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Chair: Mr. René Arseneault



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• (0855)

[*Translation*]

The Chair (Mr. René Arseneault (Madawaska—Restigouche, Lib.)): I call the meeting to order.

Welcome to meeting number 53 of the House of Commons Standing Committee on Official Languages.

Pursuant to our routine motion, I want to let you know that all members and all witnesses did the necessary connection tests before the meeting.

Pursuant to the order of reference adopted on Monday, May 30, 2022, the committee is resuming its examination of Bill C-13, An Act to amend the Official Languages Act, to enact the Use of French in Federally Regulated Private Businesses Act and to make related amendments to other Acts.

Welcome to the officials from the Department of Canadian Heritage, Treasury Board Secretariat, and the Department of Citizenship and Immigration, who are here to support the committee on technical issues.

From the Department of Canadian Heritage, we again have with us Ms. Boyer, Mr. Fallu and Ms. Terrien.

From the Department of Citizenship and Immigration, we have Mr. Saint-Germain, who will be joining us shortly by videoconference.

From Treasury Board Secretariat, we again have Mr. Quell with us.

Before beginning, I would like to give you a few updates.

Mr. Beaulieu, are you wanting to speak to the agenda?

Mr. Mario Beaulieu (La Pointe-de-l'Île, BQ): I would like to move a motion for us to go immediately to the part of the meeting dealing with committee business, to discuss and clarify the situation. If all goes well, it will go quickly. If there is debate, the time will not be deducted from the time devoted to the clause-by-clause consideration of the bill.

The Chair: What are you proposing, exactly?

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: I am proposing that we go immediately to committee business to discuss the motion and clarify the situation.

The Chair: Are you talking about motions we have received or the one we talked about on Tuesday?

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: An amendment was adopted, and now we have to vote on Mr. Godin's amended motion. If all goes well, we

will come back right away to the clause-by-clause study of the bill. It's so we avoid wasting too much time.

Mr. Marc Serré (Nickel Belt, Lib.): Mr. Chair, I think you wanted to give an update on all that. We are going to vote against Mr. Beaulieu's proposal, but we should let you give your update.

The Chair: Just a moment, please.

If I understand correctly, Mr. Beaulieu is moving a motion for us to go to committee business. It's a dilatory motion, so there is no debate and we have to vote on it immediately, agreed?

Mr. Joël Godin (Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier, CPC): Wait, Mr. Chair. Before proceeding to the vote, I want to understand.

If we go to committee business, are we coming back to the motions that were before us and the proposed amendment to the motion?

The Chair: That is what Mr. Beaulieu is proposing, that is, that we go to committee business and do exactly that.

Have I understood correctly, Mr. Beaulieu?

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: Yes.

Mr. Joël Godin: Fine.

We can vote now, Mr. Chair.

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

Mr. Francis Drouin (Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, Lib.): I just want to clarify something.

The fact that we are in clause-by-clause study of a bill doesn't mean that a member may not present a motion. I am talking about a motion like the one we discussed last time. There is nothing to prevent Mr. Beaulieu from presenting it now, is that not right?

The Chair: That is correct.

If I may, Mr. Beaulieu, before we come back to that, I'm going to finish what I was going to say before beginning the meeting. You have moved a motion and we are going to vote on it, unless you withdraw it if you think it is not necessary.

I was going to tell you that there was a lot of confusion on Tuesday. Among other things, there were some technical difficulties that cut into the meeting considerably.

So, first, I would like to tell you that I have decided that the last meeting would not be considered to be the eighth meeting. So today we are starting the eighth of the eight meetings provided for by the first motion.

The second thing I wanted to tell you concerns the motion we were debating, but before talking about that, it has to be moved. I will talk about it at that point.

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: I would like us to proceed with the vote. If it doesn't pass, oh well; if all goes well, as I think, we will start consideration of the bill again five minutes later.

The Chair: That's fine, but, as Mr. Drouin said, there is nothing to prevent you coming back to it while we are doing the clause-by-clause study, even if we are not in the part of the meeting devoted to committee business.

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: Yes, exactly.

The Chair: So the dilatory motion has been moved, and we will proceed to a roll-call vote.

(Amendment negatived: nays 10; yeas: 1)

The Chair: So we will resume the clause-by-clause study of the bill.

Mr. Godin, I believe you wanted to say something.

Mr. Joël Godin: In fact, Mr. Chair, I asked questions and we were ridiculed, but we were proved right this morning.

At the last meeting, Ms. Ashton proposed an amendment to part of my motion. We are now going to debate my amended motion.

May I read it, Mr. Chair? How do you want me to proceed?

The Chair: On that subject, also, I have made a decision I would like to inform the committee of. You can correct me if I am mistaken.

At the last meeting, before the end of the sitting, a motion was moved by Mr. Godin, to which Ms. Ashton proposed an amendment, which was agreed to by the committee. Words like "leaves out" and "stricken out" were used, and that might have made the effect of the amendment on the main motion ambiguous.

The decision I have made is this. The committee can tell me quickly, by unanimous consent, whether it approves it or not.

The first point in Mr. Godin's motion asked that "the committee proceed with clause-by-clause consideration of the Bill for a duration of four supplemental meetings, at a frequency of two meetings per week." Ms. Ashton's amendment, adopted by the committee, asked specifically that it instead be "6.5 hours of meeting". I think that was clearly understood by everyone.

The second point in Mr. Godin's motion proposed that "consideration of clause 54 of Bill C-13 be postponed to the end of clause-by-clause consideration and be subject to debate." I am making the decision to retain the second point of the motion in full. After listening to the meeting again and rereading the unrevised transcript several times, I realized that there really was confusion. Given that ambiguity, I prefer to have the amendment alter the main motion as little as possible.

I want to be sure we all understand this clearly. To summarize, Mr. Godin's amended motion refers to "6.5 hours of meeting", in accordance with the amendment adopted earlier that was clearly understood by everyone. The second point of the motion remains intact.

Does the committee unanimously consent to this decision?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

● (0900)

The Chair: Good.

We will now come back to Mr. Godin's motion as amended by Ms. Ashton's amendment.

You have the floor, Mr. Godin.

Mr. Joël Godin: I just want to make my argument to try to persuade all my colleagues around the table to support this motion.

Clause 54 of the bill is very important, because it has symbolic value. Everyone around the table has seen that French is in decline everywhere in Canada. The purpose of this clause is to show that Quebec is the fortress of French. That is why it is important that we be able to discuss clause 54, which deals with subjects that include the obligation of federally regulated private businesses to apply the Charter of the French Language. This is a very meaningful element that sends an important signal. As I have said many times, if the federal government does not take concrete action to protect French, who will do it?

I think it is important to debate this clause so that people understand its importance. That is why I have moved this motion.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Godin.

Mr. Serré, you have the floor.

Mr. Marc Serré: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thanks to my colleague for presenting his motion.

I think we can all agree that all of the amendments to the bill that have been proposed in this committee are important.

We have already debated certain matters and this is now the eighth meeting at which we are debating the bill, and we are going to add 6.5 hours of meeting.

For these reasons, I am moving an amendment to delete the second point of the motion in its entirety.

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

Mr. Joël Godin: Mr. Chair, I do not share my colleague's comments. It is not true that all the amendments are as important as each other. There are some that have more impact than others. It is very important, for me and for us, to debate clause 54.

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

Ms. Niki Ashton (Churchill—Keewatinook Aski, NDP): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

First, we believe that clause 54, which we are discussing here, is an important issue. In fact, we have addressed it in the House and outside the House on several occasions.

That said, the NDP's concern is the time we have already given to consideration of this bill. Since November, we have been trying to propose a clear and efficient agenda, to find a balance that both allows amendments to the bill to be proposed and allows us to move forward. We believe the proposed debate on clause 54 would significantly prolong consideration of the bill, that being something that we are already seriously concerned about. We think it is important that the committee refer the bill to the Senate as soon as possible, so that it comes back before the House of Commons before the end of June. The communities have been clear on this subject: they are despairing and we have to move forward.

