HOUSE OF COMMONS
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES
CANADA

Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs

PROC • NUMBER 100 • 1st SESSION • 42nd PARLIAMENT

EVIDENCE

Tuesday, May 1, 2018

Chair

The Honourable Larry Bagnell

Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs

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● (1100)

[*English*]

The Chair (Hon. Larry Bagnell (Yukon, Lib.)): Welcome to meeting number 100 of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs as we continue our study on the use of indigenous languages in proceedings of the House of Commons.

We are pleased to be joined this morning by officials from the Translation Bureau at Public Services and Procurement Canada: Stéphan Déry, Chief Executive Officer; and Matthew Ball, Acting Vice-President.

Just before we do that, I have a couple of questions for the committee. First, we received two long articles from the AFN. They are not directly or totally related to the study, but they are on aboriginal languages. We can't distribute them because they are only in English, and they are very thick, so they're not normally translated.

There are two choices. One is that we can put you in touch with the person at AFN if you want the articles, and they can give them to you. The other is that the committee could unanimously agree that we can distribute them in English.

Mr. Scott Reid (Lanark—Frontenac—Kingston, CPC): How big are they? Can they not just be translated? Is that not—

The Chair: They are fairly—

Mr. Scott Reid: There must be a practical limit, Mr. Chair, on what we normally translate and what we don't.

The Chair: I will ask the clerk.

Mr. Scott Reid: These are obviously above the normal limit. What is the normal limit on things that we translate?

The Clerk of the Committee (Mr. Andrew Lauzon): It depends on what is being submitted to the committee. Normally, for briefs, we will translate up to 10 pages. For anything longer than 10 pages, we will ask for an executive summary, which we will translate.

I think one of these is about 20 pages, and the other one is similar in length.

Mr. Scott Reid: Personally, I would be okay with translating them. I realize that there is a certain expense involved, but this is probably likely to be germane.

Mr. Romeo Saganash (Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou, NDP): I think that, as a matter of principle, we should get a translation of the documents. I'm here on a matter of principle trying to get indigenous languages in this House. I'm not going to let that go by. I think the documents should be translated.

The Chair: Okay. Is that what the consensus of the committee is, to get them translated?

Ms. Ruby Sahota (Brampton North, Lib.): You were saying that they're not even that related, so what's the cost going to be? Is there a purpose in our spending that money, or should we just leave it?

Mr. John Nater (Perth—Wellington, CPC): We have the experts here.

The Chair: There is one article, “An Aboriginal Languages Act:”—that's the act that's going to come to Parliament—“Reconsidering Equality on the 40th Anniversary of Canada's Official Languages Act.” The other one is an article by someone of Ojibwa and Canadian ancestry who is a member of Nipissing First Nation. It is called “Reconciliation and the Revitalization of Indigenous Languages”.

● (1105)

Mr. Scott Reid: It's hard to tell from the titles whether they are relevant or not. The second one certainly sounds relevant enough to put the effort in.

Ms. Ruby Sahota: Whatever the committee wants, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Is there consensus to translate?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Chair: Okay. Thank you.

We're winding down. Thursday is our last meeting with witnesses on this, which we can discuss a bit later. Then, hopefully, right away we can give instructions to the analysts.

I would tell committee, although I'm sure they all understand, that these are functionally our most key witnesses because they are the ones who have to put the idea into practice, into something that can actually technically be done. Hopefully, you will ask a lot of questions of this group because they are the ones who do translation, the ones who have to provide the facilities, the translators, and everything possible.

We will turn it over to Mr. Déry for his opening statement. Then we will have some questions.

Mr. Stéphan Déry (Chief Executive Officer, Translation Bureau, Department of Public Works and Government Services): Thank you.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Chair, committee members, good morning.

I'd like to begin by acknowledging that we are meeting on the traditional territories of the Algonquin nation.

Thank you for inviting me to appear before this committee to talk about the use of indigenous languages in House of Commons proceedings.

My name is Stéphan Déry and I am the Chief Executive Officer of the Translation Bureau. Here with me is my colleague, Matthew Ball, Vice-President of Service to Parliament and interpretation.

The translation bureau provides translation and interpretation services in indigenous languages to the House of Commons and the Senate on an as-needed basis, when requested by Parliament. For example, during the meetings of this committee of the last few weeks, it is the bureau that ensured interpretation services in indigenous languages. For these reasons, we maintain an up-to-date list of approximately 100 interpreters who work in 20 different indigenous languages.

Before going into greater detail about our services in indigenous languages, allow me to speak briefly about the bureau.

[*English*]

Established in 1934, the Translation Bureau has its foundation in the Translation Bureau Act, which mandates it to serve departments and agencies as well as the two Houses of Parliament on all matters related to the translation and revision of documents, as well as interpretation, sign language, and terminology.

We are the sole in-house service provider to one of the world's largest consumers of translation services, the Government of Canada and Parliament, which makes us a major player in what is, in every sense, a global industry. Our translation services are available 24 hours a day, seven days a week, via secure infrastructure, and in over 100 languages and dialects.

In concrete terms, the bureau fulfilled approximately 170,000 requests in 2017-18, mostly for translation, or nearly 305 million words for departments and agencies and over 49 million words for Parliament.

In official languages, we provide over 5,000 days of interpretation for Parliament, nearly 7,000 days of conference interpretation, and over 4,500 hours of closed captioning for sessions in the House of Commons, the Senate, and your committees. Lastly, we supply over 9,700 hours of visual interpretation.

[*Translation*]

I now would like to talk to you about what we do for indigenous languages. The data that I just mentioned contextualizes the translation bureau's current capacity in providing services in indigenous languages.

The bureau is well equipped to meet the current demand, in particular through partnerships it has established over time with a number of indigenous organizations. Our mandate is clear: we are here to serve Parliament.

If Parliament chooses to increase the demand for services in indigenous languages, as the exclusive provider of language services, the translation bureau will regard it as its duty to meet that demand.

[*English*]

Requests for services in indigenous languages are few and far between compared with the overall volume of translation and interpretation requests for all languages combined. Thus, of the 170,000 translation and interpretation requests we handled in 2017-18, approximately 760, or 0.5% of the total volume, involved indigenous languages. Of those 760 requests, nearly 85% were for Inuit languages. The other requests were spread among 28 language combinations.

As for interpretation, requests from the House of Commons and Senate committees have totalled 33 days of interpretation in indigenous languages since 2016, primarily in Cree—East and Plains—Inuktitut, and Dene.

● (1110)

[*Translation*]

In 2009, the bureau worked with the Senate on a pilot project aimed at providing interpretation services in Inuktitut to senators Charlie Watt and Willie Adams, stemming from one of the recommendations in the fifth report of the Standing Committee on Rules, Procedures and the Rights of Parliament. Pursuant to the affirmation of aboriginal rights of the first nations, the report recommended that the use of Inuktitut be allowed in Senate deliberations, in addition to English and French.

The interpretation services were provided on several occasions, and the senators seemed pleased with the service provided. However, although greater capacity has been established in Inuktitut than other indigenous languages, identifying interpreters with parliamentary experience proved to be a challenge.

[*English*]

I would like now to touch on two operational challenges for the bureau.

First, your committee has discussed the possibility of using remote interpretation services.

The Translation Bureau conducted a pilot project in 2014 to test the viability of such a service. While the results were encouraging, there are still issues that need to be addressed before we can offer this service on a regular basis. The two key issues are audio quality and bandwidths, which can be erratic, resulting in variable audio quality for interpreters and clients alike. We are committed, though, to continuing to explore this possibility further as technology improves.

Second, as other witnesses before this committee have explained, since there are approximately 90 indigenous languages and dialects in Canada, the capacity of skilled interpreters is limited. The translation bureau's ability to assess their language skills is equally restricted.

This capacity is based in part on the limited demand for this service. Should Parliament create a more sustained demand, the bureau would be prepared to play an active role in increasing capacity, in partnership with indigenous communities and organizations. Over time, this service could be offered to Parliament on a regular basis, thus contributing to the preservation of indigenous languages in Canada.

[*Translation*]

I would now like to describe the work the bureau has undertaken to foster new relationships and build new partnerships, in anticipation of an increased demand, which would support the government's objective to renew the relationship between Canada and indigenous peoples.

We have assigned a senior interpreter to assess the bureau's capacity, and then leverage our expertise in linguistic services. We want to develop strategic partnerships to enhance capacity development. To do so, we are in contact with the Assembly of First Nations, Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami, the Inuit language authority, and the Grand Council of the Crees, as well as with training institutions such as the Arctic College of Canada and the First Nations University of Canada.

We are also working in partnership with the University of Alberta's Canadian Indigenous Languages and Literacy Development Institute, to promote the interpretation field amongst students, over the coming summer.

Since 2003, we have also been working regularly with the Government of Nunavut, among other things to provide terminology training to Inuit translators. The focus of our most recent project, in 2017, was our terminology tool, Termium, for which we created a terminology directory that now contains some 2,300 records in Inuktitut.

In other words, Mr. Chair, we are always looking for new avenues that will allow us to broaden our partnerships and increase our pool of indigenous language translators and interpreters. As indicated earlier, we are meeting the current demand and are taking the necessary steps to build a pool of additional resources.

[*English*]

In conclusion, I'd like to draw your attention to the new vision for the translation bureau, which is to make it a world-class centre of excellence in language services. This vision is notably based on the need to strengthen the bureau's ties with its employees and clients, but also with its partners. It also relies on training and the next generation of language professionals. These are the foundations on which we intend to build, if you, the Parliament, request services from the bureau in indigenous languages on a more consistent basis. Our mandate is clear: we are here to serve Parliament.

