find it a bit inappropriate for us to specify a date. It doesn't give the clerk much flexibility. We don't even know if the commissioner will be available that day.

I would prefer to propose that it be held that on October 20 or October 25, and that the commissioner be invited to appear before the committee for the entire meeting, not just for one hour, and that the meeting be televised.

The Chair: We have an amendment moved by Mr. Bélanger, proposing that the meeting be held on October 20 or 21, 2011...

Hon. Mauril Bélanger: It's the 20 or the 25.

The Chair: Pardon me. So the meeting would take place on October 20 or October 25, 2011. It would be televised and would be a two-hour meeting.

[English]

Is that okay? Is there...?

Monsieur Godin.

[Translation]

Mr. Yvon Godin: I am in favour of that. I think that it's very important that we do not limit the commissioner to one hour when we invite him to appear.

The Chair: Okay. Would any other committee members like to discuss this amendment?

Mr. Gourde.

Mr. Jacques Gourde: Mr. Bélanger's amendments seem reasonable. We are giving the commissioner more flexibility by offering him the choice of appearing on either October 20 or October 25, depending on his availability. I have no problem with that. I think that two hours is fine. I have no problem with that either. And we have no objection to a televised meeting.

So we do support Mr. Bélanger's amendment, with pleasure.

[English]

The Chair: I'll call the vote.

All those in favour of the amendment moved by Mr. Bélanger?

(Amendment agreed to [See *Minutes of Proceedings*])

The Chair: We're back to the main motion as amended.

Is there any discussion?

Seeing none, all those in favour of the amended motion?

(Motion as amended agreed to [See *Minutes of Proceedings*])

The Chair: Now, I'm assuming that

[Translation]

Mr. Gourde and Mr. Bélanger do not want to move the two other motions.

Hon. Mauril Bélanger: What? There are more?

The Chair: Yes, Mr. Gourde gave me a notice on a second motion.

[English]

If you're not going to move them, then we'll just drop them.

Hon. Mauril Bélanger: Drop them?

The Chair: We'll just not proceed with them.

Hon. Mauril Bélanger: Today.

The Chair: That's right.

Hon. Mauril Bélanger: Okay.

The Chair: They're roughly duplicates of the motions just adopted.

[Translation]

Hon. Mauril Bélanger: One moment, Mr. Chair.

I would not want you to interpret the decision to mean that all pending motions would be abandoned.

[English]

The Chair: No, no, that's not what I've said.

You've given me notice of motion. Provided it's not a duplicate of an earlier motion either adopted or defeated by the committee, you are within your rights to move that motion at any meeting, at any time—

Hon. Mauril Bélanger: Thank you.

The Chair: —or to continue debate on a motion already moved that has not been yet disposed of by the committee. Okay?

Hon. Mauril Bélanger: Thank you very much.

The Chair: I was just asking whether or not you wanted to move these motions. I assume you don't, so we're going to move on to the first item on our agenda...

Yes, Monsieur Godin.

[Translation]

Mr. Yvon Godin: Since we just lost 15 minutes, I propose that the meeting adjourn at 10:00 a.m. rather than 9:50 a.m.

[English]

The Chair: So Monsieur Godin has moved a motion that the committee adjourn at—

[Translation]

Mr. Yvon Godin: And if we need to recall the witnesses, we can do it later. We'll make that decision together.

[English]

The Chair: Monsieur Godin has moved a motion that the committee adjourn at 9:50.

• (0905)

Mr. Yvon Godin: It would be at 10 o'clock for the report of the commissioner.

The Chair: The motion is to adjourn at 10 o'clock today. At a future date, if we want to call these witnesses, we can bring them back to appear.

Seeing that there's no debate on this motion, I'll call the question.

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: We'll now move to the first item on our agenda today, which is our two witnesses. We have Mr. Jean-Pierre Gauthier, senior director of the Official Languages Secretariat, and Mr. Tom Scrimger, assistant deputy minister for Citizenship and Heritage.

Welcome to you both.

[Translation]

You have 30 minutes for your presentation.

[English]

Mr. Tom Scrimger (Assistant Deputy Minister, Citizenship and Heritage, Department of Canadian Heritage): Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

[Translation]

We will try to be as brief as possible, given the change in time in today's meeting, to leave time for committee members to ask questions.

Mr. Gauthier, to my left, will make a presentation on the Roadmap. We hope that it will provide enough context for all the committee members. I am sure that some members are already fairly familiar with the Roadmap that was presented in 2008, but others may not be familiar with it.

[English]

Without any further pretext, I'll turn the mike over to my colleague to go through the presentation.

[Translation]

Mr. Jean-Pierre Gauthier (Senior Director, Official Languages Secretariat, Department of Canadian Heritage): Thank you, Tom.

Good morning, everyone. Good morning, Mr. Chair.

If you wish, I suggest that this morning we provide an overview of the various concepts that might be helpful to you in your study. Obviously, I will spend a little more time talking about the Roadmap itself.

We have divided the presentation that you have in front of you into three parts. The first part deals mainly with statistical data and clarifies some figures. Obviously, we could talk about statistics for two hours if we wanted to. I will just provide an overview, which will help direct and structure today's discussions and perhaps the discussions you'll have later as part of your study. Then I will provide a quick overview of the legal framework for language rights to provide a solid foundation to all committee members for your upcoming study. Lastly, we will address the Roadmap more specifically. I will explain what it's about, how it came about and

what it contains. My overview will be quick so that you have as much time as possible for questions.