I would like to clarify our position. Yesterday, we sent a motion to the clerk. We intend to support adding 6.5 hours of meeting, but we do not want to continue the debate on...

• (0905)

Mr. Joël Godin: A point of order, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Wait a moment, Ms. Ashton.

Mr. Godin, you have the floor.

Mr. Joël Godin: Mr. Chair, you probably know why I have raised a point of order.

Can my colleague focus on the amendment proposed by my colleague? Then we will deal with my motion. After that, we will see how the rest of the proceedings will go.

The Chair: Good. I was just going to make the same comment.

Ms. Ashton, I would ask that you focus on the amendment proposed by Mr. Serré.

Ms. Niki Ashton: Yes, Mr. Chair.

I intend to support the removal of the second part of the motion, because we think it would add a lot more time than is needed to the consideration of this bill. Our goal is to finish consideration as soon as possible. We therefore support this amendment.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Ashton.

Mr. Beaulieu, you have the floor.

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: Clause 54 is important. There is consensus on this in Quebec. All former premiers, even those from the Liberal Party, all the major trade union federations and all the major cities in Quebec have supported this proposal. That is why I believe it is important to be able to debate it.

The motion under consideration, Mr. Godin's motion, does not give us more time to consider it; it just reorganizes the time so that we keep some time at the end of our consideration to debate clause 54, very simply.

As to Mr. Serré's amendment, we will let things stand, otherwise... If I understand correctly, it's so that it will be possible to vote against clause 54 and still have the 6.5 hours of debate.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Beaulieu.

Mr. Godin, you have the floor.

Mr. Joël Godin: Once again, Mr. Chair, we have a demonstration of proceduritis that is making us waste time.

Personally, the way I decode the situation is that the Liberals and the NDP do not want to debate clause 54, and that is a big disappointment to me.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Godin.

As no one else wishes to speak, we will proceed with the vote.

Just before that, I would note that I have checked with the clerk and the word used by Mr. Serré is in fact "delete". It's clear. If the amendment is adopted, the second part of the main motion will be deleted; it will no longer exist.

Mr. Joël Godin: Mr. Chair, the procedure is very clear to me.

The Chair: Fine.

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: Mr. Chair, am I still entitled to—

The Chair: I have already called the vote, Mr. Beaulieu.

Mr. Joël Godin: Voting hasn't started, Mr. Chair.

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

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: It will be very quick.

I don't understand why the NDP, which is supposed to support the application of the Charter of the French Language to federally regulated businesses, does not want to debate it.

The Chair: Mr. Beaulieu, the amendment was proposed by Mr. Serré, not by the NDP.

I am ready to call for the vote, but I see that we have lost a player who is participating in the meeting remotely.

Can someone send a message to Mr. Gourde to see what's happening?

Mr. Richard Martel (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord, CPC): He just said that his Internet connection was interrupted.

The Chair: Right.

We will suspend the meeting for a few moments to give Mr. Gourde a chance to reconnect.

• (0905)

(Pause)

• (0905)

The Chair: Resuming the meeting.

Mr. Godin, do you want to replace the member who is absent with another Conservative Party MP?

Mr. Joël Godin: Mr. Chair, thank you for your diligence, but in the circumstances, the absence of one of my party's MPs will not have any impact, because we already know the outcome of the vote.

For this time, I agree to have the committee proceed with the vote.

• (0910)

The Chair: Fine.

The first vice-chair of the committee, who is from the Conservative Party, is telling me to go ahead even though his party is missing a member, because we have quorum.

We are therefore going to put Mr. Serré's amendment to the vote.

I will let the clerk proceed.

Ms. Patricia Lattanzio (Saint-Léonard—Saint-Michel, Lib.): Madam Clerk, the vote is to delete clause 54, is that right?

Mr. Joël Godin: A point of order, Mr. Chair.

When we hold a vote, we can't make comments.

I was given a dressing down by my colleague last week when voting had begun. So I am asking that we keep silent and not answer questions. We have to know what we are voting on, and when voting has begun, everybody has to vote. I was rebuked for this last week.

Ms. Patricia Lattanzio: Mr. Chair, if I may speak.

We have connection problems this morning. You can check with other colleagues who are participating in the meeting remotely: the sound is not top quality today. So when the clerk started the vote, it wasn't clear. That is why I wanted to get clarification.

You know that I am not in the habit of making comments during a vote, my dear colleague.

That said, I apologize.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Lattanzio.

Mr. Joël Godin: Mr. Chair—

The Chair: Can we proceed with the vote, Mr. Godin?

Mr. Joël Godin: No. I want to finish what I was saying.

I agree to one of my colleagues withdrawing from the vote because he had technical difficulties. If Ms. Lattanzio has technical difficulties, she should withdraw.

The Chair: Mr. Godin, what you are telling me is not important for the vote. I would ask that you follow procedure, please. You agreed to proceeding with the vote.

Ms. Lattanzio asked a legitimate question. She is actually present. Let's be a bit more open-minded about this. I think she clearly told us the reason why she had asked the question.

Let's continue with the vote, Madam Clerk.

(Amendment agreed to: yeas: 6; nays: 4)

The Chair: We will come back to the motion as amended.

Does anyone want to add something?

Since no one wishes to speak, we will proceed with the vote on Mr. Godin's amended motion.

(Motion as amended agreed to: yeas 6; nays: 4)

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

Mr. Joël Godin: I would like to move another motion, please.

The Chair: We're listening.

Mr. Joël Godin: The motion is as follows:

That, in relation to the consideration of Bill C-13, An Act to amend the Official Languages Act, to enact the Use of French in Federally Regulated Private Businesses Act and to make related amendments to other Acts : Consideration of clause 27.1 to clause 52 of Bill C-13 be postponed to the end of clause-by-clause consideration.

You have received a copy, Madam Clerk.

The Chair: We have all received the document.

Mr. Joël Godin: Do you need me to present my arguments?

I can repeat what I said earlier, but if we want to save time, I don't need to go back over it. For us in the Conservative Party of Canada, it is extremely important to debate clause 54.

We also want to reiterate that there are various clauses in a bill and some are more important than others.

Mr. Chair, before we proceed with the vote, I want to make sure that four Conservative members are present.

The Chair: That's fine, thank you.

Before we go any further, I want to note that everyone has received a copy of Mr. Godin's motion.

What is the situation with Mr. Gourde?

• (0915)

The Clerk of the Committee (Ms. Michelle Legault): It seems that Mr. Gourde had to restart his Surface device to do an update. He is trying to connect to the meeting using another computer.

The Chair: I'm going to suspend the meeting to give Mr. Gourde some time to rejoin it.

Do you want to say something, Mr. Godin?

Mr. Joël Godin: Mr. Chair, I just want to add that we are trying to find someone on site to temporarily replace Mr. Gourde.

The Chair: That's good, thank you.

I am suspending the meeting.

• (0915)

(Pause)

• (0915)

The Chair: Resuming the meeting.

Mr. Gourde, I'm pleased to see you back.

I see that everyone is here.

Before the break, we were on Mr. Godin's motion.

Because no one seems to want to speak, we will proceed with the vote.

(Motion negated; yeas: 5; nays: 6)

(Clause 21)

• (0920)

The Chair: We will now resume the discussions concerning clause 21 of Bill C-13.

We have got to the new version of amendment BQ-32.

Mr. Beaulieu, you have the floor.

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: The new wording of amendment BQ-32 consists of, first, amending clause 21 by adding the following, regarding positive measures:

(a.1) shall be taken in consultation with the Government of Quebec when they relate to the Province of Quebec;

This is really the least one can ask. We want Quebec to be consulted, at the very least. As for positive measures, we shall see how things go. In any event, since its earliest days, the only effect of the Official Languages Act has been to strengthen English in Quebec, when it is French that is threatened. At present, the decline of French is accelerating. The least that can be done is to consult the Government of Quebec regarding the next positive measures.

Second, the amendment refers to subparagraph 41(6)(b)(ii) as proposed in the bill, where it refers to "the necessity of considering the specific needs of each of the two official language communities of Canada". We want to replace the wording after that with "taking into account the minority status of the French language throughout Canada".