In closing, I would like to underscore the work of our interpreter in the interpretation booth near us, thanks to whom today's meeting has taken place in both official languages.

Thank you for your time and attention. I would be pleased to answer any of your questions.

● (1115)

The Chair: Thank you. *Meegwetch.*

We'll start out with Mr. Graham.

Mr. David de Burgh Graham (Laurentides—Labelle, Lib.): Thank you for being here.

I'll go right into it.

You said in your opening remarks that translation is provided on request. When Robert-Falcon Ouellette requested translation for his statement in the House, which started this whole process, I'm wondering what happened. Why was he refused and what could have been done differently?

Mr. Stéphan Déry: Thank you for the question. I'm pleased to respond.

For us, the more lead time.... As we're not providing these services on a consistent basis, we have to call on external resources to be able to provide the service. When we had the pilot with the Senate in 2009—and this was more constant—we were asking for 48 hours turnaround. There was an intention that this would happen and sometimes, when we couldn't find an interpreter, they would move the committee or they would change the date of the committee, or something like that. The more lead time we have and the more structured the requests are, the better it is since then we have time to find an interpreter. Since there's no continuous demand from Parliament, the interpreters are taking other placements and doing work for other clients.

Mr. David de Burgh Graham: Okay. However, in this specific case that generated the question of privilege that got us to this debate, he had requested translation services. He offered to provide text to the translation booths, but that was declined. I'm wondering what the rules are and how that can be fixed.

Mr. Stéphan Déry: It could be fixed if we had reasonable notice, so that we can have an interpreter for Cree or Inuktitut, so that they can be interpreted by a real interpreter who understands their language. If you're okay, I'll respond a little bit in French for those—

[*Translation*]

Mr. David de Burgh Graham: Go ahead.

Mr. Stéphan Déry: The interpreters' code of ethics requires them to interpret languages they know, not to mention all the respect we have for Parliament. The text is provided. Today, I gave you a text, but I may have said something else. So there is a correlation. Interpreters need to understand the spoken language, not just read documents that are provided to them.

[*English*]

I know Matthew had a real example where he had to use text.

I'll ask him to explain his example.

Mr. Matthew Ball (Acting Vice-President, Translation Bureau, Department of Public Works and Government Services): Sure.

An interpreter is ethically bound to understand the text that he or she is interpreting, so it would be difficult to ask an interpreter.... They could read the text, but they wouldn't understand it.

I have a good example, personally. I was an interpreter for most of my career. I was working at the Canada Day celebrations and it was broadcast live across the country. In the moments right before a speech was to be read by an elder in an indigenous language, I was given the text and was asked to read this into English. I did that. It was given at the last minute. There was no time for ethical considerations or for me to make a stand and say, no, it's not professional of me to read something I don't understand. I did it.

The elder finished the prayer, and I still had four lines to read. It's a good example of how it's putting both the client and the interpreter, and the original speaker, in a bit of a difficult situation when you're asking them to read something they don't understand.

Mr. David de Burgh Graham: When you translate as opposed to interpret, you know that in French it's about 13% longer than English. It shouldn't be a surprise that it would finish at a different time.

The question that I asked earlier was based on notice period. For example, if Mr. Saganash gave you notice that he was going to speak Cree in the House next week, would you then have translation, or do the rules not permit it?

● (1120)

Mr. Stéphan Déry: We would have translators to interpret, as we did at this committee in the last few weeks.

Mr. David de Burgh Graham: You're telling me under the current regime we can have translation now in the House.

Mr. Stéphan Déry: You can have interpretation if it's requested from the bureau. We organize for interpretation.

Mr. David de Burgh Graham: Okay.

How would a member go about that request? This is a bit new to a lot of us.

Mr. Stéphan Déry: The request, I believe, was made to the....

Mr. David de Burgh Graham: In the chamber, I'm talking about.

Mr. Stéphan Déry: In the chamber, the request would be made to the clerk.

Mr. David de Burgh Graham: By whom? Any member?

Mr. Stéphan Déry: It would be by the member. Then it's the process of the chamber that would dictate whether we're providing interpretation or not.

As I've said, we are here to serve. If we're requested by the chamber to provide interpretation services in Inuktitut, or any other language, we'll do our best to ensure that we provide you with the service.

Mr. David de Burgh Graham: Okay.

I'll return to Mr. Ball's example of the prayer that was given to him for interpretation. Members are considered honourable by tradition in this place, so if a member provides you with an interpretation, regardless of outside considerations, it would be the member's privilege to be taken at their word.

Would there be any reason you couldn't accept that from a member of Parliament in the chamber, a written translation?

Mr. Matthew Ball: It speaks more to ethical considerations for the client, the speakers, and the interpreter. You know, in interpreting we sort of have three categories of language. An interpreter has an A language, a B language, and a C language. In the C language, which is the least mastered by the interpreter, they would only interpret passably from C into their A. In A and B the interpreters would work both ways.

If you were to ask me as an interpreter to interpret a language I don't know, it would put me in an ethically difficult situation because I don't understand what I'm saying. The speaker doesn't necessarily have faith in me to render it. In the equation there's not enough certainty to understand the language properly.

Mr. David de Burgh Graham: Okay, I might come back to you later on.

You also mentioned that you do a tremendous number of languages. Do you do any languages whatsoever that are not either English, French, or indigenous?

Mr. Stéphan Déry: We do multiple languages. In the G7 meeting that will happen soon, we will organize all the languages. We will organize the interpretation for all foreign languages.

Mr. David de Burgh Graham: Okay. Thank you. I'll come back to you in the next round.

The Chair: Thank you.

Now we'll go to Mr. Nater.

Mr. John Nater: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you to our witnesses as well.

Previous to serving on this committee, I served on the official languages committee. We had the honour of having your predecessor to that committee a number of times. It's good to have you at this committee today.

Back in December, the CBC reported on information it received through an access to information request. It was a memo about translation services and the potential use of indigenous languages in the new West Block. To date, we haven't seen a copy of that memo.

Is that something you would be able, or willing, to provide the committee, a copy of that memo?

Mr. Stéphan Déry: I will have to verify with procedure, but if the procedure permits, then I would be more than happy to provide this memo.

Mr. John Nater: That's great. Perhaps you could follow up with the clerk.

Mr. Stéphan Déry: Yes.

Mr. John Nater: If that could be made available to the committee, that would be great.

Mr. Ball, you mentioned some of the ethical considerations and standards an interpreter would have in terms of delivering the interpretation services. I'm assuming there's a written code that is available. I don't know if it is in the collective bargaining agreement or where that would be. Is that something the committee could be provided with?

Mr. Matthew Ball: Do you mean an interpreter's code of ethics?

Mr. John Nater: Yes.

Mr. Matthew Ball: The international professional association that governs interpreters is know as AIIC. We can provide that for you. It's public and it's on their website.

Mr. John Nater: Is there anything in your collective bargaining agreement that would touch on these types of standards, that you would have the right or the privilege to abide by those codes of conduct?

Mr. Matthew Ball: It wouldn't be in the collective agreement. It would be more the interpreters. All of the interpreters for the bureau have master's degrees and, therefore, are professionals and would abide by the code of ethics in their standard of practice.

Mr. John Nater: Thank you.

Okay.

You mentioned in your opening comments that you helped to secure the interpreters for our committee meetings thus far. Have you had a chance to review those committee meetings? Do you have any thoughts or analysis of how those interpretation services worked thus far from the translation bureau's perspective?

● (1125)

Mr. Stéphan Déry: That's an interesting and important question. The bureau presently has an accreditation process for official languages. All the interpreters who work for the translation bureau have been accredited by the translation bureau to standards that are renowned around the world. We're part of a world organization of conference interpreters, so we have to keep a high standard for official languages.

When we get indigenous languages, it's not the exact same standard, because we don't have—as I was mentioning—the internal capacity to assess in the 90 languages and dialects present in Canada. I'll ask Mr. Ball to explain how we work when we have a request for interpretation in indigenous languages.

Mr. Matthew Ball: Thank you, Mr. Déry.

I'm not sure if I understood your question. Did you ask how it goes from the bureau's perspective?

Mr. John Nater: Yes.

Mr. Matthew Ball: Did you mean from the perspective of organizing and administering the contracts?

Mr. John Nater: I meant organizing and quality of the interpretation, as well.

Mr. Matthew Ball: From the perspective of organizing and administering, I'll be frank. Organizing and administering interpretation contracts can be challenging, depending on the rarity of the language request, but it's something the bureau has been doing—as Mr. Déry said—since 1934, and we're good at it. From an organizational perspective, we felt it was fine.

From a quality perspective—and Mr. Déry was alluding to this—the bureau doesn't have internal capacity. We don't have staff interpreters in most languages of the world. We have staff interpreters and senior interpreters in the official languages, and we cover the most commonly used foreign languages that Canada and the bureau are called upon to serve.

In other languages, when we accredit interpreters, they're what's called “accredited on file”. If my team is asked to provide interpretation for a major diplomatic event.... I don't have a Polish staff interpreter anymore, so I would probably contact chief interpreters from around the world and ask them to recommend Polish interpreters from the worldwide community of interpreters. That's what we call “accrediting on file”.

