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• (1105)

[*Translation*]

The Chair (Yvan Baker (Etobicoke Centre, Lib.)): I call this meeting to order.

Welcome to meeting number 11 of the Standing Committee on Official Languages.

Pursuant to Standing Order 108(3)(f) and the motion adopted by the committee on October 23, 2025, we're meeting today to begin our study of the use of French in government communications and in federal institutions.

I would now like to welcome our witnesses for the first hour.

We're joined by Nicole Gagnon, conference interpreter and spokesperson for the International Association of Conference Interpreters - Canada Region, or AIIC-Canada.

We're also joined by Luisa Véronis, research chair in immigration and Franco-Ontarian communities, as an individual.

Lastly, we're also joined by Nikolay Slavkov, full professor, research chair in language policy, from the Official Languages and Bilingualism Institute, or OLBI.

I would like to welcome all our witnesses.

Before moving on to the remarks, I would like to confirm an administrative item with the committee. The committee members discussed how we wanted to allocate time for the questions if, as chair, I need to shorten the time for a round of questions. At the last meeting, I had to shorten the second round of questions.

I know that the parties have been discussing the allocation of speaking time. Right now, for the second round of questions, we allocate five minutes for the Conservatives, five minutes for the Liberals, two and a half minutes for the Bloc Québécois, five minutes for the Conservatives and five minutes for the Liberals. That's the standard.

I gather that colleagues have made the following suggestion. If I need to shorten the time, as I did last time, instead of giving three minutes, three minutes, a minute and a half, three minutes and three minutes, we'll consolidate the speaking time for the Conservatives and the Liberals. The Conservatives would have six minutes, and they would speak first. The Bloc Québécois would have a minute and a half. The Liberals would have six minutes. The duration is the same, but we would combine the two speaking turns of the Conservatives and the Liberals. That's the proposal.

I would like to check whether you agree to proceed in this way today if I need to shorten the speaking time for the second round.

Guillaume Deschênes-Thériault (Madawaska—Restigouche, Lib.): For today, I agree. However, for all future meetings, we could discuss this matter in more detail.

For today, we certainly agree with the proposal to proceed in this way.

Joël Godin (Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier, CPC): Mr. Chair, I don't understand my colleague's comments. All the regular members are here. I don't understand why we would need to talk about this matter again, since we discussed it earlier. If he wants to, he can bring it up again. However, I don't think that it's necessary.

Mario Beaulieu (La Pointe-de-l'Île, BQ): We could revisit the matter and increase the Bloc Québécois' speaking time.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Joël Godin: Good suggestion, but we agreed otherwise.

The Chair: I gather that we're willing to try this today, if necessary. In the future, if you want to continue doing things this way or change the system, just let me know.

Mr. Dalton, you have the floor.

Marc Dalton (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge, CPC): Could you repeat the number of minutes allocated?

The Chair: Normally, in the second round, the Conservatives have five minutes, the Liberals have five minutes, the Bloc Québécois has two and a half minutes, the Conservatives have five minutes and the Liberals have five minutes.

Marc Dalton: That's for the second and third rounds.

Right?

The Chair: For the second round, there are five members. Our committee and the other committees agreed on this. The parties negotiated this. I think that this system is used in all the committees.

Sometimes, when there isn't enough time, I need to shorten the whole round. Last time, I cut the times of the five members proportionally. I gave three minutes to the Conservatives, three minutes to the Liberals, a minute and a half to the Bloc Québécois, three minutes to the Conservatives and three minutes to the Liberals.

The members wanted to consolidate the speaking time for the Liberals and Conservatives so that it wouldn't be cut to three minutes and three minutes. Instead, they wanted both parties to have six-minute blocks.

If I must shorten this block of time, I propose six minutes for the Conservatives, a minute and a half for the Bloc Québécois and six minutes for the Liberals.

Mr. Beaulieu, you have the floor.

Mario Beaulieu: The three parties agreed to cut the speaking times.

The Chair: I would like to welcome our witnesses once again.

You will each have five minutes to give your remarks.

Ms. Gagnon, you have the floor for five minutes.

Nicole Gagnon (Conference Interpreter and Spokesperson, AIIC-Canada, International Association of Conference Interpreters - Canada Region): Mr. Chair and committee members, thank you for your important work on this topic.

On behalf of AIIC-Canada, we appreciate this opportunity to contribute to your study.

The Prime Minister's use of the French language is only the tip of the iceberg as a metric to measure the place of French in government communications and in federal institutions. Parliament functions in an officially bilingual legal and political context, a wonderful Canadian feature in itself.

With Parliament occupying the pinnacle of our democracy, it must be able to function so that Canadians can follow its proceedings in the language of their choice with the help of the highest quality interpretation. That's the duty of Parliament to Canadians, and it's worth remembering.

The clear purpose of the Official Languages Act is to ensure respect for the official languages, their equality of status and equal use throughout the federal government, in particular in Parliament, in the administration of justice and in communications with the public.

Respect doesn't mean having a lower status of quality for one of the two official languages. Equality isn't just measured by quantity. Quality is just as important.

In our view, increasingly, the Government of Canada is paying lip service to the requirements of the act. This is having a negative effect on the bilingual character of the nation.

Let me give you a few examples. The Courts Administration Service, or CAS, is entrusted with providing effective judicial, registry and corporate services to Canada's four national courts. According to its 2025-26 departmental plan, the CAS doesn't have sufficient financial resources to meet its obligations under the Official Languages Act.

The plan baldly states as follows:

Amendments to the *Official Languages Act* have come into force in June 2024, requiring CAS to release in both official languages simultaneously decisions of precedential value, in addition to cases that raise questions of law of general public interest or national importance. The impact on CAS' operations is very

significant and resource intensive. CAS currently does not have the appropriate level of resources to meet these new legislative requirements.

This situation will render the Federal Court of Appeal, the Federal Court, the Court Martial Appeal Court of Canada and the Tax Court of Canada unable to ensure the equality of status and equal rights and privileges when it comes to the use of Canada's two official languages in the administration of justice. This directly contradicts the most important purpose of the act.

Here's another example. To save money, Public Services and Procurement Canada has just released new rules for procuring interpretation services for Parliament and high-level events. These rules undermine the quality of the services. Instead of maintaining the five quality-related criteria set out in the current contract, the new rules will see work awarded to the accredited supplier with the lowest price. Other governments have long since abandoned any procurement regime based on the lowest price because it squeezes quality from the services being purchased.

The federal government's approach will undermine the ability of parliamentarians to use and be understood in the official language of their choice. The equality of the official languages in Parliament will suffer a serious blow.

Here's one last example, if I may. The translation bureau has cut interpretation services to all but a few federal departments and agencies. Caught short, these departments and agencies are issuing requests for proposals that use much the same low-quality procurement rules as the rules adopted by Public Services and Procurement Canada for Parliament and high-level events. As a result, the inequalities between the two official languages will become even more apparent across the federal government.

I would like to conclude by thanking you for listening and by extending my greetings to my colleagues in the interpretation booth.

● (1110)

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Gagnon.

Ms. Veronis, you have the floor for five minutes.

Luisa Veronis (Research Chair in Immigration and Franco-Ontarian Communities, As an Individual): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Good morning, committee members.

First of all, thank you for inviting me to testify at this very important meeting on the importance of maintaining French at the highest levels for francophone minority communities.

My testimony is based on my research on francophone communities and, in particular, on the work I've been doing on francophone immigration in minority settings for more than 15 years.

To begin with, it's important to note that, according to the Official Languages Act and the principles of bilingualism, the presence and use of French at the highest levels is essential, even primordial, especially for francophone minority communities. The very existence, recognition and legitimacy of francophone communities are closely linked, and they even depend on the federal government's commitment to official languages.

It is also crucial to ensure consistency among the various federal policies, particularly since the Official Languages Act was modernized in 2023, recognizing francophone immigration and pledging to establish a dedicated policy in 2024.

In the early 2000s, the federal government defined francophone immigration as a key strategy for maintaining and promoting the vitality of francophone communities. Since then, considerable effort and investments have gone into supporting francophone immigration. These include the creation of dedicated francophone immigration networks, annual Destination Canada forums, the welcoming francophone communities initiative and the deployment of a range of pre-departure and post-arrival services.

If the highest political and institutional authorities do not fully honour their commitment to official languages, this runs the risk not only of undermining the very idea of the existence of francophone communities, but also of compromising these significant advances in francophone immigration.

I'd now like to draw your attention to three main challenges.

The first challenge concerns meeting francophone immigration targets. I would remind you that, despite a 4% target set in 2003, francophone immigration has stagnated at around 2% for nearly 20 years, which has contributed to the demographic decline of francophone communities. It wasn't until 2022 that the target was finally met and then exceeded, thanks to concerted efforts.

It should also be noted that, in the wake of the new francophone immigration policy, the targets have been revised upward to 8.5% this year, 9% in 2026 and a projected 10% by 2028.

To maintain this promising trajectory and continue to attract francophone immigrants, it's crucial that we demonstrate an unequivocal commitment to the French language and the vitality of francophone communities. In other words, if we don't showcase the presence and vitality of French, how can we hope to attract francophone immigrants?

The second challenge concerns the importance of French across the immigration continuum. The use of French by elected officials and institutions at the highest level is essential to support francophone immigration and guarantee its success across the immigration continuum, at several key stages.

From recruitment on, we have to project the presence and vitality of French in order to attract francophone immigrants.

