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## Standing Committee on Official Languages

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EVIDENCE

**Tuesday, December 4, 2012**

—  
**Chair**

**The Honourable Michael Chong**



## Standing Committee on Official Languages

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• (1100)

[Translation]

**The Chair (Hon. Michael Chong (Wellington—Halton Hills, CPC)):** Welcome to the 64<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Standing Committee on Official Languages. Today is Tuesday, December 4, 2012.

Pursuant to Standing Order 108, we are here to study of linguistic duality during the 150th anniversary celebrations of Canadian Confederation in 2017.

Today, we welcome the Commissioner of Official Languages, Graham Fraser, together with Ms. Charlebois, Mr. Giguère and Ms. Tremblay. Welcome to you all.

Mr. Fraser, the floor is yours.

**Mr. Graham Fraser (Commissioner of Official Languages, Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages)** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

[English]

Ladies and gentlemen, honourable members of the Standing Committee on Official Languages, I am very pleased to appear before you today in preparation for the 150th anniversary of Confederation in 2017.

Let me begin by saying that Canada's commitment to both official languages is rooted in our history. Anniversary celebrations are very important in reinforcing our understanding of ourselves as Canadians. Every anniversary is an opportunity to tell our national stories to all Canadians, whether or not they've heard them before.

[Translation]

The history of language relations between francophones and anglophones in Canada since Confederation is complex. In fact, there are two stories: a less lustrous one that includes the hanging of Louis Riel, the Manitoba schools crisis, regulation 17, and two conscription crises; and another, more positive account that includes under-recognized acts and gestures of conciliation and cooperation.

Linguistic duality is an integral part of Canada's history and identity, and it needs to be a part of all the celebrations. It is important to reflect on the fact that the Fathers of Confederation, and those who inspired them, saw the question of language in terms of a founding principle of respect.

[English]

The first key steps toward Canadian democracy were taken by Robert Baldwin and Louis-Hippolyte LaFontaine in the 1840s. John

Ralston Saul wrote that it was the first strategic act in the creation of the country. The reformers suddenly understood that francophone and anglophone reformers had to cooperate. That understanding has been an important thread that has run through the fabric of our history ever since. It should be reflected in every aspect of the celebration of the 150th anniversary of Confederation.

[Translation]

We remember Lord Durham, but we forget the fact that, not 10 years later, his successor, Lord Elgin, read the Speech from the Throne in French and English, thus marking the return of French as an official language of Parliament.

On the last night of the Confederation debates, on March 10, 1865, John A. Macdonald responded to a question about the status of French in the new political arrangement that was being developed. He said that “the use of the French language should form one of the principles on which the Confederation should be established”. George-Étienne Cartier immediately rose to add that it was also necessary to protect the English minorities in Lower Canada with respect to the use of their language.

[English]

Wilfrid Laurier spent his whole political life trying to promote harmony between English and French Canadians. William Lyon Mackenzie King, himself committed to Canadian unity, managed to keep the tensions between the two groups from tearing the country apart. John Diefenbaker introduced simultaneous interpretation to Parliament. Lester Pearson introduced the principles of official bilingualism, and Pierre Trudeau translated those principles into legislation. Conservative Party leader Robert Stanfield ensured that linguistic duality became a value transcending partisan debate, and Brian Mulroney rewrote and strengthened the Official Languages Act in 1988.

[Translation]

These stories need to be told and understood. The new Canadian Museum of History will be a great vehicle for telling the stories. Historian H. V. Nelles, in his book *the Art of Nation-Building*, on the 300<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the founding of Quebec, said that how we celebrate says a great deal about who we are.

[English]

Historian Matthew Hayday made the same point in his work on Canada Day celebrations, and goes a little further by saying, “Elements such as languages, displayed flags, and the media's use of a rhetorical 'us' continually naturalize and reinforce feelings of nationalism.”

As the federal government prepares for the celebrations of Confederation's 150th anniversary, it's important to ensure that both official languages are visible and audible in public spaces in many different ways.

● (1105)

[Translation]

As I mentioned to you when I presented my annual report a few weeks ago, Canada's linguistic duality too often remains incognito. When everything runs smoothly, bilingual services become part of everyday life and go unnoticed. Let me give you two examples.

[English]

The Vancouver Olympic Games were a success on the ground in terms of the use of both of Canada's official languages. The opening ceremony, on the other hand, was a failure. No one remembers the success on the ground, but everyone remembers the backlash over the absence of French during the opening ceremony.

[Translation]

My second example is the state funeral for Jack Layton. The ceremony was a huge success for linguistic duality, but no one ever mentions that.

I would like to say a word about Canada's centennial. The high point of the 1967 celebrations was Expo 67, which took place in Montreal at the same time as the Bilingualism and Biculturalism Commission was preparing its report. I am convinced that Expo 67 laid psychological groundwork for the acceptance of official bilingualism and the Official Languages Act. For more than 50 million Canadian and international visitors, visiting Expo 67 meant taking part in a public space where both official languages were equally audible and visible.

[English]

**It was a first in terms of presenting an environment that respects both official languages. In his opening remarks at Expo 67 in Montreal, Lester B. Pearson said:** Our own country's existence is always dependent upon achieving unity of human purpose within the diversity of our linguistic, cultural and social backgrounds.

Expo 67 was an event that spotlighted Canada's French-speaking community. It showed the world and also the rest of Canada that French was an integral part of the country's fabric. And 50 years later we need to do it again.

[Translation]

Another monument built around the same time to celebrate the country's centenary and showcase Canada's linguistic duality was the National Arts Centre in Ottawa. In the words of the NAC website, it was "built to both produce and present music, opera, theatre, and dance. It was also bilingual, designed to reflect Canada's linguistic duality—the first, and still the only, performing arts centre in the world with such a complex mandate".

[English]

One thing these initiatives had in common was the promotion of English and French as official languages, Canada's linguistic duality, two years before the vote on the Official Languages Act.

How can we make sure that one of our nation's fundamental values is represented in the celebrations in 2017? Giving young Canadians more opportunities to experience the other official language is an excellent way to help Canada celebrate its shared heritage.

[Translation]

In my 2011-2012 annual report, I made two recommendations to promote second-language learning in order to increase the number of Canadians who speak our two official languages. I recommended that the Prime Minister take the necessary measures to double the number of young Canadians who participate each year in short- and long-term language exchanges.

[English]

I also recommended that the Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages work together with provincial and territorial governments, as well as post-secondary institutions, to increase the number of programs in which students can take courses in their second official language.

The 150th anniversary of Confederation celebrations are an ideal occasion to follow through on these recommendations.

[Translation]

Social media were not part of our communication landscape when we celebrated our centennial in 1967 and the 125<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 1992. These platforms are an excellent way to promote Canada's linguistic diversity and start a conversation in both official languages. We can use social media to connect local celebrations with the general spirit of the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Confederation, and to promote the history and heritage of our official language communities across the country.

However, promoting linguistic duality does not happen by itself. It requires planning sufficiently in advance, and a constant bilingualism reflex, without which it will go unnoticed. This is true as much for communicating with the public in virtual spaces as it is for serving the public in physical spaces.

● (1110)

[English]

While there's substantial bilingual capacity for visitors to Canada's capital, it is often invisible. Canadians have the right to obtain services of equal quality from the federal government in the official language of their choice. The celebrations in 2017 will be an opportunity to encourage Canadians to travel throughout their country, and every effort should be made to ensure they are welcomed in both languages. Institutions or offices providing services to the travelling public have to make more of an effort to respect the language rights of the public they serve, and to keep doing it even after the tourists have gone home.

[Translation]

Canadians need to have a better understanding of the country's official language communities, including their culture and their institutions. They need to have more exposure to the advantages of linguistic duality and the values it represents.

And so it is very important to make sure that the content of the celebrations reflect the common history of Canada's anglophones and francophones. To help organizers of large-scale events to improve their knowledge and understanding of official languages, my office published a publication called *Organizing a Major Sporting Event in Canada: A Practical Guide to Promoting Official Languages*. This guide was developed for organizers of major national and international sporting, cultural and artistic events in Canada and for the federal institutions involved in their organization.

[English]

The purpose of the guide was not to replace the expertise of the organizing committee or the federal institutions involved, but rather to remind them to take official languages and language obligations into account right from the initial planning stages. My staff and I are already using it to work with the organizing committees of the 2015 Pan American Games in Toronto, and the 2013 Canada Games in Sherbrooke.