That's what we do currently with the indigenous languages. When we have a request, we have—as Mr. Déry mentioned—a pool of people who have pre-qualified in indigenous languages that we use frequently in Canada. Right now that number stands at 20 languages and some 100 or so freelancers in our pool. We would typically do that. We would ask for references from knowledgeable members of the community, and that could vary depending on the language.

Mr. John Nater: Thank you so much.

I want to follow up a little bit on the capacity side of things. We understand, from what we have heard so far, that typically most of the indigenous language translation is to English, rather than indigenous languages to French. Is that correct, from your understanding, that it tends to be more indigenous to English, rather than indigenous to French?

Mr. Stéphan Déry: I would say we could find interpretation on both sides, given the notice. As Mr. Ball mentioned, it could be more complicated for rare languages and languages that are not spoken.... We know that some indigenous languages are spoken in Canada by from 10 to 100 people, so it's more difficult than for Inuktitut to find interpreters who can interpret from the indigenous language to French or the indigenous language to English. However, with the necessary lead time.... So far we've been able—I would say—to respond to all the requests we have received.

Mr. John Nater: That leads to the next question regarding relay interpretation, which we've heard a bit about. We've heard that often when it's relayed, there's a loss in translation, for lack of a better phrase. Does the translation bureau have standards or concerns about that relay interpretation? Is it something the bureau tries to avoid at all costs? If not, how do you help to alleviate some of the concerns?

Mr. Stéphan Déry: I will ask Mr. Ball to respond. He's the career interpreter.

Mr. Matthew Ball: You're right, relay interpreting is something we try to avoid when possible, but there are circumstances where it's required. If we had an indigenous language, typically, most of the interpreting of an indigenous language would be done to and from English, because the majority of Canadians are English speakers. It also depends on the contact between the languages. In Quebec, there would be more indigenous languages interpreted to and from French. We try to avoid it when possible.

A good example of this is the G8, which we're currently servicing right now. Where possible, we try to have interpreters who can do French to Japanese and German to Italian, but we can't cover all language combinations, so we do our best.

● (1130)

The Chair: Mr. Saganash.

Mr. Romeo Saganash: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

[*Translation*]

My thanks to the witnesses for their very interesting presentations.

[*English*]

Mr. Ball, I can totally relate to the example you gave from a code of ethics perspective. That was an important point to mention.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Déry, I will start with you.

Let's assume that the outcome of the study we are doing is positive and that the committee and Parliament accept the interpretation of indigenous languages in Parliament—which I have been hoping for since my election in 2011, as demonstrated by my discussions with the clerk at the time and with the clerks of the House. When would that happen in Parliament?

Will I be able, within a year and a half—because I will be leaving in a year and a half—to speak Cree and make my speech in Cree in the House during this Parliament?

Mr. Stéphan Déry: Thank you for your question. I would be happy to answer it. This is a very important question.

I will assume that the committee agrees with the recommendations made by Mr. Wolvengrey, a witness who appeared before the committee. He recommended that you focus on the interpretation of the four or five best known indigenous languages or of languages spoken by parliamentarians.

The following is just speculation. Parliament could decide to provide interpretation services in an indigenous language once a week, on Fridays, for example. The department I work for will therefore ask for proposals to ensure that we have contract interpreters. They will not be able to say that they are not available to work in Parliament on Friday because they have another contract. Every Friday, or every two weeks, they will serve Parliament by interpreting in the chosen languages.

Thanks to Parliament's new facilities in the West Block, barriers are coming down. Right now, there are two interpretation booths, as you know. It is therefore difficult to interpret in a third language. Temporary booths should be installed, which would require more equipment. In the new West Block facilities, three booths have been installed. This allows for more interpretation in a third language, whether indigenous or other languages, when there are guests.

Since those barriers are coming down, it should be easier to provide this service if Parliament so requests. It is difficult for me to answer that question, because it is speculation and it will depend on the number of languages that we will be asked to interpret. However, I think it could be put in place quite quickly, unless we are asked to interpret the 90 indigenous languages and dialects, which might be very challenging. If we choose languages for which there are local interpreters, it will be much easier. In addition, if the demand is steady, we can make arrangements more easily to meet requests. Interpreters must also have parliamentary experience, which is very important in Parliament.

Mr. Romeo Saganash: Thank you. I see that time is running out.

You mentioned that there are 100 interpreters on your list, and that they can cover 20 indigenous languages.

Are you currently making efforts to add other languages to that list of 20 indigenous languages?

● (1135)

Mr. Stéphan Déry: Yes and no. As I said, we started discussions with a number of organizations to see how to promote the interpretation of indigenous languages. We are making these efforts to ensure, as in the case of any other language, that the bureau is ready to meet the demand, if there is a request from Parliament. Our goal is to make sure we have the largest network possible to recruit as many interpreters as possible. From those interpreters, we choose the best ones, with the best parliamentary experience.

Mr. Romeo Saganash: Do you provide training and development courses to those 100 interpreters who appear on your list?

We were talking about accreditation earlier. I think Mr. Ball mentioned accreditation. In your opinion, who should evaluate the interpreters' skill level? The officials from Nunavut mentioned to us, including the clerk, that in Nunavut there are four or five levels. I asked who evaluated those interpreters and at what level they were.

Would there be a similar mechanism in Parliament?

Mr. Stéphan Déry: I would say that, depending on the scale of Parliament's request, we would put the necessary mechanisms in place to ensure that we meet the demand. The greater the demand, the more mechanisms the bureau will put in place. Right now, we are working with all the indigenous organizations, as Mr. Ball said, to make sure we have references on paper. If the demand is truly great, as I said in my opening remarks, we are ready to commit and work with indigenous communities to ensure that we develop interpretation of this kind as a profession. We are already working on it with the Government of Nunavut.

[*English*]

Mr. Romeo Saganash: Am I done?

The Chair: Do you have one really short question?

Mr. Romeo Saganash: Okay.

Beyond the conclusions of this study, if there were an indigenous person elected who only spoke their indigenous language, and you are here to serve Parliament, would you be obliged to provide interpretation for that person?

Mr. Stéphan Déry: If we have a request by the chamber to provide interpretation, we would provide interpretation.

Mr. Romeo Saganash: Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you.

I'll go to Ms. Tassi now.

Mr. Stéphan Déry: Okay.

Ms. Filomena Tassi (Hamilton West—Ancaster—Dundas, Lib.): Thank you both for your presence today and your testimony.

I'd like to follow up on Mr. Saganash's last question along the same line of questioning as Mr. Graham's.

This is new to me. Am I understanding this correctly? If a member is going to speak in the House and asks for interpretation in a certain language, and they provide the text ahead of time, do you provide that interpretation on the member of Parliament's request?

Mr. Stéphan Déry: As I mentioned, if we're asked to provide interpretation in an indigenous or any foreign language and we don't have the internal capacity, as Mr. Ball explained, the member would request it through the chamber. Then the chamber, if they agreed—and that's a process of Parliament—would turn to the translation bureau and tell us that we need interpretation from, say, Inuktitut to English.

Ms. Filomena Tassi: When you say "the chamber", what do you mean?

Mr. Stéphan Déry: It's Parliament, the clerk and the process internal to Parliament. It's the same as what they did in the Senate for the pilot project. They requested that we provide indigenous language interpretation.

Ms. Filomena Tassi: Right now you have not ever been asked for that. Even if a member asked for interpretation, you would have needed the clerk to make that request to you before you could provide interpretation.

● (1140)

Mr. Stéphan Déry: We need the administration of Parliament to make a request to us as a service provider because we're here to provide services. We have provided indigenous languages interpretation 33 times in the last two years to Parliament, so it did happen that we were asked to do that.

Ms. Filomena Tassi: Okay.

With respect to the question of capacity now, I can understand the importance of the code, Mr. Ball, that you mentioned. Just so that I'm clear, is there something in the code that would allow an interpreter to interpret based on a text if the permission was given ahead of time from the organization, the House of Commons? We understand that your code exists, but we are asking that you provide the interpretation based on the text. This goes to capacity. Say, for example, it was too difficult to get with all the dialects of an indigenous language that's spoken and the text is provided to someone to interpret. If the House of Commons said, we would like you to do this and your understanding was that you're just going to interpret based on the text, would your code allow you to do that?

Mr. Matthew Ball: Not to give you a grey answer, but typically a translation is a translation of a text. We would ask the person who's provided the translation to read it. Therefore, the translation bureau could provide the translation of the text and we could read it, yes. But when we're given a text that we haven't translated, for the interpreter, it puts them in an awkward situation ethically because they're reading something they don't necessarily understand.

Ms. Filomena Tassi: Okay.

With respect to the code, for you to fulfill your obligations under the code, you wouldn't be able to do that. You wouldn't be able to take a text that someone's given to an interpreter and have that interpreter interpret based on that text, not understanding the first language that's being used.

Mr. Matthew Ball: Correct. It would be awkward for someone to read a text they didn't understand.

Ms. Filomena Tassi: Right, okay.

Do you have any issues with respect to capacity, because this committee has heard testimony with respect to how there are various dialects. I understand and appreciate starting...and maybe the start is on a smaller scale. Could I maybe have your comments on that with respect to what's a reasonable start-up? With respect to dialects, if you had that issue, is there the potential that someone could bring in an interpreter who would be acceptable to you? Is there some sort of process whereby that can happen?

How many languages and what sort of an approach would you suggest to this committee as a start?

Mr. Stéphan Déry: Personally, I would suggest we—as in the rest of our lives and in business—start small and build on successes.