At intake, as soon as they arrive, we have to ensure access to services and the first positive interactions in French in order to establish a solid foundation for integration.

Throughout the settlement and integration process, successful settlement depends on access to francophone networks, resources, institutions and social spaces.

It takes local community engagement and full inclusion in the host society.

Finally, for retention, they must be motivated to stay and flourish fully in French in francophone communities.

In my research, I've often heard francophone immigrants say they don't know where the francophone communities are. They've heard about them, but they're wondering where they are. They don't see them and they can't find them.

This raises the crucial issue of the visibility, or rather the invisibility, of francophone communities. Their visibility and accessibility are essential to ensuring the welcoming, integration and engagement of francophone immigrants.

Let's imagine a scenario where, despite all the efforts made to attract, welcome and integrate francophone immigrants, they become discouraged after a few years because they haven't achieved the Canadian dream they were sold.

In that case, they run the risk of leaving the country, which renders all the investment by the federal government, the francophone communities or the immigrants themselves, useless.

That's why the use of French at the highest levels of government is essential for the immigration continuum in order to guarantee its success and ensure that immigrants do well.

• (1115)

The Chair: Ms. Veronis, your time is up. I would ask you to finish up your presentation. During the question period, you may have time to say more.

Luisa Veronis: Okay.

The third and final challenge I wanted to address concerns the risks and abuses to be avoided, particularly the risk that francophone immigration will be perceived as utilitarian. Immigrants are no fools. In my research, they've often told me that they felt weaponized.

In closing, I would add that, if we want to preserve the credibility and sustainability of the francophone immigration initiative, we have to ensure the presence and vitality of French in all public institutions.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Mr. Slavkov, you have the floor for five minutes.

Nikolay Slavkov (Full Professor, Research Chair in Language Policy, Official Languages and Bilingualism Institute): Good morning, Mr. Chair.

Thank you for inviting me to testify.

The subject of this study is of great interest to me, both professionally and personally. I am a professor at the Official Languages and Bilingualism Institute, or OLBI, at the University of Ottawa. I work more often in my third language, which is English. I also had the pleasure and privilege of starting to learn French at our institute. Therefore, I'm constantly learning Canada's official languages.

My testimony today reflects that personal perspective, as does my accent in English and French. Obviously, my testimony is based on research in the field of language learning and instruction. My remarks are also informed by some innovative practices and initiatives at our institute.

[*English*]

Now I will dive into a few more specific points.

Language learning is a complex and multi-faceted phenomenon. Human beings, regardless of whether they're high-ranking public servants, elected officials or ordinary people, may have different life trajectories, and their diverse human experiences shape their language repertoires, sometimes called plurilingual repertoires or dominant language constellations.

The field of second or additional language learning is well known and almost notorious, I would say, for the variability of outcomes in comparison to the field of first-language acquisition. That is, the outcomes of first-language learning are generally quite uniform, whereas the outcomes of second-language learning are highly variable. Some of these include age of exposure, quantity and quality of input or educational choices made early on in life. It is curious that adults sometimes do not even realize that their bilingualism—or, in some cases, multilingualism—is sometimes preconditioned by their parents' early strategic decisions—decisions about what languages to use at home and what languages of schooling parents may choose for their children.

Another important factor to keep in mind is emotions and, more specifically, language anxiety. As pointed out by Peter MacIntyre, one of Canada's world-renowned language learning psychologists, language anxiety is one of the most studied emotions in his research field. Since language anxiety is seen as a debilitating factor, we must approach language learners with understanding and even empathy. In fact, one often-cited model that draws on these ideas is called “empathics.” Such models are not perfect, but they show some promise in reducing language anxiety or language insecurity and ultimately increasing output or target language use.

• (1120)

[*Translation*]

I want to make it clear that my remarks are not intended to justify the reduced use of French at the highest levels of government. On the contrary, I believe that we need to have a good understanding of the contextual and individual factors so that we can give appropriate advice and push for the increased use of French.

[*English*]

At the Official Languages and Bilingualism Institute, where I work, we have various innovative practices and initiatives that may be explored in government contexts.

In terms of knowledge, we teach courses on the role of positive psychology in second-language learning, and we have publications on transitioning from linguistic insecurity to linguistic security.

In terms of tools, we have a paper booklet called “Linguistic Risk-Taking Passport” and a phone app called Linguistic Risk. These tools are specifically designed to push learners out of their comfort zone and increase their second-language output. In the context of the Government of Canada, such knowledge and resources can be used to offer strategic advice and, perhaps, customized coaching in order to increase the use of the French language.

One quick final point is that it may be important to mention that the level of proficiency and the level of target-language use or output are two distinct variables. However, they are not always treated as separate in some media publications or other reports, so that will be an important point to consider.

I am probably running out of time, so I could discuss that later if you wish.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Slavkov.

[*Translation*]

We will now go to questions from members.

Mr. Godin, you have the floor for six minutes.

Joël Godin: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'd like to thank the witnesses for being with us. Their comments are fascinating.

Ms. Gagnon, in your presentation, you mentioned that the situation was the tip of the iceberg.

What do you mean?

Nicole Gagnon: What I mean by that is that the Prime Minister is the head of the government, and anyone who follows him will follow his example.

I'm not picking on him specifically, but if the Prime Minister or all the ministers and parliamentarians don't speak French, that's not going to encourage the country's francophones to speak French.

Joël Godin: I can therefore infer that, if the Prime Minister doesn't use one of our country's two official languages or minimizes its use, that will have enormous consequences for the structures of the government institution under his authority.

Did I understand correctly?

Nicole Gagnon: Yes, there's a ripple effect.

Joël Godin: Above him is the Governor General of Canada. The person appointed by the Liberals is bilingual, but doesn't speak French. It's the same symbolic value, and it has the same consequences.

Isn't that right?

Nicole Gagnon: Exactly. It's what it symbolizes.

Joël Godin: Now, let's talk about the equality of status and use of both official languages.

Are you making the same observation as I am, that the government is not currently honouring them?

Nicole Gagnon: Radio-Canada did a report on the Prime Minister's French in which it had calculated the number of minutes he spoke French.

I can tell you that it doesn't stop there. There have been studies in the past. I'm thinking in particular of a study by the Commissioner of Official Languages of Canada in 2022, if I'm not mistaken. The study measured the speaking time in Parliament of a number of parliamentarians who spoke various languages. The finding was that English was indeed predominant at the expense of French.

• (1125)

Joël Godin: Yes, that's true. Even in Parliament, we don't lead by example.

Is that right?

Nicole Gagnon: That's right.

Joël Godin: You talked about the new rules regarding the lowest bidder. You've already told us about it here.

The officials told us that wasn't true, but you're saying that the new contract for interpreters could be awarded to the lowest bidder.

Can you tell us more about that?

Nicole Gagnon: I'd like to clarify that. The request for information was followed by the standing offer, which expires on November 24 of this year. So we're in a delicate period.

When I say that, I have to be very aware of the Competition Bureau rules governing this issue. However, no changes have actually been made to the procurement rules regarding the use of the lowest certified bidder.

Joël Godin: You've testified here before. The officials did tell committee members that it was not true that the contract would be awarded to the lowest bidder. However, from what I understand from your remarks, that's where we're headed. Am I right?

I would ask you to give me a brief answer.

Nicole Gagnon: In its testimony, the translation bureau said that it wasn't true that the contract would be awarded to the lowest bidder. He went on to say that there would be accreditation and security clearance.

Joël Godin: I'll stop you there because, in my opinion, that shows this government's inconsistency when it comes to enforcing the Official Languages Act.

Ms. Veronis, you talked about consistency issues with the Official Languages Act. I completely agree with you on that. This government has a long list of inconsistencies over the past 10 years.

I'd like to remind the people listening to us of one thing, so that it appears in the committee meeting evidence. The current Liberal government, which followed another Liberal government, received royal assent for the modernized version of the Official Languages Act on June 20, 2023.

Today is November 20, 2025, and this government has not yet tabled the regulations to implement the Official Languages Act.

So much for consistency.

Isn't that right?

Luisa Veronis: My specialty is more francophone immigration. However, I support you. In my opinion, that's inconsistent. As for francophone immigration, there's at least some consistency and progress. The inconsistency is that some of the proposals are being advanced and others are not.

Joël Godin: I like your optimism, but I just want to remind people that the only time the francophone immigration targets were met was in 2022.

What was happening in 2022? The government and the drafting of the new version of the Official Languages Act were in the spotlight. What a coincidence. So I'm a bit skeptical about the future of francophone immigration targets.

The Chair: Mr. Godin, you have 15 seconds left.

Joël Godin: Okay.

Mr. Slavkov, I hope to be able to ask you some questions later.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Godin.

Ms. Chenette now has the floor for six minutes.

Madeleine Chenette (Thérèse-De Blainville, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'd like to thank the witnesses for being with us.

Mr. Slavkov, it's very interesting to hear what you have to say about the emotion factor related to language. I say that because, as a francophone, having learned English and having used French across Canada and internationally, I can understand exactly what you're saying.

Indeed, there are people who speak and value French. However, even if they are francophone, they're afraid to use French. I heard people say it at the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, or OECD, among the professionals who were French from France. They told me that if they spoke in English, they'd be more credible. That's a complete myth. We've finally managed to change that attitude.

Given the emotion factor, what can the government do to really strengthen trust and pride in our language?

• (1130)

Nikolay Slavkov: Thank you very much for the question.

It's quite a complex situation, but we can use a lot of strategies.