We will continue to encourage organizers of major events in Canada to integrate linguistic duality into their activities.

[Translation]

I hope that the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of this country's Confederation will be a highly successful event, and one that present and future generations of Canadians will remember as reflecting both the English and French cultures of Canada.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Fraser.

Mr. Godin, you have the floor.

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

Welcome to the commissioner and his team.

Mr. Commissioner, you say that the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary will be an event to remember. I know I am putting you on the spot by saying what I am about to say, but I notice that you named all the prime ministers who have done good things but stopped at a specific point. You did not mention the current prime minister, to whom we owe the appointment of a unilingual judge to the Supreme Court and of an auditor general who is also bilingual, as well as the closure of the only French-speaking rescue centre in Canada and the transfer of its calls to Halifax and Trenton. That is not a shining record. What will there be for us to remember in 2017?

Could you first tell me if you support private member's Bill C-419 that specifically mentions the auditor general? You talk about respecting both languages. As commissioner, it is your role to defend that idea. But we are seeing that things are not going that way at all.

Are you not concerned about the direction that the Conservative government has taken? It is all very well to be preparing for celebrations in 2017, but things are happening in our country right now. Incredibly, government support for bilingualism is moving backwards at the moment. I would like to hear your comments about that.

**Mr. Graham Fraser:** First, in terms of the prime ministers, I would like to specify that I decided to list them only up to 25 years ago, in order to give a historical perspective.

As to the bill requiring senior officials appointed by Parliament to be bilingual when they are appointed, yes, I support it.

A number of the points you raise are already subject to an investigation. As I have said, I cannot comment on matters like the closure of any institutions. I have been expressing my concerns for some time about the effect that budget cuts will have on services and on linguistic duality. I continue to be worried about it. We receive complaints and we investigate them, but when those complaints are ongoing, I cannot make detailed comments about them.

•(1115)

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** Mr. Commissioner, the closure of the maritime search and rescue centre in Quebec City, which was supposed to happen earlier, has been postponed until next autumn because not enough qualified bilingual personnel could be found to meet the needs. What will happen in two years if two people leave their jobs at the same time? Are they going to close the doors? It is worrying.

**Mr. Graham Fraser:** Yes, it is. I agree. It is...

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** It is the only bilingual centre in Canada. They want to celebrate the anniversary in 2017, celebrate the beauty that is Canada, have a big party.

**Mr. Graham Fraser:** In exactly the same spirit, and on a number of occasions, I have expressed, and continue to express, my fears about the structural changes as a result of which, to save money, jobs are moved from bilingual regions to regions that are not designated as bilingual. It is a question of the language of work. I continue to monitor the matter.

I am equally concerned about the changes being made to language training in the government. That is why we are conducting a study on the matter with a view to determining what effects the changes will have.

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** In the past, Parliament paid for training, but now it comes out of MPs' budgets. Are you studying that too? You know what is going to happen. Employee training is going to be the last thing to get done. It worked quite well here. Employees came here to the Hill for training. A number of MPs were learning both languages. But what was once a kind of benefit paid for by Parliament has been taken away.

Are you looking at that to see if fewer people are being trained now?

**Mr. Graham Fraser:** I don't think so, in part because Parliament is not subject to the Official Languages Act. I also believe that the decision was made by parliamentarians in terms of managing their own budgets. So I have no right to investigate a decision of that nature.

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** The question was whether you are concerned by it.

**Mr. Graham Fraser:** I am concerned by any change that reduces opportunities for learning a second language.

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** As commissioner, have you met with Minister Moore about the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary? I remember that, during the Olympic Games, you had opinions and concerns.

**Mr. Graham Fraser:** There was a very preliminary conversation last March.

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** Has a committee been formed? Have you or any members of your team been invited to be part of one?

**Mr. Graham Fraser:** The only source of information I have on the matter is the testimony that Assistant Deputy Minister Nicole Bourget gave you to the effect that no decisions have been made.

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** If a committee were formed for the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary, should people from your team be part of it, do you think?

**Mr. Graham Fraser:** We would have to think about it. As I am not part of the government, it would be difficult to investigate complaints after having been part of the governance and the preparations. However, I am quite open to the idea of being consulted.

That is what is happening at the moment in the work we are doing with organizers of the Pan American Games and the 2013 Canada Summer Games in Sherbrooke. I and members of my team have met with Pan American Games organizers on a number of occasions. We have been able to see that some of our suggestions have been taken into account. That is not the same thing as being directly involved in a committee with administrative responsibilities. If that were the case, I would be in a difficult position if I subsequently had to investigate complaints.

• (1120)

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Mr. Gourde, you have the floor.

**Mr. Jacques Gourde (Lotbinière—Chutes-de-la-Chaudière, CPC):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Commissioner, thank you for joining us this morning. It is a good opportunity for you to talk about your concerns about the 2017 celebrations, I feel. Calling on expertise, finding solutions and determining what Canadians want is part of this committee's role. From that perspective, everything you share with us is important.

You gave us a wonderful historical presentation this morning. One thing in particular struck me. When something is going well, we often do not hear about it. When it is going badly, we hear it loud and clear.

Do you have an idea about the number of things that are going well as a proportion of those that are going badly? Do the 1% of things that are going badly make it seem as if 50% of the system is going badly? Do we have to look at the big picture and see that a lot of work is being done in both official languages, representing a lot of effort, but that it is still disappointing when something does not go well? When something goes badly, things get so amplified that you get the impression that there is never a way out.

**Mr. Graham Fraser:** That is quite a broad question. It is always difficult to go beyond qualitative assessments of a situation to determine its quantitative effect.

Take the public service as an example. According to the Treasury Board, between 92% and 93% of positions designated bilingual are held by people who have passed their exams and who have the qualifications required. Does that mean that French is used as much as English in the workplace? There is no quantitative answer to that question. The evaluation is rather a qualitative one, using anthropological observations in the workplace.

I am always a little at a loss when I am asked if things are getting better or worse. My answer is always that it depends. We see improvements in some institutions but we see a deterioration, or cases that give rise to complaints in other institutions. During an investigation, I have difficulty discussing it.

But, in any event, one of the themes of the annual report is that success is invisible and failure is anything but.

**Mr. Jacques Gourde:** I would also like to ask you what you think about one of the legacies that will be left after the 2017 celebrations. I would like Canadians, especially young Canadians, to have the opportunity to be exposed to the second language, anglophones to French and francophones to English. It can be done in different ways, but are you aware of an economical way of doing it? I am thinking about all the government apparatus. There are a number of agencies, like Radio-Canada/CBC, for example. Are you aware of a very broad way in which to have our young people exposed to the other official language?

**Mr. Graham Fraser:** That is something that has always interested me. In part, it is because of my own experience. I learned French, in fact, when I had a summer job with a federal institution. It was on an archeological site, which I think is now part of Parks Canada.

I think that we could put some effort into setting up exchanges in summer jobs programs, into providing students with scholarships and into providing learning opportunities in post-secondary education. We could build on experiences from elsewhere, like the Erasmus program in Europe. In the United States, spending the third year of a university course abroad is practically a tradition. In Canada, a similar thing could be done in an institution speaking the other official language.

I think that a number of approaches are possible, but the best way would be to coordinate, organize it and promote it as a 2017 program.

• (1125)

**Mr. Jacques Gourde:** Given the advent of social media and of new digital technologies, could schools be twinned? I am thinking of Quebec with Alberta, for example, or British Columbia with Ontario. That would create connections between young people. Then they could continue to communicate with each other in their own languages and provide mutual support. Anglophone students could support francophone students as part of the process of learning French, and vice versa.

**Mr. Graham Fraser:** Certainly, the technology makes all this very easy. It's important to remember that, when primary and high schools are involved, it comes under the provinces. That's why I was careful to say that the Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages should work with the provinces and post-secondary institutions to increase the number of courses.

I am stressing the role of post-secondary institutions, but I could also mention that the first commissioner of official languages, Keith Spicer, created a game for young people called "O Canada" that was available in schools across the country. It was the old technology. It had a 45 rpm record in a sleeve. I think there are now other technological means to encourage students in this respect.

**Mr. Jacques Gourde:** Thank you, Mr. Commissioner.

[English]

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Monsieur Dion.

