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• (1535)

[*Translation*]

The Chair (Yvan Baker (Etobicoke Centre, Lib.)): Welcome to meeting number 23 of the Standing Committee on Official Languages.

Pursuant to Standing Order 108(3)(f) and the order of reference of Tuesday, December 9, 2025, we're resuming consideration of the official languages (advancement of equality of status and use of English and French) regulations.

I would now like to welcome our witnesses.

From the Alliance des femmes de la francophonie canadienne, we're joined by Nour Enayeh, president, and Soukaina Boutiyeb, executive director. Welcome, both of you.

From the Association des collèges et universités de la francophonie canadienne, we're joined by Martin Normand, president and chief executive officer. Welcome, Mr. Normand.

Each organization will have five minutes to speak. We'll then open the floor to questions from the members.

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

Nour Enayeh (President, Alliance des femmes de la francophonie canadienne): Thank you.

Mr. Chair and members of Parliament, on behalf of the Alliance des femmes de la francophonie canadienne, thank you for inviting us to appear before you.

My name is Nour Enayeh. I'm the president of the Alliance des femmes de la francophonie canadienne, or AFFC. I'm joined by Soukaina Boutiyeb, the executive director.

The AFFC is a national feminist not-for-profit organization dedicated to promoting the role and contribution of over 1.5 million francophone and Acadian women living in minority communities. We're backed by a network of 17 member organizations across the country.

I would like to start by emphasizing the key role played by women in passing on the language, a factor often undervalued in public language policies. Francophone and Acadian women are true pillars of official language minority communities. They play a vital role as guardians of the language and they ensure the vitality of our communities.

We would like to reaffirm our full support for the recommendations of the Fédération des communautés francophones et acadi-

enne du Canada, or FCFA. These recommendations constitute a solid and crucial foundation. However, we would like to add a factor that we consider critical to accurately reflecting the reality of Canada's francophonie. The Official Languages Act shouldn't be watered down in the name of intersectionality, but should be seen as complementary to it. These two principles must go hand in hand, clearly and unambiguously.

Yet the current approach to gender-based analysis plus, or GBA plus, when implemented without a language lens, weakens and even renders invisible official language minority communities. A truly intersectional perspective must build on the Official Languages Act, not compete with it.

We can see the productive role of GBA plus in the development of all public policies. However, when this approach is implemented without taking the language component into account, it runs the risk of pitting language rights and diversity issues against each other, when they should be strengthening each other. A properly applied intersectionality never undermines language rights. It consolidates and contextualizes them.

We must remember that francophone women, with their multiple identities, belong first and foremost to an official language minority community. This membership profoundly shapes their lives, their access to services and their socio-economic conditions. Their reality, often marked by a double or even triple marginalization—as women, as francophones in a minority situation and as a result of other identity factors—increases their vulnerability. This leads to precarious situations that all too often remain invisible in the analyses, public policies and decision-making processes.

Strong official language minority communities are, above all, communities where language rights are fully integrated into the analysis and decision-making process. Effective regulations take into account the realities faced by all women, without ever pitting their identity against their language rights.

Our message is clear. The intersectionality must complement the Official Languages Act. It must never replace or weaken the act. The two must be implemented together rigorously, consistently and in compliance with legal obligations. The protection of our language rights is never a side issue. It's fundamental. This protection makes it possible for our communities to exist, to pass on their culture and to look to the future with confidence.

That's why we're asking you to strengthen these regulations so that they fully reflect this reality. We must ensure that the regulations are clear, ambitious and in line with the Official Languages Act. A properly implemented intersectionality protects our language rights rather than watering them down. The vitality of our communities depends on the willingness to embrace this complementarity.

Thank you for your attention. We look forward to answering your questions.

• (1540)

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Enayeh.

I'll now give the floor to Mr. Normand for five minutes.

Martin Normand (President and Chief Executive Officer, Association des collèges et universités de la francophonie canadienne): Thank you.

In 2005, the Official Languages Act was amended to include the possibility of establishing regulations to govern the implementation of part VII. However, that year, a Department of Justice lawyer expressed concern that the greater the level of detail in the regulations, the greater the risk of limiting the scope of part VII. In other words, the potential for innovation was greater in the absence of regulations.

The situation has changed. Part VII has been greatly expanded, and regulations have become a necessity. However, the warnings of the past have come to fruition. The Association des collèges et universités de la francophonie canadienne, or ACUFC, considers that the draft regulations for part VII run contrary to the legislator's intentions, considerably reduce its scope and fail to give federal institutions the means to take proactive action to advance the substantive equality of the two official languages.

We'll soon be sending you a more comprehensive brief that elaborates on the observations shared today. However, I would like to focus on three of our general concerns.

First, the regulations run a high risk of stifling innovation in official languages. In our view, the proposed regulations fail to encourage federal institutions to develop positive measures outside the parameters indicated, meaning at specific stages in government actions or when determining the potential negative effects of key decisions. On the contrary, the regulatory framework should encourage, for example, federal institutions to develop positive measures that reflect their mandate or to review current measures that fail to advance the official languages towards substantive equality. Rather than acting as a suffocating ceiling, the regulations must serve as a foundation that propels us together towards concrete, positive and purposeful measures. The proposed framework is too restrictive. It encourages inertia rather than proactive action.

Second, the draft regulations' proposals regarding the analyses, their use in dialogue and consultation activities and their inclusion in final decisions fall short of the mark. The proposed regulations don't state how these analyses must be carried out or who is responsible for producing the data to support them. Some institutions have developed best practices in this area that could serve as a benchmark. There also aren't any plans to publicize the results of these

analyses, particularly in preparation for consultation activities. Federal institutions are encouraged only to record the results of the analyses. Yet the results should be shared in the run-up to consultation activities to ensure that the relevant information makes the consultations effective. Federal institutions also aren't expected to report on how the consultations played a part in the final decision-making process. The proposed regulations deviate from best practices in civic engagement.

Third, we're bringing back a legislative oversight of long-standing concern. The act and draft regulations have ruts that limit the scope of federal, provincial and territorial relations. The emphasis on agreements obscures the variety of interactions among the levels of government. A number of federal institutions have developed positive measures that directly affect the post-secondary sector in francophone minority communities. Yet the act opens the door to an uneven implementation of these measures if the governments refuse to work with federal institutions. We hoped that the regulations would provide a framework for dealing with interjurisdictional conflicts and that they would create effective and equitable conditions for the development of measures with a direct and ongoing impact. The regulations uphold a restrictive vision of government relations, which may hinder the achievement of the legislator's objectives.

The draft regulations are riddled with grey areas and loopholes. These will have a serious impact on the ability of federal institutions to advance the equality of status and use of English and French and to support the development and vitality of francophone minority communities and the strong institutions that serve them. The post-secondary institutions in particular are crucial in helping to achieve federal objectives. These objectives include providing opportunities for lifelong French-language learning; supporting key sectors such as health care, justice and early childhood education; and working to restore the demographic weight of francophone minority communities.