I can start by talking a bit about the difference between the level of proficiency and the level of use of French.

Normally, it's easier to increase the use of French than the level of competence, because it takes much longer to increase the level of competence.

[English]

These are very different variables. Even though they are related, it's important to know that it's a bit of a chicken-and-egg question. On the one hand, we need to increase our level of use—our output—but on the other hand, our proficiency may be making us fear the fact that our proficiency is not perfect. Because of that fear, we may be tempted not to use our second official language, which is French in this case.

It's very important to relay the message to language users and language learners that we are not aiming for perfection. We should be embracing our errors. We should be okay with our identity as a second-language speaker. At the same time, we should be taking risks. These risks push us out of our comfort zone and help us to increase our language use without worrying too much about mistakes. We know that the more risks we take, the more our level of proficiency will increase as well.

[Translation]

In short, there are many other strategies, but that's something we can bring up.

Madeleine Chenette: Yes, that's certainly the case.

Ms. Gagnon, thank you once again for being with us today.

We had a chance to discuss how important interpreters are and how important their work is. I don't know if you have any data on that. Having worked in a number of government departments over the past five and a half years, I've clearly seen a progression of francophones who speak French when they're sharing the stage with their anglophone colleagues.

As far as interpretation is concerned, do you have any data or do you keep track of the data on the percentage of francophones who speak their language or who speak English when they're sharing the stage?

I'm able to speak both languages, so I can relate to the insecurity or the emotion factor. Pride in showcasing a language is also a choice people make to say they are asserting themselves.

Is there any data on that?

This also affects immigration, and I'll come back to that.

Nicole Gagnon: Thank you for the question.

AIIC-Canada doesn't compile data per se. As I mentioned, the 2022 study by the Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages showed that the use of French was declining.

If we go back a little further, in 2020, Mrs. DeBellefeuille said that 86% of witnesses spoke in English.

I don't have any data for you. I'm just providing anecdotal evidence based on observations. It goes back to what I was saying at the very beginning of my remarks. When people speak French, there's a ripple effect. We're speaking in French more often, and that certainly includes parliamentarians. They must set an example for the Canadian people, for the people who have chosen to be part of a bilingual nation.

Madeleine Chenette: I completely agree with you. It is certainly important to our government to make that francophone presence evident in all our interventions.

Ms. Veronis, you talked about how challenging it is for newcomers to Canada to see the strength of the francophonie. I found out about an app called Canoo that helps immigrants find cultural organizations. I think this app encourages newcomers to connect with cultural organizations.

Our Prime Minister speaks French, and he intends to get better at it. We also have to look at the emotional aspect and the issue of the use of French.

That said, apart from showing leadership, which is key, should the government find other ways to really reinforce this perception of French among newcomers to Canada?

The Chair: You have about 25 seconds left.

Luisa Veronis: Thank you for the question. It's a very important one.

It's very difficult. It varies a lot from one francophone community to another. You have to consider their diversity, size, population density and institutional completeness. The more visible, the better.

However, even francophones are sometimes afraid to speak French. That even happens here in Ottawa. People wonder where the francophones are even though we're in the national capital, right next door to Quebec.

One of the most impactful things has been the kiosk at Pearson International Airport, where we welcome and orient francophone newcomers. Many of them go through that airport to get to Ottawa, for example, or to go out west.

The kiosk provides them with information as soon as they arrive. It has had a huge impact. I should point out that, when immigrants arrive, it's information overload. They don't always have the right information when they need it—

● (1135)

The Chair: Excuse me, Ms. Veronis. I have to cut you off there.

Luisa Veronis: This is true across the immigration continuum.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

I'll now give the floor to Mr. Beaulieu for six minutes.

Mario Beaulieu: Thank you.

Ms. Gagnon, you raised an interesting point. You talked about the quantity of French used and added that the quality of French should not be dismissed. You feel that the status of French must not be undermined by declining quality of the language.

In your opinion, when you listen to the debates, among other things, is the quality of the French getting better or worse?

Nicole Gagnon: Thank you for your question. I'm glad to know that I said something interesting.

Is the quality getting worse? It's difficult for me to comment on that. Some will say that quality is subjective.

What I can say is that, as long as the people talking to each other understand each other, the quality is good enough.

We agree that, in Parliament, the seat of democracy, you must receive quality interpretation so you feel comfortable speaking in the language of your choice. Parliamentarians have diverse backgrounds, and they come from all over the world. They have a range of accents, and sometimes we have to deal with technical subjects.

For that to work, you need to be sure that interpretation will function as it should. You mustn't get the impression that the anglophone you're talking to didn't really understand you, which could make you feel the need to switch to English if you're bilingual.

Mario Beaulieu: Listening to the debates, I often feel like some people butcher the French language. I know people need to give it their best shot, but it's also important to understand that, when ministers speak truly laborious French, that sends the message that French isn't really important. In other words, it's not really worth learning the language well enough to speak quality French.

When more people manage to produce quality French, that sets a better example and has a greater impact on the population.

Nicole Gagnon: I don't think interpreters are accusing anyone of butchering the French language, any more than they would accuse anyone of butchering the English language, for example. I agree with Mr. Slavkov.

Mario Beaulieu: True, that happens too.

Nicole Gagnon: Practice makes perfect. If people make mistakes in either official language, whether French or English, that doesn't necessarily bother the interpreter, who is there to convey the message. If it's laborious in French, it will likely be laborious in English as well. What you say matters, but so does how you say it.

Mario Beaulieu: In the past, the translation bureau provided all of the translation and interpretation services. As you said, these services are increasingly being sourced through calls for tender issued by departments, and they're much less regulated. That's the direction it's going. Under the new regulations, that's the way it's going.

Would you say that fewer resources are now being used to provide quality interpretation services?

Are calls for tender usually issued by individual departments, or are they more general calls for tender?

Would you say that the quality of interpretation services remains the same despite all these changes?

Nicole Gagnon: I would say no. Once again, if the translation bureau, which is Canada's centre of linguistic excellence, lets its quality standards slip, that will definitely spread to various departments. That's what we're seeing in the calls for tender on CanadaBuys, where the emphasis is no longer on the quality of the interpretation.

In my opinion, the translation bureau should have a cultural mandate, not a technical one. Nobody on the translation bureau's management team is an interpreter, so they don't necessarily understand translation or interpretation work. They manage it like they would manage, say, paper clips.

We're very concerned. That's actually why AIIC-Canada is delighted to be here today to talk to you about how the example being set and the quality of the discourse are going to impact bilingualism in this country.

● (1140)

Mario Beaulieu: I get the impression that a lot of things are being done to save money on interpretation and translation at the expense of the quality, even though witnesses who have appeared before the Standing Committee on Official Languages have sometimes criticized the French or English translations of their documents.

Another thing we're seeing more often is that translation and interpretation services are not being provided to friendship groups, which are not official parliamentary groups. That is the case for the Canada-Palestine Parliamentary Friendship Group, which I belong to. I think this basically shows that French is considered unimportant.

Mr. Slavkov, you are the only person here who's an expert on second-language learning, among other things.

If I understand correctly, Prime Minister Carney has had 10 hours and 45 minutes of training since taking office six or seven months ago.

Would you say that's enough for him to improve his French?

The Chair: I'm sorry to interrupt, but the member's time is up. I would therefore ask for a very brief answer.

Nikolay Slavkov: It's important to not just—

Mario Beaulieu: That's a total of 11 hours in six months.

Nikolay Slavkov: It's important to not just count the hours, but also to look at the daily tasks that can be done in French.

The Prime Minister has a very busy schedule. He should therefore perform real-life tasks in French to add more hours in French.

Mario Beaulieu: You're being diplomatic.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Beaulieu. I chair a friendship group, and I agree with what you said.

As discussed, I'm going to have to shorten the second round of questions, so I'll proceed as planned at the beginning of the meeting. I'll give six minutes to the Conservatives, one and a half minutes to the Bloc Québécois and six minutes to the Liberals. You can obviously decide to divide the speaking time among yourselves.

We'll start with Mr. Dalton for six minutes.

Marc Dalton: Thank you very much.

Thank you to all the witnesses for their testimony.

Ms. Veronis, you talked a bit about newcomers, immigrants and the invisibility of francophone communities, which is a bit sad. That's not what this committee wants to see. You also said that it was important for the Prime Minister to use French more.

Can you elaborate on that?

Is it a concern in terms of the vitality of French outside Quebec and in Quebec?

Luisa Veronis: Thank you for your interest in the invisibility issue.

It is important for people at high levels to speak French because, as Ms. Gagnon explained, it enhances the presence and vitality of the language.

Members of francophone minorities are often reluctant to speak their own language. I don't think it's the same for anglophone minorities in Quebec. As a result, they don't present themselves as francophones, which increases invisibility, especially in small communities that have few institutions. In places like that, you don't see signs in French or the names of organizations in French.

Sometimes there are flags, like the Franco-Ontarian flag, but francophone immigrants aren't familiar with those flags before they get here.

• (1145)

Marc Dalton: Thank you very much.

I agree with you. I live in Vancouver, where there are some very good organizations, but visibility is important. It's important to me and to all of us that the Prime Minister and people in government positions use French.

Ms. Gagnon, you also said that the government is only paying lip service to these issues, meaning that it talks a good game without taking any concrete action.

However, according to a study conducted by Radio-Canada, the Prime Minister doesn't really use French outside Quebec.

Do you think it's important that he do so?