The concept of equality that has been applied up to now involved treating anglophones in Quebec in the same way as francophones outside Quebec. The needs are very different, however. As I said earlier, in Quebec, we consider French to be threatened. We therefore have to take the minority nature of French everywhere in Canada into account.

Third, the amendment seeks to add subparagraph 41(6)(b)(iii), which refers to the jurisdictions and powers of the provinces and territories, including the Charter of the French Language.

The government says it wants to protect French in Quebec. If it really wants to be consistent, it has to respect the jurisdictions of all of the provinces, including Quebec's. That includes everything that the Charter of the French Language implies in areas under Quebec's jurisdiction.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Beaulieu.

Are there any comments?

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: I would add that this is also part of the right of the Quebec people to self-determination.

The Chair: Thank you for that addition.

Are there any comments?

Since no one wishes to speak, we will proceed with the vote.

(Amendment negated: nays: 10; yeas: 1 [*See Minutes of Proceedings*])

• (0925)

The Chair: That brings us to amendment CPC-29.

Mr. Godin, you have the floor.

Mr. Joël Godin: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Obviously, we have introduced amendment CPC-29 with the intention of representing the Fédération des communautés francophones et acadienne du Canada well.

Do I read the amendment, Mr. Chair? It's long.

The Chair: Before you read it, I would like to remind committee members that if amendment CPC-29 is adopted, amendments BQ-33, NDP-7, NDP-8 and BQ-35 cannot be moved because of a line conflict, in English or French.

I will let you read your amendment, Mr. Godin.

Mr. Joël Godin: In fact, I would say these are adjustments, but they are important.

In point (a), the amendment proposes to amend clause 21 of the bill by replacing line 14 on page 12 with the following:

(c) shall include measures, among others, to

In point b), the amendment proposes to amend clause 21 by replacing line 25 on page 12 with the following:

if those measures are consistent with the mandate of the federal institution in question, and

In point (c), the amendment proposes to amend clause 21 by replacing line 32 on page 12 with the following:

strong institutions serving those communities, if those measures are consistent with the mandate of the federal institution in question.

In point (d), the amendment proposes to amend clause 21 by replacing lines 34 and 35 on page 12 with the following:

shall, on the basis of analyses,

Last, in point (e), the amendment proposes to amend clause 21 by replacing line 41 on page 12 with the following:

the possibilities for avoiding or, at least, mitigating those negative impacts.

I think these adjustments will simply strengthen Bill C-13 and give it more teeth.

The Chair: Are there any comments on amendment CPC-29?

I don't see anyone wishing to speak.

So we will proceed with the vote.

(Amendment negated: nays: 7; yeas: 4)

The Chair: We will now move on to amendment BQ-33.

Mr. Beaulieu, before you go ahead, I would like to say that if amendment BQ-33 is adopted, amendments NDP-7 and BA-34 cannot be moved because of a line conflict.

You have the floor, Mr. Beaulieu.

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: We are moving this amendment for the same reasons as our previous amendment. It is to reflect the positions of the Government of Quebec.

First, the amendment seeks to add "while taking into account the specific need to protect the French language in Quebec."

The second part of the amendment refers to line 21 on page 12 of the bill. After the passage that says "induce and assist organizations and institutions to project and promote the bilingual character of Canada in their activities in Canada or elsewhere," we are proposing to add "of Canada and the French-speaking character of Quebec in their activities in Canada or elsewhere".

The Chair: Thank you.

Are there any questions or comments about Mr. Beaulieu's amendment?

Since there are none, we will proceed with the vote.

(Amendment negated: nays: 10; yeas: 1)

The Chair: That brings us to amendment NDP-7.

Ms. Ashton, you have the floor.

Ms. Niki Ashton: I am not going to present this amendment, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Ashton.

Amendment NDP-7 will therefore not be presented.

We are now at amendment BQ-34.

You have the floor, Mr. Beaulieu.

• (0930)

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: Mr. Chair, I am not going to present this amendment, to save us time.

The Chair: Right, thank you.

Amendment BQ-34 will therefore not be presented.

That brings us to amendment LIB-16, which is on page 88 of the bundle of amendments.

Are you moving this amendment, Ms. Kayabaga?

Ms. Arielle Kayabaga (London West, Lib.): Yes, I am moving amendment LIB-16.

The Chair: Right.

You have the floor, Ms. Kayabaga.

Ms. Arielle Kayabaga: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Amendment LIB-16 proposes that Bill C-13, in clause 21, be amended by adding after line 21 on page 12 the following:

(iii.1) foster the re-establishment and growth of the demographic weight of French linguistic minority communities,

As with the other amendment I recently proposed, the reason behind this one is that we need to continue to foster the growth of francophone minority communities in Canada. We can rely on immigration or use any other method to see the francophone community outside Quebec expand.

The Chair: Before hearing comments, I want to clarify a point about the English version of the proposed amendment. Again, it is a matter of consistency. We have discussed this at earlier meetings.

In amendment LIB-16, the word "re-establishment" is used. For continuity and consistency, the word used should actually be

"restoration". However, it amounts to the same thing, because it's a synonym.

Are there any comments?

You have the floor, Mr. Godin.

Mr. Joël Godin: I have a question on your comment, Mr. Chair: why does the word need to be changed?

The Chair: This is what we had agreed to do at a previous meeting. I think it was at the second or third meeting on the bill.

Mr. Joël Godin: Is the word "re-establishment" being replaced by "restoration" everywhere in the bill?

The Chair: Yes. Because there were amendments that talked about the same thing, but didn't use the same word.

Mr. Joël Godin: Thank you for the clarification, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: It's only in the English version.

Mr. Joël Godin: It's always important to get answers to our questions.

In fact, I would like to propose a subamendment. I agree completely with the comments of my colleague Ms. Kayabaga, except that I would like to strengthen her amendment.

May I present my subamendment immediately, Mr. Chair?

The Chair: Madam Clerk tells us that the wording of the subamendment is being circulated. You may present it.

Mr. Joël Godin: I'm going to summarize it briefly: that we replace the words "foster the re-establishment and growth" with the words "restore and increase". The wording would then be as follows:

(iii.1) restore and increase the demographic weight of French linguistic minority communities,

The Chair: Good.

Mr. Joël Godin: That strengthens amendment LIB-16 and gives it more teeth. We want the act to have adult teeth, not baby teeth.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Godin.

Ms. Ashton, you have the floor.

Ms. Niki Ashton: We also wanted to propose a similar subamendment. I'm happy that this one has been proposed by my colleague. We do have to have much stronger language, and that is particularly accomplished by the word "*assurer*".

The Chair: Thank you.

Are there any other comments?

Ms. Lattanzio, you have the floor.

Ms. Patricia Lattanzio: The proposal is to change the word "*favoriser*" in the French version, but what word would it be replaced by in the English version?

The Chair: You have the floor, Mr. Godin.

Mr. Joël Godin: Ms. Lattanzio, your question is a good one.

It would be replaced by "restore and increase".

The Chair: Does that work, Ms. Lattanzio?

Ms. Patricia Lattanzio: Yes, I heard my colleague clearly with no audio problems.

Thank you.

The Chair: Are there any other comments?

There being none, we will proceed with the vote on the subamendment moved by Mr. Godin to amendment LIB-16.

(Amendment adopted: yeas: 11; nays: 0)

● (0935)

The Chair: So we now come back to the main amendment.

Are there any other questions?

You have the floor, Mr. Godin.

Mr. Joël Godin: In fact, Mr. Chair, we are proceeding with the vote on Ms. Kayabaga's amendment as corrected by my subamendment, are we not?

The Chair: That's what I just said, Mr. Godin.

Mr. Joël Godin: You didn't say it as clearly, so I wanted to check the information.

The Chair: Right, I'll say it again clearly.

We are coming back to amendment LIB-16 as amended by unanimous vote.

Mr. Joël Godin: You didn't say that.

