



HOUSE OF COMMONS
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES
CANADA

43rd PARLIAMENT, 1st SESSION

Standing Committee on Official Languages

EVIDENCE

NUMBER 001

Thursday, February 20, 2020

Chair: Mr. Emmanuel Dubourg



Standing Committee on Official Languages

Thursday, February 20, 2020

• (1535)

[Translation]

The Clerk of the Committee (Mr. Michel Marcotte): Honourable members of the committee, I see a quorum.

I must inform you that the clerk of the committee can receive motions only for the election of the chair. The clerk cannot receive other types of motions, cannot entertain points of order, nor participate in debate.

We can now proceed to the election of the chair.

Pursuant to Standing Order 106(2), the chair must be a member of the government party.

I am ready to receive motions for the election of chair.

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde (Orléans, Lib.): I hope my colleagues will support us. I would like to nominate Emmanuel Dubourg for chair of this extraordinary committee.

The Clerk: It has been moved by Ms. Lalonde that Mr. Dubourg be duly elected chair of the committee.

Are there any further motions?

(Motion agreed to)

The Clerk: I declare the motion carried and Mr. Dubourg duly elected chair of the committee.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

[English]

The Chair (Mr. Emmanuel Dubourg (Bourassa, Lib.)): Dear colleagues, thank you very much. I'm so happy.

[Translation]

It is a privilege for me to sit in this chair. I can assure you of my full cooperation in helping the committee run smoothly.

If it is the pleasure of the committee, I invite the clerk to proceed to the election of the vice-chairs.

The Clerk: Pursuant to Standing Order 106(2), the first vice-chair must be a member of the official opposition.

I am now ready to receive motions for the election of first vice-chair.

Hon. Michael Chong (Wellington—Halton Hills, CPC): Mr. Chair, I would like to nominate my colleague from Nova Scotia, Mr. d'Entremont, for vice-chair.

The Clerk: It has been moved by Mr. Chong that Mr. d'Entremont be elected first vice-chair of the committee.

Are there any further motions?

(Motion agreed to)

The Clerk: I declare the motion carried and Mr. d'Entremont duly elected first vice-chair of the committee.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

The Clerk: Pursuant to Standing Order 106(2), the second vice-chair must be a member of an opposition party other than the official opposition.

I am now ready to receive motions for the election of second vice-chair.

Hon. Michael Chong: I would like to nominate my colleague Mr. Beaulieu, from the Bloc Québécois.

The Clerk: It has been moved by Mr. Chong that Mr. Beaulieu be elected second vice-chair of the committee.

Are there any further motions?

(Motion agreed to)

The Clerk: I declare the motion carried and Mr. Beaulieu duly elected second vice-chair.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Mario Beaulieu (La Pointe-de-l'Île, BQ): There are two Montrealers.

• (1540)

The Chair: Honourable colleagues, we will begin.

I see some hands up to move routine motions.

Ms. Lambropoulos, go ahead.

Ms. Emmanuella Lambropoulos (Saint-Laurent, Lib.): I will move the routine motions. I have copies for everyone.

Concerning analysts, I propose:

That the Committee retain, as needed and at the discretion of the Chair, the services of one or more analysts from the Library of Parliament to assist it in its work.

(Motion agreed to)

Ms. Emmanuella Lambropoulos: Regarding the Subcommittee on Agenda and Procedure, I propose:

That the Subcommittee on Agenda and Procedure be established and be composed of five (5) members; the Chair, one Member from each Party; and that the subcommittee work in the spirit of collaboration.

(Motion agreed to)

Ms. Emmanuella Lambropoulos: For reduced quorum, I propose:

That the Chair be authorized to hold meetings to receive evidence and to have that evidence printed when a quorum is not present, provided that at least four (4) members are present, including one member of the opposition and one member of the government, but when travelling outside the parliamentary precinct, that the meeting begin after fifteen (15) minutes, regardless of members present.

(Motion agreed to)

Ms. Emmanuella Lambropoulos: Since everyone already has the document, we could perhaps....

[*English*]

We can move to accept the document as is, or at least to put it forward as is, and if anyone has any concerns with any parts of it, they can let us know.

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Are there any objections to that suggestion?

Mr. Bernard Généreux (Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, CPC): Mr. Chair, if I understand correctly, nothing has changed, except on the last page, which concerns clauses and independent members.

I would like us to read that one because the rest has remained the same since the last meeting.

Ms. Emmanuella Lambropoulos: Yes, great.

Regarding independent members and clause-by-clause consideration, I propose:

That, in relation to Orders of Reference from the House respecting Bills,

(a) the Clerk of the Committee shall, upon the Committee receiving such an Order of Reference, write to each Member who is not a member of a caucus represented on the Committee to invite those Members to file with the Clerk of the Committee, in both official languages, any amendments to the Bill, which is the subject of the said Order, which they would suggest that the Committee consider;

(b) suggested amendments filed, pursuant to paragraph (a), at least 48 hours prior to the start of clause-by-clause consideration of the Bill to which the amendments relate shall be deemed to be proposed during the said consideration, provided that the Committee may, by motion, vary this deadline in respect of a given Bill; and

(c) during the clause-by-clause consideration of a Bill, the Chair shall allow a Member who filed suggested amendments, pursuant to paragraph (a), an opportunity to make brief representations in support of them.