As a result, we would like to see more robust regulations that encourage innovation. The ACUFC recommends that Treasury Board take note of the widespread dissatisfaction with the draft regulations, review the regulations in light of the main concerns raised by all stakeholders and come back with regulations that better reflect the legislator's intentions and that set an example in terms of consultations.

• (1545)

Thank you.

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

We'll now move on to questions from members.

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

Joël Godin (Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you to the witnesses for joining us in person. There are no technical issues when the witnesses are here. I could talk about past experiences, but I won't go there.

Mr. Normand, Ms. Enayeh, what I understand is that, for various reasons, the draft regulations don't meet your expectations, or your respective visions.

Ms. Enayeh, what elements would you like to see in the regulations?

You talked about intersectionality. Can you be more specific?

Do you have any suggestion as to what should be included in the regulations?

I'll ask Mr. Normand the same question afterwards.

Nour Enayeh: Since gender-based analysis plus already appears in the legislation, the language lens must also be included. That's really it.

What I mean by intersectionality is that by saying francophone women are part of intersectionality and diversity, we take away the entire notion of official languages.

That's what we'd like to see. We'd like the language lens to be included in the GBA plus.

Ms. Boutiyeb, would you like to add something?

Soukaina Boutiyeb (Executive Director, Alliance des femmes de la francophonie canadienne): Regarding intersectionality, the current practice is to take the various identity factors into consideration. Some departments often say they don't want to mention francophone women or the linguistic minority situation specifically so as not to favour one group over another. Instead of being specific, they just talk about intersectionality, and that's it.

Joël Godin: You're diluting yourself.

Soukaina Boutiyeb: That's exactly right.

With this dilution, the reality of francophone women, and more importantly their basic needs, become invisible.

Let's take, for example, the national action plan to end gender-based violence. There are no tangible language measures in this action plan, and that clearly has a negative impact. There were no positive measures included in that action plan.

At the moment, women don't really have access to services on the ground.

Joël Godin: If I can summarize your remarks, you'd like the regulations to include a language lens specifically for francophone women so that your difficult situation is taken into consideration.

You also want to grow, I don't mean as a minority, but as a group. You want to grow and have your rights recognized so you can take your place in this whole development process.

Is that correct?

Soukaina Boutiyeb: Absolutely. We can't let our rights be diluted.

It's just a matter of understanding and making everyone understand that the word "intersectionality" doesn't mean failing to comply with the Official Languages Act. The act exists. There are various identity factors within our communities, but most of us are still part of the francophone community.

Joël Godin: Yes. Thank you.

Mr. Normand, Ms. Linda Cardinal, a professor from the University of Ottawa, came to testify earlier this week. She said we needed to erase everything and start over.

You essentially said the same thing in your opening remarks. You seem quite dissatisfied with the regulations. I'd like to remind you that it took three years to draft those regulations. Also, from what I understand, they're not consistent with the act.

How do we fix that? Based on what you said, we need to change course and start over.

Can you help us be more effective? We don't want to take another three years to write a new version.

Martin Normand: I wouldn't say to erase everything and redraft the regulations. I think what we have here is the bare minimum.

● (1550)

Joël Godin: That's the first version.

Martin Normand: It's a bare minimum. We'd hoped these regulations would bring clarity to help federal institutions take positive measures.

Actually, I feel these regulations are codifying loopholes or how to do the bare minimum to comply with the Official Languages Act.

The act is a step towards substantive equality. It should propel us to a new place where we don't have to once again explain to a federal institution that it has linguistic obligations. I frequently have to do that.

We're still facing a wall in some federal institutions. Public servants don't understand their language obligations. The regulations should be the road map for these public servants to understand that they have obligations and that there are tools to implement them. This can open up possibilities for analysis and action, which can be strengthened by consultation activities provided for in the regulations, but they should be improved in order to achieve a more formative action.

Joël Godin: You're going to submit a brief to the committee.

Is that right?

Martin Normand: Yes, that's right.

Joël Godin: If I understand you correctly, you're saying the regulations stifle innovation and, instead of being constructive and productive, they're somewhat restrictive.

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

Joël Godin: Okay.

Mr. Normand, I'll come back to this next time, because you won't even have time to give me an answer in 15 seconds.

I liked your presentation. We have similar points of view.

That said, help us put the necessary tools in place so we can be more effective and meet our objectives.

Thank you.

Martin Normand: It'll be in the brief.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Godin.

Mr. Deschênes-Thériault, you have the floor for six minutes.

Guillaume Deschênes-Thériault (Madawaska—Restigouche, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'd like to thank the witnesses for their remarks.

My first question is for the representatives of the Alliance des femmes de la francophonie canadienne.

In your remarks, you said the Official Languages Act must be designed to complement intersectionality, that they must reinforce each other. From what I understand, that's not always the case.

Can you give us some specific examples where it's been an issue and where the strong implementation of part VII through regulation could have a positive impact?

Nour Enayeh: I'll start with an example related to the national action plan to end gender-based violence.

When we talk to a department like Women and Gender Equality Canada, people ask us why francophone women should be prioritized over others. There are indigenous women, women with disabilities, and so on. They're making us compete with other groups, but we don't want to do that. We're not competing with indigenous women or any other group. That said, there is an Official Languages Act.

Public servants and departments don't seem to automatically take this into account. On the contrary, we're told that it's because of intersectionality.

Soukaina Boutiyeb: Beyond the fact that we're being put in competition with other groups, there's also a lack of understanding that this diversity exists within our communities themselves. Francophone women with disabilities need services in French just as much. So it's important to say that the Official Languages Act exists and that, within it, these various identity factors are recognized and that it is ensured that the needs of the population are being adequately met.

The concrete example is the action plan. It has been mentioned that no measures have been taken. As a result, there are currently no services in French, if only for shelters. That's non-existent in some provinces and territories. So a great opportunity was missed. In other words, it could have been ensured that adequate services were provided and that women who are trying to escape violence could receive services in French. Sometimes it's a life-and-death situation. Basically, it's a minimum right.

Guillaume Deschênes-Thériault: Treasury Board must play a leadership role with respect to the modernized act by adopting robust regulations on part VII.

Do you think this could be an example of a situation where Treasury Board could take action by reminding departments of their obligations?

Soukaina Boutiyeb: Absolutely, but it should be made clear that the concept of "intersectionality" does not mean that intersectionality is fostered beyond the Official Languages Act. The Official Languages Act must first be respected.

Guillaume Deschênes-Thériault: Do you have any other examples of positive measures that you would like to see in the draft regulations?

