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Chair: Mr. Scott Simms



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• (1235)

[English]

The Chair (Mr. Scott Simms (Coast of Bays—Central—Notre Dame, Lib.)): I call the meeting to order.

Thank you for being here today.

This is, of course, a very special day as we welcome legislation that has successfully gone through second reading in the House of Commons.

This is, of course, a hearing about Bill C-5, an act to amend the Bills of Exchange Act, the Interpretation Act and the Canada Labour Code. Bill C-5 is also known as the bill for a national day for truth and reconciliation.

Just as a quick note regarding organization, we're going to have two separate hours of witnesses to discuss this bill with our MPs.

For the sake of our witnesses, we have representation from the Liberal party, which is the governing party; the opposition party, which is the Conservatives; the Bloc Québécois; and the NDP.

Most of us are doing this remotely. I just want to say to our witnesses that if there's a conversation that you wish to comment on or in which perhaps you want to correct something, try to get the questioner's attention by just waving your hand, rather than trying to get my attention.

By the same token, MPs, I'd like to ask you to please direct your questions by starting with the name of the person you would like to answer the question. That makes things a lot easier.

That said, we will now proceed.

We have three witnesses on the first panel. Carlon Big Snake is a small-business owner. We also have, from the Canadian Federation of Library Associations, Stacy Allison-Cassin, assistant professor, University of Toronto. As well, from Federally Regulated Employers — Transportation and Communications, we have Derrick Hynes, who is the president and CEO.

The way we do this is that you give your opening statements for up to five minutes. You don't have to use all five minutes, but you have up to five. If you go beyond five, I'm somewhat flexible, but of course for the sake of our timing, we have to keep moving.

We're going to start with Carlon Big Snake, and I hope the connection is solid enough.

Please give us your introductory remarks for five minutes.

Mr. Carlon Big Snake (Small Business Owner, As an Individual): Thank you. First of all, I would like to say *okya*.

My name is Carlon Big Snake. I'm a proud Blackfoot member from the Siksika Nation in Treaty No. 7 territory.

Today I am very honoured to represent and witness a promising historical event for indigenous people and Canadians in making a positive change to Canada's modern society. Not only for ourselves but to look to [*Technical difficulty—Editor*] these opportunities or to allow an equitable quality of life. Unfortunately, today's society is apportioned, which in turn causes hate and racism.

The acceptance of the TRC call for action number 80 to support Bill C-5's changes will show the sincerity and commitment of the federal government. This action will show a promising future for Canada and indigenous peoples across the nation.

The proposed bill, Bill C-5, will also enhance the education system. It will be prudent to assist Canada's educational institutions for a better understanding of our forgotten history.

My wife Lisa and I are descendants and survivors of the residential school system. We were raised with negative impacts of history. However, we felt it is our responsibility to take that mentality and use our hardship for strength for our future.

We decided to advocate in a positive manner to give hope to our families and communities. We also used those negative impacts to strengthen and create a future for our future generations.

Recently, my wife and I acquired two white buffalo. They are held with honour and respect among the people. In the past, the buffalo provided food, shelter and medicine.

However, when a white buffalo is born, it is a sign of strength and hope that we will see change soon for our people, which I see now. With the proposed acceptance of call to action number 80 through Bill C-5, we as caregivers hope that not only our people but everyone will receive blessings.

It is our way of allowing Canadians to visit first nation territory and see that we, as individuals, have pride in who we are today and to create a united society.

In closing, I would like to thank you for giving me this opportunity to address the matter, and I have faith that the decision will be made to accept and have September 30 as a national day of truth and reconciliation.

Together we can begin to heal the past and look forward to a united prosperous future.

Kiit'aah'mut'tsin. Again, thank you.

• (1240)

The Chair: Thank you. We appreciate that. Thank you very much.

We are now going to go to Stacy Allison-Cassin, assistant professor, University of Toronto.

Are you with us?

Ms. Stacy Allison-Cassin (Chair, Indigenous Matters Committee, Canadian Federation of Library Associations): I am.

The Chair: Ah, there you are.

Okay, you have up to five minutes. Please proceed.

Ms. Stacy Allison-Cassin: Good afternoon, members of the committee and fellow witnesses. I guess maybe it's good morning for some of you.

I'm Stacy Allison-Cassin, assistant professor, teaching stream, at the Faculty of Information at the University of Toronto, and I'm chair of the Canadian Federation of Library Associations' Indigenous Matters Committee. I am appearing today on behalf of the CFLA.

I'm a citizen of the Métis Nation of Ontario, and I am speaking from Oakville, Ontario, which is the traditional territory of the Huron-Wendat, the Haudenosaunee and the Anishinabe. I also acknowledge the current treaty holders, the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation.

I want to thank the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage for the opportunity to speak on Bill C-5 on the proposed national day for truth and reconciliation.

I want to start off with a brief story. Like many families right now, we are working and learning from home. My youngest daughter is in grade 3, and she currently does her schooling from the kitchen table. On September 30, as in recent past years, we wore our orange shirts. As I came in and out of the kitchen on that day, I was continually struck—being sort of able to listen in on a day of grade 3—by the lessons and discussions that were taking place on the topic of residential schools. The teacher read them Phyllis Webstad's story of her orange shirt, and the children in the class were invited to reflect on the story in different ways, really reflecting on it as children listening to a story about another child.

I found it particularly moving. Throughout the day, they watched videos and did orange shirt-themed artwork, and the teacher led the

group of seven- to nine-year-olds through some very difficult conversations.

After school that day, we had further conversations within our own family about residential schools and Canada's role. My child had a one-word question that I think many parents are familiar with: Why?

Although I've not had a family member who has experienced residential school—as far as I know, at this point—I have had to talk to my children about why my grandmother hid her identity and why she did not teach my dad her language. I'm hopeful and encouraged that my children and their classmates are learning about residential schools and indigenous peoples in Canada. I know that we have more work to do, and I am really so grateful for all of those and for Phyllis for sharing their stories to bring us to this point.

As a librarian, a parent and an indigenous person, I was struck by a great number of things that day. Among them are the following. Stories are important for truth and understanding and conversations. Facts are important. Creating deliberate space—time apart from the contours of work and school and our busy days in the lives that we all lead—is really vital to ensuring learning, awareness and remembrance of residential schools and the ongoing impacts of colonization, as well as learning about the vibrancy of indigenous peoples and cultures.

September 30—what is now known as Orange Shirt Day—has in many schools, libraries and other sites become an important day of learning and remembering. Creating a national day of truth and reconciliation will create further weight and impetus for a day of remembering and learning for all Canadians.

This is important because, as we know, the first step of reconciliation is the truth part, which includes learning facts, hearing stories and understanding the ongoing impacts of colonization. That will ultimately lead to reconciliation.

As a librarian and educator, I recognize the importance of access to materials, as well as the importance of infrastructure in the delivery of such materials and learning. As we know, access to online materials is particularly important right now in the pandemic. This includes access to the Internet, to materials that are both age-appropriate and culturally appropriate, and to materials in an appropriate language.

As a parent, I have found myself seeking books and guides to help me have conversations with my children and sharing these with other parents.

Libraries exist in schools, communities, hospitals and higher education, making them key hubs for accessing information, programming and technology across the spectrum of age, location and social position. They enable learning outside the bounds of formal education.

Libraries play an important role in ensuring that people have the ability to learn about not only the residential school system, the Indian Act and treaties, but also about indigenous art, literature, language and culture and the experiences of indigenous people in Canada.

• (1245)

Creating a national day for truth and reconciliation would encourage and support the development of programming and the collection of materials, and it would bring greater learning and awareness to all people in Canada.

In 2017 the Canadian Federation of Library Associations' working group on the Truth and Reconciliation Commission released a report that set out detailed actions for libraries to take to implement the calls to action. Since the release of the CFLA's TRC report, the Indigenous Matters Committee has formed a major component of the work of the CFLA. Numerous calls to action relate to education, language, and programming, and speak to the availability of reports and documentation. Furthermore, calls to action numbers 69 and 70 highlight the importance of compliance with UNDRIP regarding indigenous peoples' rights to know the truth of what happened and to access information regarding human rights violations. It is thus vitally important that infrastructure be present to support both control of and access to documentation.

To return to the story I told at the beginning of these remarks, it's my hope that with a national day of truth and reconciliation, learning and discussion will be amplified across Canada. In this, libraries are able to act as a key component to help ensure that we will not have another generation that will not know the truth and that we will acknowledge and honour the survivors and remember those who have died.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Allison-Cassin.

Is it "Ms." or "Dr."?

Ms. Stacy Allison-Cassin: It's Dr. Allison-Cassin.

The Chair: It's Dr. Allison-Cassin. Good for you.

I want to now go to Federally Regulated Employers — Transportation and Communications, and Derrick Hynes, who is the president and CEO.

Go ahead, Mr. Hynes.

Mr. Derrick Hynes (President and Chief Executive Officer, Federally Regulated Employers - Transportation and Communications): Good afternoon, Mr. Chair and members of the committee.

Mr. Chair, I need to start with a quick shout-out to my mom, who happens to be one of your constituents. I'm sure she's watching you and me today.

Thank you for inviting me today as a witness.

In my five minutes, I have some general comments. I'm happy to take questions and discuss these important issues with you after that point.

First let me tell you a little bit about FETCO, the organization for which I work. We are an association of private sector federally regulated employers. Our membership includes major airlines, courier companies, railways, telecom firms, etc., as well as others. Our members are businesses that carry out 24-7 continuous operations almost exclusively. They run businesses that essentially never stop. They connect the domestic and global supply chains and provide critical services to Canadians on a daily basis.

