



House of Commons
CANADA

Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage

CHPC • NUMBER 037 • 2nd SESSION • 40th PARLIAMENT

EVIDENCE

Thursday, November 19, 2009

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Chair

Mr. Gary Schellenberger

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• (1140)

[English]

The Chair (Mr. Gary Schellenberger (Perth—Wellington, CPC)): I call this meeting to order.

Welcome to the 37th meeting of the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage, pursuant to the order of reference of Friday, March 6, 2009, on Bill C-302, An Act to recognize the injustice that was done to persons of Italian origin through their “enemy alien” designation and internment during the Second World War, and to provide for restitution and promote education on Italian-Canadian history.

We're going to hear a short presentation from our witnesses from Canada Post and then we'll have one round of questioning. We're going to limit that to 20 minutes, if we can, so that we can move into the next session.

I'm going to ask Canada Post officials who are here this morning to introduce themselves, and I'm going to ask the second group of witnesses to announce themselves, too, because I'm not very good at Italian—no better than I am in French.

Canada Post, please go ahead.

Mr. Robert Waite (Senior Vice-President, Corporate Social Responsibility, Canada Post Corporation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

My name is Robert Waite. I'm senior vice-president, corporate social responsibility, for Canada Post Corporation. I'm also the chair of the Canadian stamp advisory board. I'm joined here by Elia Anoaia, who is manager of new products service and delivery. She's here to help me if I need any technical help, which is always possible.

Mr. Chairman, thank you for the invitation to appear here today. As chairman of Canada Post's Stamp Advisory Committee, I am very pleased to be here to outline Canada Post's stamp subject selection policy and to discuss stamps in general.

Canadian stamps are recognized internationally to be among the finest in the world. Canadian stamps have long been a source of pride for Canadians. Through our stamp program, we celebrate the remarkable heritage of our country, and we attempt to capture Canada and what it means to be Canadian and showcase that to the world. Canadian stamps celebrate and promote our history, our heroes, our leading personalities, and the achievements and passions of our people.

The selection of stamps is undertaken, like all operations at Canada Post, in a non-political manner and at arm's length from the government. Central to the stamp selection process is an invitation to all Canadians to participate through their suggestions for subjects to illustrate our stamps.

Every year, Canada Post receives between 500 and 600 different suggestions for subjects or events to be celebrated by a stamp or commemorative envelope. Only approximately 20 of the suggested subjects will eventually be honoured by a Canadian stamp and only two or three by a commemorative envelope. The Canada Post Board of Directors approves the annual stamp program on the recommendation of this national Stamp Advisory Committee.

Most countries have such a stamp advisory committee. Ours is formed of knowledgeable Canadians from across the country, selected for their historic, design, or philatelic knowledge. The committee was first established in 1969 to help guide the selection of Canadian stamps. Its composition reflects English-speaking and French-speaking populations, as well as the regional and ethnic diversity of the country.

The Stamp Advisory Committee evaluates suggestions for stamps using the following criteria.

First, the topics should appeal to broad segments of the Canadian population and encourage Canadians of all ages to buy and collect stamps.

Next, they should relate primarily to Canada and be of national significance. For example, they should evoke Canadian history, traditions, accomplishments, or natural heritage, or illustrate the social, cultural, political, or economic life of the country.

Often they commemorate people, their work, their birth, or an event in their lives. In this way, their outstanding contributions to Canada are recognized and celebrated.

The committee also favours stamps that enhance the high regard for Canadian stamps and Canada in national and international philatelic circles. In addition, Canada Post makes every effort to maintain regional and cultural balance in selecting subjects and designs so that stamps appropriately reflect all aspects of our nation.

I've brought with me copies of the 2009 and 2010 stamp programs to allow you to see examples of selected topics. Particularly popular ones include Canadian recording artists, our recent Remembrance Day stamp, and the 100th anniversary stamp for the Montreal Canadiens. Other significant and notable stamps include a stamp celebrating the Vancouver 2010 Olympic Winter Games and the 100th anniversary of the Canadian Navy.

The stamp selection process is a lengthy one. It involves a thorough review of hundreds of suggestions received. Once a topic is selected, time is needed for researching, designing, producing, and promoting these stamps.

Accordingly, we tell those who wish to propose stamp subjects that, at a minimum, they should submit their suggestions two years before the beginning of the desired year of issue. This is a very important consideration for those suggesting subjects related to anniversaries or any other time-sensitive events.

Suggestions for stamps come from a wide variety of proposers, which reflects the vast diversity of interests in the country. We have received a number of stamp suggestions related to past treatment of various ethnic groups, for example.

In regard to the topic at hand, the stamp provision of Bill C-302 let us look back at the context of World War II. At that time, a number of groups were subject to internment, including German Canadians, Italian Canadians, and Japanese Canadians, among others. Most recently, Ukrainian and Croatian Canadians have sent us similar types of stamp requests.

• (1145)

To date, and after careful consideration, the stamp advisory committee has not recommended any of these topics for inclusion in the program.

I would invite members to read the stamp subject selection policy brochure, which I have here with me and will circulate at the conclusion. I would also like to reinforce the fact that Canada Post is open to all suggestions for stamp topics and will diligently consider them when submitted.

Again, let me say thank you for having me here today to explain a program that is a tremendous source of pride for Canada Post and, I believe, for all Canadians.

I stand available for any questions that committee members may have.

The Chair: Thank you.

Our first question will be from Mr. Rodriguez, please.

Mr. Pablo Rodriguez (Honoré-Mercier, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you to the witnesses for being here.

[*Translation*]

Good morning. It is a little strange to begin the meeting with you, because the bill is much bigger and only one small section deals with creating a commemorative stamp.

As you have read, Bill C-302, An Act to recognize the injustice that was done to persons of Italian origin through their “enemy alien” designation and internment during the Second World War, and to provide for restitution and promote education on Italian-Canadian history is a large bill.