The Chair: No, I didn't say it was unanimous.

The amended amendment is therefore as follows:

(iii.1) restore and increase the demographic weight of French linguistic minority communities,

For the English version, I don't have the document in front of me.

Mr. Godin, what would the word "foster" be replaced by in the English version?

[English]

Mr. Joël Godin: It's "restore and increase". The restoration.....

It's that amendment LIB-16 be modified by replacing "foster the re-establishment and growth" by the following: "restore and increase".

Mr. Francis Drouin: It's "restore and increase the re-establishment and growth of the demographic weight the French linguistic minority communities."

[Translation]

The Chair: We will proceed with the vote on amendment LIB-16 as amended.

(Amended amendment adopted: yeas: 10; nays: 0)

The Chair: So that brings us to amendment NDP-8.

Ms. Ashton, you have the floor.

Ms. Niki Ashton: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

It is with great pleasure that I present amendment NDP-8, which seeks to add an essential step in the federal government's negotia-

tions with the provinces and territories: negotiating language clauses for minority communities. In proposing this amendment to Bill C-13, we want language clauses to be included in agreements with the provinces, unless it is impossible, which should rarely be the case.

This amendment is being moved thanks to the hard work of the francophone and Acadian communities that have endured underfunding for their essential services for years. Those communities have to fight constantly to protect their services, often services for which federal funding is provided.

I want to recognize the people who fought to keep Hôpital Montfort here in Ottawa, to preserve Campus Saint-Jean in Alberta, or to protect higher education in Sudbury and in the north. I want to recognize the people who are waiting for childcare in French all across Canada, including in communities like mine in Thompson, Manitoba. I want to recognize the people who wish to receive their health-care in French. The purpose of this amendment is to mark a historic turning point for all these people.

Thanks to the solution we are proposing to add today, the federal government will no longer be able to forget the minority language communities of Canada and will ensure that language clauses are included, to protect and promote French everywhere in Canada.

● (0940)

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Ashton.

Before debating amendment NDP-8 further, I want to remind you that if that amendment is adopted, amendment BQ-37 cannot be moved because of a line conflict.

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: Is it the same thing for amendment IND-1, on language clauses?

The Chair: No, there doesn't seem to be a line conflict in that case. It would just be amendment BQ-37 that could not be moved.

On the subject of new amendment NDP-8, I now give the floor to Mr. Samson.

Mr. Darrell Samson (Sackville—Preston—Chezzetcook, Lib.): Mr. Chair, thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak to amendment NDP-8.

I would like to take the opportunity to thank the member for Churchill—Keewatinook Aski for her excellent work. We can see that she has taken the opinion of the diverse communities of Canada into account.

It is essential that necessary measures be taken in negotiating agreements. I worked on the ground in the field of education for two decades, and I can confirm that this is one of the most important things that associations across Canada are asking for.

I want to thank the member for including certain other worthwhile items in her amendment.

For example, when I worked in education, the school boards and organizations talked to me for a very long time about the lack of dialogue. There may have been discussions in some provinces or some territories, but in others there were none. Also adding the need to ensure dialogue and to hold real consultations will enable school boards and organizations across Canada to communicate their priorities clearly to the institutions, in order to achieve the objective of advancing French outside Quebec and the rights of anglophones in Quebec. So this is essential.

Her amendment also addresses accountability, a process we have been talking about for years. Very often, school boards and organizations in Canada have stated, long and loud, the need for accountability when an agreement provides for funds to be distributed, but they have not been listened to.

For all these reasons, I wanted to thank the member for Churchill—Keewatinook Aski for her innovation and hard work to advance the francophone community outside Quebec.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Samson.

Before giving the floor to Mr. Godin and Mr. Beaulieu, I would like to clarify something: if amendment NDP-8 is adopted, there will be a line conflict not only with amendment BQ-37, but also with amendment LIB-18.1.

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: Are we continuing debate?

The Chair: Yes, we are continuing with hearing comments. I just wanted to add that clarification, because it has been amended. Things are moving fast.

If amendment NDP-8 is adopted, amendments BQ-37 and LIB-18.1 cannot be moved because of a line conflict.

Mr. Godin, you have the floor.

Mr. Joël Godin: Mr. Chair, I think it is important to introduce this concept into the bill. In light of the testimony we have heard, I am in favour of including tools that will make it possible to achieve the desired results in the provinces and territories. Obviously, we have to find a way of doing things that respects provincial and territorial jurisdictions.

Having regard to the testimony heard and the convictions of the Conservative Party of Canada, our colleague's amendment suits us very well. We will therefore be supporting amendment NDP-8, because encouraging collaboration rather than imposing obligations is consistent with our philosophy. The provinces' and territories' authority must be respected.

● (0945)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Godin.

Mr. Beaulieu, you have the floor.

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: I'm going to let Mr. Rayes have my turn.

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

Mr. Alain Rayes (Richmond—Arthabaska, Ind.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

May I ask the witnesses a question?

The Chair: Yes, go ahead, Mr. Rayes.

Mr. Alain Rayes: I'd like someone, whether one of the officials or clerks, or perhaps the analyst, to tell us whether the proposed NDP amendment will force the government to include language clauses in future funding agreements with the provinces and territories, or whether its intent is simply to have the government hold consultations, without becoming law.

Can anyone confirm this?

The Chair: One moment, please, Mr. Rayes.

Who would like to take this question?

Ms. Boyer, you have the floor.

Ms. Julie Boyer (Assistant Deputy Minister, Official Languages, Heritage and Regions, Department of Canadian Heritage): Thank you for the question.

Amendment NDP-8 is proposing that the federal government take appropriate measures, when it negotiates agreements with provincial and territorial governments, to promote the inclusion of language clauses in the agreements. It does not propose making them compulsory. I believe that Mr. Godin just spoke about this.

These agreements often affect provincial or territorial areas of jurisdiction. The federal government would be required to systematically and regularly discuss with the provinces and territories the need to include language clauses in the agreements, but without making them mandatory.

Mr. Alain Rayes: Mr. Chair, may I ask Ms. Boyer a further question?

The Chair: Go ahead, Mr. Rayes.

Mr. Alain Rayes: Thank you.

In 2022, the Federal Court of Appeal handed down a decision in the matter opposing the Fédération francophone de la Colombie-Britannique and the Government of Canada. If a similar case were to arise in future, would amendment NDP-8 mean that the decision handed down would be complied with or would it amount to what Ms. Boyer just mentioned, which is that the government would simply have an obligation to consult the provinces and territories? The decision demonstrated that, in spite of this obligation, the federal government had not taken the measures needed to include language clauses in the agreement, or that the measures it took were inadequate.

Am I wrong in saying that amendment NDP-8, if adopted, would not include anything that would prevent a decision like the 2022 ruling in the case opposing the francophone communities of British Columbia and the Government of Canada?

Ms. Julie Boyer: I'm going to ask my colleague Chantal Terrien to answer this question.

Mrs. Chantal Terrien (Manager, Modernization of the Official Languages Act, Department of Canadian Heritage): This obligation is indeed in line with the decision involving the Fédération francophone de la Colombie-Britannique. It reflects precedent.

This obligation would of course be in Part VII of the Official Languages Act, where positive measures are addressed.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Terrien.

Mr. Beaulieu, you have the floor.

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: The question I wanted to ask has been answered indirectly.

The language clauses would therefore not apply to the Government of Quebec, for example.

Ms. Julie Boyer: That's right. I confirm that the language clauses would not be obligatory, and that they would rather be a matter for discussion with federal stakeholders.

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: In that case, out of solidarity with the francophone and Acadian communities, I will support amendment NDP-8.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Beaulieu.

Are there any other questions about amendment NDP-8?

We're going to vote on it, then.

(The amendment is carried: yeas 11; nays 0 [*See Minutes of proceedings*])

The Chair: We are now going to look at amendment NDP-9, which is on page 94 of the package of amendments.

Ms. Ashton, would you like to propose your amendment?

Mr. Alain Rayes: Mr. Chair, I had raised my hand to intervene before we moved to the next amendment.