Let me start by saying that FETCO and its members fully support and endorse truth and reconciliation. Our members have a tremendous commitment to diversity and inclusion within their organizations, and this fits perfectly within that broad framework. Our members have no opposition to this proposed holiday. They appreciate the significance of setting aside a day of reflection. They agree it's a positive step in the direction of reconciliation, and frankly, they'd like to be partners in this important journey.

In the broader context, what I'd like to talk to you briefly about today is basically the concept of what a paid statutory holiday means within the context of the federal private sector to provide you with, I hope, some insights around what this looks like in practical terms. What I'm not going to do, and I don't want to do, is in any way disrespect this important dialogue by somehow implying that we should put a price on reconciliation. That would be wrong. That's not my intention. However, I think it's important that we all understand what a paid holiday means.

My colleagues at the Canadian Federation of Independent Business conducted some research a couple of years ago and concluded that a paid statutory holiday across the entire country basically costs the economy, in effect, \$3.6 billion. That's assuming all jurisdictions participate in the holiday.

Within the federal private sector, where my members reside, we've done some back-of-the-envelope analysis. It's pretty crude. It looks as if it's probably about a \$600-million cost for a one-day paid holiday.

I spoke with some of my members about this specifically. I spoke with a member who employs about 5,000 Canadians in a 24-7 continuous operation. They, in their operation, estimate that a paid holiday costs about \$1.4 million for them specifically.

It's important to note that the federal private sector is unique in Canada. As I noted earlier, these businesses don't stop during a holiday. These are not your typical nine-to-five desk jobs. These are businesses that continue to run whether there's a holiday or not. They don't shut down and take the day off.

What happens in practical terms is that those who work typically receive extra compensation, and we all know the expression about receiving overtime at time and a half, for example. What happens, building on that perspective, is that those who receive that time and a half will often take it off later on as time off, and then those who are brought in to replace them for that day are again paid overtime at time and a half, so there's a bit of a compounding effect of what a paid statutory holiday means in the context of continuous operations. Really, in essence, it becomes a cost item, for all intents and purposes.

It's also important to note that a change like this one doesn't occur in isolation. Last year, for example, the government introduced three new paid days to the Canada Labour Code. They're called "personal leave" days. Employees are entitled to them for a multitude of reasons, and the reasons for which they can be taken are quite flexible. Five are guaranteed, three of which must be paid to the employees.

Today we're talking about Bill C-5, which will potentially add one more. Minister Tassi, the Minister of Labour, is planning to soon add another—it's in her mandate letter—under the title of "family day". This means that over about a two-year period, the government will be adding five days of paid time off in a very condensed time frame.

• (1250)

With all this said, if the government does proceed in this manner, we do have a few recommendations that we hope you will consider in your deliberations.

First, one option is to consider declaring a national truth and reconciliation day without necessarily making it a paid holiday within the federal private sector.

I've looked at the witness testimony you heard earlier in the week. I'm not sure that there's necessarily a huge push from advocates asking that this be a paid day off. Some of your witnesses talked about the fact that this is not meant to be a day for people to put their feet up and watch TV.

If we did it this way and it was not necessarily a paid day off, employers could be actively engaged with indigenous leaders to ensure that the day is commemorated properly and respectfully.

However, if the truth and reconciliation day does proceed as a paid holiday, our second recommendation is that it actually be made effective as a paid holiday in 2022. The 2021 budgeting in most major corporations is done. That financial planning is already complete, and it would be quite disruptive to the process to start that process all over again to accommodate this change.

Our final request, if we do add a paid day for truth and reconciliation, is that the government reconsider its commitment to adding the family day as well. Adding both in the federal sector at this time would mean that the federal jurisdiction would have the highest number of paid statutory holidays within all the Canadian jurisdictions. What ultimately will result from that is a bit of an unfair asymmetry between organizations that operate in the federal sector versus the many—the vast majority—that actually operate across the provincial sector.

That's all I have to add. I'd be happy to take your questions and talk about this. We do believe that this is a critically important issue, and we want to be supportive.

Thank you.

• (1255)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Hynes, and give my regards to your mom as well.

Now we go to our questions.

Just to remind our witnesses, there are several rounds.

I believe Mr. Waugh is up first.

Mr. Kevin Waugh (Saskatoon—Grasswood, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: That's for six minutes, please.

Mr. Kevin Waugh: Thank you.

I want to say thank you to Mr. Big Snake, Mr. Hynes and Dr. Allison-Cassin for their comments. I'll start first with the doctor.

As a former school board trustee in the province of Saskatchewan, I totally agree with you on materials, the Internet and the language. I think this day needs an education component to it all over Canada. Is your organization, the Canadian Federation of Library Associations, at the point now, with new materials and such, that if this does become a day of recognition on September 30, your library association will be putting out materials that all of us could have access to?

Ms. Stacy Allison-Cassin: Thank you for your question.

I think an important thing to know about the Canadian Federation of Library Associations is that we're a federation of associations. We represent the provincial associations as well as specialized associations, such as, for example, the Canadian law associations or health associations, and we really act as a mechanism for bringing together conversations that are then mobilized within our individual jurisdictions. Numerous library associations have been working on this issue for several years, but we don't develop curriculum specifically through the CFLA. We have a detailed report, which I mentioned, that lays out actions that can and could be taken in the context of individual libraries or individual associations.

I do know that the library association in Saskatchewan is quite active in developing all kinds of programming. For example, I know that they have a program on right now to look at specialized subject headings, which is an important part of accessing materials. Subject headings that have been used in many libraries have actually been in racist terminology or in older terminology that's problematic. There is a considerable effort going on across many library associations and professional groups to change those so that we are no longer accessing materials with inappropriate language and names for nations that are not the names the nations use themselves. That kind of work is ongoing.

I cannot speak for all of the associations down to the individual libraries, but I know that active and considerable effort is being put into these programs across Canada, so I would think so.

Mr. Kevin Waugh: Good. Thank you for your presentation.

I'll move now to Mr. Hynes.

I used to work with Bell Canada. We did not recognize Remembrance Day as a federal holiday. That was changed.

You brought out several good points, one from Stephen Kakfwi, the former premier of Northwest Territories, whom you quoted on the definition of a holiday.

You had a good point about federal holidays versus provincial holidays. That can be a contentious issue. When I was in the television business, for example, Remembrance Day was a holiday provincially, but under the CRTC it was not. Can you expand on that? Provincial versus federal jurisdiction will be a contentious issue in this country.

• (1300)

Mr. Derrick Hynes: Thanks for the question.

One of the many challenges that emerges within this complex federation in which we all live is that the rules of the workplace, for example, are determined by the jurisdiction in which it operates. The federal sector covers about 10% of all employees within the country. The rest are covered under the relevant provincial jurisdictions wherever the organization might operate. Of course, I don't need to tell most of you on this call that it is determined by the Constitution which powers reside where.

Most of the members I represent are what were believed to be, at the time of the writing of the Constitution, those large federal undertakings—transportation firms, communications firms, banking, etc. The challenge that exists is that when we add paid holidays to the Canada Labour Code, they only affect those organizations that are federally regulated. If we add two, which is now what is largely under consideration, the private federal sector in this country will have the largest number of paid holidays.

If you're an organization whose competitor, for example, might be provincially regulated, you are now at a cost disadvantage against that competitor. It would be our hope that we would do as much as we could to create harmonization when it comes to paid statutory holidays, as well as on many other issues that we talk to the government about, such as occupational health and safety. There are lots of other issues for which harmonization just makes life a whole lot easier and removes any unnecessary competitive imbalance that could be brought into force.

This in no way takes away from our members' support and belief in setting aside a day for national truth and reconciliation. I could go on ad nauseum about how committed they are to that. These are not mutually exclusive concepts. We can do one and not necessarily make it a paid holiday.

Mr. Kevin Waugh: I think my time's up, Mr. Chair. I stopped it at 5:48.

The Chair: Yes, I was being rather generous to you, sir. I will be generous to others across the board as well.

I will take this time to welcome the two MPs who have joined us. Madame Desbiens is with us, I believe. She's from the Bloc.

Also, I mentioned to our witnesses earlier about the party representation. I mentioned the four parties. We also have a rule within the committee that both the independents and the unrecognized parties—unrecognized from a House perspective—also have access to our committee, so I want to welcome Mr. Paul Manly, who's from the Green Party.

Mr. Manly, thank you for joining us.

Mr. Paul Manly (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, GP): Thank you. Thank you for having me here.

The Chair: Mr. Housefather, you have six minutes, please.

Mr. Anthony Housefather (Mount Royal, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you so much to all of the witnesses.

Mr. Hynes, it's great to see you again. I'm going to come to you next.

Mr. Big Snake, thank you so much for your very moving story, both about your family and the buffalo. I really appreciated it.

Dr. Allison-Cassin, I'm a huge fan of libraries. When I was mayor of Côte Saint-Luc, our library was open from 10 a.m. to 10 p.m. 365 days a year. I think the library is the essence of a community. My first question is to you.

You talked a little bit about how libraries would help to instruct schoolchildren in the history of residential schools in Canada and the purpose of the national day for truth and reconciliation. Could you talk to me a little bit about how libraries might also help employers do the same thing? What could you do for adults as well as you could do for kids?

Ms. Stacy Allison-Cassin: Well, I would like to think that many adults use the library as well, as much as kids do.

Speaking to programs for adults, I was talking earlier about my role as a parent. That is certainly a vital role in understanding how to facilitate conversations with children, but I would also say that for adults, there's lots of learning. I did not learn about residential schools when I was a child. That learning primarily had to take place as an adult.

Of course, while I read picture books to my children and learn from them, I'm going to perhaps read other kinds of material or engage with other kinds of material. When we look to adult learners across the spectrum, there are things like book clubs. We know that many public libraries have book clubs.