[Translation]

**Hon. Stéphane Dion (Saint-Laurent—Cartierville, Lib.):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Commissioner, Ms. Charlebois, Mr. Giguère and Ms. Tremblay, thank you. You have submitted a document that was really very well done. It seems to me that it points in two directions. First, we need to prepare the ground. Second, we will need to find a symbolic event, which will probably not have the same impact as Expo 67—that's hard to beat—but that will be somewhat inspirational. What you are saying is very interesting, especially when you remind us that this paved the way for the Official Languages Act.

**Mr. Graham Fraser:** I can speak about this because I was there and was struck by the linguistic duality of the site.

**Hon. Stéphane Dion:** With respect to paving the way, you heard my colleague, Mr. Godin, raise some concerns about the government's direction regarding official languages. The next Roadmap will be very important for creating this feeling that we are working for the bilingualism of our country instead of abandoning it.

There will be a lot of cuts. Are you equipped to follow up on the impact of these cuts on official language communities?

**Mr. Graham Fraser:** That's a very good question. We are trying to be proactive with respect to foreseeable events. That was the case of the Olympic Games and the Pan-American Games, and this is now the case for the 2017 celebrations. However, when there are structural changes, budget cuts or changes in direction, that often is felt across the federal government structure, and we have to respond in a reactive way.

My role as ombudsman, which involves investigating complaints, includes confidentiality requirements related to those complaints. It isn't necessarily the easiest way of preventing the system from breaking down, since there must first be a complaint and then, we must properly investigate it. We need to communicate the results to the institution and to the complainant, and we have to draft a final report.

Take for example changes in language training. It's more difficult because the responsibility is now somewhat decentralized among the departments and among the managers within the departments. We cannot be everywhere, but we try, using our studies as this tool, to determine what the impacts of the change in approach were.

• (1130)

**Hon. Stéphane Dion:** I hear you, Mr. Commissioner, but what you are saying gives me the impression that you aren't equipped. If

you only react to complaints on a case-by-case basis, you lose the overall perspective.

For example, if the Department of Citizenship and Immigration centralizes its decisions and takes some latitude away from the provinces, the Franco-Manitobans may be less able to attract immigrants to their province. But you cannot grasp all that. You aren't set up to do so.

**Mr. Graham Fraser:** It isn't necessarily a matter of being equipped. Rather, it's the very nature of the organization involved, here.

**Hon. Stéphane Dion:** Yes, but does your mandate not include warning the government of this type of problem before it happens?

**Mr. Graham Fraser:** Yes, and I do my best to fulfill that mandate. I am trying to be as proactive as possible.

**Hon. Stéphane Dion:** It's a serious concern that inspired the report by the Liberal Party of Canada, complementary to the report by the Standing Committee on Official Languages on the Roadmap. The traceability of the funds poses a real problem that, during a period of budget cuts, may hit numerous services hard. As you said, it could create a very poor atmosphere between now and 2017.

Concerning your two recommendations, which are repeated in the Liberal Party's complementary report, did you have an opportunity to sit down with the minister to see whether the government was interested in doubling the number of young Canadians who take part in language exchanges every year, as well as launching a true negotiation with the provinces to have them strengthen French, not only in immersion schools, but in regular schools, as well? There is no obligation for this in western Ontario.

Does the government seem interested in reacting favourably to these two recommendations?

**Mr. Graham Fraser:** As part of tabling the annual report, I met with the minister—as well as other ministers, as I do every year—to inform him of these recommendations. However, it was really an initial overview. I have not attended any other meetings since. The government has not indicated to us whether it accepted or refused the recommendations.

**Hon. Stéphane Dion:** Does your office keep a record of its recommendations and whether they have been accepted or refused by the government over the years?

**Mr. Graham Fraser:** Yes, I think it was at your request that we do that.

**Mr. Sylvain Giguère (Assistant Commissioner, Policy and Communications Branch, Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages):** Two or three weeks ago, we sent the chair a copy of the follow-up on the recommendations in the past three years.

Obviously, it is too early to do a follow-up. Getting a reaction takes some time.

**Hon. Stéphane Dion:** Mr. Chair, will we be able to get access to the record?

[English]

**The Chair:** We'll check. I don't think we received it.

Did you send it to the clerk or to my office?

**Mr. Sylvain Giguère:** We sent it to your office.

**The Chair:** I will follow up with my staff to make sure it's distributed to members of the committee.

Thank you.

[Translation]

Thank you, Mr. Dion.

Mr. Trottier, you have the floor.

**Mr. Bernard Trottier (Etobicoke—Lakeshore, CPC):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I would like to thank the representatives of the Commissioner's office for being here this morning. Once again, it was an excellent presentation. It did a good job of putting into context what we are trying to do for the celebrations for the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary.

Mr. Commissioner, I would like to hear your comments on the recent census and on Statistics Canada's analysis showing that the francophone population outside Quebec is doing quite well. We note that certain forces are impossible to overlook, such as birth rate and immigration from a number of countries.

Will that influence how we are going to celebrate the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary? In Toronto, you do see this in the streets. Immigrants come from a wide array of countries. Even the francophone population is made up more and more of African immigrants. Will this new wave of francophone immigrants influence how we celebrate francophonie in Canada?

• (1135)

**Mr. Graham Fraser:** My reaction to the census was fairly positive, given that, as you said, there has been an increase in the number of francophones both in and outside Quebec. Those who have negative things to say after each census had a little more difficulty this time saying that this is the end of French outside Quebec, and that French was fundamentally threatened. To be honest, there is some stability and even growth in the communities.

As for the country's diversity and immigration, I believe that we cannot welcome 250,000 newcomers to Canada every year and maintain the same percentage of individuals who have English or French as their mother tongue. It's a question of math. However, these anniversaries are particularly significant for telling Canada's story to those who have not lived it or learned it in school. I think public history, if I may say so, is becoming increasingly important for our country, a country that welcomes immigrants.

It is becoming more important for minority institutions to have a certain visibility. I read the transcript of the testimony of Anthony Wilson-Smith, the president of the Historica-Dominion Institute, who said before this committee that he hears more people speaking Russian in Toronto than French. This is someone who speaks a refined French. But in Toronto, there are a number of francophone institutions around Yonge and College. I think it's important to target these institutions, to have a kind of critical mass

of francophone institutions that could even have an influence on the surrounding cafés and public spaces.

There are some historical reasons to explain why the francophone communities in Canada, the ones outside Quebec, are fairly invisible. Among others, there were waves of populations that arrived at different times, and a certain hostility was felt in certain periods. Even when the francophone communities are almost the majority, there is very little signage and public statements. One of the challenges is ensuring that these public spaces, these institutions and these communities are more visible. When francophone immigrants from Mali, Ivory Coast or Senegal arrive in Toronto, they should be able to see that there are francophone community centres and that French is given some visibility in certain parts of the city.

• (1140)

**Mr. Bernard Trottier:** At the same time, we don't want to put them in ghettos.

**Mr. Graham Fraser:** No, no. I think it's possible to give greater visibility to the francophone community resources that exist in Toronto. In any case, the price of housing in Toronto means that francophone immigrants who arrive are looking for housing pretty much everywhere. They don't have the luxury of arriving all at the same time and settling in the same community.

**Mr. Bernard Trottier:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Mr. Lauzon, you have the floor.

**Mr. Guy Lauzon (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry, CPC):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Welcome, Mr. Fraser. You are a regular guest, which is good because you have a lot of information we need.

It is much easier to learn a language when a person is young. I think everyone accepts that fact. You recommend suggesting to the minister that the provinces be encouraged to provide bilingual education at the post-secondary level and to increase the number of such programs provided to students at the high school level.

Why have you not recommended that this start at a young age, in primary school?

**Mr. Graham Fraser:** There are two reasons for that. First, I think that education at the primary and high school levels is jealously guarded by the provinces. It's under provincial jurisdiction, whereas at the post-secondary level—research, grants and so on—collaboration with the federal government is generally accepted.

The second reason is that I am seeing a certain cascading influence that the federal government is having on universities. In fact, the government and the deputy ministers play a recruiting role by sending the message that the government, as the largest employer in Canada, needs bilingual employees. This may bring universities to send the message to high schools that they need to stress French or English in francophone institutions.

One of the problems is that the rate the students drop French after grade nine in Ontario is very high, given that it ceases to be mandatory. As Mr. Dion mentioned, there is no obligation in western Ontario. So there students drop it.

A high school student told me that his teacher said that, at the end of high school, the students should choose to take a core French exam rather than an immersion exam because it was easier. So they would get a better mark. He said that the universities only look at the grade when evaluating admission applications. I think that just encourages mediocrity. Universities should look at the pool of candidates and consider the ones that have taken more difficult courses as major candidates.