The Chair: Are you talking about this one or the one that comes after?

Mr. Alain Rayes: It's to comment on the one before this one. I'd just like to say something.

The Chair: Go ahead, Mr. Rayes.

● (0950)

Mr. Alain Rayes: I'd like to withdraw my amendment IND-1, please.

The Chair: Mr. Rayes will therefore not be proposing amendment IND-1, on page 100 of our package of amendments.

Thank you, Mr. Rayes.

Ms. Ashton, you have the floor to propose amendment NDP-9.

Ms. Niki Ashton: Excuse me, Mr. Chair, I need to check something, if I could have a few moments.

We were focusing on amendment NDP-8. I'd like to thank all the members of the committee for their support.

I'm now ready to present amendment NDP-9.

The Chair: Okay.

We all have a copy of the new amendment NDP-9, on page 94 of our package of amendments.

Ms. Ashton, do you have anything you'd like to add?

Ms. Niki Ashton: No.

The Chair: Okay.

So you are introducing the amendment.

I need to point out to the committee that if amendment NDP-9 is adopted, amendment BQ-35 cannot, owing to a line conflict.

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: All right.

The Chair: Are there any comments about amendment NDP-9?

Go ahead, Mr. Serré.

Mr. Marc Serré: I have a question for Ms. Boyer, of the Department of Canadian Heritage. Amendment NDP-9 refers to "taking positive impacts into account". Could you give us some examples of what that means?

Ms. Julie Boyer: Mr. Chair, would it be possible to send me a copy of the new amendment NDP-9 being introduced?

The Chair: Before going any farther on the question that Mr. Serré asked Ms. Boyer, I have something to say.

Ms. Ashton, I think you just submitted a new amendment NDP-9. The one you are introducing shows reference number 12261211 in the upper left corner. Is that the one we are talking about, Ms. Ashton?

Ms. Niki Ashton: Yes, I submitted a more recent version of the amendment.

The Chair: All right. Everyone knows that now.

Mr. Serré, you asked Ms. Boyer a question.

Please go ahead, Ms. Boyer.

Ms. Julie Boyer: Okay.

Amendment NDP-9 suggests taking the potential positive repercussions of that a positive measure might have. That means consequences that could benefit the official language minority community. The amendment says that direct negative impacts on the community should be avoided.

I can't think of a specific example of a positive impact. It would amount to the community feeling that the positive measure has positive outcomes, and that it could likewise be of benefit to the majority.

The Chair: Are you okay with that, Mr. Serré?

Mr. Marc Serré: Yes.

The Chair: Are there any other questions about amendment NDP-9?

Ms. Lattanzio, you have the floor.

Ms. Patricia Lattanzio: I'm going to continue in the same vein.

Can Ms. Ashton give us examples of how to evaluate these positive or negative impacts? How do you determine the extent to which positive measures have failed?

It looks to me like the wording is discretionary. I'd like some clarification.

● (0955)

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

Ms. Niki Ashton: The francophone communities outside Quebec that we heard from at the beginning of the study of Bill C-13 emphasized the importance of this point. The goal is to try and avoid negative impacts and to protect the rights of these communities, while strengthening support for them.

I want to underscore the fact that this question was raised several times by the communities.

The Chair: Do you have another question after having heard this answer, Ms. Lattanzio?

Ms. Patricia Lattanzio: I'm trying to understand how a positive measure could have a negative impact. That's my question, it seems contradictory to me.

Perhaps Ms. Boyer could expand upon this point.

The Chair: Go ahead, Ms. Boyer.

Ms. Julie Boyer: I could cite the example of *Fédération des francophones de la Colombie-Britannique v Canada (Employment and Social Development)*. In its decision, rendered in January 2022, the Federal Court of Appeal ruled that the federal government had failed in its obligation to take positive measures to offset the negative impact of one of its decisions pertaining to the francophone community of British Columbia. It ruled that federal institutions must factor in the repercussions of their decisions on minority language communities, and that they must attenuate any negative impact.

I think that this amendment codifies the second part of the two-part analysis that was applied in this January 2022 decision.

The Chair: Thank you. That's clear to me.

Would you like to add anything else, Ms. Ashton?

Ms. Niki Ashton: I just wanted to point out to Ms. Lattanzio that it is already referred to in Bill C-13, making it a matter of strengthening this and ensuring that the bill doesn't have a negative impact on the community. So it's rather a clarification and a reinforcement of what's already in the bill.

The Chair: Thank you.

Over to you, Mr. Godin.

Mr. Joël Godin: Could we vote, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Since no one wishes to comment, we'll do a voice vote.

(The amendment is carried: yeas 11; nays 0 [See Minutes of proceedings])

The Chair: So that eliminates amendment BQ-35. I believe Mr. Beaulieu had indicated that he would not be presenting it.

We are now moving on to amendment BQ-36, on page 96.

Go ahead, Mr. Beaulieu.

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: I'm continuing in the same vein. I'm proposing that in the case of Quebec, it be done in consultation with the Government of Quebec.

The Chair: Are there any other questions or comments?

Go ahead, Mr. Godin.

Mr. Joël Godin: I'd like to propose a subamendment to Mr. Beaulieu's amendment.

I invite my colleagues, the clerks and law clerks, to follow along. I would simply like to remove "in the case of Quebec, on consultation with the Government of Quebec" and replace it with "in consultation with the provinces and territories".

I don't think I need to add any comments.

• (1000)

The Chair: I believe that's clear.

As there are no questions about Mr. Godin's subamendment, I'd like to call a voice vote.

(The amendment is defeated: nays 6; yeas 5 [See Minutes of proceedings])

The Chair: That brings us to amendment BQ-36.

As there are no comments, I will call for a voice vote.

(The amendment is defeated: nays 10; yeas 1 [See Minutes of proceedings])

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

Mr. Marc Serré: I'd like to introduce amendment LIB-18.1.

The Chair: That comes right after amendment BQ-37. It's very close by.

Mr. Marc Serré: Okay.

The Chair: Mr. Beaulieu, the floor is yours for amendment BQ-37.

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: I'm not going to introduce it.

The Chair: All right, thank you.

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: It would be important, but it would be defeated.

The Chair: Thank you for that clarification, Mr. Beaulieu.

That brings us to amendment LIB-18.1.

You have the floor, Mr. Serré.

Mr. Marc Serré: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The adoption of amendment NDP-8 requires changes, and a new amendment is currently circulating.

I believe the clerk has sent everyone amendment LIB-18.1.

The Clerk: Sorry. I was distracted, but I'm getting there.

Okay, there it goes.

Mr. Marc Serré: Thank you.

I'm going to read the new amendment. I propose that Bill C-13, in clause 21, be amended by replacing line 9 on page 13.

I propose adding subclause 41(9.1). Thus in carrying out this objective, every federal institution shall (a) gather relevant information; (b) seek the opinions of English and French linguistic minority communities and other stakeholders about the positive measures that are the subject of the consultations; (c) provide the participants with relevant information on which those positive measures are based; (d) openly and meaningfully consider their opinions; and (e) be prepared to alter those positive measures.

I believe that everyone has now received it.

The Chair: To be specific, we're talking about amendment LIB-18.1, reference number 12273401.

Mr. Joël Godin: That's not what I received, Mr. Chair.

I received reference number 12268948.

The Chair: Hold on, while I check that I have the right copy.

The document you received is amendment LIB-18.1 reference number 12268948.

Mr. Godin, you have the floor.

• (1005)

Mr. Joël Godin: Before moving on, Mr. Chair, I have a procedural question.

Why was Mr. Serré able to introduce his amendment when I have amendment CPC-30 on the same subject? Does he come first because he presented his amendment from the floor?

The Chair: Give me a moment while I consult the legislative clerks.

Mr. Marc Serré: Mr. Chair, I have no objection to Mr. Godin presenting his amendment. We're going to vote against it in any event.

The Chair: The previous version of amendment LIB-18.1 came before amendment CPC-30 because it was replacing line 9 of the bill, whereas your amendment, Mr. Godin, was adding things after line 9. That's why it came before yours. I haven't received the virtual version you just received. Yours should in fact come first.