Nicole Gagnon: You're talking about how the Prime Minister doesn't speak French. I would say that, as the head of government, it's important for him to speak French. I agree with you.

In terms of setting an example, we also have to talk about the fact that, during the entirety of my career at the translation bureau—which was long, as you can tell from my grey hair—the institution reported to a secretary of state. All departments had to go through the translation bureau.

Then the bureau was deregulated and became a cost-recovery agency. Since then, French has been disappearing bit by bit, especially during recessions. As Mr. Théberge told you, official languages have been neglected.

Marc Dalton: Ms. Gagnon, I have to interrupt you. I want to share my time with Mr. Godin, but I would like to make a comment first.

[*English*]

Mr. Slavkov, I just want to make a couple of comments here. You won't have time to respond. It's just that you are studying in official languages. You're the chair there. You've put a lot of emphasis in your studies on decolonization, and you're just a bit critical of the two founding nations' languages. My concern is that.... Your name was brought forward—no disrespect there—by the Liberal government. It just makes me wonder about the commitment to the official languages, both official languages in Canada, especially to French, especially when we see the...but I'm going to pass my time right now and give it to Monsieur Godin.

[*Translation*]

The Chair: There's about a minute and a half left.

Joël Godin: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Slavkov, I appreciated what you said about learning.

You're a professor at the University of Ottawa, which is a bilingual university. The Prime Minister gave a speech to young people there.

Does it seem reasonable to you that he used very little French in his speech?

Nikolay Slavkov: I think it's important to use French much more often than we do at present. I think it's good for everyone.

Joël Godin: As Prime Minister, he needs to lead by example. Thank you, Mr. Slavkov. You answered my question.

Given the number of times the Prime Minister has used French and the number of hours he has spent taking French classes, do you get the sense that he's not interested in raising the profile of one of his country's two official languages?

Nikolay Slavkov: That's a good question, but I'm not really able to answer it because it's about what's going on in our Prime Minister's mind. What people can do is adopt strategies and provide advice. People can insist on the use of French.

Joël Godin: We know that the Prime Minister's Office has been looking for a French teacher since September 2 because the Prime Minister no longer has access to a French teacher. If you know of one, maybe you can get in touch with the Prime Minister's Office.

Thank you, Mr. Slavkov.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Godin.

Mr. Beaulieu for a minute and a half.

Mario Beaulieu: Ms. Veronis, you said that francophone immigration could be a strategy to ensure the vitality of French outside Quebec. However, researchers who have testified here have shown that francophone immigrants are becoming anglicized or assimilated at least as quickly as francophones outside Quebec. The rate is very high.

The government is refusing to adopt an approach that would encourage francophone immigration to regions where French is more prevalent and where there are French schools.

What do you think of that strategy?

Wouldn't it be more effective to try to encourage, but not require, francophone immigration to areas where French is used more?

• (1150)

Luisa Veronis: Thank you for the question, which has a lot to do with geography. What you suggest may be a strategy, but it is not a guarantee at all.

My research shows that employment is the biggest barrier. We tell immigrants that we're looking for francophone immigrants, that we have francophone communities and that they can come and live here in French, but they can't find work in French. Employment opportunities in French are few. Just yesterday, Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada, or IRCC, put on a webinar showing that being an immigrant and speaking only French actually leads to downward occupational mobility—demotion, essentially.

In my opinion, if we want francophone immigrants, we have to offer them jobs in French so they can work. The welcoming francophone communities initiative can offer inspiration.

This is something that takes a lot of work. You can't just snap your fingers and create jobs in French. Such jobs are often found in francophone institutions that contribute to the institutional completeness of communities, but there aren't that many of them.

We need to look at how we can offer more jobs in French. We can approach francophone employers, but they can be in-group environments. For example, a lot of construction businesses are family enterprises that are taken over by the owner's children.

If jobs are not available in French, the risk of assimilation is greater.

The Chair: Ms. Veronis, I'm sorry, but time is up.

Thank you very much, Mr. Beaulieu.

I give the floor to Mr. Deschênes-Thériault for six minutes.

Guillaume Deschênes-Thériault: Thank you very much.

Ms. Veronis, I'm very pleased that we have you here today as a witness.

You are an expert in francophone immigration. You hold the Research Chair in Immigration and Franco-Ontarian Communities, and you've followed the francophone immigration file for a long time.

There have been significant investments in this area in recent years. However, we've had a period of stagnation. In 2013, there

was only \$30 million in investment over five years. In 2018, that went up to \$84 million.

In 2023, though, investments reached \$220 million. That means those investments were recognized as a priority for ensuring the vitality of communities. That has made it possible to implement initiatives such as the welcoming francophone communities initiative, which you mentioned.

Can you explain to me the importance of those initiatives in ensuring the success of Canada's francophone immigration?

Luisa Veronis: Thank you for the question. It's a very important one.

It took a long time, some 20 years, and a lot of investment to finally get there. I would say we're there now. Francophone communities are much less invisible than they were 10 years ago. I did a study at the time, and immigrants were talking to me about it.

There have been huge investments, and I believe they're now paying off. We've gotten there, but we still have to attract 10% of francophone immigrants. That's what we're aiming for. We have to make sure that French is used and present. That's clear from the outside as well. The Prime Minister talks about it.

The current challenge is to recruit enough francophone immigrants to meet our targets. The most important thing is to avoid hypocrisy or utilitarianism when it comes to francophone immigration. The government has to make investments and show that it's unequivocally committed to providing job opportunities in French.

Guillaume Deschênes-Thériault: How has the welcoming francophone communities initiative increased the visibility of the francophone community in some of the funded communities?

We've seen all kinds of great projects implemented.

Can you talk a bit about the impact of this initiative?

Luisa Veronis: I don't know them all in detail. To answer Ms. Chenette's question about what can be done, I'd say that the kiosk that was set up at Pearson International Airport and the welcoming francophone communities initiative have been very successful. I think Hawkesbury, not far from here, is a good example of that. That enabled us to target the specific needs of communities, based on the regional or territorial factors that affect them.

Each community can target its needs to enable francophone immigrants to succeed and thrive. Each community can decide what program it needs, and that's what makes this initiative so successful.

Guillaume Deschênes-Thériault: Thank you, Ms. Veronis.

I'll yield the rest of my time to Mr. Villeneuve.

Louis Villeneuve (Brome—Missisquoi, Lib.): Thank you.

I'd like to thank the three witnesses for being here. I'm going to ask just one question. They can share the time they have left to answer.

Liberals and Conservatives have been trading power back and forth for decades. I'm old enough now to say that the challenges we face in terms of official languages are nothing new. Our job in committee is to work together to improve things.

If you had a magic wand, what changes would you make to the federal government to ensure substantive equality between the two official languages?

● (1155)

Nicole Gagnon: I'm going to go back to what Ms. Veronis was saying about immigration to the country.

In a press conference this week, the Institute for Canadian Citizenship was talking about the immigrant retention rate. Canada invests a lot in immigration, but little, if any, attention is paid to whether new Canadians stay in the country. It sounds like that isn't necessarily the case.

There are some pretty extensive statistics, which I can't quote out of context, but you can refer to the report entitled "Leaky Bucket".

It's noted that people who do an onward migration usually do so not because they're making too little money in Canada, but because they don't feel a sense of belonging to Canada.

If a francophone immigrant can't live in French in Canada, they can't put down roots to live here. They don't feel welcome, so they go elsewhere.

Louis Villeneuve: Excuse me, Ms. Gagnon, I don't want to interrupt you, but time is running out.

What would you do first to improve things?

Nicole Gagnon: My goodness, that's quite a question.

I might go back to the past. For departments and Parliament, everything at the time had to go through the Secretary of State. Over the years, that obligation has dwindled away. It's no longer mandatory to go through the translation bureau. Government departments and agencies have been abandoned. They're trying to make do with what they have, then, and quality is being sacrificed as a result.

Now, parliamentarians even seem to be abandoning French and the quality of French. That's the subject of your study, and it's the crux of my remarks.

If we can live in French, speak high-quality French and have the right to high-quality interpretation services, we can ensure Canadian prosperity.

Louis Villeneuve: Thank you very much.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Villeneuve.

That concludes the first panel. I want to thank Ms. Veronis, Mr. Slavkov and Ms. Gagnon for being with us.

I will suspend the meeting so that we can welcome the next panel.

● (1155)

(Pause)

● (1205)

The Chair: Welcome back to meeting number 11 of the Standing Committee on Official Languages. We're continuing our study on the use of French in government communications and in federal institutions.

I would now like to welcome the witnesses for the second hour. We have Geneviève Tellier, full professor, who is appearing as an individual. From the Fédération de la jeunesse canadienne-française, we also have Simon Thériault, president, and Josée Vailancourt, executive director.

Each organization will have five minutes to share their opening remarks. That will be followed by a round of questions and answers with the committee members.

Ms. Tellier, you have five minutes.

Geneviève Tellier (Full Professor, As an Individual): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

I'd like to thank the Standing Committee on Official Languages for inviting me to testify as part of its study on the use of French in government communications and in federal institutions. I had the opportunity to testify before the committee in March 2024, during the study on language obligations related to the process of staffing or making appointments to key positions. One of the topics discussed at the time was leadership and the importance of senior officials setting an example. I note that this theme is reappearing in the committee's work.

The event that led your committee to undertake this study on the use of French in government communications was the release of the results of a compilation by Radio-Canada on the Prime Minister's use of French in his speeches. That compilation was made public on October 9. It revealed that the Prime Minister spoke French only 17% of the time, which isn't very much.