In fact, more and more, we are seeing universities recognizing the importance of this pool of immersion students and even competing for them. For example, there are programs to attract them at the University of Ottawa. Glendon College, on the York University campus, conducts a campaign to recruit immersion students.

But too many universities only look at the numbers, which doesn't concern them. Others do not see the need to provide students with those opportunities because they say that the federal government will take care of them if they hire them as employees.

• (1145)

**Mr. Guy Lauzon:** I'm sorry for stopping you there, but I have a lot of questions and not much time.

**Mr. Graham Fraser:** I'm sorry. I talk too much.

**Mr. Guy Lauzon:** One of the witnesses we had in the past few weeks suggested that all the events across the country for the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Confederation should be completely bilingual. What do you think of that suggestion?

**Mr. Graham Fraser:** I think it would depend on the nature of the celebrations. During the 125<sup>th</sup> anniversary, there were...

**Mr. Guy Lauzon:** She said that every celebration across the country should be completely bilingual.

**Mr. Graham Fraser:** Please let me finish.

For the 125<sup>th</sup> anniversary, a program encouraged people to organize neighbourhood parties. I don't think we should impose that kind of rule on neighbourhood parties, be it in a francophone neighbourhood or an extremely anglophone one.

We can draw a distinction between two kinds of celebrations. If the federal government is supporting the event financially and there is an agreement signed by Canadian Heritage, a language clause is necessary. If the celebration is a local one, in a city neighbourhood, and the residents have taken the initiative to organize it, that's another thing. I think things will be different for large-scale events headed and funded by the federal government.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Ms. Michaud, you have the floor.

[*English*]

Actually, no, it's Mr. Benskin.

**Mr. Tyrone Benskin (Jeanne-Le Ber, NDP):** You'll have to excuse my lack of voice today, but I'll soldier on.

Thank you, all, for being here, Madame Charlebois, Monsieur Giguère, Madame Tremblay, and of course, Commissioner Fraser.

I want to touch on a few things and I have very little time.

In your presentation you mentioned the good things that have been overlooked that have happened in the cases of linguistic duality. Alongside that, my colleagues, Monsieur Godin and Monsieur Dion, expressed concerns about the direction this government was going in with the closure of the search and rescue station and so forth. One of the things that has almost been overlooked also is the closure of la bibliothèque de l'Institut Maurice-Lamontagne, which is the only francophone library that deals with—

**Mr. Graham Fraser:** Marine science.

**Mr. Tyrone Benskin:** —marine science.

The thing I'm concerned about along with that is what seems to be overlooked about the impact of this, not on a fiscal level but on a socio-political level. For me, even as an anglophone, it screams at me, "You don't matter".

The closing of the only francophone search and rescue station would say to me, if I were a francophone, and even as an anglophone, "You don't matter". The closing of this library, which is a resource for ocean science in French, says to me, "You don't matter". That's a huge concern to me. I'd like you to comment on that.

I'd also like you to comment on something on the reverse of that, which I think is being overlooked.

We've heard from a number of witnesses from out west over the last little while about the lineups of families who want to send their kids to immersion schools, but there aren't the resources for that. What would you think of a possible legacy project for this 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration that we're putting together to put in place a program to allow teachers from French-speaking areas—from the Acadian community and from the Québécois community—to go west and fill the need for immersion teachers, to which they could bring not only their knowledge of the language but also the culture at preschool and higher levels?

• (1150)

**The Chair:** Let me just say one thing. I don't mind questions about

[*Translation*]

the rescue centre or libraries, for instance.

[*English*]

However, the questions have to relate in some way to 2017, so tie them in to 2017.

**Mr. Tyrone Benskin:** Well it's tied in as part of asking how we are going to celebrate 2017—

**The Chair:** That's fine, as long as it's in that context.

**Mr. Tyrone Benskin:** —when we're creating the situation that says, "You don't matter".

**The Chair:** That kind of question I don't mind—

**Mr. Tyrone Benskin:** There you go.

**The Chair:** —if it ties in to the study. Our analyst is looking for information and answers to help her formulate the report so that we have—

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** On a point of order.

**The Chair:** Go ahead, Mr. Godin.

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** I think it's important. We're going to celebrate in 2017 and right now we're losing an institution that is important. If you're celebrating the Confederation of Canada, we have to tell the truth of what's happening. I don't think the taxpayers should lose money here about how you're going to celebrate when you're losing institutions left and right and it's always on one side. We're losing right now and it has to be said, especially as the commissioner is here. I think it is very important.

[*Translation*]

**The Chair:** I agree.

Thank you.

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** Thank you.

[*English*]

**The Chair:** If the questions are framed in that context, they're good questions. To ask questions in isolation and which don't relate in any way to 2017, I don't want to allow that. In that context the questions are fine.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Fraser, go ahead.

[*English*]

**Mr. Graham Fraser:** Very briefly, I visited the Maurice Lamontagne Institute. People were very concerned. This was before the decision was announced. When the decision was announced, we received a number of complaints. We are investigating those complaints. When there was the closure....

Let me take a step back. In all of the discussions leading up to the deficit reduction action plan, I repeated over and over to ministers, to deputies, to this committee, that I was concerned there might be unintended consequences of some of the cuts, and the reference that I made was what happened in 1995 with the closure of the collège militaire royal de Saint-Jean. Almost 25 years later, you can still see the negative effects that had in terms of recruitment, in terms of officer training, in terms of the ability of the Canadian armed forces to live up to its obligations under the Official Languages Act. It is a preoccupation that I had, even before the announcement of some of the particular actions. We are investigating those actions, and I will not comment in detail on any of those specifics.

In terms of enabling teachers to engage in exchanges, I think that would be terrific. I've always thought it difficult to understand why it is easier for a teacher in Ontario to have an exchange with a teacher in Australia than it is to have an exchange with a teacher in Quebec.

There is an ongoing program that is very successful, in which a teacher in Australia and a teacher in Ontario, and I suspect other provinces as well, will exchange houses, exchange teaching positions for an academic year. All it really costs is the airfare. I find it incomprehensible why it's not possible to have a similar kind of person-to-person use of the linguistic resources that we have among teachers across this country to support the teaching of a second official language.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Mr. Chisu.

**Mr. Corneliu Chisu (Pickering—Scarborough East, CPC):** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

[*Translation*]

I also want to thank the witnesses.

[*English*]

Thank you very much for appearing before our committee.

I have seen the progress we have made as a country in promoting linguistic duality. I also understand that at the federal level we are officially bilingual, and we have a province that is officially bilingual, New Brunswick. Actually, I was in the province of New Brunswick when it was officially designated as bilingual. I was in military training there.

In your opinion, how should we approach this issue in order to explain to people that our linguistic duality is an enormous advantage and is not an artificial imposition? How can this message be delivered on the occasion of our 150th anniversary of Confederation in 2017? To speak another language is an advantage. I am telling you this because I am bilingual, but in Hungarian and Romanian, and I have a knowledge of French. It is very important to speak another language, and we have this golden opportunity to reach out to more people.

Moreover, how can we integrate our new and old immigrants in embracing enthusiastically our linguistic duality when they perceive this requirement of bilingualism as a barrier to accessing public service jobs in federal institutions? What would be your recommendation in this area? How can we reflect the perceived barrier in the 2017 celebration, which is not really a barrier? Having access to jobs can be an incentive for someone to learn both languages.

•(1155)

**Mr. Graham Fraser:** I think there are a number of elements.

One thing I would say is that I think that, to a large extent, a much larger extent than was the case when the Official Languages Act was passed in 1969, Canadians do see bilingualism as an asset. You do not hear, as happened in moments of tension in the past, the booing of the national anthem when it is sung in both languages, as happened at Maple Leaf Gardens in 1976. You don't see the kind of overt hostility to the presence of both languages.

The polls show—and it's one of the things we alluded to in our annual report this year—there's an ever-growing support for Canada's linguistic duality. One of the things that has struck me in the meetings I've had or the forums we've organized with immigrants is that many of them were attracted to Canada because they liked the idea that Canada has two official languages.

You see immigrant families who are determined to ensure that their children learn both official languages. There is a sense that this is a way in which they can affirm their Canadianness, by learning or ensuring that their children can learn both official languages.