Soukaina Boutiyeb: Certainly, I have several. The primary objective of a positive measure is to ensure the vitality of communities. As for the situation of women's organizations, core funding is lacking. Some organizations are surviving entirely thanks to volunteers, and they still have to play an advocacy role on behalf of women in their province or territory.

A positive measure is a one that helps ensure core funding for organizations. That's a concrete example.

Guillaume Deschênes-Thériault: Thank you very much, ladies.

I will now turn to Mr. Normand.

To start, why are these draft regulations so important for the post-secondary sector?

• (1555)

Martin Normand: I've said this before at this committee. I am not someone who is misinformed about the Canadian Constitution. Education is a provincial responsibility, but it's a false argument to say that it's exclusively a provincial responsibility. Research is an area of federal jurisdiction.

In addition, as a result of the obligations in the act and the regulations, the Canadian government assumes responsibility for supporting the strong institutions of the Canadian francophonie, including the post-secondary sector, which is mentioned here.

Because there is a lot of interaction between the federal government's actions and measures that could overlap with federal and provincial responsibilities, there is a possibility of conflict between a federal institution and provincial action, which could hinder the equitable deployment of positive measures in the post-secondary sector across the country.

First, we could imagine cases where a positive measure developed by a federal institution is applied in one province and not in another. In light of that, it is important to establish regulations that can close this loophole, or show that communities are at a disadvantage, as the federal government hasn't acquired the tools it needs to ensure that all communities have equitable access to the positive measures developed.

Second, the act refers to obligations in a number of places. Federal institutions are encouraged to develop positive measures on the development of information that can lead to the development of scientific disciplines. The scientific research that takes place at our institutions nourishes our communities and helps achieve social development objectives. It also has a significant economic impact locally. Without sufficiently robust regulation, we may miss out on a whole range of positive measures that are protected from government action.

Guillaume Deschênes-Thériault: You talked about consultation. You have concerns about the recording of the results and about how the results of those consultations will be used.

Can you tell us why it's important to strengthen that part of the regulations?

Martin Normand: I find it astonishing that only impact analyses are being recorded. This information should be made public and shared with the parties involved in consultation exercises. All stakeholders must have all the relevant information to participate effectively in consultation exercises and contribute to research and advocacy efforts on both sides.

The Chair: You have 15 seconds left, Mr. Deschênes-Thériault.

Guillaume Deschênes-Thériault: Do you have a final word or recommendation?

Martin Normand: Of course, I have a number of other recommendations.

I want to come back to the issue of these analyses. There is a lack of detail on how these analyses should be conducted. I have already mentioned that best practices exist. Some departments have developed lenses in collaboration with communities. I believe we need to focus on new tools that are developed collaboratively and enable us to achieve our collective goals.

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

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

Mario Beaulieu (La Pointe-de-l'Île, BQ): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Ms. Boutiyeb, you said you were pleased with the budget, which talked about increased funding for women and about gender equality. However, you said that there was nothing specific in the budget for francophone women.

Would you have liked the regulations to specify, in each place where different themes are mentioned, that there should be positive measures or measures for francophone women?

Soukaina Boutiyeb: Definitely. That's what we're calling for.

I would also say that, in addition, each department must develop a concrete strategy for linguistic minorities. I'm thinking in particular of Women and Gender Equality Canada. That department isn't even part of the action plan for official languages. So there is no concrete strategy for the women of the Canadian francophonie, and that should be important. All departments and agencies should have a strategy. That should be established de facto, in my opinion.

Mario Beaulieu: One way to make the regulations more specific would perhaps be to name the various departments and specify that

they must have an action plan not only for linguistic minorities, but also for francophone women.

What do you think?

Soukaina Boutiyeb: That could definitely be a strategy. Everyone should have an action plan on this.

Mario Beaulieu: A common criticism when it comes to college and university education is that the concepts are not clearly defined in the regulations. They aren't defined, so it's hard to have real clarity.

Do you think there was a way to define what substantive equality meant in relation to college and university education?

• (1600)

Martin Normand: It should've been done in the Official Languages Act, if you ask me. It may be a little late in the game to define substantive equality in the regulations. Defining what substantive equality means is no small feat. It's something our board has discussed. I often get asked what substantive equality in post-secondary education means. Figuring out what that looks like is a monumental undertaking. According to the type of analysis provided for in the regulations, it is possible to set targets in progressing towards substantive equality.

Here's an example.

I talked about the wall when it comes to research and the granting councils. They are one type of institution where people are very resistant to the idea of taking language obligations into account. Just read the government's recent responses to reports by the Standing Committee on Science and Research, in which the government belittles the contribution of francophone researchers and minimizes their concerns.

I can't say exactly what substantive equality in French-language research is, but I can tell you what it isn't: It's not what's happening now. The regulations need to encourage federal institutions to act. They need guidance, so that public servants can sit down and develop positive measures, because they finally understand what they are supposed to be doing under the Official Languages Act.

They have to accept that, in French-language research and other specific areas, a diversity of voices has to inform the development of measures. It's important to sit down with the people working at those institutions and to engage in the dialogue and consultations that will result in positive measures that make a real difference.

Currently, the tools in the regulations aren't adequate on that front.

Mario Beaulieu: If the services available to francophones and anglophones were of equal quality, would that not be substantive equality? Perhaps that's not a precise definition.

Martin Normand: That definition is a bit simplistic, perhaps. The math won't necessarily work in every community. Each community can determine its own timeline for advancing substantive equality.

In post-secondary education, it may be unrealistic to think that every province, every region of the country, will have large institutions that are understanding. It may be better to improve access in certain regions through different types of co-operation.

As I see it, having a centralized definition of substantive equality and imposing it across the board is not constructive.

Mario Beaulieu: There is no blanket approach to substantive equality if the various realities and possibilities are taken into account. Substantive equality has to reflect the realities of different communities. Achieving what we want to achieve will be tough if substantive equality can't be defined.

Won't it?

Martin Normand: That's what dialogue and consultation are for. If those activities are well designed, communities will be able to tell federal institutions what their substantive equality timeline is in the context of that consultation.

They could tell Women and Gender Equality Canada, Transport Canada, Global Affairs Canada or National Defence, for example, what substantive equality is. The definitions will vary greatly from one institution and one consultation to the next.

Mario Beaulieu: That's right.

The Chair: You have 45 seconds left, Mr. Beaulieu.

Mario Beaulieu: I'll be quick.

You said earlier that academic research was an area of federal jurisdiction. However, provincial governments also provide research funding. Ordinarily, even academic research should fall under provincial jurisdiction.

What do you think?

Martin Normand: Quebec has research funding, but the other provinces have little. Quebec is unique in that way. Otherwise, the federal government is responsible for funding and disseminating research across Canada.

Mario Beaulieu: English universities don't even have access to provincial research funding.

Is that right?

Martin Normand: That's right. There is none.

Mario Beaulieu: All right. I just learned something.