● (1545)

The Chair: Mr. Godin, go ahead.

Mr. Joël Godin (Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier, CPC): Mr. Chair, since we just received the document, if you could confirm that these are the committee's standards and rules, I would be ready to accept them. If not, I maintain my right to challenge.

Ms. Emmanuella Lambropoulos: Nothing has changed since the last Parliament.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Beaulieu, the floor is yours.

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: What has changed?

You say that this clause is different.

Ms. Emmanuella Lambropoulos: Nothing has changed.

[*English*]

We include it in case we have to deal with legislation in here, so that it comes here rather than going straight to the House.

[*Translation*]

The Chair: So the routine motions are carried.

Honourable colleagues, you know how committees work. We won't be alone. We will be joined by a number of experts. To my right, we have Lucie Lecomte, who is here as an analyst.

Ms. Lucie Lecomte: Thank you very much,

The Chair: I would also like to greet Laura Blackmore, who is accompanying her. Thank you for being here with us.

Let's not forget all the staff who are here and work for the telecommunications and media services, as well as the clerk and the analyst.

Thank you for joining us to ensure that committee meetings run smoothly. We know that this committee's area of focus interests many people. A good amount of work has been done over the course of previous mandates, both by members and by senators. So we will continue along the same path in order to further the committee's work.

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde: Mr. Chair, would it be possible to know the full name of our dear clerk, please?

The Clerk: My name is Michel Marcotte.

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde: Thank you.

Mr. Joël Godin: It is written on your notice, Mrs. Lalonde.

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde: Okay.

Mr. Godin, I had not looked at the notice.

The Chair: Mr. Généreux, go ahead.

Mr. Bernard Généreux: Mr. Chair, I have had the pleasure of sitting on the Standing Committee on Official Languages over the past four years. I would like to point out to my new colleagues that Ms. Lecomte is the living memory of the Standing Committee on Official Languages. She has been here for 10 years.

You were there the first time we travelled. It was to Yellowknife, unless I'm mistaken, or to Whitehorse. I no longer remember.

All to say that, as she is the memory of this committee, she can shed a great deal of light on our future work.

Earlier, Mr. Arseneault whispered to me, in full transparency, that the issue of enumerating rights holders needs to be considered. So it would be important for our work to begin as quickly as possible. In fact, I think it will be next week.

● (1550)

The Chair: Yes.

Mr. Bernard Généreux: It would be important to put that issue on the agenda right away.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Généreux.

This is part of the committee's work. If there are any proposals, we can begin the discussion.

Mr. Arseneault, the floor is yours.

Mr. René Arseneault (Madawaska—Restigouche, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Généreux.

I have prepared a motion to this effect. I will read it to you and will then send it to you in writing very soon.

I will read it in both official languages. However, before I read it, I want to thank Mr. Généreux for his comments. I will provide you with the context.

Ms. Lecomte represents not only the Library of Parliament and the living memory of the Standing Committee on Official Languages, but she is mostly to be thanked for making us look good in the many reports we produce. We have drafted a number of reports and appear to be really brilliant—which we still are—but Ms. Lecomte's mastery of both official languages and her quickness are incredible.

We met with Statistics Canada representatives a few times—three times, unless I am mistaken—between 2017 and 2019, so that rights holders could be enumerated once and for all under section 23 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. Those are people living in official language minority communities, OLMCs, who are entitled to request education in their language if their numbers warrant it.

Nothing happened at the end of the 42nd Parliament because we broke for the summer and the election was to follow. Statistics Canada was supposed to do some testing on the amended form. Apparently, it could be very complicated to ask questions properly. So they ran some tests, and they are the only ones we can ask what the results were, how things went and what is working well or not so well.

That is the purpose of asking Statistics Canada to appear. It is urgent because a census is done every five years, with the next one to be carried out in 2021, which is coming up fast. So that is the context. That is why Mr. Généreux alluded to this.

That said, here is the motion:

That, pursuant to Standing Order 108(3)(f), it is proposed that the Committee convene Statistics Canada on the following subjects:

1. Update by Statistics Canada on the question of the enumeration of rights holders, and of the results of the work and tests carried out on this subject in relation to the 2021 census questionnaire;
2. The steps to follow, if necessary, to ensure that the questionnaire meets all the requirements of art. 23 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, relating to how to count the beneficiaries of the 2021 census;
3. Advantages and disadvantages of the short form vs the long form with regard to the counting of beneficiaries;

The Chair: I don't know whether everyone has received a copy of the motion.

There is no problem as far as acceptability goes.