If I may, I'll start with the statistical data on page 3. Basically, a Statistics Canada census showed that there are approximately 200 mother tongues, of which approximately 90 are spoken. That's the linguistic environment of the Canadian population.

I would like to go off on a short tangent about definitions. Without going into detail, I would like to say that we use different terms when we speak about languages. There is the mother tongue. There is the language spoken at home. And there is another important concept, which is the first official language spoken. So when we talk about statistics, make sure you pay particular attention to what exactly we are talking about. We simply adapt the numbers to the circumstances that are the most relevant. That's the intention behind the various definitions.

We know that 98% of Canadians speak one of the two official languages. Close to three quarters speak English and one quarter speak French as their first official language spoken.

On this page, we are also providing a few details, some more specific information about official-language minority communities. There are close to a million francophones living outside Quebec. A little over 500,000 are in Ontario, which makes it the largest concentration of francophones living outside Quebec in a single province. There are approximately 235,000 in New Brunswick, which accounts for about a third of the population of that province. As for the other provinces and territories in Canada, excluding Quebec, francophones represent less than 2% of the local population.

As for anglophones in a minority situation in Quebec, they represent a little over 900,000 people. Basically the size of the francophone minority communities outside Quebec and that of the anglophone minority community in Quebec is comparable.

The next page provides some trends to give you an idea of the situation over a long period of time. We are talking here about a period of 45 years, from 1961 to 2006—the most recent census data dates back to 2006.

The proportion of francophones in Canada—those whose mother tongue is French—went from about 28% to 22%, which is a decrease. There has also been a decrease in English as a mother tongue, which went from 58.5% to 57.8%. The difference can be explained mostly by the growth in the allophone population, that is people whose mother tongue isn't English or French. It went from 13% to 20% during the same period. So this gives you the trends we are seeing in the Canadian population.

The next page deals with bilingualism. The first two or three pages we just discussed covered the individual's mother tongue.

• (0910)

We are now going to talk about people who speak both official languages. There is a small table that summarizes the level of bilingualism among the population. You can easily see that minority communities are by far the most bilingual in Canada, which is understandable. So over 80% of the francophone population living outside Quebec is bilingual, and two thirds of the minority anglophone population living in Quebec is bilingual. So we find a very large proportion of bilingualism in these minority populations. The level of bilingualism in Canada is 17%. The percentage has grown since 1961. At the time, it was 12%.

Several polls have been done over the years to determine how much support there is for bilingualism. The most recent one was from September, and it's the one I indicated here. It says that about 70% of Canadians support bilingualism and that a quarter of Canadians think that being bilingual is an asset. This information has been verified in other polls. We have already seen polls that show a level of support for bilingualism between 70% and 80%, depending on the version.

I don't want to dwell on statistics. I won't give you more than that. Obviously, we can always give you more statistical information if you wish. All sorts of very interesting breakdowns can be done. But I'll leave you with two maps.

The first map provides the population of the various provinces and territories. The populations are broken down by official language. This shows you the size of the various communities in each province.

The second map, which is a little more colourful with its shades of beige and brown, pinpoints the minority communities. That means, that in Quebec we're talking about anglophones, and outside Quebec, that means francophones. This provides some idea of the concentration of the communities.

[English]

As a second part, I'd like to spend a bit of time talking about the legislative framework, basically to give you a very quick overview to map out a little bit where linguistic rights come from.

On page 8, what you see is that the bilingualism of Canada started in 1867 with the constitutional act at that time, when Parliament and the court were deemed to operate both in French and English. This equally applied at that time to the Quebec legislative assembly and to the court system in Quebec too.

So there's the beginning of the official languages, with the 1867 constitutional act. Of course, the big marker is in 1969, when the Official Languages Act was adopted. That's more than 40 years ago. It basically provided rights to get services from the federal government in French or English. This is the beginning of the regime we are under. It also created, for instance, a commissioner of official languages at that time.

In 1982, with the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, English and French were officially presented as being official languages of Canada; that's section 16 of the charter. It also provides a number of provisions with respect to linguistic rights, including section 23, about rights to an education in French or English in Canada.

The next big step in the evolution of the framework is found in 1988, when we introduced, under part VII, the obligations to support the vitality and the development of minority communities as well as the promotion of the full recognition and use of French and English in Canada.

Then in 2005, about six years ago, that new part of the act from 1988 called upon departments to assume an obligation to take positive measures to implement the objectives and provisions of that part, and it made the part subject to legal recourse, if individuals feel that the government is not complying with its obligations under these provisions.

In a nutshell, this gives you a sense of the big steps that lead to where we are today.

On the next page, I'm going to spend a couple of minutes more about the Official Languages Act itself. It pursues essentially three main objectives.

The first objective of the act is to ensure equality of status and of rights between French and English. That's by and large one way to present one key objective of the Official Languages Act.

The second thing it does is provide for the powers, duties, and functions of the various institutions, especially in terms of what they have to do to assume and fulfill their obligations towards official languages.