Martin Normand: Some provinces may have a tiny bit of funding, but no one really has an institutional funding program like the Fonds de recherche du Québec.

Mario Beaulieu: That's interesting.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Beaulieu.

Honourable members, we will now begin the second round. I will be strict about enforcing speaking time so we can get through a full second round.

Mr. Dalton, you may go ahead. You have five minutes.

Marc Dalton (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you to the witnesses for being with us.

Mr. Normand, it's a pleasure to see you again.

When the modernized Official Languages Act was passed, I remember how happy and optimistic the organizations representing francophone minority communities were.

We now have two or three years' worth of results to examine, and what the committee has heard from witnesses is a bit worrisome.

What has changed in your field?

Have you seen visible improvements? Have you seen clear, tangible changes, more than just words?

• (1605)

Martin Normand: I want to start by correcting your initial impression.

The ACUFC expressed great disappointment when the two bills to amend the Official Languages Act were brought forward. We disagreed with the proposed approach. We raised a number of issues, including jurisdictional problems, that we were extremely concerned about. We weren't satisfied when Bill C-32 and Bill C-13 were introduced, and we still aren't.

We will propose tangible measures in our brief. From the outset, I'd say that when it comes to the approach and positive measures, the regulations need to encourage federal institutions to take positive measures outside the cycles in the regulations and to take those measures retroactively. It's important to assess whether existing mechanisms, programs, policies or initiatives are undermining efforts to achieve substantive equality. The regulations don't provide for that type of look back over existing policies. It's akin to saying that everything currently in place is fine, but that from now on, institutions are going to take action and remedy issues through positive measures.

The problem with the granting councils is a good example. A few weeks ago, we got the official languages commissioner's final report. It says that, after two years, one of the granting councils just refused to implement one of the commissioner's recommendations.

We're not able to get over that wall and the regulations aren't helping with that.

Marc Dalton: Thank you for clarifying that.

You had concerns before, and they're still there.

In your opinion, would you say that this document is more political and being used to show that the current government is doing something?

Regulations are all well and good, but they've been criticized. What's going on?

Martin Normand: First of all, any language issue in Canada is eminently political. Let's not kid ourselves.

That said, I wouldn't go so far as to reduce the Official Languages Act to an essentially political tool. It's the same thing with the regulations.

Nevertheless, we see it as the bare minimum. Those who drafted the legislation made a choice. I think we could choose another option that could lead us to a much more ambitious threshold.

Marc Dalton: Thank you.

Ms. Enayeh, apart from the funding issue, what's the most harmful measure the government has taken regarding women in official-language minority communities? What's the current situation?

The Chair: You have 35 seconds left, Mr. Dalton.

Nour Enayeh: There's a real fear of budget cuts.

As soon as there's a change in government, the first thing we see and hear are rumours of budget cuts. It always affects minorities and women first.

So I would say that's one of our fears. That's why we always talk about core funding.

Marc Dalton: Thank you.

Nour Enayeh: Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Dalton.

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

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

Witnesses, it's great to have you here.

Your testimony is making me very enthusiastic, because I think you're bringing solutions to the table.

You're talking about gender-based analysis plus, or GBA plus. Not everyone is familiar with this, or knows that it was implemented by Treasury Board in 2011. It allows all departments to evaluate data.

The “gender” in “gender-based” refers to men and women. The “plus” was added in 2011 to broaden the approach and include intersectionality. In 2019, it became mandatory to include this data in the budget.

You talk about the place of women. For a number of meetings, we've been talking about the problem of obtaining data on this. Currently, the data analysis system is also focused on gender equality.

The language lens is also one of your concerns. You say language mustn't be forgotten in all of this, that it's a key factor.

If we said that it should be run through GBA plus instead, which is required under the law, the approach could also be used to analyze the official languages situation. We could use the same data analysis system, but include the two languages in a structured manner for Treasury Board and all departments. We could then see the impact not only on men and women, but also on the two official languages.

Instead of seeing GBA plus as a tool to make sure that women aren't forgotten, we could use the existing system for official languages analysis. It's not just a “plus”, it's required under the law here. We could then look at data on gender equality, on the two official languages and, of course, on intersectionality. The data research process would already be set up.

Is that what you mean?

• (1610)

Nour Enayeh: Absolutely.

You've summed up exactly what we'd like to have. One solution would be to make it automatic every time.

Madeleine Chenette: Okay.

We need to put tools in place, and Treasury Board already has a well-established process for this. Let's integrate that dimension and highlight it. I'd like to draw everyone's attention to this.

Mr. Normand, one of our witnesses referred to the framework for the vitality of official-language minority communities, or OLMCs. The framework emphasizes education, cultural activities and the presence of institutions. It also refers to ongoing provision of services, the visibility of the minority language, as well as the economic and social expansion of the community.

Basically, it only affects a certain number of departments. It doesn't affect everybody. The fact that it isn't present everywhere fuels dissatisfaction. We've heard that from a lot of witnesses.

We have to make sure that the foundation is there and that we use this framework to establish meaningful indicators. A number of witnesses have said that it has to be meaningful. We need to examine the vitality of OLMCs through this framework and integrate it in a more structured way into the regulations.

Would that be something constructive?

I will come back to innovation later.

Martin Normand: My fear is that certain federal institutions will be let off the hook.

Personally, I don't agree that we should only target the federal institutions that appear to be the most relevant on the list.

Madeleine Chenette: I'll stop you there because that's my point.

I agree that this is necessary. However, we need to take a broader view. They shouldn't be let off the hook based on this alone. That said, it provides a foundation that can be used to gather very concrete and useful data for measuring results.

Now, I want to go back to what you said.

In your opinion, we need to look at existing programs, and there are many programs. We need to do it, but it's an incredible undertaking. Reviewing all of our programs through this lens will take several years.

However, we can already take advantage of the data from GBA plus. It might be relevant to say that, for all new programs, whether it's Build Canada Homes or the programs we're setting up in the defence sector, it's urgent to ensure that their analysis is based on this data to see what we can do.

For departments that don't have those new programs, we have to look at priorities by measuring the impact on what's been done in the past. This can be done using the data. It allows all departments to look at what needs to be done. This prevents people from just checking a box. It makes it possible to move forward and improve things in relation to everything that's coming. We need to set priorities in all existing programs and target what more we can do, based on GBA plus data.

The Chair: There are only 15 seconds left, so please give a very brief answer.

Martin Normand: I don't agree with that approach.

If we focus solely on what's new, we will overlook all the historical and structural injustices documented over the past 25 to 30 years.

Furthermore, consultation and dialogue exercises should be used to identify the programs that need to be prioritized for review.

Madeleine Chenette: I agree. It's not one or the other.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Chenette.

I'll now go to Mr. Beaulieu for two and a half minutes.

Mario Beaulieu: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Normand, you say that clear guidance is needed on the federal government's new obligations with respect to post-secondary education.