As I said, there are also many different kinds of libraries. There are public libraries, but libraries exist in other kinds of spaces. There are libraries in hospitals. There are research libraries, which is another area that is really important in conducting research around indigenous matters. When we look at the fundamental role of access to materials and information and data and reports, it really goes across the spectrum. Libraries absolutely serve to not only provide history but also access to information and research about the ongoing impacts, for example, of the residential school system on families in all kinds of ways. There are absolutely roles for libraries in multiple kinds of contexts, and in particular, as I said, in thinking about how we provide access to those materials.

• (1305)

Mr. Anthony Housefather: Thanks so much. I do think libraries will play a central role in this holiday. I really do.

To Mr. Hynes, first of all, I want to thank FETCO for its commitment to truth and reconciliation and its understanding of the importance of this day. I think you spoke very sensitively to that while balancing it with the needs of the people you represent. I want to thank you for that. I will convey to Minister Tassi the concern that you expressed about adding another day in terms of family day in addition to this holiday.

One of the points you raised intrigued me a little bit. This was in terms of your subsidiary request that if we do go ahead and make this a paid holiday, it come into force in 2022, because budgets for 2021 have already been done. Can you speak a little bit more to how you would propose the government do that?

Mr. Derrick Hynes: Sure. Thanks for the question, and also thank you for your kind comments. We do make great efforts within our organization to be a collaborative participant in any consultation that's happening under Minister Tassi's mandate. You and I have had a lot of interaction in these early days as a result.

When I reached out to members about this issue, I have to say that the response was quick and it was very positive. This issue around financial planning was one of the issues that was raised. Much of the budgeting and planning that gets done for an organization—everything down to the fine detail of shift scheduling for the year ahead and determining human resources needs, particularly in operational environments—gets done well in advance. I heard from some of our members that this planning is complete for 2021, as a result, and we're not far away from January 1. It would be somewhat disruptive to have to unfold all of that and then layer in a paid holiday at this point, so I think it would be appreciated among our member community if at least the paid portion of this holiday were delayed to 2022.

That's not to say that the national day could not be set aside in 2021. We will do all we can to be supportive of it, but if the portion of it that actually kicks in the paid part and makes it a paid statutory holiday could be extended to 2022, that would make our lives a lot easier and would certainly be appreciated.

Mr. Anthony Housefather: I appreciate that information. Thank you.

Mr. Chair, do I have any time left or am I done?

The Chair: You have 39 seconds. Make the most of it.

Mr. Anthony Housefather: I think in 39 seconds I won't achieve much.

Thank you to all of our witnesses.

[*Translation*]

I will yield the floor to my colleague from the Bloc Québécois.

The Chair: Mr. Champoux, you have the floor for six minutes.

Mr. Martin Champoux (Drummond, BQ): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

My thanks to the witnesses for joining us today. Their testimony is very enlightening.

I will turn first to Ms. Allison-Cassin.

You brought up the issue of indigenous languages. Clearly, for the Bloc Québécois, the issue of language is very important. We are talking a lot about it these days.

We know that a number of indigenous languages are under threat and that some have probably already disappeared or are spoken very little. A group of young people in the country is trying to revive the indigenous language that their grandparents spoke, but that they have almost never spoken. I find that to be an extraordinary initiative. It's a lovely story. It's a great way to value indigenous culture and make it better known.

Does your federation have the means to assist an initiative like that? Do you feel that it's an initiative that can be spread more widely in the country to save indigenous languages, which are very powerful cultural tools?

• (1310)

[*English*]

Ms. Stacy Allison-Cassin: Thank you for your question and for picking up on the importance of indigenous language.

Again, I will say that the Federation of Library Associations is an advocacy group in terms of supporting our member associations and their work. Certainly for the indigenous matters group, raising awareness around the need to support indigenous languages in libraries and other spaces is part of the work we do in raising that awareness.

I was mentioning earlier the issue of subject headings. This is one of the chief ways we access materials. We access not only materials in the language, but we need to access materials through platforms and subject headings.

We know it is important for people to be able to navigate to materials in their language, not just through English. That is one area where we are advocating that sites like public libraries or academic libraries consider ways of implementing systems that will support not only language revitalization but that language usage as well.

That is certainly something we seek to support library or member associations in doing, because, as we know, part of... As I mentioned in my story, my own grandmother did not teach the language to her children. My father could never speak to his grandparents, who spoke a mixture of French and Anishinaabemowin. He could never speak to them because they did not speak the same language, so for me it is also personally important.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Martin Champoux: Thank you.

If initiatives are already underway in academic institutions, I imagine that you will begin initiatives in elementary schools, for example, in order to make the children more aware of that culture from their early years in school.

Do you have initiatives along those lines? If so, what are they?

Generally speaking, how open are the teachers and educators across the country?

[*English*]

Ms. Stacy Allison-Cassin: I would have to get back to you on specific issues around public schools. My personal experience is more at the academic level, but I have been working on a project to look at the subject heading front and to look at implementing systems to access materials through indigenous languages, so we're supporting multilingual systems.

We know software often doesn't come out of the box all the time as multilingual, so it's important, too, to advocate for software.

Also, I will say that it's also important to connect, through our member associations, with other initiatives at the international level that are supporting indigenous knowledge and languages as well.

Part of it is supporting the availability of materials and the purchase of materials in indigenous languages, but it's also making them accessible through the means of the language. There are numerous projects. I would be happy to connect you with some of those resources.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Martin Champoux: My question goes to Mr. Big Snake.

You said that your wife and yourself are, in a way, the descendants of indigenous residential schools.

What obstacles did you have to overcome in order to heal the consequences of what you experienced in the residential schools?

• (1315)

[*English*]

Mr. Carlon Big Snake: Thank you to the witnesses for their comments.

Through our experience I felt... I was pretty well raised by my grandparents. I'll step back a bit here to let you know that both my parents spoke fluent Blackfoot. I'm the only boy in my family out of five, and my four sisters also speak fluent Blackfoot. One of the impacts is that I did stay the majority of time with my grandparents, and they as well spoke fluent Blackfoot. However, both my grandparents did tell me at that time that I had to learn how to speak En-

glish as much as I could. I could not speak the Blackfoot language. Unfortunately, I never did ask why. What was the reason I could not speak my language?

That's no blame to my grandparents. They wanted good for me, but that has an impact. Today I feel that I do my best. I do comprehend and understand the Blackfoot language. Speaking it is a challenge for me. That's one of the impacts I have due to the fact that my grandparents wanted to see the best for me. However, they were told that we needed to do away with our Blackfoot language. It was an omen.

With that system, my wife's mother was pregnant while she was in residential school. The only way for her mother to escape the residential school system was to get pregnant. She was a single parent. The day my wife was born in 1967 [*Technical difficulty—Editor*] she was taken from the [*Technical difficulty*] due to the fact that her mom could not care for her. Those two scenarios had an impact on her—

The Chair: Mr. Big Snake, I'm sorry. Please finish your thought. I'm going to have to go to the next questioner, but go ahead.

Mr. Carlon Big Snake: Those are the experiences. It has an impact and it has affected our children. They want to speak their language, and both of us... Actually, my wife is Cree. We'd like to teach my children how to speak the language, and not only them but our grandchildren.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Ms. McPherson, you have six minutes, please.

Ms. Heather McPherson (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I want to thank all our witnesses for being here and sharing with us today.

Of course, I have some questions for a number of you, but I think I'll start with Mr. Big Snake.

Mr. Big Snake, I'm also from Alberta. You can probably recognize the snow behind me.

Mr. Carlon Big Snake: Yes. Hi, there.

Ms. Heather McPherson: It's what we're dealing with here. We know a little more about this than other parts of the country.

Thank you for your comments on residential schools and sharing what you have gone through.

As you know, in Alberta right now we have a provincial government that is bringing forward a curriculum that is looking at removing any reference to residential schools from our provincial curriculum, which is of course extremely disturbing for me and I'm sure for you.

Do you think having a day for truth and reconciliation, even when provincial governments don't take their responsibility to educate children across the country on residential schools, will give us a better opportunity to do so? Also, what are the impacts of that? Could you speak to that a little bit, please?

Mr. Carlon Big Snake: Thank you.

I agree. I think that's very sad. I totally disagree with the position the Province of Alberta is taking regarding this situation, but I believe that the impact here.... As you know, there are certain incidents that are occurring in Alberta based on racism. Our fellow people have witnessed a lot of that in what's happening in Alberta, particularly. As you know, in Red Deer a Black Lives Matter protest, with the help of aboriginal organizations, was interrupted. Particularly, the RCMP took one side.

My comment today is that I feel that indigenous people in Alberta are separated from anything that we do, whether it's being an entrepreneur...and that has an impact. I think that at this point in time, considering the national holiday is a start. It sends a message. There is nothing across Canada to recognize anything for first nations or indigenous people. Should this happen, I think it will have a big impact.

There are 94 calls to action. I think there are only seven that have been recommended now. This is a good start. We need to send that message, particularly to the provinces as well. It's all about us.

Thank you.

• (1320)

Ms. Heather McPherson: Thank you very much.

My next question is for Dr. Cassin. You spoke a little bit about how your children or your family are doing education at the kitchen table, as so many Canadians are across the country, and how it had such meaning to see how Orange Shirt Day was being done.

I also have children. They also spent a lot of the last nine months at our kitchen table doing their schooling.

One thing I was reflecting on when you were talking about that was how important Remembrance Day has become in our national identity, and how children learn so much because we have that day set aside. It's not necessarily recognized as a holiday both federally and provincially, but it is an almost universally acknowledged important day of memory to recognize what people have endured, what people have sacrificed. I think having that day is so important in making that a reality.

Could you talk a little bit about how you would see the truth and reconciliation day, the day on September 30, and the lessons we could learn from Remembrance Day, and how libraries could use that day to continue to bring forward these ideas of information and education?