The third of the set of objectives is part VII, in essence: to preserve and foster the development of the English and French minority communities as well as the equal status of French and English in Canadian society.

In a nutshell, those are the three main objectives of the Official Languages Act.

One thing to keep in mind is that the act is aimed essentially at the federal government. In general it does not apply to provinces, municipalities, or, by and large, to the private sector. It is an act that places obligations largely upon the federal government.

Provinces and territories have their own regimes. These vary. For instance, New Brunswick is officially bilingual under the Constitution; Quebec has adopted French as its sole official language; the Northwest Territories, the Yukon, and Nunavut have adopted not only French and English, but also some aboriginal languages as well, as their official languages. So regimes may vary at the provincial level.

What I've presented on the next page.... There I could have spent more time, but for the sake of getting to the roadmap faster, I will quickly just highlight the various parts of the act. It's important because, as many of you know, the debate on official languages often refers in coded language to "part IV", "part VII", and so on. I thought I would take a couple of minutes to highlight the key parts. Eventually, as we discuss these things, we will fall back into using that jargon—and we will do so, because it's stronger than our will, I guess—which we use all the time.

●(0915)

I would suggest we pay attention to parts III and VII. Those are the substantive rights provisions, I would submit. Of course, there are parts I and II, but those you'll hear most about are parts III, IV, V, VI, and VII.

Part III basically concerns the administration of justice. It's the right people have before a federal court or tribunal to proceed in French or in English.

Part IV is by and large the part under which the federal institutions of government have obligations to offer services in French and English, depending on the situation, depending on the location of the office, and largely depending on the size of the minority population in that region. But it does provide a baseline right for Canadians to have access to federal government services in the language of their choice.

Part V is more internal to the public service. It is the right of public servants to work in French or English, and again that depends on their location. If they're in a headquarters office or if they are in a bilingual region, their rights are different from those if they are in a unilingual region, for instance.

Part VI is basically a technical part, I would submit, which ensures or provides that the public service and the members of the public service reflect the makeup of the population. It's to ensure that there is a connection between the demographic composition of the general population and the public service.

Part VII, which I have already mentioned a couple of times, is a key part, and you'll hear that expression "part VII" often.

I'll just spend a minute on the next page. There are a few key federal institutions, and by that I mean that they hold special roles under the Official Languages Act. The act applies to all federal institutions in terms of its obligations—there's no doubt about that—but this handful of institutions has a special role to play.

Treasury Board is one of them. They're responsible for the language of service, for the language of work in the public service, and, for part VI, the representation of the two linguistic groups in the public service.

The Department of Justice provides advice on the interpretation of the Official Languages Act, so they're very key in terms of assisting all departments and institutions in complying with their obligations.

At the Department of Canadian Heritage we basically do two things. We have a set of programs inside the department whereby we provide support to the objectives of the act directly, but we also have—and this is my group—an overarching role in coordinating other departments. That's an interdepartmental role that is being played at two different levels. I don't want to get into technicalities at this time, but it does mean that this department plays on two levels: it plays with respect to its suite of programs, but also it plays a role across government as well.

As to the Commissioner of Official Languages, I'm sure you're familiar with him.

●(0920)

[*Translation*]

Some historical information is provided on page 12 of the Roadmap. It covers the federal government's recent official languages strategies. We obviously haven't provided the entire 40-year overview. To give you some background, the first official languages action plan was put in place in 2003 for five years, so it ended in 2008. The Roadmap that started in 2008 and ends in 2013 is the second action plan and is the current one.

To focus a little on the current Roadmap, so the one for 2008-2013, it involves an investment of \$1.1 billion over five years. The current Roadmap is planned to end on March 31, 2013. When we look at its various components, the Roadmap includes about 30 initiatives. Actually, there are 32 initiatives for delivering the whole plan. It is applied by about 15 federal departments and agencies. It pursues two main objectives: strengthening the vitality of the official language minority communities and promoting the use of English and French to the general population.

The pie chart on page 14 gives you a general idea of the size of the various investments made under the Roadmap. I will let you take a look at it, but you will quickly see that education has the lion's share. Health is also a large component. There are a number of other aspects. This basically tallies with the objectives and areas of activity under the Roadmap.

The next page describes the 15 departments and agencies included in the Roadmap. I have put them in groups. The first group includes the departments and agencies that deal with economic issues. The departments of Canadian Heritage, Immigration, Justice and Health have fairly obvious fields of activity. The next three departments and agencies, namely, Public Works, the National Research Council and the Canada School of Public Service, focus much more on initiatives that benefit all Canadians, namely, promoting linguistic duality. The last two, the secretariat I run and the Office of the Chief Human Resources Officer, which is part of the Treasury Board Secretariat, deal mainly with government infrastructure and the coordination of all those activities.

I think the last point on this page is very important. The Roadmap is a subset. In reality, the federal government's investment in official languages is much larger than the Roadmap. All departments are subject to the Official Languages Act. They assume the same obligations, but they will not be able to carry them out in the same way. This depends on their mandate, but they all have obligations and must all try hard to accomplish what they need to do. In particular, I'm thinking of the active measures to promote English and French and of the vitality of official language minority communities.

So the Roadmap is a hard core, if you will, of particularly relevant government activities that have been put together to create a coherent whole. However, this doesn't represent all the federal government's investments in official languages.