Can you give us more concrete examples of what you think would be satisfactory regulations?

• (1615)

Martin Normand: First, innovation should be encouraged in the development of positive measures. I think there is potential for positive measures to be taken in a number of federal institutions, which could have an effect on post-secondary education.

Mario Beaulieu: Can you give us a concrete example?

Martin Normand: A concrete example would be to go back in time and act on the inequities in scientific research in French. This has been documented for five years.

In the coming weeks, we will receive a report from an external advisory working group on research in French. Once again, the report will make recommendations that we have been hearing for at least five years. We need to have a way to tell federal institutions that they have to act on the recommendations.

Mario Beaulieu: You say that research funds outside Quebec fall under federal jurisdiction.

Is that correct?

Martin Normand: Yes.

Mario Beaulieu: The federal government is entirely free to act, but is not doing so.

Is that correct?

Martin Normand: Absolutely.

There are plenty of reports documenting structural inequities.

The first thing is to call for innovation. The second is that data collection and analyses done in federal institutions must be made public so that we have equal opportunities in consultations.

There is a structural inequity that arises in consultation exercises if the federal government has a whole array of data in its hands that the community party does not have when it takes part.

If federal institutions already have analyses right now on the performance or role of post-secondary institutions in achieving federal objectives, I want to see them so that I can take part in consultations and discussions on an equal footing with federal institutions.

The Chair: You have 30 seconds, Mr. Beaulieu.

Mario Beaulieu: The widespread dissatisfaction and all that must be taken into account.

How can we push the government to take this into account and take action?

Martin Normand: In terms of consultations, there is a whole list of good citizen participation practices that the Treasury Board Secretariat should look at.

We need to resume the consultation exercise seriously and with expectations for results, as we should have done for any other official languages initiative under the Official Languages Act.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Beaulieu.

I'll pass the floor to Mr. Godin for five minutes.

Joël Godin: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Ms. Enayeh and Ms. Boutiyeb, you said that intersectionality shouldn't be downplayed.

I'll switch it around.

Doesn't including the concept in the regulations make it more restrictive rather than easier for you?

Nour Enayeh: It's not about downplaying intersectionality. It's about downplaying francophone women or official languages in intersectionality.

Joël Godin: How does intersectionality fit into the regulations?

Soukaina Boutiyeb: The fact of clearly mentioning it first provides a guideline for how intersectionality should be practised within departments.

Currently, the Official Languages Act includes GBA plus, but there is no complementary approach in terms of practices for the departments. Regulations would give departments something stronger and more concrete.

Joël Godin: I understand. Then it's a restriction to protect the fusion.

Soukaina Boutiyeb: That's correct.

Joël Godin: I am going to continue in the same vein as my colleague Ms. Chenette, when she spoke earlier about extending strategies to the various departments.

Mr. Normand, you said that, for the past five years, scientific data has shown that there are problems. Honestly, you can't put the toothpaste back in the tube. I think we have to look to the future.

I think there has to be a very specific element in the regulations to apply this reflex and obligation to all departments and agencies. It's not a matter of listing a few departments.

It would be up to the departments to provide the data. I think it should be in the regulations to ensure that we achieve our objective. Each department must implement positive measures to help linguistic minorities, in French and English.

Martin Normand: I would have to reread it, but my impression is that the regulations apply to all federal institutions indefinitely. The fact that there is no list seems to imply as much. In addition, it forces departments that may never have had this reflex on official languages to look into it and see if there are any possible actions that are relevant to the communities.

I'll give you an example.

We recently saw in the media that the federal government wants to set up a naval base in Baie-Comeau or Moncton. What does it mean to set up a National Defence naval base in Moncton? It would deliberately be set up there. Francophones live there.

What does that mean in terms of access to health services and adding child care spaces and spaces in primary, secondary and post-secondary educational programs?

It can take many other forms. However, it can't be said that these structuring decisions have no effect on official languages. We have to get rid of the old ways that make some federal institutions think, time and time again, that official languages are the responsibility of Canadian Heritage and not theirs.

• (1620)

Joël Godin: Canadian Heritage is not responsible for it, Treasury Board is. As set out in the act, it has the obligation to do so in partnership.

Martin Normand: It's in partnership. However, if we approach federal institutions, they refer us to Canadian Heritage, not Treasury Board.

Joël Godin: They don't refer you to the right place. That's where the confusion lies.

Martin Normand: Treasury Board doesn't have a funding envelope for communities. Canadian Heritage does. That's why we're referred to Canadian Heritage rather than Treasury Board.

Joël Godin: Treasury Board should give clear instructions to Canadian Heritage.

Martin Normand: You're right, but it's not up to Canadian Heritage to fund all official languages initiatives in the public service.

Joël Godin: No, Treasury Board had an obligation to require all departments to apply positive measures.

Martin Normand: Yes.

Joël Godin: Agreed.

In your presentation, you said that imposing too many regulations would have a more negative than positive effect. I share your opinion. However, in that case, wouldn't it be preferable to extend this obligation to all departments?

There is no mention of the obligation to apply it to all departments. That's true. Wouldn't it be better to mention it?

If we do that, are we shooting ourselves in the foot? If we overlook a detail, we'll have to fight to justify it.

Martin Normand: Personally, I would say that depending on the scope of the regulation, it already applies to all federal institutions.

Joël Godin: Yes, it applies, but there was no mention of the obligation for each department to have a language lens.

The Chair: There are 15 seconds remaining.

Martin Normand: Putting more emphasis on the obligation to produce data on official languages in all federal institutions might alleviate this concern. All federal institutions are already covered by the regulations. However, they are not equipped to implement it.

Joël Godin: Okay. Thank you, Mr. Normand.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Godin.

I now give the floor to Ms. Mingarelli for five minutes.

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

I would like to thank the witnesses for being with us today.

My questions are for Ms. Enayeh and Ms. Boutiyeb.

You have advocated for funding specifically for francophone women's rights organizations.

Should the regulations include provisions on the allocation of targeted funds?

Soukaina Boutiyeb: Certainly, that should be the case.

As I said, the reality for these organizations is that they are currently shouldering the burden of representing French-speaking Canadian women, and some of them have no funding.

I must say that in some provinces, there are no longer any women's organizations as they have had to close their doors due to a lack of volunteers. There is currently a major crisis within the movement. In addition, there has been a rise in anti-feminism as well as an increase in gender-based violence and femicide. There are many needs, but unfortunately, organizations are not receiving adequate resources.

A positive measure is therefore one that gives adequate priority to women in the Canadian francophonie.

Nour Enayeh: Let me give you a very concrete example.

In British Columbia, there is an organization that works with women who are victims of gender-based violence. It's actually one person working part-time. She covers British Columbia and the Yukon, and she answers a single helpline. For francophone women who are victims of violence in these two places, there is only one part-time person to answer the phone. They're not even talking about shelters. That gives you an example of the reality on the ground.