We will now consider amendment CPC-30.

Go ahead, Mr. Godin.

Mr. Joël Godin: I'm very disappointed to hear my colleague's comment, even before I presented my amendment, about how he was going to vote against it. That's how Liberals do things.

Mr. Chair, I simply want to introduce amendment CPC-30. I propose that Bill C-13, in clause 21, be amended by adding after line 9 on page 13 the following:

“(9.1) When engaging in consultations, every federal institution shall:

- (a) gather information to test its positive measures;
- (b) propose positive measures that have not been finalized;
- (c) seek the opinions of English and French linguistic minority communities about the positive measures that are the subject of the consultations;
- (d) provide the participants with all relevant information on which those positive measures are based;
- (e) openly and meaningfully consider their opinions;
- (f) be prepared to alter those positive measures; and

(g) provide them with feedback, both during the consultation process and after a decision has been made.

We are not making up this wording, Mr. Chair. It comes from another bill, Bill C-11. Our experts are not just improvising. I think this aspect is important.

Pursuant to the Federal Court's 2021 decision in *Fédération des francophones de la Colombie-Britannique v Canada (Employment and Social Development)*, there is an obligation to consult.

It's not an added burden for public servants, Mr. Chair. Minority communities will at least know where they stand. I think they deserve this respect, because minorities have to do battle on an every-day basis.

It's one more tool, and that's why I think it's important. Unfortunately, we just heard, right before I was introducing my amendment, that the Liberals are going to vote against it. I'm very disappointed with this attitude, but it's not the first time we've seen it.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Godin.

Are there any comments around the table?

Mr. Beaulieu, you have the floor.

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: I'd like to know whether I'm correct in saying that this does not imply that the Government of Quebec will be consulted, or that it will prevent measures that are harmful to French. It doesn't, right?

The Chair: For whom is your question, Mr. Beaulieu?

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: The question is for Mr. Godin.

Mr. Joël Godin: You're asking me...

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: Amendment CPC-31 will come afterwards.

The Chair: We will then address amendment LIB-18.1.

Right now, we're talking about amendment CPC-30.

The question for Mr. Godin was asking for clarification.

Over to you, Mr. Godin.

Mr. Joël Godin: Could you repeat your question, Mr. Beaulieu?

The Chair: Back to you, Mr. Beaulieu.

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: I've just noticed that amendment CPC-31 proposes consulting the provinces and territories. But it has not yet been adopted. We'll see, but it doesn't prevent positive measures that could weaken French as a common language.

• (1010)

Mr. Joël Godin: No, not at all. It's about consultation and working together with the stakeholders. That's the objective.

The Chair: Thank you.

I don't see any hands raised on the screen or around the table. Are there any other comments?

If not, we'll call the vote on amendment CPC-30.

Madam Clerk, you can call the vote now.

(The amendment is defeated: nays 6; yeas 5)

The Chair: That brings us to the new amendment LIB-18.1, reference number 12268948.

Mr. Serré, you have the floor.

Mr. Marc Serré: Amendment LIB-18.1 Was distributed to all members. I think I have already introduced it, and so there's no need to do it again. I have no further comments.

Thank you.

The Chair: Are there any questions about amendment LIB-18.1?

Mr. Godin, the floor is yours.

Mr. Joël Godin: To speed things up, Mr. Chair, I have no comments.

The Chair: Nor does anyone on screen either. We will now call the vote on amendment LIB-18.1.

Please go ahead, Madam Clerk.

(The amendment is carried: yeas 6; nays 5. [*See Minutes of proceedings*])

The Chair: I would now like to make sure that amendment CPC-31 has in fact been withdrawn.

Mr. Joël Godin: I had in fact intended to withdraw it. Can I propose it?

The Chair: That's up to you, Mr. Godin.

Mr. Joël Godin: That Bill C-13, in clause 21, be amended by replacing line 15 on page 13 with the following:

the Minister of Canadian Heritage and the provincial and territorial governments make regulations in

The Chair: Are there any comments?

Yes Mr. Beaulieu, go ahead.

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: I think that it would be very important to support this amendment. It would be essential to consult the provincial governments, and the government of Quebec on critical matters. I'm saying this because, given what I've seen, positive measures will continue to have a negative impact on Quebec and will continue to support only English.

At the very least, I think it's important for consultations to be held to cause as little harm as possible.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Beaulieu.

I don't see any hands up.

We will now vote on amendment CPC-31.

(The amendment is defeated: nays 6; yeas 5)

The Chair: Mr. Rayes voluntarily withdrew amendment IND-1. From the procedural standpoint, it was therefore never introduced and it's as if it didn't exist.

That brings us to amendment LIB-19.

Mr. Darrell Samson: LIB-19 will not be introduced. We're now at amendment LIB-20.

The Chair: Okay.

We are therefore proceeding with amendment LIB-20.

You have the floor, Mr. Samson.

Mr. Darrell Samson: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

It's truly a pleasure to be here with you today to discuss another area of extreme importance across Canada.

We are talking about school boards. The most recent census raised some key issues pertaining to paragraph 23(1)(b) and subsection 23(2) of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. Over 600,000 potential students in Canadian schools were identified. That's all very well, but in some provinces, people had to wait more than 20 years to get land on which they could build the schools to which they were entitled. They have a right to a school and to education. They are entitled to land, but there is none. It's therefore crucial for the federal government and the Official Languages Act to support minorities in this regard. That's why I am introducing an amendment today, so that Bill C-13, in clause 21, be amended by adding after line 26 on page 13, the following:

41.1 (1) In developing a disposal strategy for a surplus federal real property or a federal immovable, every department and supporting federal institution shall take into account the needs and priorities of the English or French linguistic minority communities of the province or territory where the federal real property or federal immovable is located.

(2) In taking account of the needs and priorities under subsection (1), departments may consult English or French linguistic minority communities and other stakeholders, including school boards or commissions.

Although I use the word "may" in the second paragraph, I'm convinced that if the federal government were to consider the needs and priorities of the school boards and organizations, it would consult them. I can't imagine that they wouldn't do so. If the federal government takes their needs and priorities into account, I'm convinced it would consult the communities in question.

I should also tell you that my intent, through this amendment, is to make sure that federal institutions like the Canada Lands Company, Public Services and Procurement Canada, and the Department of National Defence are required to give the school boards—and I'm not talking about a gift here—the opportunity to purchase the land in question at current prices so that rights like the right to education, schools and land are complied with.

We all know just how important section 23 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms was in 1982. Yet it's even more important today, given what is being experienced on the ground.

• (1015)

As I also previously mentioned, the census carried out in that year confirmed, by means of the short survey—

• (1020)

The Chair: We're talking about the 2021 short form.

Mr. Darrell Samson: The questions in the short form were specific. This meant that the courts could not say that they were not really aware of just what they could do because they didn't have any data other than Statistics Canada's, which did not address Part II and Part III of the act. Now, these 600,000 students are a fact, based on data. It's not simply a matter of potential; it has been proved, and it's tangible, which is why we're ready to take action. My intent is to make it possible for us to address these problems.

Ms. Boyer, do you believe the wording includes the Canada Lands Company, a federal institution that supports the departments?

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Samson.

Ms. Boyer, you have the floor.

Ms. Julie Boyer: Thank you very much.

According to this amendment, it's clear that the departments have to consult minorities and other stakeholders. The departments are responsible for the disposal of property. The Canada Lands Company handles sales on behalf of the departments. The amendment specifies "every department and supporting federal institution".

My team has confirmed to me that the Canada Lands Company is indeed covered by this amendment.

Mr. Darrell Samson: I've always admired your work, but I like you even more because of the answer you've just given.

Thank you, Ms. Boyer.

Ms. Julie Boyer: Thank you.

The Chair: I'm now giving the floor to Ms. Lattanzio.

After that, it will be Mr. Godin's turn.