Mr. Wolvengrey, a professor of Algonquian languages and linguistics from Regina, who testified here earlier on video conference, mentioned that it would be almost impossible if you were to ask us for 90 languages. But if you start with the languages that are spoken by members of Parliament already, then if you have a guest, we can work on maybe finding an interpreter for that guest.

The first step is the languages that are spoken already by members of Parliament, and then we can start building from there. Then if you have guests who speak a dialect that we don't have, I would say we need advance notice. We haven't refused anybody so far, so with all our connections and partnerships with communities, we have been able to fulfill all the requests.

Now it's been 33 since 2016. It's not 300. But the more structured the approach will be, the more chances we have to fulfill all the requests.

Ms. Filomena Tassi: Right, okay.

What's your suggestion of a reasonable time? You're saying a reasonable turnaround time. What would that be? It's been suggested 48 hours. Is that a reasonable time for a request?

Mr. Stéphan Déry: Yes. Forty-eight hours for requests that are common indigenous languages, and where we have local interpreters, is a lot easier.

Again, if we don't have a constant demand from Parliament, these interpreters are not waiting and sitting at home. In the case of this committee, there was Kevin Lewis who did interpret, and he's not an interpreter we usually call upon.

● (1145)

Ms. Filomena Tassi: Right.

Mr. Stéphan Déry: The interpreter we called upon had another engagement. He couldn't make it. We asked him if he could suggest someone. That referral is how we got Mr. Lewis, who I believe, from what I read in the notes, did a good interpretation. We work with the community to try to find the right interpreter, but if we had a structured demand, that would be a lot easier.

Ms. Filomena Tassi: Okay. That's very good.

How long would it take you to get to capacity? Say, for example, that we suggested this to every member in the House who speaks an indigenous language and we offered that member the right to speak in their language. How long would it take you to get up to capacity for us to implement that?

Mr. Stéphan Déry: From my knowledge right now, there are three members of Parliament who speak indigenous languages.

Ms. Filomena Tassi: Yes.

Mr. Stéphan Déry: It wouldn't be too hard for us.

Ms. Filomena Tassi: Are you saying that you could do it in a week?

Mr. Stéphan Déry: I would propose that we would do that in the new House, as the infrastructure would be there. I don't know when the move is scheduled, but as soon as you would, it would be—

Voices: Oh, oh!

Mr. Stéphan Déry: I mean that it would be a lot easier to implement when we have the third booth and the infrastructure to do it, but it could be done in this House.

Ms. Filomena Tassi: Yes, and fulfill Mr. Saganash's dream.

Thank you.

The Chair: Now we'll go on to Mr. Nater.

Mr. John Nater: Thank you, Mr. Chair, and again, thank you to our witnesses.

We were talking a bit about the hundred or so interpreters you have on file, for lack of a better word. I'm curious about this. Perhaps there would be some way we can do this without releasing personal information, but would we be able to get a profile of those hundred interpreters, without names or whatever, but what languages they speak, their profiles, and perhaps as well where they're located geographically? It would help us in our deliberations.

Mr. Stéphan Déry: Absolutely. We would be happy to provide that without names, but with the location, the capacity of the interpreters, and the languages. There are about 20 languages. We will provide that from the information we have. We don't have a major database for that, but we can provide the information.

Mr. John Nater: That would be greatly appreciated.

Stemming from that as well, you mentioned that many of these interpreters have other jobs. Would you be able to tell the committee what some of those other positions are? Are they in health care? Are they in the justice system? Where would they normally be if they're not interpreting for us?

Mr. Stéphan Déry: That's a question that I don't think we would be able to answer, to be honest. Also, a lot of these interpreters are not necessarily full-time interpreters. There is no profession of interpreter in indigenous languages like there is in official languages, but they also could be community interpreters, or they could do other work that is not related to interpreting.

Mr. John Nater: I'll follow up a bit on what we talked about in that first round in terms of relay in translation and how there is often that loss in translation. I'm curious to hear if you have any comments on whether it would present a challenge for the Official Languages Act if something is being interpreted from an indigenous language into English and then relayed into French. Would that loss, which we have been told is 20%, give or take, offend the Official Languages Act in terms of having to use a relay translation in those situations?

Mr. Stéphan Déry: Thank you for the question. I will try to answer. I may ask my colleague Mr. Ball to continue the answer.

Interpretation is different from translation. It's not word for word. We're not speaking word for word what has been said by the person. Let's say the person says, “one point eight billion, two hundred and sixty-two million, and five hundred and sixty-two”. A good interpreter will probably say “around two billion dollars”.

If they start repeating every single number, they'll lose the context and they'll lose the speaker. That's a big difference. This would be a bad translation: “approximately two billion dollars”. You would have to write down the entire number. But in the interpretation, to give the sense of the message, you would say “two billion dollars”. It's not exactly the same in terms of the Official Languages Act.

The person who is receiving the message would get a sense of the message, of what has been said. I would say that they won't get all the flowers around the message, and maybe they'll lose a few of the colourful statements, but they'll have the intent of the message.

● (1150)

Mr. John Nater: That follows when it's recorded in *Hansard*. Does the translation bureau do the translation for that as well, in which it would be the exact—

Mr. Stéphan Déry: That would be the exact number, yes.

Mr. John Nater: The translation bureau does that entirely for the production of *Hansard*.

Mr. Stéphan Déry: Yes.

Mr. John Nater: I want to go back and talk a little about the code of conduct and things like that. I was curious about some of the rules the translation bureau has in terms of working conditions. I know we often see the rotation of interpreters within the House. Are there set rules for how long an interpreter works consecutively before a break, or the length of a workday?

Mr. Stéphan Déry: I will ask Mr. Ball to answer the question.

Mr. Matthew Ball: Yes, there are. There are internationally accepted standards, and the bureau abides by them. What you see here in Parliament is typical. The team strength is based on the length of the event, so typically for your meetings, if they're two hours, we may send two interpreters. You're right, the interpreters will spell off in rotation. Interpreting is a cognitively demanding task. We would not expect an interpreter to do her or his best work non-stop for hours on end.

The interpreters also are there to work for their clients, so there are times when we.... These are principles and standards that we respect in theory. If a meeting goes over by 20 minutes we don't usually send in another team. That's a little context for you.

Mr. John Nater: Are those documents publicly available?

Mr. Matthew Ball: Yes.

Mr. John Nater: That's great.

The Chair: Now we'll go to Mr. Graham.

Mr. David de Burgh Graham: Thank you.

We're here for process. I want to know if you think what I'm saying here is reasonable. Every member has their spoken indigenous languages documented on arrival in this place. Everyone is given a reasonable notice period for speaking so that someone like MP Saganash can have that right. If we recommend that honourably submitted text be read, how would you handle that, given the conflict between our rules and your ethical rules?

If we make that a rule, how will you take that? If we put it in our Standing Orders that if a member provides the text to the interpretation booth, that it will be read, and that puts you in an ethical conflict, how will you take it?

Mr. Matthew Ball: I believe the rules state now that the members are to read their statements themselves. If the bureau were to be asked to read statements, it would be made clear that this was a statement provided to be read into the record. I don't think we would make an interpreter speak through the voice of the interpreter. We would make the distinction clear. I don't see an issue with that.

Mr. David de Burgh Graham: That's a good point. If a member speaks a language other than English or French and gives the English or French text to the interpreter, and our rules state that you will be obligated to read it, can you do that or is the ethical conflict such that you couldn't do it?

Mr. Matthew Ball: It could be read, but the interpreter wouldn't characterize it as his or her work. Do you understand the distinction? When the interpreter—

Mr. David de Burgh Graham: How would they say that? Would they say into the mike, “This is not my work”, and that's it?

Mr. Matthew Ball: Yes, we'd make an announcement. That's done sometimes in certain specific contexts. Typically, in many of our assignments if a video is going to be played, we normally would make a note saying that the interpretation would resume after the video is finished.

Mr. David de Burgh Graham: I appreciate that. Thank you.

I think that Mr. Saganash has some more questions for you. I'd like to give him my time, if I could.

Mr. Romeo Saganash: Thank you, Mr. Graham.

I'm unaware of the relations that you have with the 100 or so interpreters you have on your list. Over time, have you had any conversations relating to the fact that this is a very particular setting, that this is Parliament? Have you had any discussions with them about the difficulty of translating certain concepts?

I speak my language fluently, but there are some words that we use in a parliamentary setting, like filibustering, for example.... I know a lot of chiefs who filibuster all the time, but that's another setting. Certain concepts exist in our setting, the parliamentary setting, that don't exist in indigenous languages. Have you had any discussions to that effect with the interpreters you have right now?

[*Translation*]

You can answer in French, if you wish.

Mr. Matthew Ball: Generally, some of the interpreters we hire and who work on parliamentary committees have little or no parliamentary experience. This is often the case with indigenous languages. In these cases, we send a senior interpreter who supports them during the process. We provide them with background documentation to explain what parliamentary committees are, how meetings are run, the roles of members of Parliament, the chair, the opposition and the interpreter, and the fact that the interpreter speaks in the first person, as the witness who is speaking.

So that's what we are doing right now. As for the unique features of a language and notions of that kind, it is up to the interpreters to be familiar with them and to master them, and to make the transfer between languages and cultures.

● (1155)

Mr. Romeo Saganash: I imagine that's part of your code of ethics.

Mr. Matthew Ball: Yes.

Mr. Romeo Saganash: Thank you.

[*English*]

The Chair: We will go on to Mr. Reid.

Mr. Scott Reid: I think it's actually Mr. Nater.