Giovanna Mingarelli: How can we prevent francophone organizations from being disadvantaged in pan-Canadian programs?

Soukaina Boutiyeb: A strategy needs to be developed. That is the solution, in our opinion. All departments must develop a strategy targeting linguistic minorities. It should also be noted that women represent more than half of the population, and unfortunately, the services intended for them are among the most poorly designed.

In my opinion, it is important to have a francophone feminist strategy in all departments to ensure that all measures put in place have a positive rather than a negative impact, thereby ensuring the vitality of women in Canada's francophone communities.

• (1625)

Giovanna Mingarelli: Thank you very much.

I have finished.

Mr. Chair, I would like to propose reopening the debate adjourned on December 2, 2025, regarding the motion by my colleague Mr. Deschênes-Thériault concerning the integration and acceptance of francoqueers within the Canadian francophonie.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Mingarelli.

I will just consult with the clerk.

Before giving the floor to someone else, I want to clarify something. What Ms. Mingarelli is proposing is a dilatory motion. There will be no debate on the matter, unless you want to clarify something, which is normal. However, I want to warn you that we cannot have a debate.

Marc Dalton: Can we have a minute or two, please?

Joël Godin: Can we adjourn the meeting?

[English]

Hon. Mike Lake (Leduc—Wetaskiwin, CPC): I'm sorry, but could we have it repeated?

[Translation]

The Chair: Ms. Mingarelli, could you repeat your motion?

Giovanna Mingarelli: I would like to move that we reopen the debate adjourned on December 2, 2025, on the motion by my colleague Mr. Deschênes-Thériault concerning the integration and acceptance of francoqueers within the Canadian francophonie.

The Chair: Therefore, there will be no debate.

Mr. Godin, you have the floor.

Joël Godin: I want to be sure I understand, Mr. Chair.

We are not debating the motion, but we can debate the subject.

Are we just voting?

Guillaume Deschênes-Thériault: We will vote to open the debate, after which we will discuss the motion.

Joël Godin: We cannot prevent the motion from being tabled because it is a dilatory motion. We will be able to discuss it later, when the next step has been taken. It is an automatic process. That is my understanding.

The Chair: That's right. What Ms. Mingarelli is proposing is dilatory. It means that we have to vote on her proposal right away. Our colleague is proposing that we reopen the debate. If it is adopted by the committee, we will begin that debate immediately.

Mario Beaulieu: The debate would be reopened immediately.

The Chair: That's correct.

Mr. Dalton, you have the floor.

Marc Dalton: I just want to make sure I understand correctly.

Are we setting aside all of the committee's work and the other reports to have this debate?

The Chair: Do you mean do we set the work aside until the committee decides to conclude the debate? Yes, that is correct.

[English]

Hon. Mike Lake: Could we have a two-minute pause?

[Translation]

Guillaume Deschênes-Thériault: Mr. Chair, this is a dilatory motion.

The Chair: It is, but I can suspend the meeting for a minute.

[English]

Hon. Mike Lake: That doesn't prevent us from suspending for a minute.

The Chair: That's what I'm saying. Just to make sure there's no misunderstanding, I'll suspend for a minute, but then we'll go right into the vote.

• (1625)

(Pause)

• (1645)

[Translation]

The Chair: We are resuming the meeting.

We will vote on Ms. Mingatelli's dilatory motion.

Are there any points of clarification?

(Motion agreed to: yeas, 9; nays, 0)

The Chair: Before resuming the debate on Mr. Deschênes-Thériault's motion, I would like to thank the witnesses on behalf of the committee. We have now reached the end of the time allotted for their visit.

We thank you for your testimony; our time with you is now at an end.

Colleagues, we will now resume debate on the motion.

Does anyone wish to speak?

Mr. Deschênes-Thériault, you have the floor.

Guillaume Deschênes-Thériault: Mr. Chair, I would just like to do a quick refresh.

We tabled this motion because various LGBTQ+ community groups, such as FrancoQueer and other Canadian francophone groups shared their concerns with us about representation and inclusion, as well as federal and other support. When we talk about the vitality of francophone communities, that also includes sexual diversity.

We thought it would be interesting to look into this issue to better understand the needs and challenges, particularly those related to integration into the Canadian francophonie, and representation. That is why we moved this motion in December. When we talk about the challenges facing the Canadian francophonie, we are referring to both urban and rural areas, such as my riding, where groups have contacted me.

I would say that this is a fairly broad spectrum, which will allow us to fully understand the challenges and see how we can better support these groups. It was in this spirit that we tabled the motion in December.

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

Mario Beaulieu: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'm sorry. I didn't remember that, and I even thought it had been adopted.

The proposals actually came from the Bloc Québécois. We said that the term "francoqueers" seemed to apply very specifically to one group. We proposed using "sexually diverse persons" to broaden it to include all LGBTQ2+ communities. That was more along the lines of what we meant.

Perhaps our colleague could provide some further explanation of what he meant.

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

Joël Godin: Mr. Chair, I have no problem doing this kind of study. Before going any further, however, I'd like to know about the experiences that these groups have had that have prompted a study on this subject. I think all the groups could share their experiences with us.

Are we going to hear from all groups in our society about their daily lives? Is this the right committee to do that? I wonder about that. I'm not opposed to this study, quite the contrary. However, we are opening the door to other similar requests from representatives of other groups, knowing that the schedule is quite full. In fact, it's full until the end of June, and we're just adding that to it. There may be other things that will be added, such as the study of other regulations, or other commissioners will resign and others will have to be appointed, for example.

I don't want this to be misinterpreted. I'm not acting in bad faith. I'm just wondering about the importance of opening the door to this kind of approach without knowing of any actual cases or situations that justify the need to undertake a study at the Standing Committee on Official Languages.

That's more or less the question I'm asking myself and putting to the movers of this motion. My colleague from the Bloc Québécois wants to fine-tune the motion. I want to participate in the debate and be constructive, but there's a lack of data.

The Chair: Okay.

Mr. Deschênes-Thériault, you have the floor.

Guillaume Deschênes-Thériault: In fact, part VII of the Official Languages Act, which is the main piece of legislation related to our committee, deals with the support and vitality of francophone communities, and that includes diversity across sectors. There are various groups that represent Canada's francophonie. In my opinion, that also includes LGBTQ+ communities, which are sometimes overlooked in some of our studies. They don't have the same organizational network or network of community associations as some other groups across the country. I'd say that, historically, the committee has heard from fewer witnesses from those groups. That may be a blind spot in the work we've done so far.

That's why the motion proposes a maximum of three meetings: We recognize that the committee's agenda is full.