I would now like to give you an overview of the type of dialogue we maintain. As the committee is aware, we are at a point in the Roadmap when the time is right to start thinking about the future. So the first step we are taking is to pay attention and listen to the stakeholders, particularly the official language minority communities, to try to understand and determine what priorities and areas for action we should focus on for the future.

With this page, I simply wanted to show you what we are doing. Our consultations are divided along three lines. There is the interdepartmental discussion, where we consult among colleagues. This starts with the 15 Roadmap partners and it can, and does, reach beyond those members. We also have intergovernmental discussions. A number of Roadmap actions call on the provinces. I'm thinking of education and health. So these are initiatives that we discuss with our colleagues from the provinces and territories. There is also the whole non-governmental community, namely, the community representatives. We have been listening to what they have to say for close to a year now. We use occasions, events, meetings and gatherings to pay attention to what is being said and to engage in this dialogue.

● (0925)

We are also very much interested in the committee's work, which is along the same lines, and will allow us to continue to listen attentively to what the communities want.

The last page of the presentation provides an overview. In 2011, we were in our preparatory phase. We did a midterm review. It was a management review to see how we had done to that point.

As I just explained, we started dialogues and discussions. Formal summative evaluations of the various programs are currently under way. We are proceeding with research and analysis.

Next year, we will have to synthesize the research and draft proposals to the government and to cabinet.

In 2013, we will look to the future. The Roadmap for Canada's Linguistic Duality will have expired and we will probably have to take steps for implementation at that time.

This completes the presentation. It was an overview.

Thank you for your attention.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Gauthier.

[*English*]

Before we go to Monsieur Godin, in terms of the 2011-12 work plan the department has for reviewing the roadmap, do you have the exact months? We're undertaking our study here and it would be helpful for the analyst if you had an idea of when the items on page 17 are taking place. I know it's in 2011 or 2012, but do you have any—

Mr. Jean-Pierre Gauthier: I guess we're aiming to get back to making recommendations and proposals sometime in the second part of 2012. And of course we will be paying a lot of attention to the work of the committee, and we'll adjust ourselves accordingly to make sure that we don't miss the opportunity of taking advantage of your work and of your conclusions.

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Good. Thank you for your presentation.

We have 32 minutes for questions and comments from the committee members.

Let's start with Mr. Godin.

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

I would like to welcome our two witnesses, Mr. Gauthier and Mr. Scrimger. I hope I am pronouncing your name right.

I really like that we devoted half an hour to your explanations. It gave us the opportunity to hear your point of view.

I have a few questions, and so do my colleagues. We prepared these questions so we could get answers. If you don't have the answers, you can send them to us later.

The Department of Canadian Heritage is currently preparing a midterm report that will include the government perspective and the community perspective on the implementation of the Roadmap for Canada's Linguistic Duality. My questions are as follows: When will this report be ready? What is the distribution plan? Will the report be made public? How does the department intend to make sure that the community perspective section has actually been validated by the communities?

● (0930)

Mr. Tom Scrimger: Thank you for your questions.

First, we want to draft our report and submit it to the minister by the end of 2011. The minister will also consult with his colleagues.

The public communication plans have not yet been determined, but I think the most important part of the matter is the consultation with the communities. Canadian Heritage maintains an ongoing dialogue.

We take every opportunity to strengthen the dialogue to ask questions. I just sent letters to several community organizations to discuss priorities and the progress of the Roadmap for Canada's Linguistic Duality. The minister asks the same questions when he meets with the groups.

It's certainly a topic of discussion for us and something we are always considering. We most certainly want to be in a good position to represent the concerns of the communities in our report to our minister. I think that there are several ways of interacting with the communities to ensure that we are really able to reflect their concerns.

Mr. Jean-Pierre Gauthier: Mr. Chair, I would like to add a few observations, if I may.

For the midterm review, I think it's important to clarify the goals of the exercise we are conducting. The purpose of the exercise is to provide an account of what has been accomplished. It is a management step for reviewing the implementation and how we have delivered the Roadmap. It's a verification or review step that is focused more on the management of the Roadmap than on the creation of a document that would recommend public policy themes, for example.

The information that we use is already part of the public domain through the annual reports of Canadian Heritage. If you take a look at the departmental reports on performance that were published in late spring, unless I'm mistaken, you will find appendix 5. It isn't in the paper version, but is available online.

This appendix lists the 32 initiatives I just spoke about. It provides very specific details about the outlays that have been made during the year compared with the expected outlays. There is also space for comments at the end of the document and notes from the various departments to explain what happened over the year. So this is a yearly process, and part of our process is more a way of taking stock at the midterm based on this information.

We consulted the official language minority communities fairly thoroughly in the summer and fall. To ensure that we fully understood what they were telling us, my team is drafting a report right now that will summarize what we collected, both through a brief survey this summer and discussion groups this fall. We will send it to them to ensure that it truly reflects what they told us.

And, as my assistant deputy minister said, our discussions are ongoing with these communities. I can say that we trust that we have fully understood the messages.

Mr. Yvon Godin: So if I've understood correctly, the midterm report will not appear in an actual report, but instead we will have to go on the Internet to find bits and pieces, so a bit from the spring here, a bit from the summer there. We'll have to do research to find out where the minister is at rather than having a public report that everyone would have access to.