First, I would like to give the floor to Mr. Angus.

• (1555)

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

First, for the NDP, the issue of the impact and repercussions of the census on minority communities across Canada is very important. It is necessary for the committee to look into that.

Second, when it comes to developing a long-term plan for this committee, is it possible to wait until the next meeting to discuss this aspect? The NDP has a lot of ideas. We have had discussions with francophone organizations.

Could we vote on this motion, but also on waiting until the next meeting to develop a long-term plan?

The Chair: I will give the floor to Mr. Généreux.

Mr. Bernard Généreux: I readily support the motion. I am just wondering whether, by having only three points, we may not prevent ourselves from putting other questions to the Statistics Canada officials when they appear before us. If they receive this motion, they will prepare answers only to those three questions.

If we wanted to obtain more details on those questions or put sub-questions to them, could we do so?

Mr. René Arseneault: It is enough to cover all the questions while taking into account situations we have experienced with Statistics Canada.

First, we want to know what the results of the tests are. I remember hearing the Statistics Canada representatives say how difficult it was and how complicated it would be. So we need to check what the results of those tests carried out last summer are.

Second, there are steps to follow. We will certainly discuss the advantages and disadvantages of the short form census compared with the long form census. That's how it always goes with Statistics Canada.

If there is anything else, all we have to do is make amendments. I don't want to restrict the question selection.

Mr. Bernard Généreux: I am not currently thinking of anything specific, but I would perhaps add four other points. It may be sufficient to leave open the possibility of asking other questions. Oftentimes, certain answers lead us to other questions or to potential discussions.

I would not want the answers to be restricted and those people to tell us that they have unfortunately not prepared answers for the other questions.

Mr. René Arseneault: Okay. So we could talk about other issues related to the enumeration of rights holders.

Mr. Bernard Généreux: Exactly.

The Chair: Thank you.

Ms. Lambropoulos, go ahead.

Ms. Emmanuella Lambropoulos: Regarding the point raised by Mr. Angus, I have prepared a motion I would like to present today to this committee. I would still like to have the opportunity to....

[English]

An hon. member: We're still on the first one.

Ms. Emmanuella Lambropoulos: I know, but he mentioned putting forward...or at least considering not putting forward any motions, so I'm just speaking to that point, but I'd like to still bring forward the motion.

[Translation]

The Chair: Okay.

Mr. Godin, over to you.

Mr. Joël Godin: Mr. Chair, I agree with Mr. Généreux when it comes to openness, but as the parliamentary secretary mentioned earlier, Mr. Généreux and he are familiar with the file's background. However, a number of us are new members.

So I would add in the motion, parliamentary secretary, a description of the past situation, starting before the last census, and of the problem, so that we can understand what has happened with the solutions proposed and the tests carried out last summer. As we don't know what the source of the problem is, we cannot find a solution.

Mr. René Arseneault: May I respond to the concern that was just expressed, Mr. Chair?

The Chair: Go ahead, Mr. Arseneault.

Mr. René Arseneault: The question is really important, and the answer is that rights holders were never counted in the past. There is no historical trend. Previously, people were asked whether their mother tongue was French or English. There was never a concerted, voluntary effort to enumerate the rights holders under section 23 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

Section 23 is a specific provision that concerns minority languages. Where the number justifies it, education can be provided in the language of the minority. The question was never asked that way. There is no historical trend. So we could never look at the past context. There has never been any. The census has existed for 35 years, with seven of them having been done, and rights holders under section 23 have never been enumerated. That is what this important request was about.

• (1600)

The Chair: Mr. Godin, do you want to say something?

Mr. Joël Godin: Yes, Mr. Chair.

I thank the parliamentary secretary for his answer. That said—and this may not be the fault of Statistics Canada—rights holders have been ignored. I would like to know what figures and data were used to enable minorities to have access to education in their language.

Mr. Bernard Généreux: Mr. Chair, perhaps I could partially answer my colleague.

We have already considered this issue. We could perhaps ask Ms. Lecomte to create a one-page document based on all the exchanges that have been held between the committee and Statistics Canada officials, including information they have submitted to us. When those people come meet with us, we could use that document as a starting point for the discussion.

I understand my colleague. When we invite witnesses, we must be at least somewhat prepared. I think that Ms. Lecomte can provide us with that data.

Ms. Lucie Lecomte: There is a report, a track record and the government's response.

The Chair: Ms. Lecomte tells me that a report on this issue was produced. She will provide us with information on it.

Ms. Lucie Lecomte: I will also provide the response.

The Chair: At that point, the discussion could be more open.

The Chair: Mr. Beaulieu, you have raised your hand.

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: I would like to put a question to the clerk.

I am in favour of the proposal, I don't really have anything to say, but, normally, it seems to me that motions require a 24 hours' notice. If my understanding is correct, this is an exception because the issue has been discussed. I have seen it in the news.

The Chair: Exactly.

This is not work we could start at the next meeting.