Ms. Stacy Allison-Cassin: I was reflecting as I was preparing for today that I had witnessed my children doing Remembrance Day, which has just passed, remotely. They even had remote Remembrance Day assemblies. Again, I'm so grateful to Phyllis Webstad and the way that Orange Shirt Day has now become, even just in the past two or three years, something that is happening at

schools. I know that three years ago, when my children were a bit younger, it was not necessarily marked in the same way.

Like Remembrance Day, a day such as this would allow, for example, school libraries to pull together materials in a display, or for children to be able to begin to prepare. We know with the number of other ways that we mark days in Canada—Canada Day, for example—that it isn't just the day, that there is preparation beforehand, and teaching of why we hold this day important. It's not just that there is a holiday on this day, but there is a reason for the holiday.

We have all of those preparations. Now we have Christmas starting up, I suppose, and we prepare well ahead of time. We see that they allow for numerous kinds of preparations, not only for schoolchildren but, as I was mentioning, for adults as well. Why not have ways of reading about the TRC, book club ideas, or reading different kinds of materials and allowing for displays, exhibits, lesson plans, all of those ways that we can think about? Again, when we go into our public spaces and we see Remembrance Day or Canada Day displays go up, we would see the same thing for a national day of truth and reconciliation.

I think that has impact because, again, it's about demonstrating that it is important, like in Remembrance Day, that we do not forget. We remember those experiences. Even as we have fewer and fewer veterans left from the Second World War, we still remember. I think in the same way it allows for that gathering and that learning beforehand.

• (1325)

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We'll now move to our second round.

Mr. Shields, you have five minutes.

Mr. Martin Shields (Bow River, CPC): Right. Thank you.

I agree with Mr. Housefather about the critical role. I was vice-president of the Alberta Library Trustees' Association for many years. Here's the problem for libraries: They don't have money. They don't have money. Unless we're willing to direct money to libraries, which I would advocate, they don't have the money or the resources to do this. I believe in what you said, but we need to give them the money to do it.

Mr. Hynes, your consideration of a 2022 implementation due to cost—that's an interesting one.

Mr. Big Snake, I've had the occasion to be at events with you and have listened to you. You are very intelligent and passionate. You talked in your comments about people coming to your nation. You have a residential school that's still being used. You have the world-class Blackfoot Crossing. How would you envision bringing people to learn about this on this day and more?

Mr. Carlon Big Snake: My background is in economic development. I think the impact here, to go back to my earlier comments, is in the education system. We need to educate a lot of people out there. We're still not sending the message.

Our facilities here, particularly the interpretive centre, can provide that. It invites people right across, worldwide, and it's there for a purpose. I don't know if any of you have been there. When you enter the building, you see a lot of history about residential schools. I've seen a lot of people, non-indigenous people, come out of there crying. They want to learn more. We have provided that information to them to understand what the livelihoods were. I think having an indigenous national day will help a lot of people come out to first nation lands and understand that. That will create economic activity, not only for first nations but on and off reserves. I feel that now it's time to do that, to take those opportunities and expand them, working with first nations.

Yes, we do have our old residential school standing up, but as I said in my comments, we have to take something that's negative and make it positive. We converted that old residential school into a community college, where our people are taking their education to the next level. The facility, I'm proud to say, as a former leader, [*Technical difficulty—Editor*] that we have doctors, lawyers, dentists, nurses, teachers—you name it. We have a lot of professional people, and I'm proud of that.

Again, I invite the world to Siksika. I believe other first nations would like to do the same on this day.

Thank you, Martin. It's good to see you.

Mr. Martin Shields: You bet. You too. I hope more and more people get to see Blackfoot Crossing. It is a phenomenal exhibit and a phenomenal place that people need to see.

That, I guess, is what we're saying: that from your point of view, people need to come to your nation. They need to walk in those footsteps.

Mr. Carlon Big Snake: Exactly. They'll have a good opportunity to see what happened in history, to see the past. I think that's really important. They need to visualize it. That's where you can see the visualization of what really happened.

It's a touching story. I cannot.... I keep saying to people, "Come out to Siksika. See for yourself."

Mr. Martin Shields: Possibly they can take the opportunity to visit with you and your significant contribution in terms of the white buffalo. What you've acquired is a phenomenal story as well.

Mr. Carlon Big Snake: Yes. My wife and I feel that we're really blessed in acquiring these buffalo. I've never done a count, but I

would say that since September, when we acquired them, probably about a couple of hundred people have visited.

There's one visitor who everybody keeps commenting about on Facebook or Snap or whatever you call it. That's former prime minister Stephen Harper. He was a visitor here. He mentioned that he wanted to be here for 20 minutes to half an hour due to his schedule, but I have to say that he was here for two hours. He was curious about the significance of the white buffalo. We gave him the story, and I really appreciated that.

That's a start there, as it is with gentlemen such as you, Martin. The education is going to start here.

• (1330)

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Folks, the clock shows that the hour is done. However, we did have a late start, so I'm going to allow one more question.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Bessette, the floor is yours for five minutes.

Mrs. Lyne Bessette (Brome—Missisquoi, Lib.): Thank you very much for your generosity, Mr. Chair.

My thanks to all the witnesses for joining us today and for taking the time to come to talk to us about this topic, difficult though it may be.

My first question goes to Mr. Big Snake.

Thank you for your personal testimony.

Can you tell us a little more about why you find this bill necessary?

[*English*]

Mr. Carlon Big Snake: As I said earlier, does any other holiday represent first nations? There's Family Day, Christmas Day. Christmas Day doesn't reflect our culture. It's about Jesus and so forth. We weren't part of Jesus. We don't call it God. We call it the Creator, and we believe in that.

I think we need to balance this. I think it's really important. I keep emphasizing the educational part. This holiday is a start. If it starts in 2022, that's fine, but I feel it's a message that's going to be sent. We need to start implementing these 94 calls to action, and I believe that's a positive start.

Mrs. Lyne Bessette: Thank you very much.

I was obviously touched by the testimony. I was speaking with colleagues who were struck by the testimonies of indigenous and non-indigenous children who thought Orange Shirt Day was just a day when you put on an orange shirt. They need to know why. We have to go to the heart of this issue. We have to have a day on our calendar that says we have to pause and think about this.

I don't buy the money argument. People are going to get paid anyway. I think, let everybody pause. It's \$11 million. Is it worth spending \$11 million to commemorate this part of our history? Yes, absolutely.

Mr. Carlon Big Snake: Yes, I agree. I would rather take [*Technical difficulty—Editor*]. I don't know if it's spending. Call it an investment. That investment is going to create a lot of opportunity, and I truly believe that. Whether it be....

I don't know what to say here, but if we recognize that, I feel that all the people who were hurt through the history of what's happened to us have to come to the forefront. We have to quit hiding it and denying it.

It says "truth and reconciliation". The lady, the doctor, mentioned it and said, "Yes, we need to talk about the truth." Then we can reconcile after that. That's important to me.

Whether it's Orange Day or Orange Shirt Day, there's a lot of mishappenings to first nations. I think everybody needs to know that. I think we need to utilize that day to send that message out in a positive manner. I need to use what happened in the past, and the negativity about that, and turn that around and make it a positive for everyone. I truly believe that.

• (1335)

Mrs. Lyne Bessette: Thank you very much.

My second question would be for Dr. Allison-Cassin

[*Translation*]

It will be in French, I am sorry.

You mentioned that the first stage in the process of truth and reconciliation is the "truth" part, and that we have to have difficult conversations so that we never forget the consequences of the past and so that history never repeats itself.

In your experience, what is the best way to have those difficult conversations with young people?

[*English*]

Ms. Stacy Allison-Cassin: Thank you for your question.

It's one of those "it depends" answers on how one carries out those conversations. I will say that I think it's important to have those conversations with small children as much as it is to have them with older people. Obviously, my story was about my daughter in grade 3. I know we have been talking about this in my family for some time. This is why I think education is important, but it's also important to educate the educators and to help those participating in education, whether it's teachers, librarians or other people in other areas—parents even—understand that even though these topics are hard, and it is hard to talk about....

I will say that when children are taught in school, as I think mine have been, that Canada is the best and Canada has all these wonderful things and you say, well, yes, but there are these parts of Canada that require work.... So it's allowing people to learn how to have hard conversations and not to not have them because they're uncomfortable or because you don't feel equipped to have them. I do think that is particularly important in thinking about ways that.... As Mr. Big Snake said, coming out to the territory, to the land, and seeing those places is also vitally important for having an understanding of what happened.

Again, it depends, but I think the biggest part is not not having them. That for me is one of the biggest things I would say. Having a national day does speak to the importance, to say, no, we can't not have these conversations.

The Chair: I'm sorry. I have to end it there. We're over time right now.

[*Translation*]

Thank you, Mrs. Bessette.

[*English*]

I want to say a special thank you to our three witnesses here.

Mr. Big Snake, I want to thank you. I think I speak on behalf of many when I say that you've widened our interest in white buffalo. That's really something. It's quite a story.

Mr. Carlon Big Snake: You're more than welcome.

The Chair: It was our pleasure. Thank you.

Dr. Allison-Cassin, thank you so much for your time.

Of course, Mr. Hynes, we also thank you.

Committee, we're going to suspend to set up for our next panel. Thank you.

• (1335)

(Pause)

• (1345)

The Chair: Welcome back, everybody.

We're now in our second hour of witnesses where we are discussing Bill C-5, An Act to amend the Bills of Exchange Act, the Interpretation Act and the Canada Labour Code (National Day for Truth and Reconciliation).

We have two witnesses for the second hour, and I want to thank them very much for joining us. They're joining us remotely. I will give you the opportunity in just a few moments to correct any mispronunciations, but in the meantime I want to welcome the national chief from the Dene Nation, Norman Yakeleya and also the Innu chief of Ekuanitshit, Jean-Charles Piétacho.