We are presently dealing with one very specific element of the bill, that you have surely read in the final paragraph. It asks that:

5. The Minister of National Revenue shall instruct the Canada Post Corporation to issue a stamp or set of stamps to commemorate the internment of persons of Italian origin during the Second World War.

If this bill is passed, with that provision in it, can someone in the government give an instruction like that requiring Canada Post to issue the stamp?

[*English*]

Mr. Robert Waite: There could, but I would say, though, that in the history of the Canada Post Corporation there have only been two directives, and neither of them has related to stamp subjects. As I mentioned in my opening remarks, the selection of stamp subjects has been traditionally—and this goes back decades—at arm's length from the government. So I guess my short answer is that it would be highly unprecedented, but it is possible.

If the bill does pass, clearly the committee would take note of that, but it would be in the context of any other suggestion that we would get from any member of the public. We do that with regard to suggestions from members of Parliament. They certainly get attention, but they do—

Mr. Pablo Rodriguez: But you would see this as a suggestion, not an order or request.

If the bill passes, it's quite precise, in that it says, “The Minister of National Revenue shall instruct the Canada Post Corporation to issue a stamp...”.

Mr. Robert Waite: It's a little confusing to me because that's actually not our minister. We report to a different ministry.

Mr. Pablo Rodriguez: Who's your minister?

Mr. Robert Waite: We report directly to Mr. Merrifield, and Mr. Baird ultimately is our minister.

Mr. Pablo Rodriguez: Okay. That's the transport ministry.

Mr. Robert Waite: In Mr. McCallum's day—and I see Mr. McCallum here—it did report into a different ministry, but there have been changes since then.

Mr. Pablo Rodriguez: Those were the good old days. He was a great minister.

But tell me, what happens if the bill passes?

Mr. Robert Waite: The committee would take note of it. I'm not a lawyer, but I would not necessarily see that as a legislative directive. Typically—

Mr. Pablo Rodriguez: So not necessarily, but it could be; it would have to be defined.

• (1150)

Mr. Robert Waite: One of the other things I would point out is that there seems to be a sense that this would not have economic impact on Canada Post. Producing a stamp actually does cost money. It's anywhere from \$130,000 to \$200,000 to produce a stamp.

Mr. Pablo Rodriguez: So what would be your suggestion to members of the Italian community who want to have this stamp—to go to the committee and submit a normal request?

Mr. Robert Waite: Yes. They'd write a letter directly to me as the chairman of the committee, as many other groups do, and the staff would take it under advisement, do research, and make a recommendation to the committee. Then it would move from there.

Mr. Pablo Rodriguez: Excuse me, sir, but you're telling me that you would take note of a law of the land and being instructed and not having to follow the law.... Is that what you're saying?

Mr. Robert Waite: I'm saying I would seek legal advice as to what I should do. I find the precedent of legislated issuance of stamps unusual. I'm not aware of whether that would happen in many jurisdictions.

Mr. Pablo Rodriguez: So if this passes, you would seek counsel and you may want to challenge the law?

Mr. Robert Waite: That would not be my—

Mr. Pablo Rodriguez: Go to court?

Mr. Robert Waite: —decision. That would be a decision taken—

Mr. Pablo Rodriguez: But that's something you would consider?

Mr. Robert Waite: —by management and our board.

Again, it's an unprecedented request.

Mr. Pablo Rodriguez: Okay.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Pomerleau, please.

[Translation]

Mr. Roger Pomerleau (Drummond, BQ): Mr. Chair, I am going to ask a quick question.

Unfortunately, it is not specifically related to the topic you are dealing with. If you prefer not to answer, no problem, especially if it is not your area. At the moment, many post offices and postal counters are closing, including the one at Peggy's Cove, which closed last week, I believe. My question is—

[English]

The Chair: Mr. Pomerleau, I think that is going a little outside the realm of the bill. If you'd like to talk to Mr. Waite afterwards, I would suggest that.

Mr. Roger Pomerleau: Okay.

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): He wants a commemorative stamp, though, for all those closed post offices.

Voices: Oh, oh!

The Chair: I'd like to stick to the bill, please.

Madame Lavallée.

[Translation]

Mrs. Carole Lavallée (Saint-Bruno—Saint-Hubert, BQ): With your permission, I am going to use the time allotted to the Bloc Québécois.

Going back to the issuing of commemorative stamps, is the provision in the bill in line with Canada Post's normal policy? Can it fit with the way your committee works?

[English]

Mr. Robert Waite: No.

To answer your question, it doesn't conform with policies and procedures for either the stamp committee or our board of directors. As I said, it would be an unprecedented mandated issuance of a stamp.

[Translation]

Mrs. Carole Lavallée: I am sorry for interrupting you, but the precedent is that we have a bill that basically orders you to issue this commemorative stamp. However, if a group made that suggestion, could that fit with your policy?

[English]

Mr. Robert Waite: As I understand it, if a group comes and suggests it, that would be normal. That would be the way we operate normally. As I say, we even get letters from the Prime Minister, but the letters are all treated the same, whether they're from a member of Parliament or a child. There are actually stamps that we've produced that have been suggested by Canadian children.

I'm not trying to be disrespectful with regard to the passage of this bill. If this bill were to pass, we would have to look at it and consider how to move forward. But I just want to stress that it's highly unusual to be directed to do something like this. It will lead to some consequences for us. The Japanese community, the German community, the Ukrainian community...it would be hard to argue that they don't have similar types of interest.

What we've tried to do with the program over the decades, as most countries do, is highlight positive aspects of life in the country, including communities that live within the country. We've produced many stamps with Italian Canadian themes over the years—I have a list, but I won't use the valuable time—but we tend to try to honour various communities in that way.

As I say, we'd have to think about it.