What must also be considered is that there is a possibility of amending the proposal that has been submitted. The clerk told me that we should perhaps discuss it now or keep a copy of it and, at the next meeting, debate it more extensively before adopting it.

Mr. Angus, do you want to say something?

Mr. Charlie Angus: I support the motion, but there is a problem. I feel that the committee has a dual role. It must invite officials to examine programs and services, but its role is also to give organizations and citizens an opportunity to raise issues.

So I would like to amend the motion to invite witnesses. I am not ready to propose witness names today, but we could perhaps do so at the next meeting in order to give organizations an opportunity to tell us if there is a problem. It is our role to hear both points of view.

The Chair: Exactly.

Mr. René Arseneault: We usually work that way. We table a motion and invite everyone to suggest witnesses. We've worked that way since I've been here.

By the way, unless I'm mistaken, all the reports produced here over the past four years have been adopted unanimously. Bernard's memory may be better than mine.

Mr. Charlie Angus: Yes.

Mr. René Arseneault: That's how we work. We table a motion and we each suggest witnesses. We then make selections based on the suggested names.

The Chair: So it's tabled.

Mr. Godin, go ahead.

Mr. Joël Godin: I fully agree with my colleague from the NDP. We're inviting Statistics Canada representatives to share the results of the work and tests. However, in addition to Statistics Canada, we must meet with Canadians and with people who are affected by this issue. Our analyst will provide information to show us the current situation.

I think that we're putting the cart before the horse by inviting Statistics Canada representatives to the first meeting without having any information on the issue.

• (1605)

The Chair: Mr. Arseneault, you have the floor.

Mr. René Arseneault: Mr. Godin, I don't want to seem persistent, but that's why Statistics Canada carried out tests. The reason is that we heard from all the stakeholders. I don't think that we missed anyone. Every school board in Canada that you can imagine came, along with the Quebec Community Groups Network, the Fédération des communautés francophones et acadiennes, specialists, constitutional experts, and Supreme Court Justice Michel Bastarache, who is now retired.

As you'll see in the report that Lucie will provide later, this led to the Standing Committee on Official Languages' unanimous desire to ask Statistics Canada to include certain questions in its next form. We can no longer conduct a census without the enumeration of rights holders under section 23 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, in a proper and genuine manner. You'll see this in the historic record.

Mr. Joël Godin: This was done beforehand, but we've just arrived.

Mr. René Arseneault: I understand. I just want to reassure you.

Mr. Joël Godin: Okay.

Mr. René Arseneault: Your colleague can tell you.

I'm not saying that we shouldn't ask this witness to come back and tell us what he heard from Statistics Canada. I agree with you.

The Chair: Before we continue the discussion, Ms. Lecomte, the analyst, is informing us that, before the next meeting, on Monday or Tuesday morning at the latest, she'll send us this information by email so that we'll be ready.

Ms. Lambropoulos raised her hand before Mrs. Lalonde.

Ms. Emmanuella Lambropoulos: I just wanted to say something.

[*English*]

It's not a stand-alone study. This is something that we had done in the previous committee and that we had heard extensively about. That was why we figured this would tie the bow and finish and help us to move forward in a positive way after what we had heard already.

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Thank you.

Mrs. Lalonde, you have the floor.

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde: I'm new to the committee. The fact that we're passing this motion doesn't mean that we can't invite

these witnesses to come back and give us a report on what has happened and on where Statistics Canada currently stands.

If the committee feels that it needs more information after Ms. Lecomte has sent us the latest recommendations, it could proceed that way as well. I want to know what Statistics Canada has done and where it stands, as soon as possible, so that we can get organized for the long term. In terms of the previous recommendations, we must decide how this committee can improve the component. However, this doesn't prevent us from listening to what Statistics Canada has to say.

The Chair: Ms. Lattanzio, you have the floor.

Ms. Patricia Lattanzio (Saint-Léonard—Saint-Michel, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I agree with my colleague's comments. We amended the motion to add a fourth point. We made it clear today that we reserve the option of addressing any other related questions. I'm relieved about this. I'm also a new member of Parliament, but this new possibility doesn't restrict us.

Should we need to seek further information, the fourth point would enable us to do so and it doesn't restrict us at this stage. I fully agree with the amendment. I don't feel at all restricted or prevented from inviting people in another group to shed light on this issue.

The Chair: Okay.

I want to inform you that the clerk needs time to invite the witnesses. We must make a decision fairly quickly. By Tuesday, we need a final motion so that the clerk has time to invite Statistics Canada representatives to appear next Thursday.

Mr. Beaulieu, you have the floor.

• (1610)

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: Are we passing the motion now or at the next meeting?

Mr. René Arseneault: Only if there's unanimous consent.

The Chair: If there's unanimous consent on the amendments—

I'll let Mr. Beaulieu finish his comments.

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: By adding the fourth point, we could also ask Statistics Canada about issues other than the enumeration of rights holders.