The motion talks about inviting "witnesses with specific knowledge about the activities of Francoqueers". We could also write about the "francophone LGBTQ+ community"; we can review the wording and discuss it. The objective is precisely to shed some light on the challenges and see whether, as a federal government, there is a need to better support that. It can also be useful, in the context of the 2028–2033 action plan for official languages, to find out if there is anything we could do.

It's more about better understanding needs and realities. We also have to take into account the fact that it's three meetings. We're not talking about devoting a dozen or so meetings to this subject.

It's more along those lines, Mr. Godin.

As for Mr. Beaulieu's comment, I'd say that we are open to changing the vocabulary, as long as we remain within the Canadian francophonie. It's not a broad study; it's really a study focused on the Canadian francophonie. That's where the focus is.

Mario Beaulieu: Quebeckers as well.

Guillaume Deschênes-Thériault: Quebec is part of the Canadian francophonie. The Canadian francophonie includes Quebec.

Joël Godin: Until further notice.

Mario Beaulieu: It's in the new definition in the act.

The Chair: Are you finished, Mr. Deschênes-Thériault?

Guillaume Deschênes-Thériault: Yes.

The Chair: Okay.

I will now turn the floor over to Mr. Lake.

Hon. Mike Lake: I'll speak in English.

[*English*]

I'm just curious. This is a new committee for me. I'm filling in today.

I'm wondering about the Canadian francophonie and the various groups that might not be represented in conversations, and it seems to me that the list could be very long. I'm curious to know whether the committee has undertaken studies, for example, to understand communities with disabilities, people with disabilities.

I was just at a meeting of the Autism Alliance of Canada in Edmonton, which we helped coordinate with the francophone community in Edmonton, regarding services available in French for families or individuals with autism in the Edmonton area.

Maybe I don't fully understand the mandate of the committee, but it would seem to me that virtually everything that any other committee in Parliament could study could also be studied in the minority language context in this committee.

How do we set priorities? It sounds like there's a fairly busy agenda in front of this committee. What is the core priority of the committee? I think if I were a regular attendee at the committee, I would be ensuring that we were pretty tightly focused on the studies that were already before us and leave lots of flexibility, maximum flexibility, moving forward in case emerging issues arose.

Again, I have a lot of experience in Parliament. I have 20 years' experience in Parliament. The committees that have been the least functional in my mind are the ones that plan all of their studies for two years in advance and never leave room to adapt to something that is a pressing priority.

• (1650)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Lake.

[*Translation*]

I will now turn the floor over to Mr. Beaulieu.

Mario Beaulieu: I just want to say that I agree with the principle, if Mr. Deschênes-Thériault proposes to include in his motion the term "LGBTQ+ community" or "sexually diverse people". Either one would be fine. I would like someone to explain to me why we would limit that to francoqueers.

The Chair: Mr. Deschênes-Thériault, you have the floor.

Guillaume Deschênes-Thériault: I want to follow up on what Mr. Lake mentioned.

We have a committee that is quite effective at setting its agenda. We have a subcommittee. We are able to work together to determine the committee's agenda and priorities. I thank Mr. Lake for sharing his concerns, but I think the committee has done a good job so far. The motion I'm proposing doesn't change the order of priority that we established together. Studies are coming. In addition, we were quite flexible when motions or urgent matters were raised in the fall. We were able to study them, so I don't see how it would be different this time.

With regard to Mr. Beaulieu's comment, we would agree to change the wording of the motion to say that it is "a study on the integration and acceptance of 2SLGBTQIA+ communities". We could use that acronym to refer to all communities. We're open to that proposal.

Mr. Beaulieu, if you want to propose an amendment to that effect, we'll be open to that amendment.

I would like to return briefly to the context of this motion. If groups were to appear before the committee and talk to us about accessibility issues in the context of francophone minority communities outside Quebec, I would be very open to the idea of the committee conducting a study on the subject. We've done studies on education and immigration; we've studied a variety of topics. The francophonie encompasses all sectors that are important for the vitality of francophone communities.

In my riding, a group of young people from the LGBTQ+ community, who knew that I was on the Standing Committee on Official Languages, came to talk to me about problems related to rurality, visibility and representation. It was in that spirit that I moved the motion.

If the committee were to learn that there were problems in other sectors of activity, I think it could look into the matter. In fact, I believe it's the responsibility of each committee to do so. There is always a wide range of topics that can be studied. Whether it's the Standing Committee on Science and Research, the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development or any other committee, there are a variety of topics that can be examined.

What is more, around the world, we are currently seeing a rise in rhetoric that can sometimes be less open and more critical of these communities. I think there's a need on our part to reaffirm the inclusion of these communities.

I think this topic may be relevant here at the committee. If Mr. Beaulieu has any amendments, we'll be open to them.

• (1655)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Deschênes-Thériault.

Mr. Godin, you have the floor.

Joël Godin: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

As I said earlier, I'm not necessarily opposed to the idea of conducting a study on this.

However, I don't agree with my colleague's argument that these groups don't have enough visibility. It's not the mandate of the Standing Committee on Official Languages to give visibility to groups. We have to get back to the main subject, which is to deal with official languages.

Earlier, we heard from the Alliance des femmes de la francophonie canadienne. I don't want to put this group we're talking about here at a disadvantage, but I'm more aware of the reality experienced by francophone women. At first glance, I would be more inclined to study this than francoqueers, because I don't know what those people are going through.

I would like to be given more information on the subject. If I were presented with specific cases of situations in which francoqueers have been victims, I might be more receptive. Honestly, I don't have any facts, so it's hard for me to take a position.

That said, if we ever reach a consensus, I will go along with it. Most of the time, the committee manages its affairs by consensus.

As I said, I would prioritize francophone women before francoqueers. That said, I have nothing against these people; I don't know them.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Godin.

Ms. Mingarelli, the floor is yours.

Giovanna Mingarelli: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

[*English*]

I think Mr. Lake's idea is very good.

Further to this conversation about MP Deschênes-Thériault's motion, which I think is very good and one I would like to pursue, I would also like to suggest that we consider a brief study on how people with disabilities, especially students in school, are supported in learning French. That must be a serious issue across Canada and not something that is very actively discussed.

If people are open to that, then I would be happy to work on a motion with my team.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Mingarelli.

[*Translation*]

Go ahead, Mr. Beaulieu.

Mario Beaulieu: I would propose an amendment to replace the word “Francoqueers” with “2SLGBTQIA+” to make it as inclusive as possible.

I don't know if you have it, but I can send it to you.

As I understand it, that would be the most inclusive term. There are a number of terms. We checked. If someone has a more inclusive term, they can send it to me or the clerk. That would be helpful.

The Chair: So you are proposing an amendment. Is that correct, Mr. Beaulieu?

Mario Beaulieu: Yes. I am proposing an amendment.

The Chair: Hold on a minute, colleagues.

So you proposed an amendment, Mr. Beaulieu.

Mario Beaulieu: Yes. It would be to make it even more inclusive. The change would be in the first and second paragraphs.