The Chair: You're next on the list. Mr. Nater just went.

Mr. Scott Reid: That's fine, but Mr. Nater has some questions to ask.

The Chair: Okay. That's fine.

Mr. John Nater: Thank you.

I want to talk a little about technology. I know that the translation bureau has been involved in projects in the past—for example, the Portage tool. What efforts are being made from the technology side of things in terms of developing a capacity on the technological side of things for indigenous languages?

Mr. Stéphan Déry: I could come back with additional details, but currently we're working with the National Research Council looking at incorporating English, French, and Inuktitut into machine translation. That's not machine interpretation. It's different.

We're looking at this. As you know, though, Portage is a tool to understand, not necessarily to translate. It's the same thing with any tools we will be looking at, especially for dialect, Inuktitut and others, and indigenous languages. As you heard from many of the witnesses, there's not even consensus on how it should be written, so it's difficult.

As I said, we're working with the National Research Council. We're trying to make progress on that, but I would say that the progress is slow coming.

Mr. John Nater: The Star Trek universal translator machine isn't in the near future, then.

Mr. Stéphan Déry: In interpretation, definitely not.

Mr. John Nater: Okay. That's great.

I want to touch a little bit more on the remote translation idea. You had some concerns about that in your opening comments. I've not been in the new chamber since last spring when it was an empty cement block, but I understand that the third translation booth isn't in the chamber itself. Is that your understanding?

One of the concerns we heard is that when someone is interpreting, it's better to see the person who's speaking. If the third translation booth is not physically in the chamber, does that present challenges for interpreters?

Mr. Stéphan Déry: I will have to verify that, because to my understanding, it is there, or it was when I visited the chamber.

As an interpreter, if you don't see the speaker, you can't really use the body language for your verbal intonation. Visual expression is, we say, worth a thousand words. It's important for them to see. It's harder when they are working remotely. It's feasible, but it's harder, especially when they don't see the interlocutor.

Mr. John Nater: The technology is there, potentially, but the usefulness or ability or capacity to do that would be the challenge. It wouldn't necessarily be the technology.

Mr. Stéphan Déry: What we have seen with remote interpretation is that when we have somebody from Nunavut, let's say, trying to interpret something in Parliament here, the bandwidth is the biggest issue we have. There's a disconnect. Sometimes the lack of audio quality of the interpretation is extremely difficult for the participant.

Mr. John Nater: Absolutely. Having briefly been in Iqaluit for a committee meeting and calling back here to talk with a school group, there was about a two-second delay over the line, so I certainly appreciate the challenges there.

That's good, Chair. Thank you.

The Chair: Does anyone else have any questions? We have one minute left.

Ms. Tassi.

● (1200)

Ms. Filomena Tassi: Thank you.

The only follow-up question I have is with respect to the suggestion you made about choosing a day—the Friday, for example. Is there an advantage to choosing a day, or is it okay to have it any day as long as you have the 48 hours? Is there some advantage to that?

Mr. Stéphan Déry: For us in the industry, we have 100 freelancers who work with us right now. If there's a demand that is constant and it requires the translation bureau to hire an indigenous interpreter, then we will have them on staff, just as we do for a lot of our official languages interpreters. We have about 70 of them on staff. We also deal with freelancers. If they're all freelancers, though, and we don't tell them when they're going to be asked to come to Parliament, then they may take other contracts.

So as I was saying, a day or so makes it easier for them to schedule and to arrange their professional life around working in Parliament. You have a lot more consistency and probably a better interpreter and a higher quality interpretation. They will over time develop this parliamentary experience in the language that MP Saganash was talking about.

Ms. Filomena Tassi: Okay. Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you very much. It's been very helpful for us that you're making all the arrangements possible for this to occur on a reasonable basis. I think it's very exciting for Parliament and for all of us on the committee.

While we're shifting witnesses, I want to ask the committee something.

We could get our last two witnesses into the first hour of the next meeting, if that's okay. There's one we could do later, which would not interrupt our flow or anything, and that's the Northern Territory of Australia. They're not available the week of May 22, which would be an evening thing, so I'll leave that out for now. On Thursday, if we did our last witnesses in the first hour, would it be okay on Tuesday, then, to give instructions to the analyst for the report?

Some hon. members: Yes.

The Chair: They could basically start now because we don't have a lot left to do. Then we could still go ahead with the Northern Territory if we want. As we did with Costa Rica, if there's any little thing that needs to be added, we could do that.

We'll suspend while we change witnesses.

●

(Pause)

●

● (1205)

The Chair: Welcome back to the 100th meeting of the committee.

For our second panel, we're pleased to be joined by Jérémie Séror, Director and Associate Dean, Official Languages and Bilingualism Institute, the University of Ottawa. We have Johanne Lacasse, Director General, from the Eeyou Istchee James Bay Regional Government; and Melissa Saganash, Director of Cree-Quebec relations, Grand Council of the Crees and Cree Nation Government.

Thank you, all, for being here. It's great that you can make it.

Now we'll have opening statements from each of you, and we'll start with Mr. Séror.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jérémie Séror (Director and Associate Dean, University of Ottawa, Official Languages and Bilingualism Institute): Mr. Chair, members of the committee, thank you for inviting me to appear before you today on the use of indigenous languages in proceedings of the House of Commons.

By way of background, I am the Director of the Official Languages and Bilingualism Institute and the Associate Dean of the Faculty of Arts at the University of Ottawa. I'm also an Associate Professor.

My main field of research focuses on the educational, social and political dimensions of developing advanced literacies. I am particularly interested in educational approaches that promote the academic and social success of language learners.

My research highlights the importance of languages as a means of socialization and integration. They carry values and cultures. They are often the tool for identity building and social construction par excellence. Learning to use a new language is developing skills that facilitate communication with another person. It is also a way of opening oneself up to new ways of understanding and expressing the world.

Languages are therefore powerful political tools and language policies, which seek to preserve, encourage and develop the multilingual identity of individuals in society; they are seen all over the world as important tools to ensure a better mutual understanding and greater openness to others in this world that is increasingly marked by diversity and the need for “intracultural” and “intralinguistic” exchanges.

This vision of language learning and the benefits of multilingualism is, of course, at the heart of Canada's major policies. Canada has long been a leader in the field of language teaching and language policies that seek to promote French and English bilingualism in our particular context.

In terms of the topic being studied by this committee, although the discussions in Canada have often revolved around the issue of learning French and English, I confirm that universities are now expressing a growing interest in programs and initiatives that also focus on the development of indigenous languages and literacies.

This interest reflects the recommendations of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples in 1996 and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission almost 20 years later. Both of those documents have dealt with the issue of indigenous languages and call for initiatives to stop their decline or, consequently, to encourage their development.

I think there is no doubt that allowing the use of indigenous languages in proceedings of the House of Commons would serve to advance those recommendations.

Allowing the use of indigenous languages in proceedings of the House of Commons would enhance the symbolic status and function of indigenous languages at the federal level. This simple act of making indigenous languages visible and heard as part of the activities of the House of Commons, the elected legislative branch of Parliament, would result in enhancing these languages, the communities attached to them, and the contributions of indigenous peoples to Canadian heritage.

To achieve this goal, it is important to remain flexible and to keep in mind a number of factors, including the great diversity of Canada's first peoples—Inuit, Métis and first nations—their needs and the unique setting of the House of Commons. Nevertheless, the task is not impossible, in my opinion. I think we could, in fact, be inspired by similar initiatives that have been previously taken in Canada.

For example—I'm sure this has already been discussed—the 1988 Northwest Territories Official Languages Act, which is now almost 20 years old, already recognizes in section 6 that: “Everyone has the right to use any Official Language in the debates and other proceedings of the Legislative Assembly.” Subsection 7(3) states that: "Copies of the sound recordings of the public debates of the Legislative Assembly, in their original and interpreted versions, shall be provided to any person on reasonable request.”

Similarly, the 2008 Nunavut Official Languages Act recognizes the same rights. Subsection 4(1) of the act recognizes that: “Everyone has the right to use any Official Language in the debates and other proceedings of the Legislative Assembly.” Subsection 4(3) states: “Copies of the sound recordings of the public debates of the Legislative Assembly, in their original and interpreted versions, shall be provided to any person on reasonable request.”

● (1210)

In my opinion, the House of Commons could adopt provisions similar to those of the Northwest Territories and Nunavut. We could also envision procedures similar to those proposed by the Senate that allows the use of an indigenous language, and offers simultaneous interpretation and translation services, provided reasonable notice is given.

From the perspective of applied linguistics, allowing members of the House of Commons to speak in an indigenous language would not only recognize their right to express their culture and language during debates, but would also allow all members of the House of Commons and Canadians nationwide who listen to these debates to gain from the values and beliefs encoded within indigenous languages. All languages have their own distinct ideals and ways of thinking, and that is often something that draws people towards languages different from their own. It is what the Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, entitled “Looking Forward, Looking Back”, called “a fundamentally different world view [that] continues to exist and struggles for expression whenever Aboriginal people come together”.

Such provisions, as well as the potential sharing and enhancing of existing Senate resources would allow the House of Commons to send a strong signal of support for preserving, promoting and revitalizing indigenous languages, as well as acknowledging the special place indigenous peoples have in Canadian society.

However, to successfully implement this type of legislative measure—I am sure that you have also talked about this a lot—the Government of Canada and the House of Commons will have to implement strategies and invest resources.