Mr. René Arseneault: I understand that we're talking about other questions related to the enumeration of rights holders. That's my understanding of Mr. Gagné's amendment.

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: As long as we get them here, we could broaden the scope of the meeting. I, for one, would have some questions about the analysis grid.

The Chair: Excuse me, Mr. Chong wants to speak.

Hon. Michael Chong: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Angus suggested that we discuss this issue and propose amendments to this motion at the next meeting, because he needs more time to prepare amendments.

Isn't there a consensus on this?

The Chair: Yes, there's a consensus.

I just want to draw the committee's attention to the fact that, to move our work forward, the clerk needs the complete motion so that Statistics Canada can be invited to appear on Thursday next week.

Hon. Michael Chong: However, can't we adjourn the debate on the motion now and continue the debate at the next meeting?

Mr. René Arseneault: It would be postponed until next week.

The Chair: Yes. If our analyst sends us the information on Monday or Tuesday, we'll have time to consider it. We'll be able to present all this right at the outset.

Hon. Michael Chong: I think that Mr. Angus wants to propose amendments next week.

The Chair: Okay, thank you.

Mr. Généreux, you have the floor.

Mr. Bernard Généreux: I want to share with everyone what we've experienced over the past four years. Mr. Arseneault was talking earlier about the unanimity in all the reports. I think that all our reports over the past four years have been unanimous.

The committee has worked in a way that shows great respect for all parliamentarians here. As a result, mutual trust has been built. We must never lose sight of our objective, which is to advance the rights of francophones in minority communities and anglophones in Quebec. That's the ultimate goal.

In the past four years, there has been little or no partisanship in the committee. Of course, this doesn't mean that there hasn't been some partisanship.

We also noticed that we were wasting a great deal of time. When we want to invite witnesses, it takes ages to ensure that they'll appear. When we postpone these types of motions, inevitably the time frame is longer.

It's already the end of February, and we'll finish at the end of June. There will be a three or four week break before then. Quite frankly, if we want to make any progress, we should make a decision today. We can walk and chew gum at the same time. We can get this resolution passed because it's quite open ended as a result of the last point added.

If we pass this resolution today, we could all do our jobs by starting to invite the witnesses from Statistics Canada. We can't have them join us next Tuesday, of course. This doesn't in any way prevent Mr. Angus or Mr. Beaulieu from making additional points during the witnesses' presentations and from asking them questions.

However, we'll try to keep that perspective, since we're inviting them to appear for this purpose. In any case, given the duration of the meetings with them and the presence of the witnesses, we truly don't have time to indulge ourselves for very long. We have enough material to cover the duration of the presentations.

I just want to bring you up to date on what we've experienced over the past four years. We could pass this resolution today so that the work can move forward. On Tuesday, based on the information from our analyst, we could begin to discuss the issue, develop our

thoughts on the matter and prepare our questions for potential witnesses.

Otherwise, all this will be postponed until mid-March or sometime around then. We're already way behind in the process, if you ask me.

• (1615)

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Angus, you have the floor.

[*English*]

Mr. Charlie Angus: Thank you.

I'm just trying to be clear here. I've been on many committees, and I'm not really sure what's going on, and it's not just because I speak English.

I've asked about whether we'll have witnesses. If we're agreeing that we're going to have some witnesses, I'm perfectly supportive of this motion. I am not supportive of saying, "Well, we were unanimous in the past, so we'll be unanimous now."

We have a role to play here, which is to be the voices of people out there. This is not about filibustering. I'm willing.... I can pass this motion now and say I totally support it, but, to me, the role of committee is to give the people of Canada an opportunity to be heard on fundamental issues. We don't just meet with the functionaries and then go home.

I'm just trying to get a sense.... Do I have to have it in the motion? Do I have to amend the motion, or can we just go with this motion and say that next meeting we'll talk, pick some witnesses and move on?

I don't know how the committee works. My other committees.... I need to have a sense. Do we want an amendment, or are we going to vote for this and just say we'll come back and meet?

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Ms. Lattanzio, you have the floor.

[*English*]

Ms. Patricia Lattanzio: For the benefit of explaining, we made an amendment here today. We said that in number four we would add any other questions that would be pertinent to what is being proposed. "Any other questions" would certainly cover your preoccupations in terms of having other witnesses.

This is where I want to have my assurance, too. I don't think the committee wants to work in a venue where we want to limit the number of people who can come to clarify things to this committee, in terms of getting the information we want, as long as we stay within the scope of the motion. We just added the amendment—and I think we're all fundamentally okay with it—to say "and all other questions that are relative to it". It doesn't bar you or any other member here.... We're not saying, "Look, we just want to have StatsCan, and that's it. We're going to go home. That's how we're going to make our decision."

I don't know if that brings clarity to you, but that's my understanding of it.

The Chair: Mr. Chong, do you have a point of order? Go ahead.

Hon. Michael Chong: What's in front of the committee right now? Are we on the amendment, or are we on the main motion?