• (0935)

Mr. Jean-Pierre Gauthier: Right now we are doing the analysis that you are describing. Drafting a report, whether it's going to be public or not, is not something that is being done at the moment. We are at the analysis stage.

Mr. Yvon Godin: You are in the process of drafting a report. So are you going to make it public?

Mr. Tom Scrimger: The matter of making the report public will be raised in the communication plan that will be submitted to the minister once the report has been completed.

The report isn't finished yet. The minister will decide what he wants to do when the report is ready and will establish his communication plan for the report.

Mr. Yvon Godin: So you aren't able to confirm whether the report will be made public. It will be the minister who decides that?

Mr. Tom Scrimger: The decision has not yet been made. The minister will have to make the decision once he has read the report, which isn't ready yet.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Scrimger and Mr. Godin.

Mr. Gourde, you have the floor.

Mr. Jacques Gourde: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

I would like to thank the witnesses for being here this morning and for preparing the presentation. I think it clearly set the stage for this extensive reflection that will enable us to move forward with the initiatives.

I think that the past is indicative of the future. There was the Action Plan for Official Languages in 2003-2008. Then there was the Roadmap for Canada's Linguistic Duality 2008-2013. No doubt, in 2007, people reflected on the creation of the Roadmap. Are there major steps that should be taken again or considered to do the same work on the Roadmap, or are there things that should be avoided because they didn't amount to much? Of course, now, it's difficult to ask these questions because we are starting.

So to be able to open up about these questions, what action should be taken to ensure this study is completed?

Mr. Jean-Pierre Gauthier: I see two things, mainly. The first is the review of what was done as part of the Roadmap for Canada's Linguistic Duality 2008-2013. It is mainly from this perspective that we are currently conducting the formal summative evaluations. We are reviewing each of the 32 initiatives again. It is being done by the evaluation services in the departments. So these are specialized groups that examine the various programs and activities of the departments to assess the performance and how effective they have been in fundamentally attaining the objectives set initially. So we will have information on the performance and effectiveness of the various measures. A horizontal evaluation will also be done. But it is a little out of phase and a little late to evaluate the entire Roadmap as an instrument. It is out of phase because it is fuelled in part by the results of the individual evaluations of the 32 initiatives. Still, all of that will give us a good overview of the effectiveness obtained as part of the initiatives and the Roadmap as a whole.

Also, since we are thinking about the future, we are still listening. Measures had already been taken in 2007 to listen to the communities. The format may vary depending on the circumstances. In 2007, for example, a champion was appointed by the minister responsible for official languages at the time. That champion was Mr. Bernard Lord. He did a tour to meet with people.

This time, we are maintaining the dialogue to gather information. We are taking note of the work that this committee is doing. Since we handle matters on official languages that interest the entire population, we are talking to the communities and stakeholders and taking note of the reactions, ideas and suggestions of these people so that we can reflect on the information later.

So we are talking about evaluation with respect to the past, and listening and consultation with respect to the future. The consultation will be fuelled by people giving their comments and opinions on how things went in the past. We will also put their creativity and ideas to use for the future.

Mr. Jacques Gourde: So, in short, there are two main thrusts: the 32 initiatives and the evaluation of everything that has been done, and hearing out the communities and the stakeholders with their comments. We must find a way to bring all that together. Some communities are connected to some departments and others to other departments. So, with the current process, we are definitely going to have to try to bring the two together at the same time.

You also said that, in terms of the five-year timeline, it is appropriate to start the study at the end of 2011 or the beginning of 2012. The department will be able to take a position. Is that too late?

• (0940)

Mr. Jean-Pierre Gauthier: No, I think it is just the right time. We have already started listening to the communities. Some meetings are in place and others will follow. We are definitely going to pay attention to that. If we are really at the stage of analysis, of collecting data, opinions and suggestions, the completion of the study will be in sync with the agenda we are hoping to adopt for 2013, after the Roadmap.

Mr. Jacques Gourde: Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Gourde.

Mr. Bélanger.

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

In terms of the latest demolinguistic data, under the third item, you are talking about less than 2% of the population in the 10 other provinces and territories. Could you please give us more details about Manitoba and the Yukon, please? I think the percentage is over 2%.

Mr. Jean-Pierre Gauthier: Okay. I can provide you with a very detailed chart for each province.

Hon. Mauril Bélanger: Yes, since it is misleading.

What is the percentage for Quebec anglophones? You indicated the percentages for everywhere else, but not for them.

Mr. Jean-Pierre Gauthier: Okay. We will send you some additional information on this.

Hon. Mauril Bélanger: Thank you.

Could you give us the deadline for the summative evaluations?

Mr. Jean-Pierre Gauthier: Yes.

Hon. Mauril Bélanger: Do the summative evaluations for the 15 departments have to be done by a certain date?

Mr. Jean-Pierre Gauthier: They have to be done by February-March 2012. So there is a floating period between projects. In terms of the current state of affairs, all the departments are finishing up the planning of the evaluation. There are three standard stages for evaluations: planning, collecting data, and drafting the report.

Hon. Mauril Bélanger: Are the communities going to participate in these evaluations?