I think that rate of 17% raises a number of questions that could be grouped into three broad categories. First, what are the causes of this situation? Second, what are the consequences? Third, what could be the solutions to remedy this situation?

If I had to answer those questions in under a minute, I'd say that language issues are still highly politicized in Canada. Politicians are courting the French-speaking electorate, rather than serving French-speaking communities. What's more, even today, certain topics are considered to be more appropriate for French-speaking populations than others. The opposite is also true. Some topics are discussed less in French than in English. That means that there's an imbalance, not only in form—the Prime Minister's speaking time in this case—but also in the content of what's communicated to the public.

Finally, it's time for an independent agent to be able to conduct in-depth independent studies to document the language situation in Canada. It's impossible to regulate someone's speaking time. However, it's certainly possible to document it, as the CBC has done. The work has to continue, though. For that reason, I would be happy to answer any questions the committee may have on these topics and any other issues they deem relevant.

Thank you for your attention.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Tellier.

I will now give the floor to Mr. Thériault for five minutes.

Simon Thériault (President, Fédération de la jeunesse canadienne-française): Mr. Chair, members of the committee, thank you for inviting us to appear.

The Fédération de la jeunesse canadienne-française, or FJCF, is a national organization managed by and for young people. It is made up of 12 member associations and operates with a governing body made up entirely of young elected officials who represent the interests of young people across the country.

For 50 years now, the FJCF has been offering support and training, as well as the opportunity to participate in major initiatives, including the Jeux de la francophonie canadienne. We manage a number of programs that promote youth employability, including the DépasseToi program, Young Canada Works and Apic.

Finally, we provide opportunities for young people to think about the future of the country and take part, in a non-partisan way, in efforts to learn about public policy in Canada.

Let me emphasize that, from our perspective, this isn't about a decline in French but a wind of change. This is a wind that has been blowing in our communities for a number of years now, and it means that our communities are becoming more and more diverse. That diversity can be heard in the many accents that resonate in French across Canada. That change ensures that French in Canada is increasingly rich and varied. That wind of change has breathed promising new life into our language.

French in Canada is also fragile. For years, we've been counting on access to education to strengthen the French fact, support the development and vitality of communities, and encourage bilingualism. As you know, that means that schools, colleges, child care centres and universities that provide French-language education are essential institutions.

Unfortunately, access to post-secondary education in French remains quite a challenge. The cost of education, the costs of moving to pursue studies, the fact that some programs are unavailable in our communities and the burden of student debt are some of the biggest barriers to accessing the education continuum today. As you may already know, student debt is actually higher among those who choose to study in French at the post-secondary level, particularly because of the need to move to study in French.

Access to the labour market is proving to be more difficult than it used to be. When people can't find jobs in French in their field, some turn to bilingual jobs or to the English-language labour market. For that reason, youth employability is directly linked to the sustainability of our communities.

To delve deeper into some of the issues you're studying, particularly the use of French by Canadian government parliamentarians, at the risk of surprising you, neither young people nor the organizations that bring us together spend their time counting the number of words or minutes spoken in French in speeches by the Prime Minister, party leaders or any other government representative.

We have rights, and we fight every day to assert and defend them. We also have expectations and hopes for our leaders. Political leaders, and particularly the Prime Minister, have important roles to play. They're flag bearers for the country, role models, as far as we're concerned. That's why our leaders have to be champions of the country's two official languages. That doesn't mean that we'll police the French language in Canada and that we'll try to criticize or correct their use of French. We know how much using French can make people feel vulnerable. We feel it ourselves. In fact, we documented it in the national strategy for linguistic security, a strategy that aims to strengthen the sense of belonging, confidence and linguistic resilience across Canada.

To live up to our expectations, it also isn't enough for our elected officials to start their speeches with "*Bonjour*" and end them with "*Merci beaucoup*". If we feel that French is nothing but an afterthought and that leaders aren't recognizing our communities, our realities and our challenges, we'll take that into account when it's time to go to the polls. Where there's a serious, sustained and sincere effort, French-speaking youth will always be grateful.

For French-speaking youth, French isn't a private club. We share a language and a pride that we celebrate with many accents. We aspire to have parliamentarians who will share and embody our pride. We're counting on them, and we're counting on you.

Thank you for welcoming us and for listening. We'll be happy to answer your questions.

● (1210)

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. Thériault.

We will now move on to the question period.

Before giving the floor to Mr. Godin, I want to tell my colleagues that we have 45 minutes left before the end of the meeting. If I'm strict enough on time, we can complete the two rounds of questions without any changes. I'm going to try to be stricter than usual to make sure we stay on schedule. Is that okay? Okay.

Mr. Godin, you have the floor for six minutes.

Joël Godin: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Good afternoon, Ms. Tellier, Mr. Thériault and Ms. Vaillancourt. Thank you for being here, to reiterate what you said in your opening remarks, Mr. Thériault.

My first question is for you, Ms. Tellier. Like us, you saw the Radio-Canada article, and you were even quoted in it. You said, "It would take a strong message from above. At 17%, we don't really feel like we're getting a strong message."

There's a big gap between 17% and 50%. You and I agree that we're not asking for people to speak 50% of the time in French and 50% in English. Now, Ms. Tellier, since I saw you on television, I'd like you to tell us what percentage of the Prime Minister's speeches should be in French to show his willingness and intention to promote and showcase French, even though it's not his mother tongue. The percentage should be much higher.

• (1215)

Geneviève Tellier: That's a good question. Thank you.

My inclination would be to say, first of all, that 50% would be fine with me.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Joël Godin: Yes, but we have to be realistic.

Geneviève Tellier: The important thing is to be able to convey the same message in both languages. You're right, equal sharing is not going to make that happen. We have to ask ourselves if the message presented in French is the same as the one delivered in English. I think that's the test, and that's where the problem lies. In fact, while there is 17% French, not all content is shared, as I mentioned in my presentation.

I don't know of any conclusive study that states what the percentage of French should be for the message to be equivalent. Is it 25%, 30%, 33%, 35% or 40%? We can't come up with an estimate. Things are more complicated, because in some circumstances, they would have to speak French 80% of the time, whereas, in other circumstances, it would be 20%. It depends on the circumstances, and we need to have that flexibility.

I think we have to aim for an average.

Joël Godin: We need to get closer to an equal share.

As far as the Prime Minister is concerned, there's a difference between the individual and the office. Historically, all previous prime ministers have made an effort, even Stephen Harper, who had a lot of trouble speaking French at first. As an indication of his goodwill, he always started his speeches in French. It was a true indication.

Now, we don't all learn at the same pace. I understand that. I am working hard to learn English, and I can say that I have improved since 2015. By the way, I'm exactly the same age as the current Prime Minister. We are actually only one day apart.

Ms. Tellier, you spoke earlier about causes, consequences and solutions. Help us tell the Liberal government what the solutions are. I understand that you can't just snap your fingers or give a one-minute answer, but can you give us an idea of what should be improved? Again, I'm not picking on him personally, but he has a responsibility as Prime Minister. What should we do or even add to the Official Languages Act, if necessary, to ensure that this doesn't happen again?

Geneviève Tellier: Thank you for your question.

I'll try to answer it in one minute.

As a professor, I like to work with data. I don't really have any studies I can rely on. I did a little exercise this week, knowing that I would be testifying before the committee.

I watched one speech that Mr. Carney gave since the Radio-Canada article came out. This was the much-talked-about October 22 speech on the pre-budget announcement. I wondered whether the situation had changed regarding the use of French in major speeches two or three weeks after that happened. Remember, the speech was televised live.

I counted the number of words spoken by the Prime Minister in French and in English. Mr. Carney's speech was 72.3% English and 27.7% French. That's over 17%. Is it close to 30%? Is that what we're talking about?

I will do what I said was the right thing to do. I looked at the content, and I saw things that should give us pause. I realized that some themes had been addressed in English only, and there was nothing about them in French.

I will tell you which ones. Every time Mr. Carney talked about the United States, he did so in English only. Every time he talked about defence, he did so in English only. Every time he talked about natural resources, he did so in English only. Every time he talked about immigration, he did so in English only.

Sometimes he addressed themes in French, but it was superficial. I found 10 instances where he talked about the economy. He did it nine times in English and once in French. He talked about international trade seven times, six times in English and once in French.

Some themes were equally addressed. For example, in that speech, he talked a lot about state intervention. In English, he was talking about efficiency and tax cuts, and in French, he was talking more about social programs.

Generally speaking, the messages in English were much more factual than the messages in French.

This ties in with what I was saying in my opening remarks. The substance is also important. One solution could be addressing the themes in both languages, without necessarily doing it equally or in the same proportions.

In my opinion, if not a word of French is spoken when we talk about the major issue that is the United States, there is an asymmetry and an imbalance.

• (1220)

The Chair: I'm sorry to interrupt, Ms. Tellier, but your time is up.

I will now give the floor to Ms. Mingarelli for six minutes.

Giovanna Mingarelli (Prescott—Russell—Cumberland, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you to all the witnesses for being here.

Ms. Vaillancourt and Mr. Thériault, you work closely with young francophones in a number of provinces and territories. Could you describe to us how the quality or frequency of government communications in French influences their civic engagement and their perception of the federal government's role in protecting their language rights? I'm not talking about the Prime Minister here, but about the government.

Josée Vaillancourt (Executive Director, Fédération de la jeunesse canadienne-française): Thank you for your question.