On behalf of everybody, thank you very much.

Both of you, of course, are under the umbrella of the Assembly of First Nations. The way we do this, with witnesses, is that you have up to five minutes for your opening statement. We provide some leeway to finish your sentences. Then we proceed with questioning after that.

We're going to start with Chief Yakeleya for five minutes, please.

National Chief Norman Yakeleya (Dene Nation, Assembly of First Nations): Marsi.

[Witness spoke in Dene]

[English]

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

In my language, I said thank you to my relatives on this call, and today is good weather outside. It's beautiful outside.

Members of the committee, friends and relatives, thank you for inviting me here today to join in sharing the perspectives of the Assembly of First Nations on Bill C-5, an act that will result in a national day of truth and reconciliation as a national statutory holiday.

While I encourage the building of relationships based on understanding and respect every day, I'm here to support the bill advocating for the creation of a national holiday. Creating a national statutory holiday for indigenous people will assist in promoting reconciliation while also commemorating those who need commemoration. We must not forget the past harm done to our communities and the long-lasting legacy of the residential school system and the impact it has had on first nations and indigenous communities.

There will still be challenges to the relationship building between the first nations and Canadians. A national statutory holiday could provide an opportunity for learning, education, and coming together for a better understanding of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, its goals and aspirations, and how all of Canada can move forward on the path to reconciliation.

As indicated in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's final report, the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples provides the framework for reconciliation. Article 15 of the declaration states:

1. Indigenous peoples have the right to the dignity and diversity of their cultures, traditions, histories and aspirations which shall be appropriately reflected in education and public information.
2. States shall take effective measures, in consultation and cooperation with the indigenous peoples concerned, to combat prejudice and eliminate discrimination and to promote tolerance, understanding and good relations among indigenous peoples and all other segments of society.

A national holiday could be used to combat prejudice, eliminate racism and promote tolerance. This holiday will serve as an annual act of reconciliation. First nations have welcomed many of the Canadians' recent commitments to promoting reconciliation, including supporting Bill C-262, the United Nations declaration act, and we look forward to continued initiatives that foster reconciliation. Several provinces and territories have already acknowledged the important day to celebrate the indigenous people.

In 2017, the Yukon government created legislation that led to June 21 becoming a statutory holiday. In the Northwest Territories,

this date has been celebrated as a statutory territorial holiday for 18 years. This is not a new issue. The Assembly of First Nations has been calling for this legislation since 1982. The Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples recommended this special day, and the chiefs-in-assembly have several resolutions speaking to this matter specifically.

As a party to the Indian Residential School Settlement Agreement, which led to the creation of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, the AFN has a unique mandate in advocating the full implementation of all 94 calls to action. Among these calls to action is number 80, which calls for a national day in a very measured outline of this proposed bill.

● (1350)

I'm aware of Canada's recent commitment to declare a federal statutory holiday to mark the legacy of the residential school system. We welcome the announcement of a day to honour the history of this period, as called for by the TRC.

The AFN executive committee recently passed a motion to advocate that Orange Shirt Day on September 30 become a statutory holiday for reconciliation. This date is near the time of year when children were separated from their families to attend the residential schools. It was named after the shiny orange shirt that was given to a six-year-old Phyllis Webstad by her grandmother in 1973 and taken from her and never returned when she attended St. Joseph's Mission school in Williams Lake, B.C.

I paused just now, because I reflected. That also happened to a lot of us in our residential schools in the Northwest Territories.

I'll conclude my statement.

The AFN proposes that this bill be amended so that September 30 becomes a statutory holiday for reconciliation and that June 21 remain a national day of celebration. If Canada chooses to fulfill call to action number 80 through this bill, June 21 must accomplish the important task of ensuring there's an opportunity for all to honour and respect the legacy of survivors while celebrating our culture and our history.

There is a concern over the conflicting tones of these two objectives. Reconciliation is never easy. It will take substantial effort from all of the partners, both public and private, to ensure reconciliation is encouraged and promoted. Sustained reconciliation takes more than just one day.

I urge all governments to ensure that they keep front and centre the interests and the perspectives of the survivors. First nations are committed to action and change. It is time to restore the original relationship of mutual respect, mutual recognition, peaceful coexistence and sharing. It is a time for reconciliation.

I want to thank the committee and MP Jolibois for raising this important issue.

In closing, the Dene Nation, along with the Assembly of First Nations, wants to ensure that we walk together in these footsteps so that our children can truly have a place in society as first nations people.

We thank you. We thank our elders. God bless you. God bless our people who are in the Labrador country. We pray for you all.

We look forward to your questions.

Marsi cho.

• (1355)

The Chair: Thank you, Chief Yakeleya.

Chief Piétacho is next.

[*Translation*]

You have the floor for five minutes.

Chief Jean-Charles Piétacho (Innu Chief of Ekuanitshit, Assembly of First Nations Quebec-Labrador): Normally, I would talk for a day, but I will restrain myself and take only five minutes. The fact remains that this is a very important moment in our lives.

My name is Jean-Charles Piétacho. My family name is actually not like the Oblates wrote it back in the day. In Innu, my name means "he who comes with the wind". I have been chief of the Innu community of Ekuanitshit for 30 years. I have been elected for many years.

Before I forget, I would like to highlight an important event that involves one of our legendary figures. I am talking about Grand Chief Max Gros-Louis, who has left us and was laid to rest yesterday. Vigils were held for three days, around the clock. They were powerful moments. I was present for the beginning of the ritual and I went to pay my respects to the family, both personally and as chief.

Let me start by telling you that I am a former residential school student. I will say "wave" because that's often the word used these days. I am one of the second wave of kids who were abducted, put in trucks, and taken to the airport on an old American base. Then we were put into planes. We were very young and we were having fun, until the evening when we realized that we were no longer at home.

I am trying to imagine and describe, as quickly as possible, what that was like. You should do the same. We were no longer at home. I don't know how many kids from the Innu community of Ekuanitshit left that day. My grandfather and grandmother raised me. I imagined my grandfather and grandmother crushed because they could no longer hear me speak. They could no longer hear me cry. I knew that there would be no more communication because I was no longer there.

I was at the residential school for a long time. Some of us went to live in the school to the west of our community of Maliotenam. We stayed there one year, three years, seven years, 10 years. Some never came back. Times like those are what we are now trying to have people understand.

I am trying to not make this speech about victimization anymore, but I want all Canadians to remember, and never to forget, that tragic period for our families and for ourselves. It happened during the 1950s and 1960s. There were a lot of children. When we got to the residential school, they took off all our clothes and cut our hair. We understood not a word of what people were saying to us.

I want to tell you something I have said before: this is not about money. My wife and I were not entitled to the amounts that all former residential school students received. My wife comes from Sept-Îles. Her case was considered inadmissible because her school was described as a day school. We are following what is happening in British Columbia with day schools very closely. They are in court at the moment, and our thoughts are with them.

• (1400)

For administrative reasons, I was denied the amount that should have come to me. However, what hurts me most is the sexual abuse. That does hurt. Sometimes I have difficulty, because it comes back to me. Certainly, it is good to decide to hold a day of commemoration and acknowledgement. However, for some, including myself, it brings back painful memories.

Today, I am a chief and I have had to watch other children being abducted. I've seen young children leave as a result of an order issued by an external legal body. In the present case, it is the director of youth protection who once again has decided that those kids will go somewhere other than into our families. That is too much for me; I must not fail to react.

We are in the process of handling things ourselves, although Quebec is challenging Bill C-92. Despite the lack of funding, the bill would have allowed us to come up with our own solutions. We will get there anyway, with nothing. We have succeeded in placing our own children in families in our communities. That is my greatest concern.

[*English*]

The Chair: Sorry, if you have a concluding remark, that would be great. We have to move on to questions really soon.

Thank you.

[*Translation*]

Chief Jean-Charles Piétacho: Let me be sincere and transparent when I tell you that I hope that the national day for truth and reconciliation will not just be for public servants, because that may end up as a holiday that we, in our already underfunded communities, will have to pay for. That said, it's good that there should be a day like September 30.

Finally, the situation is difficult at the moment. Recently, on September 28, a young Atikamekw woman died tragically. She succeeded in making a video of it before she died. The systemic racism that currently prevails in that region of Québec is being denied. I hope that you will understand the concerns we have.

I wanted to talk to you from my heart. I could have read you a text, but I prefer to speak with my heart, because I would not want my children, my grandchildren and my great-grandchildren to live through what I lived through. I will never be able to accept that.

Thank you very much.

● (1405)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Piétacho.

[*English*]

Now let's get to the questions. We're going to start with the first round of six minutes each.

We'll start with Mr. Aitchison, please.

Mr. Scott Aitchison (Parry Sound—Muskoka, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

For my first question, I would like both gentlemen to respond, if they could.

What I'm concerned about here more than anything else is that we will establish the day off for federally regulated industries and employees and we won't grow in our understanding. I say that because of my own experience. Before Prime Minister Harper apologized for the residential school system in this country, I didn't know about it. I'm not a particularly unengaged human being. I was involved in municipal council in my home for 26 years. I didn't know about it.

I have to tell you, Chief Piétacho, that when I hear the stories, they are so compelling, so powerful and so moving that they motivate me to do more and to educate more to help people understand what we really did to first nations people in this land.

I wonder if you would comment on whether, instead of just a holiday that gives a bunch of federal employees and federally regulated industries a day off, you would be interested in the notion of having the national day for truth and reconciliation include education, understanding and personal growth for people to understand what we have done to first nations people and culture in this land.