Mr. Jean-Pierre Gauthier: We are checking now, but the communities are usually called upon to share their views when data are collected.

Hon. Mauril Bélanger: You are saying that they are often called, but you are not saying that they are going to be this time. Are they going to be called?

Mr. Jean-Pierre Gauthier: The evaluator decides on the methodology for each evaluation. Now that the planning of the evaluations is over, I am going to check whether they...

Hon. Mauril Bélanger: Is the methodology ready for all of them?

Mr. Jean-Pierre Gauthier: All but two.

Hon. Mauril Bélanger: Could you tell me what the methodology is for the 13 evaluations that are ready?

Mr. Jean-Pierre Gauthier: I got them on Friday.

Hon. Mauril Bélanger: May I have them?

Mr. Jean-Pierre Gauthier: I think so.

Hon. Mauril Bélanger: Thank you, it should be sent to the clerk.

The Chair: Please forward all the information to the clerk, who will circulate it to the members of the committee.

Hon. Mauril Bélanger: Are we going to get the summative evaluations when they are done?

Mr. Jean-Pierre Gauthier: Generally, they are public documents.

Hon. Mauril Bélanger: That's generally, but are they going to be public?

Mr. Jean-Pierre Gauthier: To my knowledge, yes.

Hon. Mauril Bélanger: Thank you.

Mr. Jean-Pierre Gauthier: I would like to make something clear. The evaluations are the property of the departments. So I am speaking for 15 departments. That is why I am cautious but, in principle, the answer is yes.

Hon. Mauril Bélanger: On page 17, there is a reference to dialogue and consultations. When did the dialogue and consultations take place?

Mr. Jean-Pierre Gauthier: On various occasions. Some were listed. As I said, there were some for the mid-term report in particular.

Hon. Mauril Bélanger: Can we have the list?

Mr. Jean-Pierre Gauthier: Yes, absolutely.

Hon. Mauril Bélanger: What was the event? When did they take place? Who was invited to participate?

Mr. Jean-Pierre Gauthier: We can send that information to you, no problem.

Hon. Mauril Bélanger: Can you tell me whether members of Parliament participated?

Mr. Jean-Pierre Gauthier: The answer is no.

Hon. Mauril Bélanger: Were they invited?

Mr. Jean-Pierre Gauthier: No, because those meetings generally take place with community representatives.

Hon. Mauril Bélanger: Why were MPs not invited?

Mr. Jean-Pierre Gauthier: We just wanted to hear what the communities had to say.

Hon. Mauril Bélanger: Would it have hurt to have the members there as witnesses, just observing?

Mr. Jean-Pierre Gauthier: Oh, just to observe. Well, that didn't happen because we invited community representatives.

Hon. Mauril Bélanger: I'm sorry, but it did happen between 2003 and 2008.

•(0945)

Mr. Jean-Pierre Gauthier: I am talking about these specifically. The various initiatives I am talking about were meetings often organized by the various departments, the Department of Health and the Department of Justice in particular. They called on their communities. We took notes.

Hon. Mauril Bélanger: From now on, when consultations like that are organized, could the department invite some members from this committee? We would actually be interested in being observers. We are not asking to participate, just to observe. I will leave you with that question. You can give us the answer later.

Mr. Jean-Pierre Gauthier: That's fine.

Hon. Mauril Bélanger: Let's talk about expenditures. Could you send a copy of Appendix 5 to the members of the committee for each year?

Mr. Jean-Pierre Gauthier: Yes, I can send you the total to make things a bit easier for you.

Hon. Mauril Bélanger: That's great. Will we be able to see which of the 32 projects have not met their annual targets?

Mr. Jean-Pierre Gauthier: Yes.

Hon. Mauril Bélanger: What happens with the money when you miss the target?

Mr. Jean-Pierre Gauthier: Departments try to manage the whole project over a five-year period. When there is some slippage, they make forecasts to try to fix things in the coming years. We are in the middle of a financial year. So we will see how successful we are. But so far, we have actually been more or less on schedule with the expenditures.

Hon. Mauril Bélanger: Do the analyses include the percentage for administrative spending?

Mr. Jean-Pierre Gauthier: We don't do that specifically. It has to be defined and it can be complicated because there are different types of functions. There are also program expenditures that are...

Hon. Mauril Bélanger: Is the amount that is given to the communities quantified? Is that figure then compared with what is left within the departments?

Mr. Jean-Pierre Gauthier: No, Appendix 5 does not provide that level of detail.

Hon. Mauril Bélanger: Would it be possible to do so in your summative evaluations?

Mr. Jean-Pierre Gauthier: Yes, normally, that would be the case. However, this will be cumulative work. We will have to see what information we obtain.

Hon. Mauril Bélanger: How much time do I have left, Mr. Chairman?

The Chair: You have two minutes left.

Hon. Mauril Bélanger: Oh my goodness, I've got lots of time!

The Fédération des communautés francophones et acadienne was supposed to do the midstream evaluation. Why was that decision changed?

Mr. Jean-Pierre Gauthier: I have two or three things to tell you about that.

First of all, I think that the expression midstream evaluation does not match up with what we have been doing, and I understand why. Basically, this was an administrative exercise to assess progress in implementing the Roadmap for Canada's Linguistic Duality, as well as the spending involved.