[*Translation*]

The Chair: I gather that we're wondering whether we're moving or postponing the amendment. Mr. Angus seems to be saying that, if, however, an open-ended question were ready, we could move the fourth point, the amendment. If the committee agrees, we'll pass the amendment and then the motion.

[*English*]

Hon. Michael Chong: Maybe a solution for it is to dispose of the amendment first, and then, if Mr. Angus is so inclined and wishes to present another amendment on adding other witnesses to it, we could then debate that, dispose of that, and then return to the main motion, as amended or not amended. We can deal with it that way.

The Chair: Yes. We will proceed.

Mr. Angus.

Mr. Charlie Angus: To me, “all other questions” is not as clear as just saying “and potential witnesses”. Then we sit down and we decide if we need witnesses. I'm new. I didn't go through what happened last time. Just “and potential witnesses”.... We can talk about it for months or two meetings, whatever. All I want is clarity, because “other questions”, to me, could be other things. Just put “and potential witnesses”.

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Mr. Beaulieu, you have the floor.

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: I gather that there could be additional witnesses if committee members make that suggestion. That's what Mr. Angus wants.

I agree that the enumeration of rights holders must be included. I consider this important. However, since Statistics Canada representatives would be coming to meet with us fairly quickly, would there be a way to ask questions regarding other aspects of the language that I find troublesome in Statistics Canada's analysis grid?

The Chair: Mr. G n reux, you have the floor.

Mr. Bernard G n reux: Mr. Beaulieu's questions will be answered. He can ask as many as he wants. However, as soon as he asks questions about the analysis grid, it will inevitably affect rights holders.

• (1620)

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: It won't affect rights holders.

Mr. Bernard G n reux: Yes.

They'll answer all your questions. It's not an issue.

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: It was a matter of information.

Mr. Bernard G n reux: I move the amendment.

The Chair: Okay.

Can you read it for us?

Mr. Bernard G n reux: Okay.

We'll add the point that you set out earlier, Mr. Arseneault.

Hon. Michael Chong: It's another point?

Ms. Patricia Lattanzio: Yes, it's another point.

It's a related question, and Mr. Angus wants to add other potential witnesses. That's my understanding of the amendment.

The Chair: We'll draft the amendment clearly so that everyone can read it. We'll then proceed to the vote.

I would like your attention. Ms. Lambropoulos, you have the floor.

[*English*]

Ms. Emmanuella Lambropoulos: Yes, I have two things. Number one, would we like to set a number of meetings for this study? Number two, in my experience with StatsCan, it's very frustrating because they never have the answers that we need to our questions. They just have exactly what they have in front of them. Maybe, when we're inviting them, we could provide them with the questions we're going to be asking or at least what information we're seeking. In your invitation, maybe just let them know in advance what we expect to get answers for.

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Since two amendments are on the table, the clerk will clarify everything for us so that we can discuss them and proceed to the vote.

The Clerk: Here's what I propose. The first amendment to the original motion seeks to add a fourth point and the words “other questions.” This would be fairly open-ended. Is this what you discussed?

[*English*]

Mr. Bernard G n reux: That's fine. Yes.

[*Translation*]

The Clerk: You'll vote on this amendment first. I just want you to have a general idea.

The second amendment, Mr. Angus's amendment, seeks to change the first sentence, which states “it is proposed that the committee convene Statistics Canada,” by adding “and other witnesses.”

[*English*]

In English, it's “that the committee convene Statistics Canada and other witnesses on the following subjects”.

Is that the whole idea?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: I want a clarification. Can the words “other questions” include questions that don't specifically concern the enumeration?

The Chair: The way it's written, it's—

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: Are we moving another motion to bring them back?

Mr. Bernard Généreux: —the time limit—

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: In any case, we can talk about it again. I don't want to hinder the enumeration issue.

The Chair: We're ready to vote on the amendments.

First, we want to know the other questions in the fourth point.

Mr. Bernard Généreux: You usually ask whether we're in favour of the amendment. That's why I raised my hand.

The Chair: The question is on the amendment.

(Amendment agreed to)

The Chair: We'll now proceed to the second amendment, which states as follows: "That, pursuant to Standing Order 108(2), it is proposed that the committee convene Statistics Canada and other witnesses on the following subjects:"

The Chair: The question is on the second amendment.

(Amendment agreed to)

(Motion as amended agreed to)

• (1625)

Mr. René Arseneault: We have a good chair.

The Chair: Thank you.

If the committee wants to discuss any other issues, I'm completely open to doing so.

Ms. Lambropoulos, you have the floor.

Ms. Emmanuella Lambropoulos: I also have a motion to move.

The Chair: Okay.

Ms. Emmanuella Lambropoulos: I have 15 copies, but not 16.

The Clerk: We'll get organized.

The Chair: We've just passed the routine motions.

Normally, a 48 hour notice is required for a motion. I've discussed this with the clerk. A 48 hour notice is required, provided that the motion isn't directly related to the business then under consideration by the committee. Since we're discussing our future business, the motion before us isn't really an issue. However, we can debate this notice of motion and see where the members stand.