Ms. Patricia Lattanzio: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Having, earlier in life, been a trustee on the English Montreal School Board, I can say that this amendment would further strengthen the idea of contributing to the survival and vitality of minority language communities. I'd like to congratulate my colleague, Mr. Samson, for this amendment. I strongly and fully support it.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you.

Go ahead, Mr. Godin.

After that, it will be Ms. Ashton's turn.

Mr. Joël Godin: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'd like to begin by thanking my colleague, Mr. Samson, for his heartfelt presentation. We know that he has spent his life defending Canada's francophone minorities, which is all to his credit.

I'd like to return to one of his comments. Unfortunately, we did not succeed in including the enumeration in the bill, because the Liberals opposed it.

My colleague was there, as were you, Mr. Chair, when...

The Chair: Please stick to the amendment, Mr. Godin.

Mr. Joël Godin: I'm getting there, Mr. Chair.

I simply want to describe the extraordinary work done by my colleague on behalf of francophones outside Quebec, and even in Quebec.

There is at the moment a property-related situation. I'd like to congratulate Ms. Marie-Pierre Lavoie, the chair of the Conseil scolaire francophone de la Colombie-Britannique, the CSFCB, who has been working hard on this. There is a problem at the moment in British Columbia with access to real property in Canada. That's why I wanted to congratulate her.

It's worth remembering that the last witness before we began to discuss Bill C-13 was Mr. Denis Chartrand, who has spent his life working on many issues, including access to federal real property. Mr. Chartrand will be retiring soon. As he has already said so, I'm not revealing anything new, but I just wanted to thank him for his work and his dedication to francophones outside Quebec.

I would now like to propose a subamendment to amendment Lib-20.

• (1025)

The Chair: Go ahead, Mr. Godin.

Mr. Joël Godin: Its purpose is to strengthen what Mr. Samson said in his presentation, but which didn't make its way into his amendment. As Ms. Boyer mentioned, the word "shall" was not used, but rather "may".

I am therefore proposing that Bill C-13, in clause 21, be amended by adding after line 26 on page 13 the following:"

"41.1(1) In developing a disposal strategy for a surplus federal real property or a federal immovable, every department and supporting federal institution, including but not limited to the Canada Land Company, shall take into account the needs and priorities of the English or French linguistic minority communities, including but not limited to the school boards or commissions of the province or territory where the federal real property or federal immovable is located."

The words "including but not limited to the Canada Land Company" further strengthen what was said. The words "including but not limited to the school boards or commissions of the province" are important. They are mentioned in the second paragraph, but they should also be included in the first. As a member of Parliament, I think it's important for us to be as specific as possible to facilitate the work of our judges.

I will now continue with my proposed subamendment.

"(2) In taking account of the needs and priorities under subsection (1), departments and supporting federal institutions, including but not limited to the Canada Lands Company, consult English or French linguistic minority communities and other stakeholders, including but not limited to school boards or commissions, with regard to their needs and interests in relation to the federal real property or federal immovable and offer them the opportunity to purchase or lease that real property or immovable in whole or in part."

I'd like to draw your attention to the fact that in the French version I removed "peuvent consulter" and replaced it with "consultent".

I think that's important. As my colleague mentioned, the purpose of all this is to give access to these properties in order to comply with the Government of Canada's obligation to make infrastructures available to those entitled to them.

The Chair: Mr. Godin, thank you for having presented the content of your subamendment, but from the procedural standpoint, I will let the legislative clerk explain to us how a subamendment should be presented.

I will therefore give the floor to Mr. Jean-François Pagé so that he can explain to us how this ought to be done.

The Clerk of the Committee (Mr. Jean-François Pagé): You indicated the changes you wanted to make, but you began by reading the entire amendment as amended.

However, when a subamendment is introduced, one does not present the entire amended amendment. The parts to be amended are presented and voted upon. It's a step-by-step process. It's not part of a whole, because it's a subamendment, not an amendment.

Mr. Joël Godin: Do you want me to present six subamendments?

The Clerk: That's the procedure.

A subamendment is not presented in its entirety like that.

The Chair: Let's begin with subsection 41.1(1) and go at it step-by-step.

Mr. Joël Godin: Okay.

Do I need to request unanimous consent?

The Chair: That's how it has to be done.

Mr. Joël Godin: Is that how it's done?

The Chair: That indeed is how it's done.

Mr. Joël Godin: Can I do that?

The Chair: Yes.

As I mentioned, it's strictly a matter of procedure.

I think Mr. Gagné would like to say something.

Go ahead, Mr. Gagné.

Mr. Bernard Gagné (Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, CPC): I'd like to ask a procedural question.

Can the outcome of a prior vote be applied? If we are required to vote six times, could we not apply the outcome of the previous vote to save time.

The Chair: With unanimous consent, the committee can do whatever it wants.

Mr. Joël Godin: Right.

Mr. Chair, you've just said that with unanimous consent, we can do whatever we want...

The Chair: I was talking about the committee.

Mr. Joël Godin: In that case, I am requesting unanimous consent to introduce all of these items together so as not to lose any time.

The Chair: Is there unanimous consent on this? Okay.

Good. That will save us some time.

Before giving you the floor, Mr. Beaulieu, I'm going to allow Ms. Ashton to ask her questions.

Go ahead, Ms. Ashton.

Ms. Niki Ashton: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

There is a question I would like to ask before Mr. Godin presents his subamendment. It's a question for the officials, one that is always appropriate.

To begin with, I want to underscore the tireless work of the member for Sackville—Preston—Chezzetcook. His life experience has led us to this amendment and to a bill that will considerably change things for our communities across Canada. I also approve of Mr. Godin's sound proposals.

That said, I would like the officials to clarify something.

We know that indigenous communities are also affected by the sale of real property or federal lands. In testimony before the committee, we heard that there was a shortage of land in francophone communities to build schools. It's important to point out that such sales of lands or buildings are also part of what the federal government has to do as part of the reconciliation process with indigenous peoples.

Will the proposed amendments enable the federal government to continue to make these lands available to first nations? Will it protect first nations' right to acquire these lands on a priority basis?

• (1030)

The Chair: Who would like to take this question?

Go ahead, Ms. Boyer.

Ms. Julie Boyer: Amendment LIB-20 repeats what is written in the Directive on the Management of Real Property. The directive, which was developed by the Treasury Board, clearly states that its purpose is to address issues of this kind and to ensure that sales or transfers of excess real estate must comply with five conditions, in a specific order.

First of all, they have to be done from a government-wide perspective—they must give consideration to the requirements of other departments; they must then be efficient, equitable and transparent; they must also provide the best possible value for Canadian taxpayers; in addition—listen carefully, because what I'm about to say is important—they must also give consideration to the interests of the communities, including official language minority communities, and other levels of government; lastly, they must comply with all legal obligations with respect to indigenous groups.

In disposing of real property, the directive recommends that a notice be sent out the following order: departments, provinces and territories, official language minority communities, and indigenous groups.

The amendment in question does not place obligations to indigenous groups at the beginning, but this in no way affects the legal obligations we have to indigenous groups.

I hope that answers the question.

The Chair: That's very clear.

Ms. Ashton, do you have any other questions on this? No? All right.

Mr. Beaulieu, you have the floor.

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: It's a good proposal for francophone and Acadian communities, but there's nothing there for francophone school boards in Quebec, which are experiencing difficult circumstances. French schools, particularly in Montreal, are having to add portable classrooms. There is not enough space. And yet some anglophone schools are empty. Schools are funded by taxes contributed by all Quebecers. It's an ongoing battle to transfer francophone students to the schools. The government has made one or two such transfers.

As a result, I'm going to have to vote against the amendment. I consider votes to be specific, and that positive measures will continue to contribute to the anglicization of Quebec. Quebec will not be taken into consideration.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Beaulieu.

Go ahead, Mr. Godin.

Mr. Joël Godin: I'd like to clarify something for my colleague and everyone here in the room. It's true that there is a space problem in Quebec schools. However, the Government of Quebec has jurisdiction over education.