In terms of the jobs issue, I think it's just a matter of making it clear that bilingualism is not a requirement for hiring in the federal public service, that 60% of the jobs in the federal public service do not require both official languages. There are a relatively limited number of reasons why people need to be bilingual if they work for the federal government: to serve people at a counter or serve the public in an office where they have an obligation where numbers warrant to serve the public; to be able to manage people who have a right to work in their language of choice in an area that's designated bilingual, such as New Brunswick, parts of Quebec, the national capital region, and parts of eastern and northern Ontario; and to be able to brief a minister. Ministers obviously have the right to say they want to be briefed in French, and the system has an obligation to ensure there are senior people who can do that. Finally, there is the importance of senior public servants understanding the country as a whole. All kinds, 60%, of federal jobs do not meet those criteria.

•(1200)

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chisu and Mr. Fraser, for your testimony today and for responding to the questions that members posed to you. We appreciate your feedback on the 2017 celebrations.

We'll suspend briefly to allow our next panel to appear and for members to take a break.

•(1200)

\_\_\_\_\_ (Pause) \_\_\_\_\_

•(1205)

[*Translation*]

**The Chair:** We are continuing our meeting of the Standing Committee on Official Languages.

Joining us for the second hour are Ms. Saint-Pierre and Mr. Dubeau, of the Fédération culturelle canadienne-française, and Mr. Racine, of the Fédération des aînées et aînés francophones du Canada.

Welcome.

We will begin with the representatives of the Fédération culturelle canadienne-française.

•(1210)

**Mr. Éric Dubeau (Executive Director, Fédération culturelle canadienne-française):** Good morning. Bon appétit.

My name is Éric Dubeau. I am the Executive Director of the Fédération culturelle canadienne-française. I am joined by Simone Saint-Pierre, our Chief of Communications. Thank you for inviting us to this meeting.

The FCCF is a national organization whose mission is to promote artistic and cultural expression of francophone and Acadian communities. It brings together representatives of national groups in theatre, publishing, singing, music, media arts, visual arts, a group of performing arts broadcasting networks and a community radio alliance, as well as representatives from 11 Canadian provinces and territories dedicated to the cultural development of Canada's francophonie. The FCCF has 22 member organizations and speaks on behalf of some 3,000 artists, and 150 arts and cultural

development organizations, working in over 250 francophone and Acadian communities across Canada.

Arts and culture should be at the heart of the celebration of the 150th anniversary of Canadian Confederation. Artists use their creativity and work to help enhance, examine, celebrate and develop culture, and to make it alive and contemporary. The work of artists and arts and cultural organizations greatly contributes to social cohesion and facilitates intercultural dialogue, since arts and culture express our emotions, thoughts and values. One of the goals of the 150th anniversary celebration is to strengthen the relationships between all the components of Canada's social fabric. Artists can ensure a successful celebration in terms of that.

We read with interest the report the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage published in September. Basically, we support the report's recommendations with regard to arts and culture. We especially support the government in its willingness to work with the provinces and territories to maximize the leverage of its investments. However, we also want to point out that the one-time investments recommended in the report will have less of an impact than ongoing support would.

Considering the scale of the anniversary we will celebrate together in 2017, we think the activities of the 150th anniversary of Confederation should not be only occasional and short-lived, such as a concept show tour or a themed exhibit. We also think investments should encourage the implementation of projects that are more structuring and have a greater sustainable impact. For instance, it would be beneficial if the government supported exchanges of artists from different parts of the country by establishing artist residences over several weeks, even several months. That initiative would culminate on the 150th anniversary. Another option would be to order a series of new creations that would be unveiled or performed throughout 2017 and during subsequent years. That more longitudinal approach would increase the positive effects of the government's investments, to the benefit of all Canadians.

We feel strongly about Minister Moore's statements—quoted in the committee's report—confirming that the agencies from his department's portfolio will be involved in the celebrations. As you may perhaps already know, the FCCF signed a document called the Agreement for the Development of Francophone Arts and Culture in Canada. In addition to the FCCF, this agreement has six federal signatories: Telefilm Canada, Canada Council for the Arts, the National Arts Centre, the Department of Canadian Heritage, the National Film Board of Canada and the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation. We feel that not only would it be appropriate for each of those agencies to participate in the 150th anniversary celebrations, but all of them should have to invest at least 15% of their celebration budget into activities presented by artists or arts and cultural organizations of Canada's francophonie.

We are convinced that all the artistic and cultural organizations of our Canadian francophonie should be considered—as should federal cultural agencies—as key partners in celebrations. Those organizations are in the best position—both in terms of their ongoing programming and special one-time projects—to ensure that the concrete actions in the field are mobilizing Canadians across the country. To do so, organizations will have to receive sufficient support not only for the 150th anniversary, but from here on in as well. We invite the government to establish the necessary mechanisms and tools.

Another way to ensure a solid return on your investments as part of those festivities is to make sure they facilitate Canadians' access to artistic and cultural activities in first-rate cultural spaces. Investing in cultural infrastructure is a way to ensure that Canadians have a permanent cultural heritage. As pointed out in the committee's report, the National Arts Centre was created in 1967, as part of the celebration of Confederation's 100th anniversary. Today, 45 years later, thousands of Canadians are still benefiting from this world-class cultural institution every year.

• (1215)

The committee's report also talks about using large-scale festivals and events to organize festive gathering opportunities. Creating ties among festivals from various regions of the country through program exchanges could facilitate collaboration among local event organizers from OLMCs and national-scale events. That would be a better way to discover the diversity of talents from OLMCs at events across the country.

To ensure that the collaborative projects by various organizations can be carried out and that artists and arts and cultural organizations from OLMCs play an important part, support mechanisms will have to clearly establish the obligations of various organizers in terms of official languages. When the time comes, we would be happy to work with those in charge to develop programs to encourage and support the participation of our artists and arts organizations. I also want to point out that, should the government implement the committee's recommendation to establish an independent body or organization in charge of celebrations, we would gladly join that body.

In closing—and in response to Minister Moore's concerns that the funding of artistic events may affect future generations—I would like to quote a francophone Canadian visual artist and author, Pierre Raphaël Pelletier. He wrote something along these lines:

All artistic creation is meant to forever transform our folk space into a new territory of exchanges, into a space of intimate interactions that changes every life that takes part in it, that dedicates itself to it—a wonderful initiative of liberation, the root and foundation of any authentic culture [...]

We are convinced that all the artistic and cultural events to which Canadians will have access during the commemoration of the 150th anniversary of Confederation will forever be part of the nation's genetic code. The creations, performances and infrastructure created as part of those festivities will become a legacy of great wealth for future generations.

Thank you for your attention. I would be pleased to answer your questions.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Dubeau.

Mr. Racine, you have the floor.

**Mr. Jean-Luc Racine (Director General, Fédération des aînées et aînés francophones du Canada):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

On behalf of the president of the Fédération des aînées et aînés francophones du Canada, Michel Vézina, who could not be here today, I want to thank you for inviting our organization to appear as part of your study on the 150th anniversary of Canadian Confederation.

The Fédération des aînées et aînés francophones du Canada represents some 27,000 senior members across the country, who naturally live in all Canadian provinces and territories, except Quebec.

We are especially proud that you have invited francophone seniors who have contributed a great deal to the building of our country and who, through their hard work, their beliefs and their identity, have shaped our communities and made Canada into such a great country.

Last November 6, you heard from the representatives of the Fédération des communautés francophones et acadienne. They suggested turning the 150th anniversary into an opportunity to develop a vision of sharing, exchange and dialogue among Canada's constituent parts. The Fédération des aînées et aînés francophones du Canada agrees with the FCFA's thinking.

The government and Canadians recognize linguistic duality and culture diversity as important national values. Therefore, Canada should use these festivities to provide Canadians with unique opportunities to rekindle those values, share and exchange common experiences and remember the various stages of our collective journey.

It is important to remember the major milestones of our shared history, to explain how the three founding peoples of Canada—first nations, francophones and anglophones—contributed to the building of our national identity, and how the addition of cultural communities helped enhance that identity. It is very important to use those festivities to also show how much of a role that diversity has played in making Canadians tolerant, open to differences and open to the world. It should also be shown that these founding peoples put down roots across the country and that the francophonie developed not only in Quebec, but also within many communities across the country.

Canada is certainly a forward-looking country. However, Canada must also use this opportunity to remember and never forget the peoples and individuals who built this country. A country that loses sight of the unique attributes that helped build its identity is a country that will always be searching for something and have a hard time defining itself. Therefore, the 150th anniversary is a unique opportunity for francophone communities to finally be seen, not only as minorities, but rather as communities of full-fledged citizens who have contributed and continue to contribute to the country's strength.