[Translation]

Mrs. Carole Lavallée: So, to be more in line with what you are telling us, perhaps we need an amendment to the bill that, instead of saying: “the Minister of National Revenue shall instruct [...]”, would say: “[...] the minister could suggest that the Canada Post Corporation [...]”.

If I understand correctly, the topic also causes a problem. Instead of saying: “[...] to commemorate the internment of persons of Italian origin [...]”, it could say: “[...] to recognize and pay tribute to the Italian community in Canada [...]”. Would that be more in line with what you are able to do?

• (1155)

[English]

Mr. Robert Waite: Absolutely. That would conform much more closely to the way the committee operates and receives information. I think that would be a very positive amendment from our perspective. I'm not a legislator—that's your job—but I can tell you as someone who would be on the receiving end of this that it would be much easier for us to deal with.

Again, one of the things I said in my opening statement is that we endeavour wherever possible, because these stamps are seen internationally, to present all Canadian people and the country of Canada in a positive light. Now, I don't mean to say that we want to hide things either, but in a way, this is our public face going out on letters and other items around the world.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Mr. Angus, please.

Mr. Charlie Angus: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you very much for coming here today.

I'm very, very interested in this subject. As somewhat of an amateur historian, I spent a fair amount of time researching the treatment of the Italian community in my area, which is a mining town, and the so-called Moneta riot, which wasn't a riot at all: the local regiment decided to go and beat up the Italians, try to pull them out of the mines, and have them fired. It's something that nobody ever wanted to speak about. Even within the community there is a sense of shame. I think commemoration is very important.

I preface this with those remarks because I also think the role of a Canadian stamp is very important and I'd like to find out how this advisory committee works.

Mr. Robert Waite: Sure. The committee meets three or four times a year; typically, it's three times a year. Staff work is done in advance of that. Every single suggestion made to the committee is presented to the committee and research typically is done from a historic standpoint, particularly around historical accuracy.

There are also views as to whether or not the subject would make some commercial sense, because we try to run a program that is of interest to collectors and to others. There is lengthy discussion of the topic, typically at more than one meeting. Those that are selected are then sent for further research. In terms of design, two or three firms typically are asked to submit designs.

It's actually quite a complex process. I chair the committee. I don't actually vote unless there is a tie. There's a vote within the committee and then the topics, if they're approved, go on to the Canada Post board.

Mr. Charlie Angus: So you say you get 500 suggestions a year and 20 are chosen.

Now I'll put my cards on the table. I've already written you about a commemorative stamp because of my interest in history. It's about Jack Munroe, who fought for the heavyweight championship of the world against Jim Jeffries. He fought Jack Johnson—

Mr. Robert Waite: I'm aware of that request.

Mr. Charlie Angus: He was a professional football player, professional vaudeville actor, and gold rush hero who founded Elk Lake. He was the hero of the Porcupine fire. He was the first soldier to set foot in France with the Princess Pats. To me, he was an all around Canadian hero who we should know about and celebrate.

So I would bring that to you, you would squeeze the Charmin and test whether I was just feeding you a bunch of lines here or whether everything I said is actually true, which it all is, and then you would

take that to your committee and decide on it, alongside all the other potential Canadian heroes or Canadian stories.

Mr. Robert Waite: Absolutely. I have to tell you that I'm personally aware of your request, as I am of all of them, but that is one that has moved to the stage.... Our proceedings are supposed to be kept somewhat under wraps, but I will tell you that it has moved to the second stage. The individual is a very interesting subject. We'll see how it goes.

Mr. Charlie Angus: I'm not doing shameless self-promotion here, I just want to be very clear. If I have to mention anything else on Jack, I will, but I'm interested in the process because I believe that, along with the great Canadian hero I'm promoting, there are many out there. I'm concerned if I would have another avenue, like bringing a private member's bill to instruct you.

My only concern here is whether we are interfering with the legitimate role of an arm's-length organization that does justifiable history without any detriment to any of the claims out there.... Did you say there is no precedent for this in terms of instructing your committee?

● (1200)

Mr. Robert Waite: No, certainly not in the period since 1969. As I said, we do get requests and we always respond to them and thank people for the request. Ultimately when we issue our stamp program, we actually write to every single person, giving them a copy of this and letting them know how things ended up.

Mr. Angus, you will get a letter, one way or the other, along with everyone else.

Mr. Charlie Angus: But then I can go to private members' business.

Voices: Oh, oh!

Mr. Robert Waite: Well, stated frankly, that is my concern: that this could become a backdoor method for people to get stamps issued and I just wonder if that's really the wisest use of the time of parliamentarians time or the best way to go about it.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

I'm going to lead off with Mr. Del Mastro, and Mr. Gourde, I think, is going to share his time.

Mr. Dean Del Mastro (Peterborough, CPC): Yes. I'm going to share my time with Mr. Gourde.

Thank you both for appearing today. Put me down as being pro the Charlie Angus-Jack Munroe stamp. I apologize, but that's a stamp I'd love to collect, not that I have a vote.

You raised a very important issue and that is the manipulation of Canada Post for political purposes. Frankly, I think we could get into a real problem, especially if we had a majority government in Canada, with all kinds of orders, requests, and suggestions for stamps that could manipulate the process.

You have a non-manipulated, non-partisan, independent approval process right now that's independent or at arm's length from government, and I assume you'd like to keep it that way.

Mr. Robert Waite: Absolutely. In fact, frankly, if it changed in the way you're describing, I would not be all that interested in being chairman of the stamp advisory committee, because to me that would be such a radical change that it would render the stamp advisory committee somewhat meaningless.

Mr. Dean Del Mastro: Very good.

[Translation]

Mr. Gourde, please.

Mr. Jacques Gourde (Lotbinière—Chutes-de-la-Chaudière, CPC): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. I have a question for Mr. Waite.

How many requests does your advisory committee normally get in a year, and how many of them are normally accepted?

You mentioned various processes: the first selection stage, then the second, and maybe a third.