There is a lot of talk about French-speaking young people in the youth network. Our approach is very inclusive: Whether French is a young person's mother tongue or their sixth spoken language, the important thing for us is that they be able to express themselves in French. That's all we care about.

For our young people to preserve their language and culture and to develop a sense of belonging to their community, they need examples, role models. They need to see how people use French in their everyday lives.

Certainly, for a young person living in a minority setting, it isn't always easy to have opportunities to speak French. Therefore, it's important for them to have accessible role models, especially in politics. They need to see that a French-speaking person can aspire to sit in Parliament or get involved in municipal politics. They need to see themselves reflected in the words spoken by elected officials across the country.

Giovanna Mingarelli: Thank you.

Have you seen cases where bilingual communications seemed to have been drafted first in English and then simply translated into French, with the result that the message loses nuance or effectiveness?

If so, could you explain what consequences this can have on young francophones' sense of linguistic security?

Josée Vaillancourt: Let's go back to pandemic times, when we received alerts on our cellphones that were sent out in English only.

As Mr. Thériault mentioned, a number of young members of our association come from across the country or have moved to Canada from elsewhere. They speak French, but they may not know English well enough.

When you don't receive alerts to protect your health and safety, for example, it raises questions. As a French-speaking person, it's legitimate for me to want to be informed and to want to receive these kinds of messages as well.

I think it's a matter of being sensitive to the fact that French-speaking people come from all kinds of backgrounds. However, when messages are sent by our leaders, our governments, it is important that they be sent in both official languages, particularly when it is for health and safety purposes.

There's also the question of role models. If we consider ourselves a bilingual country, it is important to have access to such information in both languages.

Giovanna Mingarelli: Absolutely. Thank you.

Ms. Tellier, thank you for being with us today.

Let's set aside the Prime Minister's communications and talk more specifically about those of the government.

Generally speaking, do its communications seem to be of equal quality to those produced in English? If not, what institutional, structural or organizational factors would explain the discrepancies? What potential solutions would you recommend?

• (1225)

Geneviève Tellier: Thank you for your question. It's very broad.

I don't have any studies or evidence to give you. However, I can tell you that I read a lot of government documents. I would therefore like to address the issue of information shared on websites.

When we visit them, we often find that the information we're looking for is in English only. Very often, we have to bring it to someone's attention, and we don't always know who to contact. Sometimes, no one responds to our requests.

I have set myself a policy of limiting my complaints, which I don't really like to call "complaints", by the way. I don't pass on all the mistakes I see, because I have better things to do. In addition, when I read certain documents—I'm thinking in particular of those published by the federal government—it feels like a translation. What I mean by that is that I sense that the turns of phrase or the expressions used are not the same in both languages.

I do a lot of work with provincial and federal government documents, and one of the things I'm interested in is the budget. In general, it is more enjoyable to read French-language budget documents from the Government of Ontario than ones from the federal government. They feel less like translations. I also note fewer errors in provincial budget documents. Might I remind you that Ontario is not bilingual. I think an effort should be made to correct the flaws in federal government communications.

As far as potential solutions are concerned, I've always thought, and still—

The Chair: Ms. Tellier, your time is up.

I'll give you a sentence or two, but then I'll have to cut you off.

Geneviève Tellier: Okay.

Perhaps we shouldn't just translate from English to French, but also, sometimes, from French to English.

Giovanna Mingarelli: Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Mingarelli.

Mr. Beaulieu, you have the floor for six minutes.

Mario Beaulieu: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Ms. Tellier, you said that 17% is not very much. Thank you for your candour. You named three factors: causes, consequences and solutions.

In your opinion, what are the main causes of the paucity of French used in communications? A similar study was even done on the speeches given by the Minister of Finance and National Revenue. It showed that he used very little French in his speeches. What are the causes, then?

Geneviève Tellier: Thank you for your question.

I'm going to be careful in how I respond.

I get the feeling that right now the language issue is being politicized and that, when we speak to francophones in various communities, we see them more as clients—whether potential voters or program participants—than as citizens who have rights.

That would explain what I was saying earlier, that some themes are addressed and others are not. They are not equally addressed in speeches. Depending on the audience government officials are speaking to, they bring up different themes, and they do so for all kinds of reasons, including political ones.

However, they don't see francophones as citizens who are entitled to receive services in both official languages. I think that's the main factor that would explain what often happens.

Mario Beaulieu: As a singer once said:

The day before the election
He called you his son
The very next day, of course
He forgot your name

There are often good intentions, like all the promises to protect French in Quebec. However, the Official Languages Act has not brought any results.

To find solutions, we conducted a study on language requirements. One thing that came out of the testimony we heard was that taking in people who don't speak French as long as they take courses to learn it is very ineffective. We proposed that and ended up with the same result. We felt that speaking French should already be a criterion. If the person doesn't speak French, they might be given some time to learn it, but they shouldn't be hired until they really speak it.

Does that show a lack of political will to really change things?

Geneviève Tellier: I don't know whether it's just a matter of political will. I think that I've already spoken about this issue in this committee. As far as I can tell, the federal government isn't considered a bilingual institution. In other words, individuals are hired to work in one of the two languages, which is fine. I think that this serves both linguistic communities. However, these individuals must still respond to people outside the government, who have the right to receive services in English and French. As the individual providing these services, you must have these skills.

I think that Canadians don't fully understand that the federal government is a bilingual institution. If you aspire to work for the federal government, which offers prestigious positions, you must have the required language skills.

• (1230)

Mario Beaulieu: In my opinion, this will remain quite challenging as long as demonstrating a knowledge of French isn't really a criterion for filling positions where people should know French. People can take courses for a while, but then not practice their French. A number of studies have shown that English remains the predominant language everywhere, even in Quebec and in the federal public service. There are fewer opportunities to practice French, so it's quite difficult.

All the reports from the Commissioner of Official Languages say the same thing. The issue is really politicized, as you say. In other words, people are courting francophones without really intending to change things for them.

Mr. Thériault and Ms. Vaillancourt, you said at the start that you didn't want to talk about the decline of French. However, do you agree that, if we look at the assimilation rate of francophones outside Quebec, we see a decline of French? You said that the situation was fragile. You're trying to remain positive, but there isn't really any progress. Just about every indicator is pointing down.

What would it take to change things?

Simon Thériault: Thank you for your question.

When we look at the figures, we inevitably see a decline of French.

You're asking what we can do. In our opinion, it's extremely important to give young people and everyone else opportunities to speak French without fear or apprehension of judgment. That's the key. We want to offer this in the youth network. Through our activities, we want to give people the opportunity to speak French without the fear of facing criticism for their language skills or feeling linguistically insecure.

Today, many young people feel that linguistic insecurity. Unfortunately, because they fear that their French isn't good enough, they choose to study or work in English. We need to ensure that our francophone communities are inclusive and welcoming, and that people who make an ongoing effort to speak in French are welcomed with open arms and given opportunities to express themselves in French.

The Chair: Mr. Beaulieu, your time is up.

Mario Beaulieu: Okay.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Godin, you have the floor for five minutes.

Joël Godin: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'll turn to you again, Ms. Tellier, but it isn't for lack of interest in our young people. On the contrary, they're our future. Remember that today is National Child Day in Canada. I would like to remind them all that they matter.

Ms. Tellier, I would like to talk about what I consider a somewhat unique issue, which is the speech that you analyzed earlier. First, could you give the committee the facts and figures relating to each topic? I already noted that the remarks on the United States, defence, natural resources and immigration were in English only, and that the remarks on the economy were in English nine times out of ten, and in French one time out of ten. We would appreciate it if you could send us this data so that we can use it properly and accurately.

Where did this speech take place?

Geneviève Tellier: The location was my other comment on that. The speech was given in front of students at the University of Ottawa. We were just talking about young people. The speech was made after the article from Radio-Canada came out. That is why I had some concerns and analyzed the speech. That same evening, I was commenting on it in the media and the limited amount of French jumped out at me. The speech was given at the University of Ottawa, with an audience that was not bilingual. Not all students are bilingual. Some students are francophone and others are anglophone.

Joël Godin: What is the status of the University of Ottawa in terms of official languages?

• (1235)

Geneviève Tellier: It is a bilingual post-secondary institution.

Joël Godin: Earlier, you talked about the content and the audience. It is only natural that, when 100% of the audience is anglophone, only part of the speech is in French and most of it is in English. That is what we are seeing in Quebec. When the Prime Minister visits Quebec, more French is spoken in his speeches.

However, in this case, it was an audience in a bilingual university campus in Canada's capital, Ottawa, the home of Canada's Parliament and the government that runs our country and is responsible for the future of Canadian society. It would have been normal for him to speak more in French, correct? Is this not indicative of his lack of will and lack of concern for the French language?

Geneviève Tellier: I am not privy to his wishes or his intentions.

Joël Godin: This is an interpretation you and I are having.

Geneviève Tellier: Is it indicative of the Prime Minister's concern or the concern of his team as a whole? That said, the Prime Minister is the head of that team.

This issue is concerning, particularly because, at the University of Ottawa, we often need to fight to receive services in French. I would have expected a slightly higher percentage of French in the Prime Minister's speech on campus.

Joël Godin: This was a great opportunity where he could have demonstrated his intentions and his concern for the French language, as well as his willingness to speak it.

You correctly stated that the person occupying the role of prime minister is not off the hook for the actions of his or her team. We are told that the Prime Minister's team speaks a lot in French, but given that the team did not draft the speech in French, that is a weak statement. To me, that is very telling.