I will now focus on one of these measures. Just as the Government of Canada did the day after passing the Official Languages Act in 1969, this type of initiative would probably require an investment to make sure that universities include the indigenous languages of Canada and indigenous language teaching in the curriculum, as well as train teachers. They will also need to train translators and interpreters to provide a pool of translators and interpreters, as well as a new wave of professional interpreters who will be necessary for the success of this new legislative measure.

In my opinion, this investment and interest expressed by the Government of Canada would have a significant multiplier effect. An investment would help put indigenous languages on par with other modern languages, and would show young students everywhere who are interested in indigenous languages studies that they could actually have careers as teachers, translators and interpreters. In my opinion, this would be an attractive virtuous circle.

This investment would also meet one of the recommendations of the "Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada: Calls to Action" document:

> We call upon post-secondary institutions to create university and college degree and diploma programs in Aboriginal languages.

An initiative such as the one we've discussed today would invigorate this type of recommendation.

When the Official Languages Act was originally implemented, the translation bureau had to face the same challenges, that is, finding a pool of interpreters. Translation students were recruited directly on campus. Some students were even offered an incentive that would allow their university years to count in their pension plans if they worked at the translation bureau. Those positive measures allowed universities to develop those programs, and allowed the government to have a pool of highly qualified translators and interpreters, who are now internationally respected due to the quality of their work.

Clearly, the demand for translation and interpretation will not be as large. On the one hand, the demand will be far more arbitrary and ad hoc if the legislative measures resembled those adopted by the territories. On the other hand, the source of the demand would be very diversified, because of the dozens of indigenous languages commonly spoken today, which isn't something to consider when systematically translating between French and English, our two official languages.

Notwithstanding these differences, it is essential for Parliament to be able to depend on well trained and qualified human resources. That is why I emphasize that the House of Commons and the Government of Canada could not only count on universities, but also on the expertise and collaboration of indigenous communities and their elders to supply and train interpreters. I am convinced that they would be greatly interested in any initiative that would allow their languages to be brought to life and heard in the public sphere. Allowing children, young people and seniors the opportunity to hear their language being spoken at the heart of Parliament would be a very powerful gesture.

● (1215)

This is where I will end my presentation. Thank you for listening to me. It would be my pleasure to answer questions from the members of the committee.

[*English*]

The Chair: *Meegwetch*.

Now we'll have Ms. Lacasse.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Johanne Lacasse (Director General, Eeyou Istchee James Bay Regional Government): Good afternoon, Mr. Chair. *Wachiya. Kwe.*

[*English*]

We wish to thank the members of the committee for inviting the Eeyou Istchee James Bay Regional Government to appear before the committee, and we hope that our presentation will contribute to your study on the use of indigenous languages in the proceedings of the House of Commons.

We also wish to acknowledge the efforts of our member of Parliament for the riding of Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou, Mr. Romeo Saganash, in recognizing the importance of using indigenous languages in House of Commons proceedings.

Meegwetch, Mr. Saganash.

My name is Johanne Lacasse. I am the Director General of the Eeyou Istchee James Bay Regional Government and a member of the Anishinabe nation.

Ms. Melissa Saganash (Director of Cree-Québec Relations, Grand Council of the Crees/Cree Nation Government, Eeyou Istchee James Bay Regional Government): Good afternoon, Mr. Chair, members.

[*Witness speaks in Cree*]

To my family, hello.

My name is Melissa Saganash. I'm the Director of Cree-Québec Relations for the Grand Council of the Crees. I also serve as a member of the James Bay Regional Government technical committee, so I have the honour of working with Johanne Lacasse every so often. I'm also a member of the the Waswanipi Cree first nation of James Bay.

Today our presentation will essentially cover topics pertaining to general provisions of the governance model of the Eeyou Istchee James Bay Regional Government and primarily on key factors of our practical experience in the implementation of the multi-language simultaneous translation that is used by our citizens, in French, English, and Cree.

To set you in context of how and why we are in the position to deliver such a service, it's important to understand the essence of a particular agreement that was signed with the province and the Cree nation.

On July 24, 2012, the Government of Quebec signed an agreement with the Cree nation government, known as the Agreement on Governance in the Eeyou Istchee James Bay Territory between the Crees of Eeyou Istchee and the Gouvernement du Québec. This historic agreement resulted in the abolishment of the former Municipalité de Baie-James, where only mayors of the municipalities and localities of James Bay would govern, and led to the creation of the Eeyou Istchee James Bay Regional Government. This new structure now includes a seat at the table for each elected chief in addition to the mayors of the territory—a first of its kind in the country. This agreement provides for the modernization of the governance regime that once prevailed in the territory, and promotes the inclusion of the Eeyou in decision-making powers.

Essentially, the Eeyou Istchee James Bay Regional Government now provides significant Cree participation in decision-making over shared lands and resources. The new regional government reflects a vision of a path for our territory based on the noble principles of inclusiveness, democracy, and social harmony.

● (1220)

Ms. Johanne Lacasse: I would like to share a brief description of our designated territory, the territory of Eeyou Istchee James Bay. As you probably know, it's within the federal ridings of Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou and Abitibi—Témiscamingue.

The territory covers a large portion of northern Quebec, which is between the 49th and 55th parallel in Quebec. It's approximately 277,000 square kilometres if you include all the category III lands of our territory. Of course, that excludes category I and II lands, as well as the municipal territories. We have four municipalities and nine Cree communities.

Overall, we're looking at a territory that represents approximately 17% of the territory of Quebec. We are considered the largest municipality in the world. If we look at the population density, that represents approximately 0.05 inhabitants per square kilometre. The estimated population is approximately 20,000 Cree and 17,000 Jamesians.

If we look at the composition of our local governance, Eeyou Istchee James Bay Regional Government local governance is carried out by way of the council of the regional government, which for its first 10 years is to be composed of 11 Cree representatives, 11 Jamesian representatives and one non-voting representative that is appointed by the Gouvernement du Québec.

The Cree representatives consist of the grand chief and the deputy grand chief of the Grand Council of the Crees and the Cree Nation Government, and nine members that are chiefs of the Cree communities elected by the board council of the Grand Council and the Cree Nation Government.

As for the Jamesian representatives, they consist of elected members of the local municipal councils, the majority of which are mayors, and of course, some of the councillors of Chapais, Chibougamau, Lebel-sur-Quévillon, and Matagami, as well as the non-Crees in the Eeyou Istchee James Bay territory.

If you look at the governance model and the concept of the regional government, our regional government is subject to Quebec's Cities and Towns Act, which in this case is pertinent today as it requires a public call-for-tenders process for all our professional services.

The chairman of the council is designated in alternation by representatives of the Cree and the representatives of the Jamesians for a two-year mandate, so they alternate every two years.

A minimum of six regular council meetings are held per year. Our council meetings are held at various locations throughout our territory, including the Jamesian municipalities, as well as our nine Cree communities. The locations of our council meetings are held in an alternate manner, which means a Jamesian municipality followed by a Cree community, and so on, which represents three regular council meetings in Cree communities and three regular council meetings held in one of our four municipalities.

Also, what's interesting here is that our council members may participate by telephone conference call for a maximum of once per year should they be unable to attend in person.

● (1225)

The documents tabled at council meetings and presentations are made available in French and English, and provided two weeks in advance whenever possible. We have an in-house translator who translates from English and French and vice versa.

Our simultaneous translation services are provided in English, French, and Cree during council meetings. Our council meetings are also broadcast live through live streaming, and broadcast live through Cree radio broadcasting in the Cree communities whenever possible.

Ms. Melissa Saganash: Here are some of the guiding principles in the implementation of the multi-language simultaneous translation services that we provide.

On the basis that Eeyou Istchee James Bay Regional Government was created to ensure the inclusion and participation of the Cree or Eeyou people in decision-making over shared lands and resources, our guiding principles are based on legislative frameworks. These are just extracts that we'll share with you about what we've included in these agreements. In the act establishing the Eeyou Istchee James Bay Regional Government in section 36 of chapter VII:

> The Regional Government must, where applicable, take the necessary measures to have any text intended to be understood by a Cree translated into either Cree or English.
>
> Nothing in the first paragraph must be interpreted as authorizing an infringement of the right to work in French in the Regional Government....

Furthermore, we have chapter V of the Agreement on Governance in the Eeyou Istchee James Bay Territory between the Crees of Eeyou Istchee and the Gouvernement du Québec. In section 108 of chapter V in the rules of operation, it says:

> 108. Cree and French shall be the principal languages of the Regional Government.
>
> 109. The Regional Government may use either French or English in its internal communications and language of work.

> 110. A citizen may communicate verbally or in writing with the Regional Government, including at meetings of the council, in Cree, English or French.
>
> 111. Texts and documents intended for Cree individuals or for the Cree population in general shall be translated into Cree and English, including any document enabling the users to exercise a right or to meet an obligation.

We've been proactive as well with article 13.2 of the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples to ensure effective measures "to ensure that indigenous peoples [in our territory] can understand and be understood in political...and administrative proceedings, where necessary through the provision of interpretation or by other appropriate means."

Ms. Johanne Lacasse: We would like to share some of the considerations in the implementation of our simultaneous translation services. These are the more practical considerations that we were faced with when implementing our translation services.

As I mentioned earlier, the fact that we are subject to the Cities and Towns Act means that we are subject also to a call for a public tender process for our simultaneous translation services.

There is also the additional cost of providing simultaneous translation services. This is a major factor. The revenues of the regional government are basically—and I would say practically solely—based on the taxation revenues of the citizens of the category III lands of our territory. The costs are covered through the taxation revenues that are generated.