Can you explain that to me a little more?

[English]

Mr. Robert Waite: Sure. We get about 500 to 600 requests per year. I see all of them and the staff sees all of them. We list all of them for the committee members, so they see everything. Some of the requests, though, are either inappropriate or just don't make a lot of sense to pursue.

Two years ago, we had one that was looking for a stamp depicting a future prime minister from the youth of Canada. We weren't quite sure how we would do that. I'm sure there were parents out there who may have had some candidates for such a position, but we decided not to do a lot of work on that one.

Typically it gets winnowed down to perhaps 50 or 60 topics from which we need to pick 20. Frankly, it becomes very difficult, because again, there's the balancing act of wanting to have regional diversity. When we did recording artists, we wanted to be sure that we honoured francophone recording artists as well as English Canadian artists, which we did, so there are a lot of things to keep in mind.

We do pay special attention if it's a big anniversary for something. This year is the 100th anniversary of the Canadian Navy. Why would we have chosen that topic? Well, it's an important institution, but also we know from past experience that stamps depicting naval vessels are actually highly prized by collectors around the world.

There's an interesting balancing act in terms of selection. We look at those 40 to 60 topics really hard, bring them back, and have debates. The meetings last all day, and it can be quite heated sometimes. Like Mr. Angus, we sometimes have very strong advocates for particular—

• (1205)

Mr. Charlie Angus: Can I get on your committee?

Voices: Oh, oh!

Mr. Robert Waite: We have no politicians on our committee—sorry—by design. They're Canadian citizens with expertise in history, for example, or design. There's a woman who's a professor with expertise in women's issues and aboriginal issues, for example.

That's the process. It's very robust. It's time-tested—over more than 40 years. It became necessary because we started producing commemorative stamps in Canada in the late 1950s or early 1960s. By 1969, the postmaster general felt overwhelmed, because he was making the decisions himself. He was getting, presumably, some pressure from somewhere, so he wanted to put it off to the side.

I think it's a good system. Is it a perfect system? No. I mean, we're people trying to do the best we can, but it's pretty robust.

The Chair: Thank you very much for answering the questions that were asked here today. I apologize wholeheartedly for being late by a half an hour or better in starting our meeting.

We will recess for a short time. We'll try to keep it within five minutes so that we can get to our next witnesses.

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_____ (Pause) _____

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• (1210)

The Chair: I'm going to call the meeting back to order, please.

I welcome our next witnesses, the National Federation of Canadian Italian Business and Professional Associations, and the Italian-Canadian Advisory Committee.

I would ask that you introduce yourselves, please. We're very pleased to have you here today.

The meeting will be over at one o'clock. If we can keep our comments fairly short, that would be great. We'll do as many rounds of questions as we can.

We'll begin with the National Federation of Canadian Italian Business and Professional Associations.

Mr. Frank Mocerri (President, National Federation of Canadian Italian Business and Professional Associations): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'd like to thank the committee for inviting the national federation to this meeting.

I'd like to take a couple of minutes to highlight what the national federation's objectives are. They are to promote and foster recreational, cultural, social, artistic, charitable, business, and professional activities in the Canadian Italian community in Canada.

We are an apolitical group. We have many chapters across Canada as well. We're here to support Bill C-302.

Our presentation is probably very short. CIBPA has always been in the forefront of the redress campaign for our Italian Canadian community. It started two full years before the National Congress of Italian Canadians and it teamed up with the national congress in 1990, along with the CIAO, for the generations' attempts to get justice and fair settlements.

Our main objective is to take part in the negotiation process for Bill C-302.

Sal Mariani has been the past president for the last three years. He's here with me to help answer any questions. I'm the current president.

Mr. Pablo Rodriguez: Mr. Chair, I'm sorry, but I missed the last sentence. He wants...?

Mr. Frank Mocerì: We want to take part in the negotiation process.

The Chair: Okay.

The Italian-Canadian Advisory Committee is next, please.

Mr. Pal Di Iulio (Chair, Italian-Canadian Advisory Committee): Thank you.

Good morning.

My name is Pal Di Iulio. I'm the chair of the Italian-Canadian Advisory Committee for the Community Historical Recognition Program. As you may know, that is part of Heritage Canada.

We've been asked to serve, at the pleasure of the minister, to help encourage applications to CHRP, to help process the applications, and ultimately to recommend through parallel bureaucracy to the minister applications that come from the Italian Canadian community to promote, to recognize, and to celebrate activities—the good ones and sometimes not the good ones—in Canadian history. This is what we do.

Mr. Perin is the vice-chair. Mr. Papa is a member. I'm from Toronto. Mr. Papa's from Montreal. Mr. Perin is from both Montreal and Toronto. We're the only three members to date.

• (1215)

The Chair: Thank you.

You may ask your first question, Mr. Rodriguez.

Mr. Pablo Rodriguez: Thank you.

Buon giorno. Grazie di essere fra noi oggi.

Thanks for being here.

Mr. Di Iulio, do you support the bill or not? I didn't hear you.

Mr. Pal Di Iulio: You heard very correctly. We are here at the pleasure of the minister; we're not here to support or not support. We've been asked to do a job.

I, with a 35-year history of Italian Canadian community development in Toronto, have been asked to promote and help CHRP through that process. I'm not here to support or not support. I'm here to do the job that we've been asked to do.

Mr. Pablo Rodriguez: So are you, in a way, representing the minister or the department?

Mr. Pal Di Iulio: No, I don't represent the minister.

Mr. Pablo Rodriguez: But you're named by the minister and you're working...advising them?

Mr. Pal Di Iulio: We were appointed or asked to participate by the minister. Yes, sir.

[Translation]

Dr. Roberto Perin (Vice-Chair, Italian-Canadian Advisory Committee): I could perhaps add that officials from the Department of Canadian Heritage attend our meetings and communicate our decisions to the minister.