Hon. Mauril Bélanger: Did the FCFA obtain an evaluation contract?

Mr. Jean-Pierre Gauthier: No, it did not. There were talks. We discussed the possibility...

Hon. Mauril Bélanger: Was there an agreement?

Mr. Jean-Pierre Gauthier: ... of asking them to collect information from the communities.

Hon. Mauril Bélanger: Was there an agreement in that regard?

Mr. Jean-Pierre Gauthier: This was discussed, but no agreement was signed.

Hon. Mauril Bélanger: Was there a change, the department changed its mind?

Mr. Jean-Pierre Gauthier: I examined the issue and I decided that this should be done internally to save money.

Hon. Mauril Bélanger: So this was a matter of costs?

Mr. Jean-Pierre Gauthier: It was to reduce the costs of the exercise. By doing this internally, I managed to have information collected in a manner that was less costly.

Hon. Mauril Bélanger: Can you tell me how much this exercise did cost?

Mr. Jean-Pierre Gauthier: In fact, it cost the time it took our employees to do this work in-house, and that is all.

Hon. Mauril Bélanger: Can this be quantified?

Mr. Jean-Pierre Gauthier: Yes, I can quantify it for you. I have a general idea of the resources I had available to do this. I would not like to just give you a figure off the top of my head today, but I can provide it to you. That is not a problem.

Hon. Mauril Bélanger: With regard to the mid-term evaluation, will the minister be making the decision to release it?

Mr. Jean-Pierre Gauthier: Yes.

Hon. Mauril Bélanger: I have a question for Mr. Gourde, Mr. Chairman.

Could Mr. Gourde inquire from his department whether the department or the minister, and the government, intend to make this midstream evaluation public?

I am not expecting an immediate answer but I am putting the question to Mr. Gourde.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Bélanger.

Mr. Lauzon, you have the floor.

Mr. Guy Lauzon: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I want to welcome our guests. I have a few questions to ask.

First, you say on page 15 that the government has invested \$1.1 billion, and you suggest that there were other investments from other departments. Do you have a figure, an estimate?

Mr. Jean-Pierre Gauthier: I don't have a total figure for the investments by federal bodies because they are too diffuse throughout the system. They are here, there and everywhere. Tracking down all of these amounts would really be prohibitive.

We know that Heritage Canada, for instance, has funds available for official language purposes that are not included in the roadmap.

Mr. Guy Lauzon: Are we talking about large amounts?

Mr. Jean-Pierre Gauthier: At Heritage Canada, yes, quite large.

Mr. Guy Lauzon: Are we talking about the same amount? One billion dollars?

Mr. Jean-Pierre Gauthier: In fact, Heritage Canada is a subset. So we are not talking about a billion dollars at Heritage Canada. We estimate that if there are about a hundred million dollars on a yearly basis going to Heritage Canada under the roadmap, there would be more than twice that not included in the roadmap.

I'd like to specify that Heritage Canada is in a particular situation, but there are other departments that promote official languages that are not included in the roadmap. I am thinking for instance of Transport Canada, which recently put in place a plan in connection with part 7. Transport Canada is responsible for all transport facilities in Canada and for things such as bilingual signage, through airport authorities and so on.

Consider also Fisheries and Oceans and Agriculture Canada, departments that are active in rural communities. I'm thinking also of fishermen on Quebec's Lower North Shore, where there is an English-speaking community, to mention only that.

• (0950)

Mr. Guy Lauzon: The investment may be even larger than is indicated.

Mr. Jean-Pierre Gauthier: Yes, but quantifying it in a precise way is a difficult exercise.

Mr. Guy Lauzon: My next question has to do with the decline in the proportion of people whose first language is French, which figure has been dropping over the past 45 years. Is mother tongue a good indicator?

Personally, my mother tongue was French. But I went to English schools and I learned French once I became an adult. In my region, in Cornwall, a third of the population has French as a mother tongue and yet perhaps only 20% of them speak French. That's somewhat bizarre.

Can you explain why we are continuing to...

Mr. Jean-Pierre Gauthier: This is a Statistics Canada process. The question is interesting and that is why we also asked them that. According to what the Statistics Canada experts explained to us, in their statistical survey, they consider that mother tongue is a significant indicator of the minority language population, in this case.

They carried out their statistical survey to attempt to verify correlations and so on. That is why the figures exist. Basically,

Statistics Canada experts compile these data because they do calculations pursuant to their own statistical verifications, and these are significant numbers that mean something.

All of that said, one has to see their meaning when attempting to explain them. That is why I was taking the time to specify that there are different terms and different definitions. Depending on the debate one is having, some figures are more relevant than others.

Mr. Guy Lauzon: Fine. I had a question concerning the level of bilingualism among francophones and allophones.

The bilingualism rate is 12.1% for Canada as a whole.

Mr. Jean-Pierre Gauthier: In 2006, the rate of bilingualism was at 17% in Canada. That is the first point at the top of page 5.

Mr. Guy Lauzon: Fine.

Excuse me. I was talking about the English-French rate of bilingualism among allophones.

Mr. Jean-Pierre Gauthier: Among allophones. These are basically people whose first language is neither English nor French. Their rate of bilingualism was 12%.