We've also considered the need to create a bank of qualified and available Cree interpreters who are hired on a contractual basis.

We've also taken into consideration the fact that we needed to compose with various Cree dialects in the territory, which means that there are the northern and southern Cree dialects and also the coastal and inland Cree dialects that were taken into consideration.

The technical aspects of the contents pertaining to municipal matters and our contents are of a very technical nature. They're dealing with municipal and land use planning matters, so we've taken into consideration those aspects. We've also foreseen the space that is required to accommodate translation booths and the work areas that are required for the technicians who accompany our interpreters. This means that we have one booth for the French and English interpreters. We have a second booth for the Cree interpreters. We also have a work area for the two technicians who accompany the four interpreters.

The cost, as I mentioned earlier, includes the translation fees and the lodging and travel costs. I would say that the overall translation cost represents anywhere from $100,000 to $150,000 per year for the regional government.

The fact is that we do hold our meetings in remote areas, and that includes as far north as Whapmagoostui, which does not have any access road. We do have a challenge with accessing reliable high-speed Internet in certain remote areas.

For access to reliable telephone communication lines, because of the fact that members do call in or join by conference call, it means that we need two separate telephone lines, one line to accommodate the English and French, and a second phone line to accommodate the members requiring Cree translation.

We have been experimenting with new technologies such as remote or distant translation, but we're not there yet, for the sole reason that we have to compose with different considerations—that is, we have the live streaming, we require the simultaneous translation, and there are the members who are joining in by phone—so we haven't yet arrived at identifying the possibility of introducing new technologies for remote translation. I was listening to the presentation earlier. It's very difficult. Our interpreters have mentioned to us that they prefer to be on location for the translation.

● (1230)

There's also radio broadcasting, so that's another consideration.

I would have to say that the added value to the quality of the implementation of our simultaneous translation services depends on the devotion and dedication of the regional government public services that are operating under time constraints and under a lot of pressure at certain times. In particular, our public servants have managed their way through an extensive administrative transformation to ensure that services are based on an inclusive approach for all citizens of our territory.

● (1235)

The Chair: Thank you very much. *Meegwetch*. *Mahsi cho*.

Now we'll go to some questions. We'll start with Ms. Sahota.

Ms. Ruby Sahota: Thank you.

I'm going to be sharing my time with Mr. Simms.

My first question is for Mr. Séror. You said that the use of indigenous languages here in Parliament would definitely have an effect on the desire to speak those languages or would reawaken people to wanting to use those languages again. I heard from a witness before this committee, also, an aspirational goal of our translation bureau helping academia to standardize some of the languages, to help finalize, maybe, where there's controversy over what word to use at what particular moment.

What are your thoughts on that? How much do you think that the work that's done here through our translation bureau could help serve the work that you do in your department?

Mr. Jérémie Séror: I think it would, indeed, be one of those gestures that sort of sparks a bunch of interesting consequences. It would actually spark a number of problems to be solved, including, for example, how to write a particular word or what's the perfect word for filibustering. These are the kinds of problems where, because there's a need, all of a sudden there's a need to actually talk about these things and look for a solution, in collaboration with all the parties involved, of course.

As soon as you start to apply those solutions, then you see if it's a good solution, and then it sort of gets this virtuous circle going. With time, what you would hope would happen is that some of these problems would no longer be problems. They would become things that have stabilized a little bit.

Having a real need to think about how we can do interpretation or how we might translate certain terms or concepts creates a need for the discussion to happen with academics, but also with the students who are working with the academics, with the future translators. This then launches the.... It's not that these conversations are not happening right now, but when you have a real objective tied to some of these conversations, to these functions, it certainly creates a motivation to look at these things and invest the time and energy that is often required to get at solutions.

Ms. Ruby Sahota: Would you see there being a role for universities to play in helping the translation bureau achieve its goals and do it accurately?

Mr. Jérémie Séror: Yes, I think so. Certainly, I'm not representing the school of translation, although we're in the same building and we talk, but certainly the field of translation has expertise and has, over time, looked at issues such as the challenge of translating something that's not translatable. It's never a “one word for one word” equivalent. There are different theories, and there are different best practices. There's the development of resources that can be used and certain kinds of training that can be developed. I think that theoretical...or the knowledge of what the best practices are in relationship with the people on the ground who are actually putting these things into implementation is always going to be a very fruitful interaction.

If the challenges are related to a certain language, then that's where people tend to orient their conversations. However, as soon as you create a new need or a new type of interaction, then you're going to see, I think, that some of the universities will be happy to think about these questions, or to apply what they know and guide what's going to be happening in the future with regard to providing quality interpretation and translation.

Ms. Ruby Sahota: In your opinion, what indigenous languages have been most developed or most taught in universities up to this point?

● (1240)

Mr. Jérémie Séror: That's a good question. Although I'm not familiar with the whole list, the big ones being taught at the University of Ottawa are Cree, Ojibwa, and Inuktitut. Year by year, it depends on which individuals are available to teach those languages and also where the various groups are interested in having the languages taught. Sometimes they will bring people to the community, or sometimes they will come to the campus.

It depends on the year. I don't think it's clearly established yet, but at the moment, it tends to be the languages that have the most speakers.

Ms. Ruby Sahota: I'll pass the rest of my time to Mr. Simms.

Mr. Scott Simms (Coast of Bays—Central—Notre Dame, Lib.): Thank you, Chair, and thank you, Ruby.

I come from a world where, every time you have a problem, you seek out a person who had the problem before and look for best practices. Ms. Lacasse and Ms. Saganash, when it comes to regional governance, I think there's a lot for us to learn when you're dealing with a larger assortment of dialects and languages than we are, with just the two languages.

You mentioned a couple of issues. You have six meetings per year. What do these meetings look like in the form of translation with different dialects? What is the main one, and what are the different dialects that you have to deal with?

Ms. Melissa Saganash: I was just reading an article, actually, before we came in. When we began our sessions of the regional government in the north, a local reporter came to watch a session.

[*Translation*]

In his opinion, Chibougamau felt like the United Nations.

[*English*]

That's exactly what it looks like. It's 22 people sitting around a table. There's Cree, French, and English. The chair might be speaking English, French, or Cree, depending on the subject or who is being addressed. Next to the large table is a translation booth, set up so that we can watch everybody who is in the room. We have technicians who've figured out some sort of magic with the lines. There are three lines. I know that once you go beyond two lines, a bit of technicality gets involved, but they've sorted it out.

We are now transportable. We can pick up the regional government, and if you tell us where to go, we'll land there and provide the services in three languages.

Mr. Scott Simms: When you say that the services you provide are transportable, do you mean the whole technical outlay of how you do translation?

Ms. Melissa Saganash: It's everything. It's a road show. We have roadies.

Mr. Scott Simms: Really?

Ms. Melissa Saganash: Yes.

Mr. Scott Simms: That's very interesting. I'm glad I asked the question. That's really something, because my next question deals with—

The Chair: You don't have a next question.

Mr. Nater.

Mr. John Nater: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'm going to follow up a little on Mr. Simms' comments, so maybe I'll ask his question. Who knows?

Mr. Scott Simms: Thank you so much.

Mr. John Nater: From the aspect of the cost of moving the government interpretation or translation, if it's fully portable now, there are very minimal additional costs beyond what you've already invested, because you've done it that way.

Ms. Melissa Saganash: The agreement that provides for the three languages was signed in 2012. To be honest, it was a bit of trial and error in the beginning. At first, we were renting everything, so we had providers bringing in the equipment. It didn't take very long for us to realize that it would be a lot more efficient and cost-saving if we actually bought the equipment. Then it would become ours. The services would become the regional government's, and we would be providing that.

Ms. Johanne Lacasse: In terms of cost-effectiveness, as I mentioned, we are subject to the call for tenders process. We've also learned from that call for tenders experience. We've recently hired a new simultaneous translation service provider. This is done every two years. When we change our service provider, we need to take the time to explain certain situations in terms of travel in very remote areas, and the service provider needs to integrate and work with the radio broadcast technicians. They need to learn to work hand in hand with our live streaming technicians.

Yes, there is the cost factor involved, and of course, we work with the service providers that submit the lowest bids. The budgets are forecast in accordance with the bids submitted by the service providers.

● (1245)

Mr. John Nater: Basically, you send out a tender, or a request for proposals, saying you need interpretation or translation services for six meetings that have to.... Then different companies that have interpreters on staff would then provide you with that—

Ms. Johanne Lacasse: That's correct for the English-French translation. Of course, we have a bank of Cree interpreters available who are integrated within the services provided by the simultaneous translation service provider.

Mr. John Nater: Now in terms of the Cree interpreters, you mentioned in the opening comments four different dialects that were common. Do you have four separate Cree interpreters, or is it kind of hit and miss, in terms of how that operates?

Ms. Johanne Lacasse: These are local. I mentioned that the locations of the meetings alternate.

We don't have interpreters with different dialects. It's on the basis that the Crees have been holding public meetings since the signing of the James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement, the JBNQA. They've always found a way to communicate. I don't think it's necessary, at this point in time, to find people with the various dialects. They have a common understanding. They've been working together since the signing of the agreement.

In terms of the process, we do have a concern about providing opportunities to the local people while we're visiting their community, while holding our council meetings. These people normally have a minimum quality of translation skills. They've been doing it for court proceedings, medical services, and their own public meetings.