Mr. Pablo Rodriguez: I am not very familiar with you, although I know all the major committees. What is your role? For how long has your committee existed?

Dr. Roberto Perin: The committee was established last year. It has three members. We have had two meetings so far.

Mr. Pablo Rodriguez: Do you work together with the CIBPA and with the Congress?

Dr. Roberto Perin: But Mr. Di Iulio is heavily involved in a major Italian-Canadian organization in Toronto.

Mr. Pablo Rodriguez: Which organization is that?

Dr. Roberto Perin: The Columbus Centre. Mr. Papa is well known in the Italian community in Montreal.

Mr. Pablo Rodriguez: Mr. Mocerì, you said you wanted to be part of—

[English]

Mr. Frank Mocerì: Sorry, but I don't speak French.

Mr. Pablo Rodriguez: I know, but it's all translated here.

Mr. Frank Mocerì: Oh, I'm sorry.

Mr. Pablo Rodriguez: That's why we have the earpiece. We can do it in Italian, if you want, or Spanish.

You said you want to be part of the negotiations.

[Translation]

What motivates your desire to be part of the negotiations?

[English]

Mr. Frank Mocerì: I'm going to ask Sal to speak to this part of it.

Mr. Salvatore Mariani (Immediate Past President, National Federation of Canadian Italian Business and Professional Associations): Thank you very much.

As the president mentioned, CIBPA, or the National Federation of CIBPA, has been in the forefront of this redress issue since the late 1980s and early 1990s. We have been part of the process along with other associations, such as the national congress and, *à l'époque*, the CIAO.

Since that period of time, we've participated in all processes, both for redress and as one of the signatories to the ACE program. So the national federation and other associations were part of the ACE program and the signing of that document.

So the national federation has been part of the process.

Mr. Pablo Rodriguez: I know you well and have a lot of respect for what you do.

In 2005 under Paul Martin, we had this important agreement...I don't know what you call it. What happened to it afterwards?

Mr. Salvatore Mariani: Well, the ACE program, and it was a program, had an agreement in principle that allotted for an initial \$2.5 million with the spirit...and the whole process to reach up to \$12.5 million. It was evident in a lot of the messages back then that the Government of Canada was promoting it during the months of December and January and right up until the election period. We were there as part of the co-signatories of the agreement.

•(1220)

Mr. Pablo Rodriguez: You were there, right?

Mr. Salvatore Mariani: I was there—

Mr. Pablo Rodriguez: You were a co-signatory with the *congresso italiano* and...?

Mr. Salvatore Mariani: Well, there was the Order Sons of Italy, there was the national congress, and there was the Fondation Communautaire Canadienne-Italienne du Québec.

Mr. Pablo Rodriguez: That was a good agreement at the time, which reserved \$2.5 million at the beginning, as you said, but was it killed after the Liberals lost power?

Mr. Salvatore Mariani: At that time, the government in question changed power, so we had a new government in a place and we allowed the process.... Because when a new government comes into place, there is the usual learning curve of a new government. It took place, and we started discussions with—

Mr. Pablo Rodriguez: It has been four years since. They're not so new now.

The Chair: Your time's up, Mr. Rodriguez.

We'll move on now to Madame Lavallée, please.

[Translation]

Mrs. Carole Lavallée: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

First, I would like to understand this constellation of organizations, so to speak. Is your federation a member of the advisory committee?

Mr. Salvatore Mariani: No. The federation is not a member. Neither am I.

Mrs. Carole Lavallée: I am talking about the Italian-Canadian Advisory Committee, the organization that these gentlemen represent, that is.

Mr. Salvatore Mariani: No, we are not members.

Mrs. Carole Lavallée: Do you want to add anything, Mr. Di Iulio?

[English]

Mr. Pal Di Iulio: Our committee is a committee of the CHRP, so I am not here saying that I represent across Canada.... We are of Italian origin. We all have community experience and historical and other experience. We were asked to participate and help review and vet applications that would be received through CHRP and make recommendations.

So I do not want you to believe that I represent or we represent this group or any other group. I have other hats. I have participated for the past 30 years in various groups that have made presentations on this subject for many reasons, but today I represent, and we represent, the consultative committee of the CHRP.

[Translation]

Mrs. Carole Lavallée: I am going to ask a question that perhaps is going to cause some trouble.

Which organization speaks for the Italian community in Canada?

There we go! I did cause trouble! Ah, ah!

Mr. Salvatore Mariani: Are you asking the National Federation, or...?

Mrs. Carole Lavallée: I do not know. I am not very familiar with your constellation of organizations. I am just asking innocent questions.

Mr. Joe Papa (Member, Italian-Canadian Advisory Committee): There is the National Federation of Canadian Italian Business and Professional Associations, the CIBPA, as we call it, the Italian-Canadian Community Foundation, the National Congress of Italian-Canadians, and the Sons of Italy. Those are the four major organizations in the Italian community in Canada.

Mrs. Carole Lavallée: And none of those four is really in a leadership position? They are all more or less on an equal footing?

Mr. Joe Papa: A committee of the presidents of those associations has been formed. That is the stage we are at at the moment.

Mrs. Carole Lavallée: Okay.

Mr. Salvatore Mariani: The roles are—

Mrs. Carole Lavallée: I understand that you have different roles. I understand that.

Mr. Salvatore Mariani: Exactly. We are...

[English]

an apolitical professional business organization.

[Translation]

Like other congresses, the National Congress of Italian Canadians represents the people. The National Federation of CIBPA brings together businessmen and women from all across Canada. There are national sections. Its role is similar, but different at the same time.

Mrs. Carole Lavallée: Are you all in favour of the bill that we are considering at the moment?

Mr. Salvatore Mariani: As our president pointed out, the National Federation of CIBPA is in favour of Bill C-302 in principle. We are really touched by—

[English]

specifically, the apology in the House of Commons. That makes probably the biggest difference in what has transpired to this day. What we find striking sensitively in our hearts was the apology in the House of Commons, very similar to what was done for other groups, such as the Japanese in 1988 under the former prime minister, Mr. Martin.