Do you think it is telling?

Geneviève Tellier: In my view, the fact that the content of the Prime Minister's speeches is not treated equally between the two languages is problematic. It is particularly problematic when it comes to the economy because this topic is generally discussed in English. I believed that such issues had been resolved, but this topic is discussed at a greater length in English.

Joël Godin: You said that, in the Prime Minister's speech, the proportion of French was higher only when he was talking about social programs. Is that correct? Are my notes correct?

Geneviève Tellier: Yes.

Joël Godin: Okay. So I will not discuss that subject any further.

The Chair: Mr. Godin, you have 50 seconds left.

Joël Godin: Thank you.

Aside from the Prime Minister's speech, there is the issue of those around him.

There was a cabinet minister who held a press conference in English only. Last week, a press release sent out by the Department of Transport was riddled with errors in French. Clearly, there is a lack of will. In addition, Ms. Tellier, when the Prime Minister set up his first cabinet, he did not appoint a minister of official languages. He later appointed a minister of Canadian identity and culture who is responsible for official languages, among other things.

Do you think that sends a positive signal to francophones in Canada?

The Chair: Please answer in 10 seconds.

Geneviève Tellier: That is not a good start. We hope this issue will be rectified. Like you, I also noted the absence of a minister responsible for official languages in the first cabinet.

The Chair: Thank you Ms. Tellier.

Thank you Mr. Godin.

Mr. Villeneuve, you have the floor for five minutes.

Louis Villeneuve: Thank you Mr. Chair.

Mr. Godin, I think I might take some classes with you on how to encourage people to say what I want to hear. You have an exceptional talent.

My questions are for both of you, Ms. Vaillancourt and Mr. Thériault.

I am very pleased to have young people with us today. When I see people like you, I feel younger.

I read your brief and noted some questions, but I will not have time to ask them all.

I want to discuss the issue of access to jobs in French. As you mentioned earlier, your data show that the lack of jobs in French is pushing young people into anglophone environments.

What are the priority areas where the federal government could encourage job creation in French?

Simon Thériault: That is a very good question.

The Government of Canada announced a number of job programs in its budget. The youth climate corps comes to mind. When employment programs like these are created, it must be recognized that francophone youth experience a different reality in the labour market. Indeed, it is often more difficult to have access to jobs in French.

Applying a francophone lens to these programs would make jobs available to francophone youth in minority communities across the country. That is one measure among many, but I think that this francophone lens could be applied to a number of employability programs under the youth employment and skills strategy to ensure that the funding allocated to youth is also available to francophone youth in minority communities across the country.

• (1240)

Louis Villeneuve: I think that AI and the future of work are important topics for you as well. You note that the impacts of AI threaten traditional jobs for young people.

How can the federal government better support francophone youth in this technological transition that is heading our way?

Simon Thériault: Once again, that is a very big question, but I obviously have very little time to answer it.

I think that there are a number of ways we can support youth in the use of AI. In particular, we could ensure that we have better regulations on the ethical use of AI. I think that remains a challenge and a priority for youth because, right now on social media, we are seeing images being created by AI and misinformation being generated by AI. Fake news and misinformation put democracy and the country at risk.

In terms of employment, we need to look at the use of AI in the ranking of applicant files, which is a reality today. Your application can be discarded because you may not have all the skills and without a human even having read your résumé. This is a reality that many youth are experiencing today. Applications require significant work experience but, through volunteer work and similar experiences, we can sometimes build that experience without having five formal years of experience. However, because of AI, the résumé is discarded and the young person will not even have a chance to explain and discuss their skills.

I think that there are a number of ways to look at the use of AI today. We need to give it some serious thought and make sure that everybody is using it ethically.

The Chair: You have 50 seconds left.

Louis Villeneuve: Thank you.

I also wanted to tell you that I agree with my colleague Mr. Godin. You are important. Youth are not just the future, they are also the present, so thank you for being with us.

I do not have a lot of time left to ask a large question. You talked about systemic barriers for youth. Can you identify which barriers are the most pressing and how the government can address them?

You do not have a lot of time, but I wanted to put that question to you anyway.

The Chair: You have about 25 seconds left.

Simon Thériault: If we are talking about systemic barriers in terms of access to post-secondary education in French, francophone post-secondary institutions do indeed exist in minority communities to address this issue. However, very few programs are often offered. In addition, young people often have to move in order to study in these programs, which makes it more difficult. Studying in French leads to additional costs for francophone youth in minority communities, as well as higher student debt.

Louis Villeneuve: Thank you very much.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. Villeneuve.

I now give the floor to Mr. Beaulieu for two and a half minutes.

Mario Beaulieu: Thank you.

I want to come back to the issue of the causes, which was discussed earlier. I think there is one overarching cause.

Since the introduction of the Official Languages Act, French has been declining and the assimilation rate of francophones has been increasing. Early on, André Laurendeau looked at a territorial approach to address the situation, the idea being to make French the common language in a given territory, as is the case in Switzerland and Belgium. That would not prevent people from learning several languages or prevent the central government from operating in a bilingual manner. On the other hand, if there is no territory where people try to make French the common language, the results are what we are now seeing.

If we truly want to fix the problem, is it not time to change the paradigm?

Geneviève Tellier: I am not sure I have any ideas to offer in this respect. However, I can tell you that we are in a sea of anglophones. That is the reality of francophones in Canada. We are a very small minority within North America. In addition, social media and the fact that people can access information from all over the world further weaken the francophone presence.

It is a matter of willpower. If we want French to survive in Canada, it can be done. That is not the problem. However, do we have the willpower to get there? That is the question we need to ask ourselves.

• (1245)

Mario Beaulieu: That's the hard part.

Charles Castonguay told me that, if we really wanted to ensure the future of French, not only in Quebec, but everywhere, we would have to make French the common language in areas where French is vibrant, such as the Acadian peninsula. That would make it possible to francize newcomers.

That's what Bill 101 in Quebec wanted to do. When it came into effect, it reversed the decline of French. However, due to the Supreme Court's rulings weakening French and all kinds of other manoeuvres, French is on the decline again. Now we're trying to reverse the trend as much as we can.

I think the same principle applies outside Quebec as well. It's the same thing in education: We need schools and universities by and for francophones. I'm referring, for example, to—

The Chair: Mr. Beaulieu, I'm sorry to interrupt you, but your time is up.

Mario Beaulieu: Okay. I was going to talk about Mr. Major from the University of Ottawa.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Beaulieu.

I give the floor to Mr. Dalton for five minutes.

Marc Dalton: Thank you.

Mr. Thériault, you said that it was important for political leaders to champion the use of French and not treat French as a language of secondary importance.

Are you concerned about the Prime Minister's insufficient efforts to improve his French and his lack of use of French, as reported by Radio-Canada? Does this indicate a decline in the importance of French for the Liberal government and the Prime Minister?

Simon Thériault: I'm not sure there's a lack of will. That was recognized by all parties on this committee. That was acknowledged by the Prime Minister himself. The Prime Minister says he wants to learn French and use it more in his speeches. I applaud that. I'm very happy to hear him say that. So I think there is a will.

As individuals, we are all constantly learning. Mr. Carney has just been appointed leader of the Liberal Party and Prime Minister. Then he was elected as prime minister. He's constantly learning. I think we need to recognize his efforts and his willingness to learn French and use French more in his speeches. I think we need to make sure that we provide opportunities for Mr. Carney.

Marc Dalton: That's good. Thank you very much.

You're talking about Mr. Carney's efforts to learn French. However, according to his schedule, he took two hours of French classes in August and only one hour of classes in September. Even after listening to the Radio-Canada report, we don't in fact see his desire to learn French. He didn't even hire another teacher to help him learn French. In my opinion, this shows a lack of sensitivity towards francophone communities and francophiles. However, he seems quite comfortable with that.

I'll ask Ms. Tellier to comment on that.

Geneviève Tellier: Thank you very much for your question.

It's always difficult to put yourself in a person's shoes to know exactly what they're feeling. Mr. Carney speaks French very well. When you listen to him, you see that French is not a problem. The problem may be more in how often French is used. That's where the stumbling block is. Is French among the Prime Minister's priorities?

I showed you my small study, which is worth what it is worth since it is based on one speech among many others. Would we like the Prime Minister to address Canadians in French more often on a number of topics? Probably. Why isn't it his priority? I can't put myself in his shoes to answer that question, but I've made the same observation as you.

● (1250)

Marc Dalton: I could add a comment to that.

Since he became Prime Minister, he has made 28 international trips. He has travelled 153,000 kilometres, the equivalent of four times the circumference of the Earth. I think this is a bit worrisome in terms of priorities. Like many people, we're wondering whether his perspective is more global or focused on European communities. He seems to be more interested in these issues than in important national issues, such as the French language, which we are studying here in committee. We're a little sensitive to that.

We're a postnational state here in Canada. So it has a significant impact on French.

The Chair: Your time is up.

Marc Dalton: Yes, I know.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Dalton.

I now give the floor to Mr. Deschênes-Thériault for five minutes.

Guillaume Deschênes-Thériault: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

The Fédération de la jeunesse canadienne-française brings together French-speaking youth from across the country. However, its president, Mr. Thériault, comes from one of the most beautiful ridings in Canada, Grand Falls, in the riding of Madawaska—Restigouche. The federation and its member associations, the young people who belong to them, are our politicians of tomorrow. They are our public servants of tomorrow.