I have to say that we don't necessarily have a problem with attracting Cree interpreters, because our Cree citizens feel very strongly about self-governance initiatives. From that perspective, they're proud to serve, and proud to serve their institutions—the regional government, the Cree Nation Government, or any other Cree entity that holds public meetings within their institutions. I think they feel compelled to serve in the capacity of providing the interpretation services, to serve the public and our citizens.

Mr. John Nater: That's really great to hear.

In terms of the age of those who provide services, are there many who are younger who are providing the services? What's the age category?

I know Mr. Saganash has spoken of his mother, who is an exceptional Cree speaker. Are there younger generations who know the language and are also providing the interpretation services?

Ms. Johanne Lacasse: I think we need to promote and encourage the younger generation to provide this quality interpretation service.

I was discussing it earlier this morning with Melissa, and I was saying that we have an older generation of elected officials who have now retired, and we call upon their services. They have the practical experience in the political and administrative field. They're often available, because they're retired. They also have a general knowledge of our council proceedings.

Mr. John Nater: The challenge about the two separate phone lines.... If I'm calling into a meeting as an elected representative, and I speak at the meeting, am I able to both be translated out and then translated back in at the same time?

● (1250)

Ms. Johanne Lacasse: Yes, that's the magic that Melissa was referring to, absolutely.

I don't have the technical knowledge—

Mr. John Nater: But it happens.

Ms. Johanne Lacasse: Yes, we make it happen. Our technicians make it happen.

Ms. Melissa Saganash: The technicians arrive the evening before the proceedings begin. This way they're able to set up and iron out any kinks, if there are any.

Mr. John Nater: Thank you so much. I really appreciate it.

[*Translation*]

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

[*English*]

Mr. Romeo Saganash: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you to our presenters.

I'm quite amazed that this regional government has managed to turn around so fast after the signing of that agreement with Quebec and was able to work together so fast with the non-indigenous population through this institution. After 50 years of both peoples ignoring each other, I think what you guys have gone through, over the last couple of years only, is quite fascinating.

It's always a pleasure to have a family member at the committee. I had my nephew, a fire chief, here not too long ago in another committee. I'm really honoured to have my niece here.

Ms. Melissa Saganash: It's an honour to be here.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Romeo Saganash: I will begin with you, Mr. Séror.

I listened closely to your presentation. You talked about how important languages are for humanity, and also about intercomprehension, a term I had never heard before, I believe. You mentioned provisions in a variety of agreements that were signed in the north, in the territories, including Nunavut. Melissa referred to article 13 of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, in which United Nations member states are called upon to take all possible measures to ensure that indigenous peoples can be understood in various institutions, including political ones. Coincidentally, Call to Action number 13 of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada speaks of indigenous languages as being ancestral rights under the Constitution.

What I'm interested in—and you touched on this—are the effects the recognition of an indigenous language has on the communities that speak this language. Clearly, they will be positive if the use of the language is recognized in an institution such as the Parliament of Canada.

I would like this process to be more than symbolic. That is important to me. Can you tell us more about the positive effects it would have?

I believe you said that indigenous languages should perhaps have the same status as English and French, the country's two official languages. I often raise this issue, and I would like you to expand on it. The effects—I'm referring to the positive effects on indigenous languages—would be more than just symbolic.

Mr. Jérémie Séror: I will give you a very personal example.

I always keep young people in mind. Adults and seniors are important as well, but we often look to younger generations when we talk about the vitality of languages in communities. For minority language speakers, whether they speak an indigenous language or an official one, it is dangerous to believe at a young age that this language is a game. Even if our parents and grandparents speak to us in the language, we can sometimes believe that this language is a game, or that it is only used in a family environment. That has an impact.

What is interesting is that we often focus on the use of a language to communicate a message, but language is not only used for communication. At all times, it allows us to establish relationships and convey information on the social status of communities. As soon as children see that the language is used outside of their homes and immediate environments, that it is used in public, this tells them that it isn't a game: It is a real language that is recognized and used. Children then realize that they have every right to use it outside of their immediate environments. Also, it sends a message about the value given to the language by everyone in the public space.

This kind of effect is sometimes felt subconsciously. Young people, and even adults, are not aware of the influence it has on the way they see themselves and on the way they themselves use the language. But we know that this effect exists. For example, I grew up in a very English-speaking region of Prince Edward Island, but the fact that I knew that French was spoken in Parliament and in Quebec encouraged me to continue speaking the language. I saw it as a real language with value and a role to play.

In applied linguistics, we sometimes refer to collective imagination. In order to commit to a language, we need to be able to imagine what can be done with it, and envision a world in which this language has a meaning. Each time we lend languages validity and we see them used in all kinds of contexts, we enrich this collective imagination, which has a motivating effect.

● (1255)

[*English*]

Mr. Romeo Saganash: I have about a minute left.

Johanne or Melissa, I'll rapidly give you my three or four questions, which will perhaps take the remaining time.

Are there unilingual members on your council who speak only English, French, or Cree?

What has the positive effect been on Cree youth with the use of language in your institution?

What is the per cent of the budget used for interpretation and translation services? How many people do you have in the bank of interpreters?

[*Translation*]

Ms. Johanne Lacasse: Let me answer your first question.

It's true that the majority of the James Bay representatives are unilingual French speakers. As for the Cree representatives, they use Cree as a first language and English as a second one.

We are seeing more and more young, trilingual Cree representatives, but the majority of the people from James Bay are unilingual French speakers. Crees, on the other hand, speak Cree and sometimes English as a language of work.

In terms of the influence these initiatives have on young people, we have seen an increase in the number of young people interested in following this closely, whether by listening to live streams or to community radio. More and more people are contacting us for information on the vocation, mission and directions of the regional government. Young people feel very engaged with all the issues surrounding governance, especially when it concerns the territory where they live, such as the Eeyou Istchee James Bay territory.

Now, on the topic of budget expenditures, the regional government has an annual expenditure budget, excluding the three localities, of approximately $9 million. If we quickly do the math and we include all the costs, that's between $120,000 and $150,000. That is still considerable for a territory with so few taxpayers, so it's important that the council's elected officials and representatives champion interpretation services. Furthermore, the requirement to provide simultaneous interpretation services rests on the necessity of ensuring transparency and accountability, but it is especially a matter of inclusion.

● (1300)

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you. *Meegwetch*.

I think we have time for one short question from Scott Simms.

Mr. Scott Simms: Because we always have time for short questions.

Where were we? One of the things I wanted to talk about is the Cree radio broadcasting that you have. How are they set up to handle this? On a couple of occasions when I've gone abroad about issues, and the issue of first nations comes up and APTN comes up. It seems to be quite famous around the world for what it provides for first nations coverage, but also because they provide it with some of the language services. In Cree radio broadcasting, how does that accommodate the languages?

Ms. Melissa Saganash: For the territory, actually, there's the JBCCS, the James Bay Cree Communications Society. It's a regional radio broadcasting outfit that's based out of Mistassini but has an antenna that reaches all communities.

Mr. Scott Simms: Are they online?

Ms. Melissa Saganash: They're online as well.

Mr. Scott Simms: Okay.

Ms. Melissa Saganash: For the purpose of the regional government, when we have sessions, they send over a tech, and the tech comes in and plugs into the board.

I'm using words that I'm not sure what they mean.

Mr. Scott Simms: That's okay, we're following you.

Ms. Melissa Saganash: They plug into the board, and it broadcasts to the JBCCS airwaves in Cree because JBCCS, James Bay Cree Communication Society, is exclusively Cree radio.

Mr. Scott Simms: Okay.

Ms. Melissa Saganash: When they come into either the Cree Nation Government council meetings or the regional government council meetings, they plug in. They plug into the interpreter's booth, actually, the interpreter's line. That's what they're broadcasting out to the communities, because radio is the way of communication, still, for many of our communities.

Mr. Scott Simms: It seems to me, then, that what you described in my first round of questioning is the key to disseminating the information you want to disseminate in all the languages and dialects that you have.

Ms. Melissa Saganash: Yes.

Mr. Scott Simms: The genesis, the origin of this thing that you had, did you develop that yourself?

Ms. Melissa Saganash: I wish I could take the credit for JBCCS, but I can't.

The regional government's guidelines and its framework and its agreement are built so that we have to serve in Cree. We have the technology. We're up in James Bay. Sometimes there's no road. Sometimes there's no Wi-Fi—

Mr. Scott Simms: Yes.

Ms. Melissa Saganash: —but we bring it up there. We have it. ECN is the Eeyou Communications Network. It's a fibre-optic company. It's a Cree company, Cree-owned. We call ECN before heading to a community where we don't have Wi-Fi. We say, "Hi, ECN. Can you give us a line, please? We're going to be there for three days." They plug a line into, literally, the phone pole outside. They drop a line down, we run it into the building, and this is what we use to feed our live stream, our radio, the phone lines, everything.

Mr. Scott Simms: Can I comment?

The Chair: No.

Mr. Scott Simms: Saying "please" won't help?

The Chair: No.

Mr. Scott Simms: Okay. All right.

Thank you very much. It was fascinating.

Ms. Melissa Saganash: It's a pleasure. Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you very much. It's great you could come here, and it was very helpful.

Committee members, don't leave yet for a minute. After I hit the gavel I want you to stay for another minute.

Mr. David de Burgh Graham: Let the record show that we met, but we didn't meet.

The Chair: Right.

As we agreed earlier, during the first hour on Thursday we'll do the last couple of witnesses, and next Tuesday we'll do the electronic petitions in the first hour and drafting instructions for this report in the second hour.

The meeting is adjourned.