[Translation]

Mrs. Carole Lavallée: And, as for the rest, the educational program and the postage stamp, do you think they are secondary?

•(1225)

Mr. Salvatore Mariani: They are part of Bill C-302.

[English]

the restitution, for education. The bill states also “restitution”, as I read it here. Again, it depends on how we read it, but restitution as a global word.... That could mean restitution for education. That could be restitution as with the families. I'm not sure if that's what it implies, but perhaps that could be elaborated on, probably in your decision-making. But definitely, to give back to the community, to the families that have been hurt by this, we look at it as restitution. That's how we read the bill.

[Translation]

Mrs. Carole Lavallée: I am sorry, but the clock is ticking.

Are you in favour of the entire bill?

Dr. Roberto Perin: Some measures are already in effect to address the grievances of the Italian community. What we have to know is whether the bill does better than those measures.

Mrs. Carole Lavallée: Okay.

If we voted for the bill, would it settle your grievances once and for all?

[English]

Mr. Pal Di Iulio: Madame, it's a valid question. I can't answer that. I don't claim to represent or speak for myriad organizations, all worthy but sometimes with different voices, across Canada. I can't speak to that.

All I know is that right now we're trying to implement what is on the table as best we can. If there were other rules, other laws, more money, or other things, maybe we could implement better.

The Chair: We have to move on.

Mr. Angus, please.

Mr. Charlie Angus: Thank you very much.

Leo Mascioli built the town of Timmins. He brought the families over from Abruzzia. They worked in the McIntyre mines, and they built every big building all across northern Ontario as Leo Mascioli's picture, but nobody knows that Leo Mascioli was taken from his home and thrown into an internment camp. That was a proud family and they were loyal citizens, so an apology in the House of Commons is something that I think is powerful, because these people were our founders.

I'm not sure what I'm hearing today. I'm sensing there's a subplot that I'm not getting. As politicians, we're extreme generalists, so you have to excuse us for not being right up on all the ins and outs. On most given days, I deal with whether Mrs. O'Grady's hearing is getting turned off.

I'm hearing you talk.... You say you want to be part of the negotiations. Does that mean you're not part of them now, that you're being left out?

Mr. Salvatore Mariani: No, not at all. Actually, we've spoken to our colleagues at the congress level. Again, the bill states “negotiate with the National Congress...”. All we're saying is that the national federation has been part of the process since the early 1990s. We've been part of this process, so we are saying that we'd like to be part of this process as well, along with perhaps other associations that pertain to this—but part of the process.

Mr. Charlie Angus: So does Bill C-302 write you in or out of the process?

Mr. Frank Mocerri: As it stands now, we're not named in the process at all, although prior to that we were named in the process all along.

Mr. Charlie Angus: You were in the process. Why do you think you've been left out?

Mr. Frank Mocerri: We agree with everything that has transpired through the bill. However, in all of the negotiations when the ACE program was on, we were always part of the negotiating team, part of the advisory committee on behalf of our chapters and whatnot. But right now, they're only naming the congress, so we don't know if we could take part in it as the national federation, and we'd like to be named as part of it or to at least assist in it.

Mr. Charlie Angus: Mr. Di Iulio, do you think this bill undoes some of the work that you're doing through Heritage?

Mr. Pal Di Iulio: I don't know how to comment on that. We are simply implementing what has been decided by the present government. We're trying to implement some of the very same programs, perhaps by a different acronym than ACE, to acknowledge, commemorate, and educate. If you read the application forms, that's what it does.

Should more be done? Again, I'm here. I asked Mr. Dupuis, “Am I coming here as Pal Di Iulio, the president of Villa Charities Inc. in Columbus Centre, or am I coming here as the chair of this committee?”

I'm here as the chair of the committee. I'm saying as a chair of the committee that in the proposed bill we're addressing some of the issues that are parallel. Again, could things be done better with more money and more time...?

•(1230)

Mr. Charlie Angus: So you're saying this bill is not necessary because there's already a process in place?

Mr. Pal Di Iulio: There is a process. Some people obviously believe the bill is necessary, but there is a process that we are trying to get the community engaged in, to participate in.

As a group, we have been involved only since March of this year. We've received approximately 10 applications that we are vetting, along with the bureaucracy, and we have made or will be making recommendations to the minister to fund or grant some of these projects that stress acknowledgement, recognition, education, and things of that nature.

Mr. Charlie Angus: I have a final question here—again because we're extreme generalists. You're our experts, really, and we need your advice.

I'm looking at a bill that looks good to me and you're telling me there's a process in place. Do you recommend this bill to me or do you say there's something already on the table?

That's for either one of you.

Mr. Salvatore Mariani: Absolutely—the National Federation of CIBPA supports Bill C-302.

Mr. Charlie Angus: Thank you.

The Chair: We'll move on now to Mr. Del Mastro, please.

Mr. Dean Del Mastro: Thank you very much.

Thank you to our witnesses.

As a Canadian who is very proud of his Italian heritage, I'll tell you that I don't support Bill C-302. I think it has very significant problems, and I'm actually surprised, on a number of levels, that you would support Bill C-302. I think it'll fracture the Italian community and fracture it quite badly, actually.

I'm proud to have served on the executive of the Peterborough and District Italian Club. I'm proud to have worked to raise money for the L'Aquila relief program; we're going to present a very significant cheque in Oshawa. I worked on it with a fundraiser in St. Catharines. I attended the damaged sites with Mr. Di Iulio this past summer. I lost my grandfather a couple of years ago, who was, in my actual family, my last direct link back to Italy, but I do feel that connection to Italy and certainly to the Italian Canadian community.

But, I look, for example, at problems with the bill, like the fact that the National Congress of Italian Canadians are the only ones named in the bill.