Now, let's look at how this could translate into concrete measures.

History must manifest itself in a spirited manner for us to remember it. What better way to do that than by calling upon the collective memory of the Canadians who have built this country? In 2017, why not give an opportunity to seniors and all Canadians to meet, share, exchange and explain how they have contributed to the shaping of this beautiful country?

We recommend that, over the next four years, four activities be undertaken in the context of an official languages perspective.

The first activity we suggest is the broadcasting of a national collection whose theme would be “150 years of Canadian achievements”. A national contest could be organized where Canadians would be invited to present short stories describing the achievements of individuals who have contributed to the building of our communities across the country. The best essays could then be put together in a collection or a website that many Canadians would have access to. It would be of the utmost importance for that collection to reflect the realities of our three founding peoples—first nations, francophones and anglophones. It would also be important to ensure to represent cultural communities whose first official spoken language is French or English.

• (1220)

We suggest a second activity that may be worthwhile. Some seniors or Canadians have trouble writing. So they could express themselves in a video, on the same topic, of course. Similar to the national collection, associated groups could be invited to connect with Canadians who are less comfortable expressing themselves in writing. These Canadians would be encouraged to recount their achievements in audiovisual format. The best videos would be incorporated into a national video, posted online or made into a DVD. They could even be featured on several TV programs showcasing the wonderful achievements of our fellow Canadians.

Our third recommendation would also make for an excellent initiative. It would involve intergenerational interactions between members of Canada's three founding peoples. These interactions would foster dialogue and sharing. The Fédération des aînées et aînés francophones du Canada already works with the Association canadienne des professeurs d'immersion. We are working on intergenerational projects between French-speaking seniors and young people in immersion programs. We see the 150th anniversary of Confederation as an opportunity to build on this idea. We could set up initiatives bringing together francophone seniors and immersion students, or young French speakers and first nations seniors. The 150th anniversary of Confederation should connect people of different generations from our country's three founding peoples.

The fourth positive initiative we would recommend is a national summit to recognize the contribution of seniors to Canadian history and the building of this country. The summit would take place in 2017 and bring together a variety of seniors from across the country representing first nations, francophones and anglophones. The summit would provide an ideal opportunity to celebrate the major achievements of our country and the tremendous contribution of our citizens. It would also be an opportunity to look ahead and lay the foundation for closer ties between the founding peoples for decades to come.

Our fifth and final recommendation or initiative, if you prefer, would be an expansion of the New Horizons for Seniors program. That would entail broadening the program criteria as of 2015 to allow interested seniors groups to highlight their contribution to Canadian society. Under such an initiative, they would be able to express themselves fully and to submit projects along the lines of the four we just described. Some of the program criteria already reflect similar thinking, but the criteria would need to be clarified and rounded out. The program would have to allow for proposals that will help ensure the 150th anniversary of Confederation is a memorable occasion that lives on in people's minds for many years to come.

So there you have a few ideas on how to turn the 150th anniversary celebrations of Confederation into the ideal occasion to honour our shared values, which include linguistic duality.

Thank you. I would be pleased to answer any questions.

• (1225)

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Ms. Michaud, over to you.

**Ms. Éline Michaud (Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier, NDP):** Welcome everyone. Thank you for being here.

I have a few short questions. I want to discuss the investments we will have to make if we truly want to be ready for 2017 and have activities in place leading up to 2017. Mr. Dubeau, in particular, talked to us about that.

Could you give us details on what order you would like to see the investments come in, to reach that goal?

**Mr. Éric Dubeau:** We certainly didn't undertake a reasoned or comprehensive evaluation of the needs. Intuitively, I can tell you I find it fascinating that both of us spoke of a more prolonged approach over time. It would be a shame if the only investments made to mark the 150th anniversary of Confederation came in the 2016-17 fiscal year. It is important to adopt a vision that unfolds over time and culminates throughout 2017. Between now and then, a whole slew of steps need to be taken and consistently monitored. When I think about appropriate times to make those investments, the renewal of the roadmap for linguistic duality comes to mind, among others.

A series of programs are currently being reviewed by the Department of Canadian Heritage, which will evaluate them over the next year. If memory serves, the programs include the Canada Arts Presentation Fund and the Canada Cultural Spaces Fund. Both would help Canada's artistic community flourish and provide financial support for cultural infrastructure, as we mentioned in our brief.

**Ms. Éline Michaud:** Thank you.

As far as this discussion goes, I would say we are all at a more intuitive stage in the process, given that no committee has been created. This is a very preliminary stage of the game, but you seem to have some very specific ideas.

Would you like to add anything, Mr. Racine?

**Mr. Jean-Luc Racine:** It may already be possible to revisit some existing programs, such as New Horizons for Seniors. If the goal is to hold large-scale celebrations, it may be necessary to enhance existing programs and add others. Expo 67 in Montreal is etched in our collective memory. An investment was necessary, but 50 years later, people still remember the event. I think we need to take a similar approach in this case; we need to make sure this celebration makes an impact and leaves a lasting impression in Canadians' minds.

**Ms. Éloïse Michaud:** Thank you.

Mr. Racine, you told us about intergenerational projects that were being considered or planned. Can you give us a few examples?

**Mr. Jean-Luc Racine:** We already have some projects, as I mentioned. I talked about videos. Some provinces already have that. There are some initiatives funded through New Horizons for Seniors. Seniors call on young people for technical assistance in making short videos. Projects like that exist in some communities, but there isn't any real mechanism to bring them all together or turn them into a single national product. We believe it is essential to capitalize on the 150th anniversary festivities to build a more far-reaching project.

● (1230)

**Ms. Éloïse Michaud:** Thank you kindly.

Mr. Dubeau, was your organization invited to appear before the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage, further to its study of Canada's 150th anniversary celebrations in 2017?

**Mr. Éric Dubeau:** I will ask Simone to answer, because I think she knows more about that than I do.

**Ms. Simone Saint-Pierre (Chief of Communications, Fédération culturelle canadienne-française):** Yes, we were invited, but unfortunately we could not appear before the committee during the period in question.

**Ms. Éloïse Michaud:** Thank you very much.

Mr. Racine, you mentioned projects and programs that are more for the general public. Aside from those, can you offer any that would highlight seniors specifically, as part of the celebrations? The video initiative has merit, but it's quite extensive.

**Mr. Jean-Luc Racine:** No. We didn't want to show up with a wish list. Instead, we put our effort into suggesting four activities that would involve seniors. As we see it, that is important. There is the summit proposal as well, if I may elaborate on that one. I think it would make for an excellent opportunity. We've been advancing that idea for years. We thought the summit would fit in wonderfully with the 150th anniversary celebrations. The summit, in my view, provides an excellent opportunity to really showcase our three founding peoples and cultural communities. It would be an event that Canadians would remember for years and years.

**Ms. Éloïse Michaud:** Mr. Dubeau, could you go into more detail on the type of long-term cultural contribution you would like to see, further to the celebrations? You mentioned things that would have a lasting impact such as visual arts products.

**Mr. Éric Dubeau:** The impact of a substantial investment to mark the 2017 anniversary would extend well beyond the celebration itself. If you and the government as a whole opt for a broad vision, the spinoff from specific investments would be felt for generations to

come. I cited the creation of the National Arts Centre as an example of that leveraging effect. That is a concrete project involving infrastructure and requiring a sizeable investment.

We could also see the federal government investing in upgrades to technical infrastructure in cultural venues across the country. A number of our venues across Canada's francophone community do not have high-quality technical equipment. So investments in that regard would be valuable.

I think it is important to find ways to help the artistic community flourish and to create cultural products reflecting the anniversary, and to ensure the effects are felt for years after the actual event, at home and abroad. To that end, a bigger investment in the Canada Arts Presentation Fund comes to mind, as does a new mechanism to help artists tour, perhaps in conjunction with the current government's international trade strategy. Those are excellent avenues that should be explored.

**The Chair:** Very good. Thank you.

Ms. Bateman, you have the floor.

**Ms. Joyce Bateman (Winnipeg South Centre, CPC):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Dubeau, Ms. Saint-Pierre and Mr. Racine, thank you all for being here. Your perspectives are very important.

Mr. Dubeau, I recall quite well the presentation you gave to the all-party arts caucus. And I thank you for it.

In your presentation, you proposed various approaches. I am very keen to hear the details of your plan to use social media. I am interested because social media is such an effective and accessible tool, not to mention less costly.