What we are talking about now is giving official language minority organizations access to federal buildings. I believe these are two completely different matters. I just wanted to clarify that.

I proposed a subamendment to amendment LIB-20. However, I wanted to mention that we had already introduced another amendment that we will not be introducing, because amendment LIB-20 covers most of what it contains.

The Chair: I understand.

I'd like to point out that we're still with Mr. Godin's subamendment to amendment LIB-20.

Madam Clerk, can we proceed with the vote?

(The amendment is defeated: nays 6; yeas 5)

The Chair: We are now returning to amendment LIB-20.

I would like to call the vote—

• (1035)

Mr. Darrell Samson: No, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Go ahead Mr. Samson.

Mr. Darrell Samson: I would like to propose a subamendment to amendment LIB-20, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: You can't present a subamendment, because you proposed the amendment.

You can take a few moments to consult your colleagues.

• (1035)

(Pause)

• (1035)

The Chair: We're back.

I think Mr. Serré has twisted his ankle.

You have the floor, Mr. Serré.

Mr. Marc Serré: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'd like just one thing.

Let's look at the English version of amendment LIB-20. I'm at subclause 41.1(2) as proposed.

[English]

Currently the amendment reads, "In taking account the needs and priorities under subsection (1), departments may".

[Translation]

We are going to remove the word *may* And make an addition to the sentence.

[English]

to read "shall" consult English and French linguistic minority communities.

[Translation]

All that's involved is replacing the word "*may*" with the word "*shall*".

Then, in the French version, we would like to have the departments "consultent" francophone minorities rather than "peuvent consulter". It makes the wording of the sentence stronger.

I think we can all agree on that.

The Chair: That couldn't be any clearer. I would imagine that this will please Mr. Samson, based on what he said earlier.

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: Mr. Chair, it takes unanimous consent, because he is changing his motion.

The Chair: No.

Mr. Samson had introduced the motion, but it was a different member who proposed the subamendment.

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: Can people from the same party amend their...

The Chair: Yes, if it's done by someone other than the person who moved it.

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: Okay.

The Chair: That will make amendment LIB-20 stronger, as Mr. Serré pointed out.

To speed things up, let's say that in the English version of LIB-20, the subamendment would, on the second line of the second paragraph, provide—

[English]

"departments shall consult" in place of "departments may consult".

[*Translation*]

In the other column, in the French version, it would say that the departments "consultent". The words "peuvent consulter" would be replaced by "consultent".

That then is the essence of the subamendment.

Is that clear to everyone?

• (1040)

Mr. Joël Godin: With their subamendment, Mr. Chair, the Liberals are in fact using part of the wording that I tabled and that they voted against.

From what I can see, they want to remove the Canada Lands Company specifically.

That being said, I agree with their suggestion. That is what I suggested in point 2: I removed "may consult" and replaced it with "consult". That is exactly what they want.

The Chair: Are there any other comments?

Let us vote on Mr. Serré's subamendment.

(Subamendment agreed to: yeas 10; nays 1)

The Chair: Are there any further comments on amendment LIB-20?

I do not see any hands raised, either on the screen or in person.

Let us then vote on amendment LIB-20 as amended.

(Amendment as amended agreed to: yeas 10; nays 1)

Mr. Darrell Samson: Thank you very much.

The Chair: Thank you.

Excellent work.

I do not want to end the meeting right away.

We have to talk about two little things before we leave.

I need a motion to adopt the detailed budget that we proposed a while ago regarding the study of language regimes in Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland and Ireland. Nothing has changed, it is the same budget.

Do I have unanimous consent to adopt the detailed budget that we received?

Mr. Gagné, please go ahead.

Mr. Bernard Gagné: I agree if we go in the first week of April.

The Chair: It will be when Parliament is not sitting.

I see there are no objections.

So we have unanimous consent. Thank you.

The last thing we have to discuss is as follows. With the incredible powers of our technicians, analysts and clerks, would it be possible to add a meeting upon our return? That would be the third meeting per week so we can speed up the process. We could hold it on the Friday.

If people agree, we could have a meeting on the Friday, from 1 p.m. to 3 p.m. It would not be next week, but the following week when we return to Ottawa for two weeks.

Mr. Bernard Gagné: In other words, for those two weeks, we would potentially meet for the six hours that we added for the clause-by-clause consideration of the bill.

The Chair: We added six and a half hours for that purpose.

Mr. Bernard Gagné: During those two weeks, we would then have the time to meet for those six and a half hours and complete our consideration.

The Chair: We would be meeting for four hours.

The meeting on March 24 is not a hundred percent sure, but once we request a meeting we cannot cancel it. Other people might want to use that time slot for a committee meeting. We would have the time slot that was used by the Special Joint Committee on Medical Assistance in Dying.

Mr. Godin, you have the floor.

Mr. Joël Godin: I cannot say for sure right now because I have not consulted my whip. I would be agreeable in principle, but off the cuff, I don't know if the Conservatives would agree.

What we do know is that resources are very limited.

If I understand correctly, Mr. Chair, we have another six and half hours left.

The Chair: Six and a half hours or three and a half meetings.

Mr. Joël Godin: We agree that it is three meetings plus thirty minutes.

Let's look at our schedule. We return on March 20. On March 21, we meet for two hours, and on March 24 as well, which means four hours of meetings. With the meeting on March 28, that would be six hours of meetings. So we would complete our consideration on March 31 in the 30 minutes remaining.

We would have enough time. Our schedule is not limited.

• (1045)

The Chair: As committee chair, I am offering the committee some flexibility. If we want to consult our whips, we can do so. What I am saying is that this schedule is available to us if we want to speed up the process.

Mr. Joël Godin: Mr. Chair, I will be in touch after I check with my whip.

That said, we completely agree with the idea in principle.

The Chair: Ms. Ashton, you have the floor, followed by Mr. Gagné.

Ms. Niki Ashton: Mr. Chair, I completely agree.

I appreciate your efforts to find more time to meet. We want to complete our consideration of this bill as soon as possible, and that would allow us to do so.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Ashton.

Mr. Généreux, you have the floor.

Mr. Bernard Généreux: I just wanted to mention, in case you were not aware, that the U.S. President will be here on March 24. I am not sure those two days will be normal days. The Americans become sovereign on Canadian soil so I am not sure we will be able to move about as we please.

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: I have two points to make.

Ordinarily, it would take one and a half meetings to get to eight meetings after we make up the time lost owing to technical problems.

Will we stick to that or will we ultimately divide up the six and a half hours of the eight meetings?

The Chair: We voted this morning on the motion calling for eight meetings to decide whether we had to request extra meetings. That is what we voted on.

The additional meetings total 6.5 hours. As I said at the outset, however, since I took into account everything that happened before, I considered that we were starting our eighth meeting today.

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: If we were starting the eighth meeting, that would leave an extra hour.

The Chair: We just corrected that by proposing 6.5 hours. That is what we did.

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: Yes, but the proposal did not stipulate—

The Chair: It is included in the 6.5 hours.

If there are no further questions—

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: Just to say that we will also see what happens in two weeks since Mr. Biden will be here on Friday, March 24.

I will consult my colleagues and, if necessary, we can come back to this at the next meeting.

The Chair: Let me just say that, if I see a possibility, I will let people know as soon as possible. I will do that of my own initiative.

Be on alert because it is possible that we will have an extra meeting. It is simply to make quicker progress in the committee's work.

Mr. Godin, you have the floor.

Mr. Joël Godin: Can we extend the meetings? Instead of meeting for two hours, can we meet for two and a half hours or three hours?

The Chair: Okay, we will explore that possibility as well.

Mr. Gourde, you have the floor.

Mr. Jacques Gourde (Lévis—Lotbinière, CPC): Just to say that on the afternoon of Friday, March 24, my private member's bill will be returning to the House of Commons. I will not be able to attend a committee meeting then, and it is more difficult to find replacements for a Friday afternoon.

The Chair: Fine, thank you for letting us know.

In any case, we will do what we can. We will keep an open mind on this and see what happens.

On that note, I wish you a good week.

The meeting is adjourned.

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