They cut your group out, sir.

And they certainly cut your group out, sir.

It establishes an endowment fund for which only they will decide who actually gets the money. Don't you think this is going to fracture the Italian Canadian community? I can tell you from just serving on boards on my local Italian club that money being spent by the club on any given initiative tended to raise some passions with the Italian community.

I think if they're going to cut out significant organizations across this country, which this bill does, it's going to fracture, not unite, the Italian community. Don't you agree?

Mr. Frank Mocerri: We are here on behalf of our chapters to address that part that we are not named in the bill. We've always been part of the negotiations of the others, the ACE program and every program prior to that and during that. We have always worked

with the congress, the Sons of Italy, and the chambers and whatnot, but we are not being named in this. We want to work alongside them.

We do recommend the bill. We do approve the bill on behalf of our association, but we're asking to be part of that bill. That's the main reason we're here.

Mr. Dean Del Mastro: So you want amendments to the bill, at the very least.

• (1235)

Mr. Frank Mocerri: At the very least, yes, exactly.

Mr. Dean Del Mastro: Thank you.

Mr. Di Iulio, does the idea of a scholarship fund, which is part of what they are seeking to create, have anything to do with acknowledgement or commemoration of what's occurred?

I can tell you that my family grew up in northern Ontario. My grandfather was lucky to land a job at the Canadian Pacific Railway shortly after arriving in Halifax and he suffered extreme discrimination—extreme. They came here in 1927. When the war broke out, they were *the* Italian family in their town, and they were hated for it. My dad's name was Enrico Guisepe. He changed his name to Hank, because he didn't want anybody to know he was Italian.

That was the kind of shame this action brought upon my family. But I fail to see how an endowment fund that would support a scholarship fund that would be arbitrarily decided by a board is going to do anything to acknowledge that what happened to families like mine was wrong.

Mr. Pal Di Iulio: Scholarship funds are good, but the reason I'm involved passionately is that I feel we're unaware, sadly, of our total Canadian history, and in many cases, the Italian Canadian community across Canada is unaware. This will vary. In Montreal, they tend to be a little bit more passionate. In other parts of the country, they either did not know or have forgotten.

It is important to commemorate, record, and celebrate. It is important to make sure that it is in the history books at all levels, especially at the high-school level, because Canadians tend to drop their history early, sadly. By the time they get to university or beyond, many people in Canada don't know, as I didn't, about the Japanese issue, the Chinese issue, and the Italian Canadian issue.

What's most important is for all of us to feel part and parcel of having built.... I see the Italian Canadian community as either the last pioneers or the first immigrants. I think that's important. All of us, regardless of which group we come from, would like to see ourselves reflected in that mirror called history.

This program, CHRP, attempts and does that. Can it do more? More time, more money, and better people can always do a great job, but this is an attempt. It's a good start.

The Chair: Thank you.

We'll move on to Mr. McCallum, please.

Hon. John McCallum (Markham—Unionville, Lib.): Thank you.

How much time do I have?

The Chair: You have five minutes.

Hon. John McCallum: Thank you.

I'll begin with Mr. Mariani and continue with Mr. Rodriguez' questions.

I think he had established, or you had agreed, that Paul Martin had \$2.5 million on the table. After we lost the election, is it true to say that no money came back or that nothing significant has come up until this bill? Or is there something else going on?

Mr. Frank Moceri: It was \$12.5 million. That was the number, but—

A voice: Initially it was \$12.5 million.

Mr. Frank Moceri: Initially it was \$12.5 million, but ever since then, should I say, programs have been put in place that never matured to anything at the end, like the ACE program was brought to the forefront and never ever finished.

Have there been any other programs? It's been all programs, but there's been nothing.... Now that we see Bill C-302, it is definitely a step in the right direction to make sure this takes place.

Hon. John McCallum: So there has been nothing concrete in terms of money or actions?

Mr. Frank Moceri: No.

Sal, are you aware of anything?

Mr. Salvatore Mariani: If I may add to what the president is saying, subsequent to the new government's taking office, the national federation and the other signatories were in discussions with the new government. Those took place for a while. There were discussions. As a matter of fact, there were very pleasant discussions with the new government in order to follow through on the agreement in principle that was signed.

Hon. John McCallum: You had some nice discussions, but four years later, nothing has happened.

Mr. Salvatore Mariani: What has transpired, from what we can gather, is that at that point the government in question came up with its own CHRP, which was not approved or finalized by the four signatories. It was a unilateral process that was put in place, and a new program was put in place.

The Chair: Mr. Perin, did you have something you wanted to say?

Hon. John McCallum: I'd like to just continue.

I might also say, after discussion with my colleagues, that I'm sure our party would also be open to amendments to the bill to make it not just one name but whoever is appropriate for the task.

• (1240)

Mr. Salvatore Mariani: That is what we would like to see as part of our process.

Hon. John McCallum: The critic has indicated a willingness for that.

To Mr. Di Iulio, I'm a little confused, because you said at the beginning you were appointed by the minister and you're here to do your job, but I don't really understand what your job is in terms of this committee and this bill.

Mr. Pal Di Iulio: My job as volunteer chair of this committee is to review applications that are made to the CHRP, evaluate those applications, along with the members and staff, and recommend to the minister on those applications that meet the criteria and have been vetted on all the areas I have to look at. That's my job. That's why we're here. We were asked to come here.

Hon. John McCallum: How many have you approved so far?

Mr. Pal Di Iulio: We have received approximately 10 and we've approved, to the minister's office, three or four. They're being dealt with or will be dealt with.

Hon. John McCallum: You have no opinion, positive or negative, on this bill.

Mr. Pal Di Iulio: Sir, I have a lot of opinions. My role was to come here today, as I was asked, and I came here as the chair of this particular committee.