Do you have a clear and detailed sense of how that would work?

● (1235)

**Mr. Éric Dubeau:** I don't know if I can give you a clear and detailed idea, but I will do my best.

**Ms. Joyce Bateman:** I hope so, because this is a very important instrument.

**Mr. Éric Dubeau:** I think the government would do well to invest in a fairly comprehensive strategy. We talked about concrete examples, and this is one. Capitalizing on social media is a highly strategic move and a winning proposition.

Obviously, 50 years ago, when we celebrated the centennial of Confederation, we weren't equipped to foster the instant flow of information. We didn't have the means to give Canadians around the country simultaneous access to the broadcast of a live performance, for instance. Nor could we give people in Whitehorse the opportunity to view a visual arts display in Toronto or St. John's, simply because it could not be moved.

So I think we have a whole slew of opportunities in that respect. The video collection my colleague suggested is a good example and also something we are exploring on our end. I would say that social media gives us the ability to shine the spotlight on arts and culture in a variety of new ways. Social media opens up many more gateways to artistic and cultural expression, giving the nation's francophone community even more reason to be proud.

I'm not sure if you have anything you'd like to add, Ms. Saint-Pierre.

**Ms. Simone Saint-Pierre:** I don't know if we mentioned it in our final brief, but when we were putting it together, we thought about an artist residency program. It may be true that only two groups benefit from that type of program on an exchange basis, but the reach of artist residencies often grows considerably through social media. So that is an option to consider.

I'll give you a made-up example. The artistic director of the Cercle Molière could set up an exchange with the Théâtre d'Aujourd'hui in Quebec. Both teams could interact via social media. The same goes for visual arts. Contemporary visual artists, in particular, rely heavily on the use of social media and new technologies.

That is certainly an initiative worth exploring, but it has to complement funding aimed at creating permanent infrastructure and artistic works.

**Ms. Joyce Bateman:** That may apply not just to visual artists, but to singers as well.

**Ms. Simone Saint-Pierre:** It would apply to the entire artist community. I gave just two examples.

**Mr. Éric Dubeau:** I would add a clarification, if I might, a thought that just came to me. Social media may offer an effective mechanism or lever to promote linguistic duality under this initiative. With social media, it is often possible to make some sort of language content available in the original language, while providing a simultaneous translation to the country, indeed the world.

That is something that wasn't done before, or if it was, it required tremendous resources, TV channels, which still offered relatively limited capacity.

I think this option would give all Canadians greater access to certain products created as a result of the 150th anniversary celebrations.

**Ms. Joyce Bateman:** Thank you.

I have another question for you, Mr. Racine. In your presentation, you talked about your plan involving francophone and immersion students. Given our country's linguistic duality, what are your plans to reach anglophone students?

**Mr. Jean-Luc Racine:** I would start by saying that we have quite a ways to go in terms of encouraging anglophone students to learn French.

**Ms. Joyce Bateman:** You've targeted a prime market, haven't you?

**Mr. Jean-Luc Racine:** Precisely. It is extremely important to us.

I will speak to the senior dimension. We want to spark an interest in language among our francophones, first and foremost. Now, we're taking that to a second level. We want to arouse that interest among young people in immersion schools. What those administrators often say to us is, despite learning French, their students don't come into regular contact with native French speakers. What better way to stimulate those young French learners than to connect them with francophone seniors or Canadians? That would provide greater motivation and bolster these efforts.

As you said, there is a lot of promotional work that needs doing when it comes to the majority of Canadians and students who aren't in immersion programs. We need to advance that thinking.

The reverse is happening. My job is not to represent anglophones in Quebec, but I do know that efforts are under way in Quebec to encourage young people to learn English more. That movement exists.

• (1240)

**Ms. Joyce Bateman:** Keep in mind that our schools offer a lot of core French programs to anglophone students.

**Mr. Jean-Luc Racine:** Yes.

**Ms. Joyce Bateman:** That is an area to work on.

**Mr. Jean-Luc Racine:** Indeed, it shouldn't be overlooked. Unfortunately, we don't always have the necessary resources to satisfy all those needs. To some extent, therein lies our challenge.

**Ms. Joyce Bateman:** Yes, we know.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Mr. Dion, your turn.

**Hon. Stéphane Dion:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Ms. Saint-Pierre, Mr. Dubeau and Mr. Racine, thank you. Your presentations were quite in line with what the committee hoped to hear from you. You came here today with recommendations for the anniversary celebrations in 2017.

And I am going to ask you to repeat your suggestions but explain how they tie into the 2017 anniversary celebrations, just as Mr. Racine did in response to Ms. Michaud's question a little while ago.

You can appreciate that the government will receive an onslaught of requests. If you want yours to make it to the top of the pile, you need to clearly identify the connection between your proposal and the anniversary celebration. Otherwise, your ideas will be relegated to the bottom of the pile, and perhaps be considered for the next milestone celebration in 50 years' time. A great many organizations, groups and movements will see this event as a funding opportunity for potential programs to advance their work. Conversely, if the tie-in between their proposal and the anniversary celebrations is not clear, their request will go no further.

With that in mind, then, could you kindly repeat your main proposals and tell us why they represent an opportunity to mark the 150th anniversary of Confederation?

**Mr. Éric Dubeau:** I'll give it a go.

The activities I proposed would have a more lasting impact as far as arts and culture go, at the local or pan-Canadian level. I would say that investment is needed at both levels. The celebration would provide an opportunity to honour the local contribution made by artists and cultural workers on a regular, daily and permanent basis—their everyday achievements.

Unfortunately, as you know, we don't often stop to celebrate these days. We're in an especially unsettling time, and Canadians have been going through a transition for some years now, economically and otherwise. We're talking about a celebration that is shared by all Canadians, our emergence as a country on the international scene, through Confederation. And why not use that celebration to establish ties with artistic endeavours that are happening locally and have a lasting effect?

I am desperately trying to answer your question and make that connection. I think we also tried to illustrate that in our basic document.

**Mr. Jean-Luc Racine:** I think turning 150 is a time to get back to our roots and to highlight who we are, fundamentally.

At the end of the day, our country was built by three founding peoples: the first nations, francophones and anglophones. I think we need to build on those roots as we celebrate the 150th anniversary of Confederation. We need to remind people of them so they never forget; we need to shine a spotlight on that aspect of our history. We need to show that it is important, not just for us, as Canadians, but also for the world.

These celebrations are an excellent opportunity to do just that, and I believe our proposals are in line with that objective. The idea is not for people to celebrate separately in their own little part of the country, but for everyone to come together, to share stories and to engage with one another.

• (1245)

**Mr. Éric Dubeau:** It may also be a time to celebrate what we do best on the world stage. We are known champions of social development. In terms of our contributions to arts and culture, the impact of our innovation and creativity, Canada should not shy away from showing its pride to the world. Why not use such an occasion to celebrate that?

**Hon. Stéphane Dion:** Are your proposals meant for the period leading up to 2017 or for 2017 itself, the year of the anniversary celebrations?

**Mr. Jean-Luc Racine:** The lead-up. In fact, as far as the New Horizons for Seniors program goes, I mentioned the process would have to begin in 2015, and not 2017. I think we should start gradually, because worthwhile results require preparation. Things have to be done in stages.

**Hon. Stéphane Dion:** Do you want to be there in 2017?

**Mr. Jean-Luc Racine:** I don't know what you mean.

**Hon. Stéphane Dion:** Surely, you want to be part of the festivities in 2017. You want our report to highlight how you could contribute to the actual celebrations, isn't that right?

**Mr. Jean-Luc Racine:** Yes, and we also want to contribute to the preparations leading up to the event.

**Hon. Stéphane Dion:** I understand. You want to celebrate in 2017.

**Mr. Jean-Luc Racine:** Yes.

**Hon. Stéphane Dion:** What do you want to do in 2017?

**Mr. Jean-Luc Racine:** Do you mean what we would do, tangibly speaking?

**Hon. Stéphane Dion:** Yes. What kind of festive events do you propose?

**Mr. Jean-Luc Racine:** I mentioned them. It would involve some sort of mechanism to highlight the numerous contributions. We mentioned a national anthology, the videos showcasing the contributions of Canadians and the seniors' summit. We believe that would be a wonderful undertaking. Naturally, we prefer initiatives that bring together different generations, where people have the opportunity to engage with one another, with a special focus on 2017.