[*Translation*]

Chief Jean-Charles Piétacho: Certainly, it should be more than a holiday. If we go on like this, adding days here and there, the calendar is going to be filled up with days like Remembrance Day or June 24. Quebec is going to have a day on September 28, to commemorate the tragic death of Joyce Echaquan. There is no doubt that it will take more education, information and awareness, so that people do not forget.

As I told you, this is not a speech about victimization. I am here to remind you about the events we have lived through in the hope that this day can bring a glimmer of hope that we want to pass on in order to avoid a repetition of what we have always lived through, and the shame of being what we were made to be in the residential schools. Some died and were never able to tell their stories.

The government and the judges are saying that all the testimony of the former residential school students must be erased at a specific time, maybe in five or seven years. That concerns me, because it

means erasing a large part, if not all, of a history that the world should know about.

I find that the day of commemoration is very important. It is being done with the orange shirts, you know. On September 28, we will have a day for Joyce and, on September 30, a day for former residential school students.

I don't know if having too many dates will end up making the thing meaningless. My fear is that the day will be used for financial considerations. I'm afraid that public servants will say that they will work from their cottages on that day instead of educating themselves. That's my concern. However, it's a fine initiative that the AFNQL supports, notwithstanding certain concerns that I have mentioned to you today.

● (1410)

[*English*]

Mr. Scott Aitchison: I'm wondering if Norman would also comment.

National Chief Norman Yakeleya: Thank you very much, parliamentary committee members.

Mr. Chair, the gentleman has asked a very important question, and I think he has a very important point, that just for the sake of having a national holiday....

I believe that the Assembly of First Nations would want this to be a very meaningful way for all of Canada, including indigenous people, to really understand the impacts of the residential schools and the other policies that had effects on their lives personally and their communities. The history of this—that as aboriginal people we were subjected to these types of policies—needs to be told in a careful, gentle, healing way. There were a lot of things that were forbidden to us to speak about and to even know about them in the education of history in our schools and institutions. It should be for families to know that a nation of people was subjected to these policies in the Indian Act and under the residential schools and many other policies and legislation, and to know that the first time the aboriginal people were recognized was in 1960, when they were allowed to vote in the Canadian system.

It would be fruitful to have the Assembly of First Nations, along with other people, come together as a task team and to make this a meaningful way. We need to have this discussion with our Canadian brothers and sisters and have the history. Just like we commemorate November 11, when we all put aside our differences and honour the people who fought for us, who gave us this freedom and sacrificed their lives, we are doing this with the residential schools. Our parents gave up their children to the schools and the churches, and they sacrificed, and the impact is very devastating, but we are a forgiving nation, and we want the Canadian people to understand that, as aboriginal people, this is what really happened to us.

The Chair: Thank you, Chief Yakeleya. I have to end it right there. We'll go on to the next question.

Ms. Dabrusin, you have six minutes.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Julie Dabrusin (Toronto—Danforth, Lib.): Chef Piétacho, I see two things that have come from the answers to our questions: will it be a statutory holiday or not, and what are we going to do with the day?

In terms of the first part, I am thinking about call for action number 80 that asks for a statutory holiday. What do you think?

Is it important whether it's a statutory holiday or just another day? You mentioned that a number of days could be established in our calendar.

Chief Jean-Charles Piétacho: I've read so many reports since the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, and there have been so many recommendations and calls to action, whether from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission or the Viens commission in Quebec. Let me tell you what is unfortunate. Many people have gone to testify. Some of my elders, who are now gone, have done so in the hope of gestures from governments.

Today, I have been doing what I do here for over 30 years, which is to speak out in different forums, whether in my community or on a regional, national or international level. We've been to the United Nations many times. We worked on the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, which is still being discussed.

My fear is that it will be just another day, like June 21. We're making every effort possible. For sure, with COVID-19 at the moment there can't be much movement, but the past teaches us things. In fact, we're so resilient, perhaps too resilient. We really need to use the word "action" if it means anything. I like to talk, but I'd also like to see action. It's not enough to pass a bill, pat ourselves on the back and do nothing afterwards.

• (1415)

Ms. Julie Dabrusin: Thank you very much.

[*English*]

Let me go to Chief Yakeleya to ask the same question. We sometimes smush in the two issues. The first issue is about whether there should be a statutory holiday or just another national day in our calendar. I note that the Truth and Reconciliation call to action refers to a statutory holiday. Does it make a difference to you?

National Chief Norman Yakeleya: Thank you very much for the question.

If there is a day, I'm not too sure it makes a difference. You are in a better position to know than I am.

I think that if there is a day, it should be a statutory day for me and the Assembly of First Nations to recognize it as a national day for the residential school survivors and families. We've come a long way, and something needs to be done for all Canadians to honour the families and the children in this period of their lives, to recognize that there is something set aside for them.

Thank you.

Ms. Julie Dabrusin: I don't have much more time, but the second part of that call to action is in fact that we use that day as a day of commemoration.

If you have any thoughts about what you would want—you said it can be used to help combat racism—what would you want to see us do as part of that day?

National Chief Norman Yakeleya: I would like to see a day of commemoration—for all people, especially those who do not have a real understanding of the impacts of the residential schools—whereby former students, like me, could have an audience with you and talk to you about the real impact of what happened when I was taken away and put in a residential school, and about how, when I listen to my mother talk about September 30.... Hearing the plane come in, she cried, because her children were going to be taken away for a long time and it really bothered her.

We didn't really give any honour to our parents and how they felt. They sacrificed us, and we did also. We should have an education of the people, that this is what really happened to us, because we couldn't really talk about it and about how it impacted our feelings and how it hurt us.

We just want you to know that we have a story to tell. Sometimes people in your position need to hear our stories and to give us the space and time. As the other gentleman said before you, we need an education period. I think the Assembly should work with you guys.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Dabrusin.

Now we are going to go to the Bloc.

I understand you are splitting your time.

[*Translation*]

We'll hear from Mr. Champoux for three minutes. After that, it will be Mrs. Desbiens for three minutes.

Go ahead, Mr. Champoux.

Mr. Martin Champoux: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Yes, that's what I was going to say, so you did the work for me and I thank you very much.

Chief Piétacho, thank you very much for being with us. It's always extremely touching to hear the stories of residential school survivors. Thank you for sharing these troubling stories with us. I think it's important that you are able to share these stories because that is how we can understand the horror that this has meant for generations of indigenous children.

There's a lot of talk about reconciliation. I have the impression that small steps are being taken, but they are always small steps. You talked earlier about the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

Do you think that would be the key? Would it be something that would solve a lot of things, or would it be something that would go a long way toward reconciliation with indigenous peoples?

• (1420)

Chief Jean-Charles Piétacho: This can be an important tool in the process. As I said earlier, I've accompanied elders from my community to the United Nations in New York and Geneva to work with all the First Nations of the world. In fact, Max Gros-Louis was part of these trips.

This would be a very important tool, since everything that should be applied and, above all, recognized is clearly stated in the declaration. Currently, it's a tool that can especially advance the fight against systemic racism. I can't stress this enough. Look, the residential school system is not just two or three priests. It's a system that was established. Let's also think about Indian reserves. We are living it. Again, it would be a very important tool, and I think it's unfortunate that its implementation has gone off track, for your own reasons.

Mr. Martin Champoux: Why do you think it's so delayed?

Why do you think the government hasn't decided to implement the declaration immediately?

What's your impression?

Chief Jean-Charles Piétacho: As I said, it's your system. You have elections every four years, you have bills that die on the order paper, as most of them do. We work very hard in our communities. We work at the grassroots. We're raising awareness among our people. For example, Bill C-92 is important for the protection of our children, and it's being challenged in Quebec, which is unfortunate. There are documents and tools that we should refer to, but they don't have the scope they should have. It's really a long-term job, which would deserve the consideration of Parliament.

Mr. Martin Champoux: Thank you very much for being here today, Chief Piétacho.

I will turn the floor over to my colleague.

Mrs. Caroline Desbiens (Beauport—Côte-de-Beaupré—Île d'Orléans—Charlevoix, BQ): Thank you to you both. Your testimonies are very heartbreaking. I'm even struggling to find my voice to ask you questions.

We don't have much time, but I'd also like to thank you for marking the passing of Grand Chief Max Gros-Louis, whom I was fortunate enough to know. I'm a writer-composer-performer, and we met each other together on international stages. He was an absolutely exceptional man who left his mark on my memory. I offer you my most sincere condolences, as well as to the entire nation and to all First Nations.

At home, in Charlevoix, we have beautiful stories with our First Nations brothers. There is a project in Pointe-aux-Alouettes, in the municipality of Baie-Sainte-Catherine, that I'm actively working on with a Charlevoix-Est RCM committee. We would like to set up a commemorative site.

As part of the study of Bill C-5, which would establish a statutory holiday, I was wondering: if there were more memorial sites where we could celebrate and learn, if there were interpretation centres where we could provide information to the public, and if more sites were established across the nation, would this give us a chance to learn more about your history?

My daughter, who is next to me, tells me that she has had only one hour in all her high school years to discuss your history. It's not enough.

Chief Jean-Charles Piétacho: Absolutely. In the community where I come from, it took about 20 years before we could have the Maison de la culture innue. In fact, we now receive a lot of people. People from all over the world even arrived by boat before they were banned.

As you say, these would be quite significant places. They shouldn't be tourist places where people come to see and listen a little. We'll have to find another formula, which I'm already thinking about too.

If people really want to know our story, they need to sit down and listen to us, because we're not going to talk for just five minutes.

• (1425)

Mrs. Caroline Desbiens: Nor should it be just one day out of 365. We should be able to access it 365 days a year.

Chief Jean-Charles Piétacho: Do you know the anthropologist Serge Bouchard?

Mrs. Caroline Desbiens: Yes.

Chief Jean-Charles Piétacho: He lived in my community and gave back to my community. It also takes people like him, who understand, who have lived with us and who give back to us.