I'll ask Ms. Lambropoulos to read her notice of motion.

Ms. Emmanuella Lambropoulos: All right.

That, pursuant to Standing Order 108(3)(f), the Committee initiate a study consisting of at least 10 meetings to examine the ways that the Government of Canada can:

a) Ensure the protection of linguistic minorities with regards to protecting the rights of right holders to receive an education in the minority language and in an attempt to protect the identity and culture of the members of the Official Language minority communities.

b) Ensure the promotion of bilingualism and raise the bilingualism rate across the country;

that this study be completed by June 2020; that the Committee report its findings to the House; and that, Pursuant to Standing Order 109, the government table a comprehensive response thereto.

The Chair: Mr. Beaulieu, you may go ahead.

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: I prefer to wait until the next meeting. There are other very important issues we could include in the agenda for the upcoming meetings.

We need to be able to clarify things, for example, with respect to the term "linguistic minorities". According to the Quebec minister responsible for Canadian intergovernmental affairs and the Canadian francophonie, an official language minority exists across the country, and it's francophones. Are we talking about institutional or individual bilingualism? I would prefer to take the time to look at that properly. We don't have a timetable.

• (1630)

The Chair: Mr. d'Entremont, you may go ahead.

Mr. Chris d'Entremont (West Nova, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I appreciate your comment. I'd very much like to take a closer look at that. Next week, we already have work to do in connection with Statistics Canada. Could we resume the discussion on Tuesday?

[English]

Ms. Emmanuella Lambropoulos: It's obviously a notice of motion, so we can talk about it at the subcommittee and have it listed as a future study after Statistics Canada.

[Translation]

The Chair: Great.

Are there any other comments? Go ahead, Mr. Arseneault.

Mr. René Arseneault: Should we talk about the subcommittee right away?

Who will be on it? Where, when and how will it meet?

I can tell Mr. Chong really wants to be on it.

Hon. Michael Chong: No, I have too many meetings as it is.

Mr. René Arseneault: Perhaps we can save a bit of time by saying that the vice-chairs will automatically be on it.

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: Would you mind explaining what a subcommittee is all about? I saw it mentioned in the Standing Orders.

Mr. René Arseneault: Yes, it's in the Standing Orders.

The Clerk: As a general rule, the majority of committees have at least one subcommittee, which can have different names, but only one official name—the Subcommittee on Agenda and Procedure—often referred to as the steering committee. It has a limited number of members. Usually, it's made up of the chair and a member from each party, depending on party representation in the House.

Not all committees have a working subcommittee, but many do to help them plan future business. Subcommittees can propose topics for study, for example. The subcommittee has discussions and, then, reports to the committee, which considers the subcommittee's recommendations and makes any necessary changes. Once the committee adopts the recommendation, it becomes the decision of the committee. A lot of the groundwork is done by the subcommittee.

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: I see.

Since the rule dictates that the subcommittee have a member from each party, I'll be on it by default.

The Chair: Yes.

The Clerk: Normally, we go through the whips' offices to find out who will be on the subcommittee. In the chair's case, it's clear, but when it's one or two members from each party, it isn't always obvious.

You can discuss it now amongst yourselves, if you like, and perhaps even make a decision. You could put forward a motion specifically designating the members of the subcommittee. If the motion isn't clear, though, I'm not the one who will decide. In the committee's case, the subcommittee has to have five members. As I said, in the chair's case, it's clear. Then, it's one member per party, and that's not an issue for two of the parties.

The Chair: Go ahead, Mr. Généreux.

Mr. Bernard Généreux: I am ready to propose the makeup of the subcommittee: you, Mr. Chair; the first vice-chair, Mr. d'Entremont; the second vice-chair, Mr. Beaulieu; the member from the NDP, Mr. Angus; and someone from the Liberal Party. Can the parliamentary secretary also sit on the subcommittee? If so, I call that an abuse of power.

Voices: Oh, oh!

Mr. Bernard Généreux: I still nominate Mr. Arseneault for the subcommittee.

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: He's proposing an abuse of power.

Voices: Oh, oh!

The Chair: Go ahead, Mr. Angus.

[*English*]

Mr. Charlie Angus: Thank you so much. Personally, I hate meetings. Life is really busy. I've sat on committees where we tended to work together and we could do it. Sometimes subcommittees are needed because it's very complex. If it's not complex, I think we just build a relationship.

If people want to go that route, I will go that route, but if we build a relationship on these issues, I think we're going to generally come down on the same area. It might just be a better and more efficient way.

The Chair: I hope so too.

Madame Lalonde.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde: I completely understand what Mr. Angus is saying, given how many committees and meetings we have. I firmly believe, though, that a subcommittee can help us set the agenda. When we come to committee, a productive discussion will have already taken place and we'll be better prepared. It makes it easier to get right to work.