Mr. Thériault, what are the winning strategies and promising practices to ensure that we have official languages champions, as you mentioned in your opening remarks?

Simon Thériault: Thank you for your question.

I don't want to pat ourselves on the back, but I think the youth network is something we've been able to do. When we conduct studies with young people, particularly through our annual survey, the youth barometer, we realize that taking part in a francophone activity or an activity that brings together French-speaking young people from across the country has a major impact on attachment to the francophone community. What's important for young people is to create this attachment to the francophone community.

Through youth activities, we are able to create moments that spark something in young people and foster that attachment to the francophone community. We saw this last during our major unifying event, the Jeux de la francophonie canadienne, the Canadian francophone games. More than 1,100 young participants gathered in Laval, which helped to foster a sense of belonging to the francophonie. That's just one example among many, but youth activities bring young people together and create that sense of belonging to the francophone community. It's certainly a very good way to create leaders in our communities who will defend French and champion official languages.

Guillaume Deschênes-Thériault: Thank you.

You mentioned a number of different events. In fact, my first experiences on Parliament Hill took place about 15 years ago, not when I was elected last April. At that time, I took part in a parliamentary simulation with the Fédération de la jeunesse canadienne-française, the FJCF. You mentioned that such events have the potential to both create a connection to the francophonie and shape young people who are more politically engaged. I'm not speaking as a partisan, but rather as a citizen.

Simon Thériault: Yes, that's right. Thanks to our many activities, but also to the fact that we bring our young people together in governance, we can create leaders who want to get involved in politics to change things.

Some of our young people are involved in the Fédération de la jeunesse canadienne-française, in provincial and territorial youth organizations and at the political level in order to take concrete action and meet with governments to promote youth issues.

Guillaume Deschênes-Thériault: Thank you.

I'm going to give the rest of my time to my colleague Ms. Chenette.

Madeleine Chenette: Thank you, Mr. Deschênes-Thériault.

Ms. Tellier, you raised an interesting question about the percentage of Mr. Carney's use of French in his speeches. Mr. Slavkov, who spoke before you, pointed out that the use of a language has a utilitarian and emotional dimension.

Since Mr. Carney has spoken in French 27.7% of the time over the past seven months—with 50% of the time being the established target—what progress should be evaluated in order to avoid having unreasonable expectations in this regard?

• (1255)

Geneviève Tellier: Thank you for your question.

I don't want us to take the 27.7% as the new benchmark. This is just one case among many. We need to be careful. I fully understand the usefulness of having a target, but then it becomes very difficult to set a target in this case.

As I said earlier, it depends on the audience and the context. In my opinion, the main criterion to be met is to ensure that the information provided to Canadians is in both official languages. As soon as a speech focuses more on certain things and obscures others, I think that poses a problem.

I think we need to focus more on the equality of speech than on a percentage of what is said in French or English, because, obviously, the context can vary greatly from one speech to the next.

Madeleine Chenette: My last question is for our young people, of course, who aren't that young after all.

We understand the importance of making ourselves less vulnerable to the United States. That's why our Prime Minister travels a lot in Canada. It wants to develop alliances to make us less vulnerable.

In your opinion, given the logic of being able to operate in a number of languages economically, rather than in a single language—English in this case—what are your concerns?

We know that English is currently the most widely spoken language on our continent.

Are there opportunities for openness?

The Chair: Answer in 15 seconds, please.

Simon Thériault: Obviously, having two official languages certainly expands the possibilities. That's why we need to promote it, encourage it and ensure that French is vibrant across the country.

Madeleine Chenette: Thank you, Ms. Chenette.

The Chair: On behalf of the committee, I would like to thank the witnesses, Mr. Thériault, Ms. Vaillancourt and Ms. Tellier, for being with us.

Colleagues, I want to address two housekeeping items with you.

First, our next meeting will be on Tuesday, November 25. It will be about the study on the quota of French-language music imposed on French-language media. The notice of meeting has already been published.

Second, I would like to come back to a subject that Mr. Godin raised during our last meeting. We discussed with the clerk the best way to ensure that all committee members are informed as quickly as possible when a witness confirms their attendance.

The clerk used to wait until all the witnesses had confirmed their attendance at a meeting before sending out the notice of meeting. From now on, she's going to publish the notice of meeting without waiting for all the witnesses to confirm their attendance. That way, you'll be informed more quickly about the confirmations. However, there will obviously be more emails to keep an eye on, because there will be changes to the notice as people confirm their presence.

Mr. Beaulieu, you have the floor.

Mario Beaulieu: On a point of order.

We agreed that the study on post-secondary education had been completed. We've heard from many stakeholders, including representatives from York University and several other universities.

Are we going to incorporate that into the study on post-secondary education? That would make sense to me.

Lucie Lecomte (Committee Researcher): Post-secondary education is addressed in the report on the education continuum, so I'm going to integrate everything.

Mario Beaulieu: That's perfect.

Since it was proposed that a report be produced on post-secondary education, I was wondering about that. My understanding is that we'll review it together.

Lucie Lecomte: That's right. I'm sure I'll have the opportunity to talk to you about my strategy. What I'm going to do is group and divide the text in order to create a continuum within the continuum.

Mario Beaulieu: A continuum of reporting.

The Chair: That's right.

I'll move to the last point. Now that the testimony on the education continuum study is over, the committee must prepare to study the report. Documents have been distributed over the past few weeks, including a summary of the testimony, an analysis of questionnaire responses and a table illustrating the sources of challenges along the continuum.

Those documents will be distributed to you again, and a drafting plan will also be distributed to you early next week. This is to help members prepare their drafting instructions for the analyst.

Mr. Deschênes-Thériault, do you have a question?

• (1300)

Guillaume Deschênes-Thériault: Yes, Mr. Chair.

Since we have completed the study on the education continuum, the study on artificial intelligence will take place soon. What is the deadline for providing the names of the witnesses?

Is it the same?

The Chair: I consulted the clerk on your question, Mr. Deschênes-Thériault.

The AI study had a minimum of five meetings. The only date available in the calendar to start this study is December 9. If the committee wants to start the study on that date, the deadline would be December 1.

Mr. Godin, you have the floor.

Joël Godin: On that note, no meetings are scheduled in the calendar for the analysis and modification or validation of the report.

Honestly, based on my experience, I suggest that you postpone the study on AI until the session resumes in January.

A committee member already told me that the regulations would be tabled by the end of the fall.

Mario Beaulieu: It was scheduled for November, I believe.

The Chair: I'm conscious of the time.

Joël Godin: The regulations are a priority.

Mario Beaulieu: We have to be realistic.

Joël Godin: Honestly, it's utopian to think that we can start the AI study on December 9. That's my opinion, Mr. Chair. I wanted to share that with colleagues.

The Chair: Thank you.

I'm mindful of the time. It's already close to one o'clock. I know people have to leave. Perhaps those scheduling details are worth discussing outside of this committee, among the parties.

I just want to mention something. First of all, our analyst says that she won't be ready on December 9 for what you have proposed, Mr. Godin. That has to be taken into consideration.

The other thing is what you raised. I haven't heard that news. What I would suggest as a next step is that we talk about it outside of the committee. We could come back to the issue of time allocation.

I've asked the clerk to distribute the calendar by email to all members so that you can better plan your schedule by knowing what's coming and to better manage the next meetings.

Mr. Godin, you have the floor.

Joël Godin: Mr. Chair, I don't like hallway discussions. We should set aside a period in the schedule for committee business so that we can plan for the next three months. That's just a suggestion. I don't know what my colleagues think.

Mario Beaulieu: We could also have a subcommittee.

Joël Godin: This could be done in subcommittee, but I don't want any more behind-the-scenes drama. You talk to one person, you don't talk to another, you say things to each other.

In a formal committee, everything is written down, so I think that's the best way to operate in the interest of parliamentarians.

The Chair: I'm here for you. It's up to you how you want to proceed.

Guillaume Deschênes-Thériault: For the moment, it doesn't matter whether we discuss the schedule together in subcommittee or otherwise. We just had a date for the AI study, which was December 9.

I would suggest waiting for the updates to see if anything else is going to come to our attention. We could discuss it next week when we have more clarity on where we go from here.

Joël Godin: That's correct.

Guillaume Deschênes-Thériault: There's no rush to provide the names of the witnesses, though. I just wanted to raise the fact that we have to start thinking about our next study.

Joël Godin: I think it's going to have to be scheduled, Mr. Chair. When we received the schedule, I honestly didn't plan for it. We'll need to set aside time during the next two or three meetings for committee business in order to plan for the coming few months. That's just a suggestion.

The Chair: It depends. I'm awaiting the decision of committee members on this matter. Is there a motion?

From what I understood from Mr. Deschênes-Thériault, it's possible that the regulations will be tabled. That will change our schedule a bit.

Joël Godin: I didn't hear that.

Mario Beaulieu: His proposal is that we talk about it again.

• (1305)

The Chair: We'll talk about it again when we know what's going to happen.

Mr. Godin, you talked about the regulations, which could come back. Obviously, that would change our schedule, so it's worth seeing what's going to happen, and we can talk about it again.

Joël Godin: Can we agree that it will be done in committee and not in the hallway?

The Chair: It's not for me to decide. It's up to the committee members to do that.

Joël Godin: Perfect, thank you. That's what I wanted.

The Chair: Is there agreement to adjourn the meeting?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Chair: Thank you.

The meeting is adjourned.

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