Mrs. Caroline Desbiens: I take note of this, Mr. "He who comes with the wind".

Do I have any time left, Mr. Chair?

The Chair: You have 30 seconds.

Mrs. Caroline Desbiens: Chief Piétacho, what do you suggest regarding history classes in schools? How can we put pressure on our school systems and ministries to have more information and access to your history for young people?

Chief Jean-Charles Piétacho: It's going to be quite a challenge, because in Quebec, it's the curriculum versus our history. If people really want to know our history, it's going to take a lot of tact, understanding and decision making, and not just a little course like the one we know today. The important word to use is "meaningful". It has to be meaningful.

Mrs. Caroline Desbiens: Young people have a thirst for knowledge. My daughter is next to me and tells me she missed it.

Young people want to know your history. It's very important to take care of them.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

[English]

For the next question, we have Ms. McPherson for six minutes, please.

Ms. Heather McPherson: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I want to thank both our honoured guests for being here and sharing their perspectives with us. This has been extremely interesting and extremely important.

I have a question for both of you, but the first question is for the chief of Ekuanitshit. I want to follow up on some of the comments you made regarding racism and the colonialism that impacts your communities and all of our communities across Canada.

We speak of Joyce Echaquan, who perished in a hospital in Quebec. We have a horrifying story of an Inuit woman in the Ottawa Hospital this week. There's Bill C-92 that you speak of, and in my province of Alberta, Bill 1 is deeply racist towards indigenous people.

One of the worries I have with a day for truth and reconciliation.... Of course I'm strongly supportive of it. It's something that my colleague Georgina Jolibois brought forward in the last Parliament. One of my worries is that we will use it as a way to sort of check a box. It needs to be a start. It needs to not be our efforts at reconciliation. It needs to be recognized as an important start, but a very beginning piece on how we deal with racism.

I'd love it if you could talk to me a little bit about those next steps that you think the government needs to take to deal with the systematic institutional racism in every province in this country.

[*Translation*]

Chief Jean-Charles Piétacho: Like most leaders, I don't feel political fatigue from preparing and presenting numerous briefs. In 1985, I served on the commission. I also participated in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and the Viens commission in Quebec. We worked so hard, and we made every effort possible. As I was saying earlier, if all this isn't considered and if it's just a holiday where public servants have a day off, with all due respect, it's not meaningful.

Sometimes I think about the colonized that I am, and I become a colonizer. This concerns me as the head of a federal entity. The band council system was established by the federal government in 1876, and the federal government took over our land. As we say, colonization is the loss of everything.

We're lucky to still be able to go to our land, but there is a dispute. We can speak our language, practise our culture and bring our children inland, but for how long? That concerns me. There has to be change. When a federal government leader said he would change colonial policies and recognize our titles and rights, I thought, "Finally"! It took years. Then we were told that it would be put off for years.

There will be new elections, and we will have to start all over again. That's what tires me out. Every four or five years, everything we've done is trivialized or forgotten and put in storage in Ottawa. As the commissioner has already said, about 100 of the reports we have been asked for have been stored. Someone in Ottawa has become a millionaire because they've put all the reports we've been asked for into storage.

I don't know what it will take, but at some point it will have to be changed if there is to be true reconciliation. In Ottawa, on this re-

port day, I met a young man, and we had a good contact. He wrote me a nice little note. It was already something.

For whatever reason, governments are doing nothing. There will be legislation, but all I hope is that it won't be used for other purposes.

Thank you very much to those who thought of establishing this day.

• (1430)

[*English*]

Ms. Heather McPherson: Thank you very much.

I think sometimes I even see us going backwards, so I recognize your frustration and I want you to know that I feel it as well. It does feel as though these are things that need to happen.

My next question, I suppose, would be for our other guest. Knowing that reconciliation takes more than a single day and that we need to actually have a commitment and stop making the promises and doing the reports and the small pieces, and actually get the work done, what are the next steps for reconciliation that you see for the Canadian government to take on?

We know this is only one of the calls for reconciliation. Of the calls for reconciliation and of the calls for justice, what would you like to see us do next?

National Chief Norman Yakeleya: Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thank you, Madam Committee Member. It's almost like Christmas here. You are asking us, and I am wishing.

I want to thank you for the very important question you've asked. I think the whole issue here is starting to put things into action. We say good words, but it's the system that certainly needs to look at what we are saying and put that into action.

I just met with our elders in the Northwest Territories, and we are starting to put our education system into place. We are a nation of people under our own laws, and our people are saying right now that we are following the federal government laws and the territorial laws that have a say over us, so it's still alive and well today in our justice system, in our language and in who we are as Dene, who we are as indigenous people.

We have our own laws, with our own elders. We have our own justice system. It may be apart from what we are subject to right now. If we want to look at education, we are taking our children and our youth out to the land and teaching them about the laws of the land, how we look at the land and how we would promote ourselves. Right now, there is no support in the system to promote our aboriginal way of life. We are not white people. We are indigenous. We are Indian. We are Dene. That's what we're asking for: the resurgence of who we are.

We understand racism very, very well. It's in our bodies. Ever since we started to go into residential schools, we have had the impacts of racism. As young people, as boys, we were not given names. We were given numbers in the residential school. We were told not to speak our language. The language was called "the devil" by the churches. How can we tell our grandparents that our beautiful Dene language is not from the gods, as they are telling us? How can the church tell us that those words are from the devil?

Those kinds of policies were backed up by the federal government. It was forbidden for us to speak our language or to eat our own food and to be with our families. Everything we were as indigenous people was wrong, so we had to learn a new way of life that was strange for us and is causing us a lot of hardship. We will never be any other persons than Dene people, indigenous people, and we have been fighting for that in our justice system, in our education system and in everything in our lives, even in how we look on our land. That's a really big task.

We're willing to work, but the federal government has to allow us the freedom of something bigger. As Dene people, we were always told to work together with the white people, to work with them but not to be like them, because we are Dene, and that's what we want to maintain.

However, through the residential system, the policies and the churches, everything made us wrong, so we always looked at it as if there was something wrong with us, because we were not taught to support our own language. We remember having soap in our mouths when we spoke our language. They put soap in our mouths to wash them out. The churches did that.

• (1435)

Ms. Heather McPherson: I'm sorry for that.

National Chief Norman Yakeleya: As I said, we were given a number. As boys, we weren't given a name. I was number 153, so when they said "153" I raised my hand. They didn't say "Norman". They said "153".

That's in our blood. We've experienced racism ever since we got into residential schools in our communities. It's still alive and well.

Thank you.

Ms. Heather McPherson: Thank you so much.

The Chair: Chief Yakeleya, thank you so much.

Folks, I was really generous on the time, as you may have noticed. Unfortunately, that only affords us one hour and one round of questioning.

Do I see Mr. Manly in the room? I don't think he is here. I was only going to provide him a short opportunity, but since he is not here, we will have to proceed.

I want to thank Chief Piétacho, and I want to thank Chief Yakeleya as well, for some really compelling testimony. We thank you for bringing your wisdom and your experiences to this committee as we now deliberate for this legislation.

Committee members, we are going to suspend, do audio checks for our department officials and get back on as soon as we can.

Thank you very much again to our witnesses. We really appreciate it.

We will suspend.

• (1435)

(Pause)

• (1440)

The Chair: Okay, folks, welcome back.

We're in our last hour, where we do our clause-by-clause.

I want to say thank you to the officials who are joining us on the line. From the Department of Canadian Heritage, we have Joëlle Montminy and Emmanuelle Sajous. You have very long titles and probably have the largest business cards of anyone I know, and so I'll just use the department, if that's okay, for the sake of time.

We also have.... I just exhausted the list and I don't think I have the others. I apologize. I'll have to ask you to introduce yourselves.

Those from the labour program, please introduce yourselves. Sorry about that.

Mr. Douglas Wolfe (Senior Director, Strategic Policy and Legislative Reform, Strategic Policy, Analysis and Workplace Information Directorate, Labour Program, Department of Employment and Social Development): Good afternoon. I'm Douglas Wolfe from the labour program. I'm a senior director within the labour program.

The Chair: We also have Treasury Board with us.

Mr. Stephen Diotte (Executive Director, Treasury Board Secretariat): Yes, I'm Stephen Diotte, the executive director of strategic compensation management for Treasury Board.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Finally, we have Indigenous Affairs.

Ms. Chantal Marin-Comeau (Director General, Reconciliation Secretariat, Department of Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs): Good afternoon. My name is Chantal Marin-Comeau and I'm the director general for the reconciliation secretariat with Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada. It's a pleasure to be here.

• (1445)

The Chair: Thank you. It's a pleasure to have you.

Thank you for joining us. I really appreciate this.

Of course, members, during the deliberations on clause-by-clause, if you have any specific questions, you now know who is with us regarding the officials. Please feel free to ask them questions at any point.

(On clause 1)

The Chair: Let's start with clause 1.

Shall clause 1 carry?

Mr. Rayes—

Mr. Anthony Housefather: Mr. Chairman, I have a point of order.

Not that I want to prolong the meeting, but I believe that an amendment was duly tabled by Mr. Rayes in section 1, and he should be putting forward his amendment, shouldn't he?

The Chair: That was my thought as well.

Mr. Kevin Waugh: Mr. Chair, I have my hand up, as you can see.

The Chair: Mr. Waugh, I sincerely apologize.

Mr. Kevin Waugh: That's okay. My hand is up.

The Chair: I didn't have the right screen.

Mr. Rayes, I apologize as well.

Thank you, Mr. Housefather, for your point of order.

Mr. Waugh, you have the floor, sir.

Mr. Kevin Waugh: Thank you.

Mr. Chair, I have several amendments. Would you like me to do them one by one, or all at once? What is the protocol you'd like?