Of course, as committee members, we always have the right to vote and decide on whether or not to adopt the subcommittee's report. I think a subcommittee could prove useful to plan for the meetings ahead, so I strongly recommend that we have one.

• (1635)

The Chair: Yes, Mr. Beaulieu?

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: I have a procedural question.

Can an associate member sit on the subcommittee? Mr. Angus said he didn't have much time.

The Chair: He can have someone replace him.

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: Okay, great.

The Chair: Back to the matter at hand.

Mr. Généreux, you prepared a motion. Could you read it with the names of the people you think would be on the committee?

The Clerk: I'll read it:

That the Subcommittee on Agenda and Procedure be composed of Emmanuel Dubourg, Chris d'Entremont, Mario Beaulieu, Charlie Angus and René Arseneault.

Mr. Bernard Généreux: I so move. I also second the motion. It's settled, then.

The Chair: I see that everyone is in agreement.

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: Mr. Godin, you may go ahead.

Mr. Joël Godin: Mr. Chair, since we're here, can we get a jump on things and come to an agreement on the speaking time allocated to each party?

Mr. René Arseneault: It's already done.

Mr. Joël Godin: Oh, very good. Pardon me.

Thank you. That's what you call being efficient.

The Chair: Yes, we're very efficient.

Thank you everyone, once again. I'd also like to take this opportunity to thank the interpreters. My apologies for not doing so at the beginning of the meeting.

(Meeting adjourned)

Published under the authority of the Speaker of
the House of Commons

SPEAKER'S PERMISSION

The proceedings of the House of Commons and its committees are hereby made available to provide greater public access. The parliamentary privilege of the House of Commons to control the publication and broadcast of the proceedings of the House of Commons and its committees is nonetheless reserved. All copyrights therein are also reserved.

Reproduction of the proceedings of the House of Commons and its committees, in whole or in part and in any medium, is hereby permitted provided that the reproduction is accurate and is not presented as official. This permission does not extend to reproduction, distribution or use for commercial purpose of financial gain. Reproduction or use outside this permission or without authorization may be treated as copyright infringement in accordance with the Copyright Act. Authorization may be obtained on written application to the Office of the Speaker of the House of Commons.

Reproduction in accordance with this permission does not constitute publication under the authority of the House of Commons. The absolute privilege that applies to the proceedings of the House of Commons does not extend to these permitted reproductions. Where a reproduction includes briefs to a committee of the House of Commons, authorization for reproduction may be required from the authors in accordance with the Copyright Act.

Nothing in this permission abrogates or derogates from the privileges, powers, immunities and rights of the House of Commons and its committees. For greater certainty, this permission does not affect the prohibition against impeaching or questioning the proceedings of the House of Commons in courts or otherwise. The House of Commons retains the right and privilege to find users in contempt of Parliament if a reproduction or use is not in accordance with this permission.

Also available on the House of Commons website at the following address: <https://www.ourcommons.ca>

Publié en conformité de l'autorité
du Président de la Chambre des communes

PERMISSION DU PRÉSIDENT

Les délibérations de la Chambre des communes et de ses comités sont mises à la disposition du public pour mieux le renseigner. La Chambre conserve néanmoins son privilège parlementaire de contrôler la publication et la diffusion des délibérations et elle possède tous les droits d'auteur sur celles-ci.

Il est permis de reproduire les délibérations de la Chambre et de ses comités, en tout ou en partie, sur n'importe quel support, pourvu que la reproduction soit exacte et qu'elle ne soit pas présentée comme version officielle. Il n'est toutefois pas permis de reproduire, de distribuer ou d'utiliser les délibérations à des fins commerciales visant la réalisation d'un profit financier. Toute reproduction ou utilisation non permise ou non formellement autorisée peut être considérée comme une violation du droit d'auteur aux termes de la Loi sur le droit d'auteur. Une autorisation formelle peut être obtenue sur présentation d'une demande écrite au Bureau du Président de la Chambre des communes.

La reproduction conforme à la présente permission ne constitue pas une publication sous l'autorité de la Chambre. Le privilège absolu qui s'applique aux délibérations de la Chambre ne s'étend pas aux reproductions permises. Lorsqu'une reproduction comprend des mémoires présentés à un comité de la Chambre, il peut être nécessaire d'obtenir de leurs auteurs l'autorisation de les reproduire, conformément à la Loi sur le droit d'auteur.

La présente permission ne porte pas atteinte aux privilèges, pouvoirs, immunités et droits de la Chambre et de ses comités. Il est entendu que cette permission ne touche pas l'interdiction de contester ou de mettre en cause les délibérations de la Chambre devant les tribunaux ou autrement. La Chambre conserve le droit et le privilège de déclarer l'utilisateur coupable d'outrage au Parlement lorsque la reproduction ou l'utilisation n'est pas conforme à la présente permission.

Aussi disponible sur le site Web de la Chambre des communes à l'adresse suivante :
<https://www.noscommunes.ca>