The Chair: Okay, thank you.

On a procedural note, we are now debating Mr. Beaulieu's amendment.

Mr. Lake, you have the floor.

[*English*]

Hon. Mike Lake: On a point of order, I believe Mr. Beaulieu suggested taking just the most inclusive and leaving it up to the chair or the clerk to get that. I don't think that it's up to the chair or the clerk to figure out the language to make sure it's the most inclusive. It has to come from the committee. Everybody's interpretation of the most inclusive language is going to be different.

Perhaps the mover of the motion could make the suggestion as to the letters, numbers, symbols or whatever it might be, and the particular order, because it is a sensitive thing. If we're going to try to get this right, it's going to be up to either the amender or the mover of the motion to get it right, not the clerk.

• (1700)

The Chair: Thank you for that.

That's on the point of order.

I agree with you, Mr. Lake, from a procedural perspective. That's the way I was planning to handle it anyway. I wouldn't dare to assume that I understand what the intentions are of all the members.

We have an amendment proposed by Mr. Beaulieu. We have language that has been communicated to the clerk.

[*Translation*]

I will ask the clerk to circulate the wording immediately.

Mr. Villeneuve and Ms. Chenette were the next speakers on the list, but procedurally, now that we've moved on to the amendment, this is now a new debate.

Does anyone wish to speak to the amendment?

Ms. Chenette, you have the floor.

Madeleine Chenette: Basically, I am influenced by the discussion we just had, when our guests talked about intersectionality.

In terms of the francophonie and our two official languages, intersectionality amounts to the “plus” in GBA plus, or gender-based analysis. In doing that analysis, you have to look at the cross-impact and determine which vulnerable groups may actually have fewer services.

That is when we talk about queer people, the 2SLGBTQI+ community, which might not be the exact acronym, and people with disabilities.

The “plus” in the GBA plus that was mentioned includes all of that. That is the intersectionality of the various groups.

If we do want to delve into this, I have a suggestion so that we don't have a series of conversations with different goals. I was wondering whether the motion could be worded differently from the proposal before us. After "That the committee invite witnesses with specific knowledge about the activities", it would say that the original term would be replaced by the acronym starting with "LG", and so forth. With full respect for all those groups, I propose that the motion refer instead to "specific knowledge of the impact of the intersectionality of the various groups". We could then indicate that we are referring to the LGBTQ+ community, persons with disabilities and organizations of that kind.

The purpose of this study is to determine whether we really need to dive deeper and gather even more information. We have to understand the reality of these people and understand how it will be taken into account so we can actually see how it is applied at Treasury Board. There are indeed implications for women. I agree with Mr. Godin on that. There is certainly a lot of data and a lot to do when it comes to women. There are however also people in my community talking to me about groups that are very vulnerable right now. They would like to know how they will be taken into account. I imagine that people in the rest of Canada would like to know that as well.

I would perhaps suggest intersectionality, with the various groups, to ensure that the francophonie is fully included.

The Chair: Before I hand it over to Mr. Godin, I have to ask, are you moving a subamendment, Ms. Chenette?

Madeleine Chenette: I'm throwing it out for discussion.

The Chair: Okay, thank you. I just wanted to clarify that.

Mr. Godin, you have the floor.

Joël Godin: I knew that we would agree, Ms. Chenette and I, and that one day we would be on the same path.

I'm looking at the description of intersectionality. Before going any further, I'd like to go back to what I was saying before. You can't pick just one group that doesn't have enough visibility; you have to be inclusive. Women are a big group to consider. They should not be a minority, but, unfortunately, even though society has made great strides, there is more work to be done to achieve equality between men and women. It's unfortunate, but that's the way it is. I think that's reality.

Let me add this though. If the idea is to provide visibility to groups that are often not heard, we have the opportunity to include them in this study, even if it means increasing the number of meetings. That way we could ensure that these groups are based on sex, race, class, age, disability and sexual orientation.

I think we have a great opportunity before us, further to the initial motion by my colleague Mr. Deschênes-Thériault. We are refining the motion and trying to see how we can advance the cause of our minorities. I think it is now warranted for the Standing Committee on Official Languages to address this and conduct a study on it.

It will then be up to us, the various parties, to prepare a list of witnesses and provide it to the clerk. We will then determine the number of meetings and decide whether we want to categorize the

groups to ensure balance in terms of visibility. There's a whole mechanism that we have the responsibility to put into motion.

I think that Ms. Chenette brought up something interesting, and I want to amplify what she said by proposing this. It's not an amendment, Mr. Chair. It's an open and constructive discussion stemming from what my colleague said.

• (1705)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Godin.

The floor is yours, Mr. Beaulieu.

Mario Beaulieu: I don't think we should bite off more than we can chew. Perhaps we shouldn't broaden the study too much.

I would just like to clarify something in the amendment. The French term is *2ELGBTQI+*. There is no A, according to the federal government's website and the information provided to me. We looked at the website, so that's what I would put. I think that covers just about everything that is not heterosexual, without wanting to be simplistic. That's more or less what it amounts to. It is clear.

The Chair: Okay. So I will ask the clerk to circulate the right wording now, so everyone has it in their email inbox.

Had you finished, Mr. Beaulieu?

Mario Beaulieu: Yes. We can go to a vote. The term in question is in the first and second paragraphs.

Giovanna Mingarelli: I just wanted to ask if we could suspend the meeting for a minute to discuss the amendment before voting.

The Chair: Yes, the meeting is suspended.

• (1705)

(Pause)

• (1715)

The Chair: We're back.

Ms. Mingarelli had the floor when she asked to suspend.

Do you have anything to add?

Giovanna Mingarelli: No.

The Chair: Okay, thank you.

Mr. Godin, you have the floor.

Joël Godin: Mr. Chair, I know we have very tight deadlines to deal with the draft regulations on administrative monetary penalties. Under the circumstances, I suggest that we postpone debate on this proposal. We have a motion on the floor and then an amendment. I think we want to get this right. I think everyone is acting in good faith, so I think we should postpone the debate.

I therefore request that the debate be adjourned. I think that's the right term, isn't it?

The Chair: It's a dilatory motion. Therefore, we have to vote on Mr. Godin's motion that debate be adjourned.

(Motion agreed to: yeas 9; nays 0)

The Chair: Colleagues, we have about 12 minutes left. The next item on the committee's agenda is the drafting of the report on administrative monetary penalties. That is supposed to be done in camera. I'm going to suspend the meeting for three minutes so we can go in camera. I would like us to return in exactly three minutes so we can do this.

Mr. Dalton, you have the floor.

Marc Dalton: I have to catch a flight, so I have to leave at 5:30.

The Chair: I'm very aware of the fact that you have to leave quickly on Thursday to catch a flight.

I will suspend the meeting for three minutes before we resume in camera.

[Proceedings continue in camera]

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