The Chair: How about we go through this.... We only have six clauses. I suggest that we start by using clause 1 and your amendment there. If everyone wants to know what he is talking about, it's CPC-1, his first amendment.

Why don't we do them one by one? I realize it's a Friday afternoon, but since we only have six clauses, I thought we would do it this way.

Mr. Waugh, you have the floor.

Mr. Kevin Waugh: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The amendment is:

That Bill C-5, in Clause 1, be amended

(a) by replacing line 4 on page 1 with the following:

“Short Title

1 This Act may be cited as the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation Act.

Purpose of this Act

2 The purpose of this Act is to respond to the Truth and”

(b) by replacing line 6 on page 1 with the following:

“number 80 by establishing the National Day”

That's it, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: That's it, Mr. Waugh?

Mr. Kevin Waugh: For that clause.

The Chair: Well, I'm going to give my ruling.

I want to start this ruling by quoting from *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*. This is from page 770. I'll try to do this slowly for the sake of our interpreters. It says:

An amendment to a bill that was referred to a committee after second reading is out of order if it is beyond the scope and principle of the bill.

If you read the bill, you will see that Bill C-5 amends several acts for the sole purpose of creating a new legal holiday. That was prescribed by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. Specifically, call to action number 80 is what people refer to and what this bill refers to, as a legal concept.

This amendment proposes to remove the concept of a legal holiday and replace it with a symbolic holiday. As you know, after second reading, once we accept the bill in principle and scope, we cannot go back on that, as the House by a majority voted for it.

This amendment goes beyond the principle and scope of the bill. Therefore, the amendment is inadmissible. In my opinion, the amendment is contrary to the principle of the bill.

The ruling also applies to other amendments, by the same token. I'll use the numbers that are ascribed, in the top right-hand corner of the sheets that you have, folks. The ruling applies to amendments CPC-2, CPC-3 and CPC-7, since they are consequential in what they plan to do and are similar in purpose to CPC-1.

Monsieur Rayes.

• (1450)

[*Translation*]

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

I don't know if I'm allowed to make a comment at this stage.

The amendments proposed by Mr. Waugh and the Conservative Party have only one objective. We agree on the principle—

[*English*]

The Chair: I'm sorry, Monsieur Rayes. I thought you had a point of order. Because these are inadmissible, we are unable to debate them. I cannot engage in a debate on something that is not admissible.

We now have to go to deliberation of the clause.

That being said, I return to the original question. Shall clause 1 carry?

(Clause 1 agreed to)

The Chair: Now, clause 2.... I'll just walk you through this. CPC-2 was inadmissible by virtue of the ruling on CPC-1; therefore, we go straight to the question.

Shall clause 2 carry?

Mr. Scott Aitchison: Mr. Chair, I'm sorry. I don't know whether this is a point of order or not, but as a rookie in the room here, I'm going to ask you about your ruling and about the intention.

The intention of the actual motion is of course to implement one of the calls to action from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission—

The Chair: Mr. Aitchison, I'm sorry. I think I've heard enough at this point. I've tried to be generous, but if it's inadmissible, I can't engage in debate about the amendment. If it is not admissible based on the fact that it goes beyond the principle and scope—

Mr. Scott Aitchison: Sir, what I'm trying to ask you—

The Chair: If you have a point of order, please get to it. Thank you.

Mr. Scott Aitchison: What I'm wondering is whether we can challenge your ruling, because—

The Chair: Yes, you can.

Mr. Scott Aitchison: Okay. I'm new here. I'm sorry, but I'm just trying to figure out how to do this.

The Chair: That's quite all right. Quite frankly, I should have mentioned that.

Go ahead.

Mr. Scott Aitchison: My point is that if in fact the intention of the resolution is not just to create a holiday, but to actually—

The Chair: Mr. Aitchison, I hate to do this to you, but when it's inadmissible, we cannot engage in a debate.

What you can do is challenge the ruling. That is a dilatory motion. It has to be voted on right away. However, I cannot engage in a debate on the merits of the amendment that was ruled inadmissible.

Are you asking to challenge the ruling?

Mr. Scott Aitchison: I am asking to challenge the ruling so that I can make my point about why I think your ruling is wrong.

The Chair: Well, we have to vote on it.

Are you challenging it?

Mr. Scott Aitchison: Yes.

The Chair: Tom, go ahead.

The Clerk of the Committee (Mr. Thomas Bigelow): To be clear, the question is, shall the chair's ruling stand?

So that everyone is clear, this would be the chair's ruling that CPC-1 is inadmissible, and thereby CPC-2, CPC-3 and CPC-7 are inadmissible.

(Ruling of the chair sustained: yeas 7; nays 4)

The Chair: Therefore, the ruling stands. Once again, as I mentioned prior to that, CPC-2, in the amendments that you see in your docket, is also inadmissible.

Shall clause 2 carry?

I'm sorry. I know I'm being repetitive, but I have to go back, following the ruling.

(Clause 2 agreed to)

• (1455)

The Chair: On clause 3, again, you'll notice in your documents that you have CPC-3. That, too, was inadmissible regarding the ruling from CPC-1.

Shall clause 3 carry?

(Clause 3 agreed to)

The Chair: On clause 4, we have CPC-4, or I could just continue on.

Mr. Waugh.

Mr. Kevin Waugh: I'm sorry, Mr. Chair. I should have raised my hand. I withdraw that.

I've withdrawn CPC-4, CPC-5 and CPC-6 in the package.

The Chair: Okay. Just give me one moment.

Tom, if you're there, perhaps you can confer with Philippe. Mr. Waugh, as you've just heard, is withdrawing his motions. Do I still have to deliberate on them?

Mr. Philippe Méla (Legislative Clerk): Thank you, Mr. Chair. This is—

The Chair: Monsieur Méla.

Mr. Philippe Méla: That's right, the legislative clerk.

No, Mr. Waugh simply withdrew his motions. He is not going to move them. That's all he's doing.

You can continue with the clauses then.

The Chair: Thank you, Monsieur Méla. I wanted to make sure that what I was doing was right. It happens a lot.

(Clauses 4 to 6 inclusive agreed to)

The Chair: Shall the title carry?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Chair: Shall the bill carry?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Chair: Shall the chair report the bill to the House?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Chair: With that, ladies and gentlemen, we draw to a conclusion. The bill has passed committee unamended and it's on its way back to the House of Commons.

I want to thank our department officials. I hope we didn't ruin your Friday afternoon. Nevertheless, thank you for joining us, as we had quite a few of you here. Thank you for all the support.

Ms. Marie-Lise Julien (Senior Counsel, Legal Services, Department of Canadian Heritage): It was an easy job. Thank you.

The Chair: It was, eh? There you go. Okay.

Mr. Stephen Diotte: We appreciate being included. Thank you.

The Chair: That's all right. Thank you so much.

Ms. Marie-Lise Julien: Yes, thank you so much.

The Chair: Thank you, on a Friday afternoon.

Colleagues, that draws this meeting to a close. We will see you on Monday, when we pick up—

[*Translation*]

Mr. Martin Champoux: Mr. Chair, a point of order. If I may, I would like to discuss a point before the meeting adjourns.

In the first round of questions to the witnesses, we had already exceeded the allotted time, and you gave a round of questions to Ms. Besette. I have nothing against the principle, but the fact that we had already exceeded the time allotted for the first portion of the questioning made it more appropriate to interrupt that and move on to the second hour and the second group of witnesses.

I would like to discuss with you the fact that you granted the privilege to one of the committee members to do his portion of the questioning of witnesses when we had already exceeded the time allotted, but not to other members of the committee. In this instance, Ms. McPherson and I were unable to take advantage of the second round.

This is normal, when we stick to the allotted time, but if we go over, it should be fair and equitable for everyone.

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Champoux.

You're talking about the first round and the fact that we went to two questions prior, which did not involve the other parties, such as your party, as well as Ms. McPherson's. I'm assuming that's what you were saying.

• (1500)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Martin Champoux: Yes, that's what I'm saying.

[*English*]

The Chair: Unfortunately, I have to stick to the original motions that we passed in the very first meeting that we had, which establish the order in which we do this. I try to be as fair as I can. There is no doubt that I would like to pass on another few minutes. I was pushing up against a clock. As I said, we had to get to our other two witnesses.

I will, however, be cognizant of what you just pointed out to allow equal representation. If you'll notice, I also asked for Mr. Manly, who hadn't said anything at that point. Even though they're not recognized at the committee, they do have a role to play in a situation like this. That is in our standing orders as well.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Martin Champoux: Let me interrupt you, Mr. Chair. I just want to make sure we understand each other.

I'm talking about the timeframe that we were allotted for the first portion of the witnesses and that we had exceeded at the end of Mr. Shields's time. Mr. Shields had started his round of questioning, and we were already within the time. We had completed the time allotted for the first witness by the time the second hour of the hearing was starting.

If you give time to one party, it's important to do so equally and according to the normal distribution. I know that you pay particular attention to the distribution and fairness of speaking time. But as we are going to be dealing with some very important issues in the coming weeks, I want to make sure that we all have the opportunity to take advantage of the time we are allotted to speak.

[*English*]

The Chair: I agree. I will look into that. I just wanted to outline what I was going through at the time to try to put fairness into play vis-à-vis running up against a clock that was diminishing very quickly.

What I would suggest to you, though—and I take your suggestion sincerely—is that if that happens again, chances are it is unwittingly. Perhaps you could raise a point of order at that point when it does happen, and I will try to compensate at that point. Would that be fair to say?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Martin Champoux: I didn't dare do it in front of the witnesses earlier, but I appreciate it, and I'll make a note of it for next time.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

[*English*]

Okay, everyone, are there any more questions or comments? I don't see any hands raised.

[*Translation*]

On that note, have a good weekend, everyone.

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