Mr. Guy Lauzon: Do we have any programs to encourage other people, programs that might lead to an improvement in that percentage?

Mr. Jean-Pierre Gauthier: In fact, there are all of the programs and initiatives involving second language teaching. These people are a part of that clientele in this sense.

Mr. Guy Lauzon: Fine.

You stated that in 2006, 17% of the population self-identified as bilingual, as compared to 12% prior to that. That covered a 45-year period. Is that to say that we are going to have to wait 45 years more to improve the result by 5%?

Mr. Jean-Pierre Gauthier: I am not sure that anyone could answer that question.

Mr. Guy Lauzon: Has there been any acceleration in the course of the last 10 years?

Mr. Jean-Pierre Gauthier: I can check the data we have and see whether there has been an acceleration, according to the data's evolution over the years.

Mr. Guy Lauzon: At the bottom of page 5, something does not jibe. It says that seven out of ten people state that official languages are important for the future of their country, but one person out of four considers them to be an asset.

Mr. Jean-Pierre Gauthier: This means that for them, learning the second language is an asset. However, that set aside, they can nevertheless consider that this is an important characteristic of Canadian identity.

Mr. Guy Lauzon: Once, I heard someone say that 68% of the Canadian population supports bilingualism. Is that accurate?

Mr. Jean-Pierre Gauthier: It is on that order. Several surveys situate support for bilingualism somewhere between 70% and 80%.

Mr. Guy Lauzon: Fine.

Thank you Mr. Chairman.

The Chair: Thank you Mr. Lauzon.

Mr. Trottier, you have the floor.

Mr. Bernard Trottier (Etobicoke—Lakeshore, CPC): Thank you for being here with us this morning to examine the state of bilingualism and official languages in Canada.

I'd have a few questions for you on the roadmap.

The next roadmap will surely cover the period from 2014 to 2019. Will the analyses you are conducting currently be used as inputs for that roadmap?

• (0955)

Mr. Jean-Pierre Gauthier: In fact, I think that people are now determining what the options are for the future. The five-year horizon of the action plan and the roadmap seems to be working. Will we be going with that again? It is possible. In the course of those next five years, in 2017, there are going to be celebrations for the 150th anniversary of the Canadian federation. This is going to be an important event. How are we going to position ourselves in this respect? That remains to be determined.

Mr. Bernard Trottier: If I look at the roadmap financial breakdown for the current five-year period, I have to conclude that things will certainly evolve over the next phase. What will be the dominant factors? You talked about immigration and the birth rate. Certain technological factors will certainly affect the priorities in the next roadmap. Can you tell us what important factors are going to have an influence on the next phase?

Mr. Jean-Pierre Gauthier: What we have done up till now has been based on demographic and statistical findings. We are trying to determine what the situation is. The law talks about the vitality of communities and their development. And so we rely a lot on the information that allows us to determine what the situation is in the communities.

Afterwards, we try to see in our discussions with the communities what fields of action we should pursue. The topics that come up the most often are education and health. We also hear a lot about immigration, economic development, employability and so on.

Of course, people talk about emerging tendencies within each of these fields of activity. For instance, where health is concerned, there are all of these trending developments such as the application of new technologies and so forth. I'm thinking of distance medicine, for instance. I know that people are trying to see how it would be possible to serve smaller populations by using that technology. That is specific to health. The same comment applies to immigration and the economy.

Mr. Bernard Trottier: I see. I don't want to make assumptions about the work the department will be doing over the next

18 months, but I wonder if you could tell us whether expenditures relating to immigration, which are currently at the \$30-million level, will increase during the next phase, given the high levels of immigration and the services that have to be offered to those new Canadians to ensure that they will integrate well?

Mr. Jean-Pierre Gauthier: I think it is too soon to know what we will see in the next federal strategy on official languages. We don't want to make assumptions about what will be discussed or heard.

That said, according to what we hear, clearly immigration is a priority concern for the communities overall. And because of that, a great deal of attention will be directed to it.

There are three types of challenges with regard to immigration, the recruitment of immigrants being the first, and their settlement being the second. Once they have decided to go to a particular place, they must be helped to settle in their community, they must find work, and all sorts of transitional measures must be put in place for them. Finally, these people have to be retained in order to remain members of the community. Often, when they have been encouraged to settle in a minority language community, the objective is to see to it that they will remain members of that community.

Those are the three big challenges. The Department of Citizenship and Immigration, through all of its programs but also with programs specific to the roadmap, is attempting to put the emphasis on immigration toward minority communities.

Mr. Bernard Trottier: Another important factor is the aging population and their related health care needs.

How do you work with the provinces that manage health care expenditures to offer services to the minority language communities?

Mr. Jean-Pierre Gauthier: Our colleagues at Health Canada have focused on two main areas of activity. I will myself focus on one aspect that is more relevant to your question. They invest a great deal in the training of health professionals, in a network of schools and institutions of higher learning where health care professionals who speak the minority language are trained.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Trottier.

Thank you, Mr. Scrimger and Mr. Gauthier, for your presentation.

Mr. Yvon Godin: There are three minutes left.

The Chair: No, the clock is wrong. It is 10 o'clock and so the hearing is adjourned. Thank you very much.

The meeting is adjourned.

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