**Hon. Stéphane Dion:** I thank you.

**Mr. Éric Dubeau:** On our end, it's a matter of strategy or choice. The government needs to adopt a strategy underlying its desire to really make 2017 a memorable occasion. I'm sorry to say our ideas are a bit less concrete than those of our colleagues.

To be able to unveil a series of new works, to be able to broadcast and display them for Canadians and others to enjoy, the time to commission them is not April 1, 2017. That would create major logistical challenges between April and July 1st.

**Hon. Stéphane Dion:** Do I still have time left?

**The Chair:** A minute.

**Hon. Stéphane Dion:** The government hasn't yet put any kind of lead-up structure in place for the anniversary in 2017. It likely will. Have you thought about how you could play a role in that structure?

**Mr. Éric Dubeau:** We already articulated that we would be eager to contribute to such an effort or structure, whether that involves sitting on a committee or some new body, or taking part in consultations undertaken by such a body.

We believe the celebrations should be put on by and for Canadians. If the government agrees, it would have to bring representatives of official language minority communities to the table. So why not solicit members of the arts and culture community and Canada's French-speaking community through that committee as well?

That is my response.

**Mr. Jean-Luc Racine:** I was going to say more or less the same thing. I think some sort of consultation process involving Canadians and continuing on until 2017 is necessary. That would produce the best ideas and the best suggestions. I would also echo what Mr. Dubeau said.

**The Chair:** Okay, thank you.

[English]

Mr. Wilks.

**Mr. David Wilks (Kootenay—Columbia, CPC):** Thanks, Mr. Chair, and my thanks to our witnesses today.

In our last hour, the Commissioner of Official Languages was here and he spoke on the importance of some of the stuff that John Ralston Saul had commented on in *Reflections of a Siamese Twin*, namely, that it was suddenly understood that francophone and anglophone reformers had to cooperate. It seems to me that we Canadians tend to cooperate for major events such as Expo 67 or the Olympic Games in Vancouver, because we feel that there's this importance to show our spirit.

Mr. Dubeau, how do you think we can transfer this enthusiasm that we show during these major events to everyday life in Canada? That, I think, is the trick. We're really good at doing a two-week stint, but can we hold it for 365 days a year? That's what I'd like to hear from you.

• (1250)

[Translation]

**Mr. Éric Dubeau:** My answer is going to be disappointing, and I apologize.

We have a saying, crises bring people together. It's easy to rally Canadians around a cause they perceive as critical. It's also possible to bring them together for a memorial or celebration. We see arts and culture as a key strategy, a key piece in bringing people together day to day. I think we would do well to further shine the spotlight on our success stories, our best practices, our triumphs and the interdependence of Canadian society. We should emphasize just how diverse we are through our creativity and culture, in the broadest sense. Turning that idea into a reality hinges on building more gathering places.

I spoke before about tangible measures and the importance of a concrete investment in infrastructure and first-rate technology. I think it's essential to provide opportunities for people to come together. In that respect, I'd say our society is a bit lost today. Arts and culture opens up a number of doors. An establishment, whether it's the NAC or a local cultural centre, gives people a place where they can gather while appreciating and celebrating others. We need to find ways to support these establishments and to ensure the working conditions are conducive to their mandate.

That is the bare-bones answer I can give you in 30 seconds.

**Ms. Simone Saint-Pierre:** I would say there are artistic endeavours all over the country. Every corner of the country has something to offer, in our francophone communities alone. I am sure you would find artistic endeavours happening 365 days of the year, more or less anywhere in the country. As Ms. Bateman pointed out earlier, it might be possible to get into the habit of bringing those various endeavours together using social media, as part of the celebration.

One thing is for sure, Canadian values are already being celebrated through artistic and cultural activities year-round. And we could certainly do a better job of that with a bit more funding to mark the anniversary of Confederation.

[English]

**Mr. David Wilks:** Thank you very much.

Go ahead, Mr. Racine.

[Translation]

**Mr. Jean-Luc Racine:** I was going to say, that, at the end of the day, our proposals include initiatives that will stand the test of time.

Our example of intergenerational projects funded through the New Horizons for Seniors program alone proves that point. Even if the funding disappears, those endeavours will last forever. The summit proposal is a first step. What we want to see after that are other summits that will bring together the three communities we talked about. That would be the ideal. If things go well in 2017, why not do it again afterwards?

Experiences that takes us farther into the future, not just to 2017, will provide the foundation.

[English]

**Mr. David Wilks:** Excellent.

Mr. Racine, you spoke of the importance of recording the history of seniors, and we're all going there, some of us sooner than later.

**Voices:** Oh, oh!

**Mr. Pierre Dionne Labelle (Rivière-du-Nord, NDP):** Don't look at me.

**Voices:** Oh, oh!

**Mr. David Wilks:** I wasn't. I was looking at Ms. Michaud.

**Voices:** Oh, oh!

**Mr. David Wilks:** When we look at the challenges this country has faced over the last 100-some years, and the mistakes we've made along the way, we realize that sometimes we Canadians don't learn from our mistakes. We tend to want to repeat them from time to time to make sure they were wrong the first time.

I wonder if there's been any thought to reaching out to western Canada, especially from the perspective of Saskatchewan and Alberta, which have fairly high francophone populations. We might be able to learn from the challenges they overcame in trying to integrate into a society that I'm sure wasn't too accepting of them in the 1910s and 1920s, probably as a result of fear more than anything else. Has there been any thought given to looking at that angle?

• (1255)

[Translation]

**Mr. Jean-Luc Racine:** Not specifically, but that is definitely an interesting angle. We have very active representatives in Saskatchewan, Alberta and British Columbia. In fact, some of them already do a lot of work with the anglophone communities, in Manitoba and Saskatchewan, in particular. That isn't as common in Alberta, but I believe those kinds of efforts are being made.

In terms of bringing the communities together, the idea that French-speaking seniors reach out to their English-speaking counterparts more often certainly lends itself well to the celebrations. Yes, I do believe those kinds of initiatives are worth pursuing and this occasion is the time to do so.

**The Chair:** Good. Thank you.

Mr. Gourde, over to you.

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

Thank you to the witnesses.

Mr. Racine, you advanced the idea of using New Horizons for Seniors to enhance projects or put them in place. I would like to explore that further, since you are the first to suggest such an idea to the committee. I think there is merit in looking at that.

**Mr. Jean-Luc Racine:** Actually, the program already has some criteria that are quite similar, so it wouldn't require any major changes. What it would require is tweaking the program criteria to allow groups to submit proposals specifically for the celebrations in 2017. I feel that is important. It would require adjusting the criteria a bit.

I think any such adjustment should go hand in hand with increased program support. It would be easier for the government to do that than to set up a new program and a new funding mechanism. I believe that building on existing programs and injecting a bit more into them would really go a long way.

**Mr. Jacques Gourde:** Would that initiative allow seniors to share their part of history?

**Mr. Jean-Luc Racine:** There could be a variety of initiatives. We suggested four, but other seniors groups may have different ones. All this one, in particular, would require is a tweaking of the criteria with a view to certain 2017 anniversary objectives. What should those criteria be? I can't say exactly, but there is no doubt that the current criteria are well-suited to our proposal. They simply need to be reworked a bit.

**Mr. Jacques Gourde:** Mr. Dubeau, would it be possible to build a cultural component into that initiative?

**Mr. Éric Dubeau:** I think you and your colleagues asked questions about very specific measures or initiatives. I would encourage you, instead, to think about a policy framework that you can use to support a whole slew of efforts. Clearly, sharing our stories is the key here. But those stories can be shared in writing,

through social media, in documentaries, in more traditional television productions and so forth.

Does part of the solution lie in reworking that particular program? Perhaps so, but it also lies in a series of other strategies and measures that you will have to reject and clarify in the days and weeks ahead, I imagine.

**Mr. Jean-Luc Racine:** My remarks focused solely on the senior perspective, but I think we need to look at the big picture, and consider all the programs and possible additions to other initiatives.

**Mr. Jacques Gourde:** Thank you.

I believe my time is up.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Gourde.

Thank you to our witnesses.

I just want to make the committee aware that, right now, we have no witnesses planned for Thursday. No witnesses means no meeting.

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** We could invite representatives from the Canadian Coast Guard's marine rescue centre in Quebec.

**The Chair:** If it so pleases the committee.

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** Surely, there is unanimous agreement on that.

**An hon. member:** Ha, ha!

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** There are other candidates as well, such as representatives from the Maurice Lamontagne Institute.

● (1300)

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Godin.

Thank you, everyone.

Meeting adjourned.







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