Hon. John McCallum: If we're debating this bill, what's the point of coming here if you can't comment at all on the bill? I don't mean to be rude; I'm just a bit perplexed. We want to know whether this is a good bill and you don't have an opinion on that.

Mr. Pal Di Iulio: I'm trying, sir, but it's very easy to get into the political field, which I've tried to stay away from for the first 35 years of my community work. What you're asking me to do is to get into a political situation. I'm trying definitely not to do that. I'm sorry.

Hon. John McCallum: I'm trying not to be political, but just to go on the content.

Let me ask you a specific question, then. One of the things this bill calls for is an apology. Are you in favour of that?

Mr. Pal Di Iulio: An apology was given. If the apology were to be given in the House of Commons, I'd say, "Great, even better".

Hon. John McCallum: It's talking about appropriate funding after negotiations with various Italian organizations as to how that money may best be spent. Are you in favour of that?

Mr. Pal Di Iulio: I have varying degrees of understanding as to how much money was discussed, how much money was on the table, how much money was on a separate table, and what was agreed to by whom and when. I wasn't there personally. There's a whole personality and politics around these issues. That's why I'm trying not to give a comment.

But I do know that right now there is \$5 million on the table to apply towards the community historical recognition program, and we've been asked, as Canadians with some expertise, to try to help the minister approve those....

Hon. John McCallum: Okay. Thank you very much.

The Chair: We'll move on to Mr. Pomerleau, please.

[Translation]

Mr. Roger Pomerleau: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I know, of course, that it was the member for Saint-Léonard—Saint-Michel who rose in the House and introduced this bill. I personally applauded that because I know the Italian community well. My father was a contractor in the 1950s and the first people to arrive from Italy almost all settled in Villeray where my father had his business. A number of them worked for us, they spoke not a word of French or English and they wore scarves on their heads when they worked. That is how the Italian community in Montreal was born.

I know that, for a long time, a part of the community was affected by the War Measures Act that was in force during the war. As you know, Quebeckers are in general agreement with the bill's intent to recognize past injustices. Quebeckers suffered the same kinds of injustices. You will recall that the War Measures Act was invoked in Quebec in 1970. Four hundred Quebeckers were arrested for no reason at all. They were never charged, they never had their day in court, they were put in prison for political reasons, with no shred of evidence that they were guilty of anything. So we understand past injustices perfectly well and we agree with rectifying them in whatever way we can.

My question is kind of like Mr. McCallum's. I am a bit skeptical when I do not understand things. Mr. Perin, you said just now there is currently a process in place. What exactly is the difference between what is currently in place and what is contained in Bill C-302?

• (1245)

Dr. Roberto Perin: I was not part of the discussions leading to the agreement known as ACE. I am not very familiar with what went on before. However, I can tell you that the government has initiated a process under which Italian Canadian organizations can apply for grants specifically to commemorate the internment of Italians during the Second World War. Our committee has had two meetings already. We have examined ten or so requests and we have approved three or four of them. I feel that the commemoration objective is well on its way to fruition.

Now, my answer to you is like my colleague Mr. Di Iulio's. Would \$12 million be better than \$5 million? Clearly. Is the Italian Canadian National Congress the only organization that the government should be dealing with? That is not clear.

I wanted to tell Mrs. Lavallée that there is no organization in Canada—

Mrs. Carole Lavallée: No umbrella organization.

Dr. Roberto Perin: — no umbrella organization in Canada that represents all Italians. There is no Italian community. There are Italians who—

Mr. Pal Di Iulio: There are a lot of communities.

Dr. Roberto Perin: There are a lot of Italian communities that are very different from one another. Does favouring one organization mean that it represents the Italian community? I am not sure about that at all.

[English]

The Chair: Mr. Del Mastro.

Mr. Dean Del Mastro: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Before I get into my questions, can I first stress the difference between what was done to the Italian Canadian community in 1940 and the FLQ?

• (1250)

There is no similarity there—

Mr. Roger Pomerleau: It's identical.

Mr. Dean Del Mastro: These were just everyday people going about their lives who were pulled off the streets. They hadn't done anything. They were labelled as enemy aliens because across the ocean, where they had no contact at all, they picked the wrong side, mostly because they were afraid. It had nothing to do with the FLQ, nothing.

Mr. Roger Pomerleau: Four hundred people jailed, and no accusations, no accusations at all—

Mr. Dean Del Mastro: That's outrageous. Anyway—

Mr. Roger Pomerleau: It is outrageous, what you say.

Mr. Dean Del Mastro: No, it's outrageous to equate them.

First of all, the problem with this bill, and the problem with even going through this process, is that we start to get away from historical recognition and we start to drive political wedges.

Mr. Di Iulio has indicated a couple of times that he's uncomfortable with the questions. He's uncomfortable with the questions because you're trying to take the Italian community and fracture it.

A voice: [Inaudible—Editor]

Mr. Dean Del Mastro: Yes, absolutely. That's the problem with this bill. That's the problem with it.

The Italian community... I'll tell you that my grandfather—and I loved him to death and respected him so much—came to this country with zero, nothing, nothing at all, and built a life. His whole family is successful. They worked hard. They have earned everything this country has provided them. They've earned it.

But they're all extremely proud Canadians, extremely proud, and never ever... In fact, I clearly remember him telling me upon his return from Italy when he had gone to visit family that it was great to go back, but he knew that he lived in the greatest country on the planet. I think a lot of Canadians felt that way, including those who were actually here during the internment.

What a lot of people need to understand in this Parliament is that there were several waves of Italian immigrants into Canada. There were those who came before the Second World War, then there was a gap, and then there were a lot who came in the fifties, more who came in the sixties, a few who came in the seventies, and not many in terms of the bulk of the Italian community who have come since then. The experiences were different depending on when they came.

Certainly, those who came in the fifties and sixties, those who were here before them, and those who came later have worked to earn the respect of the Canadian people, because it was not always equal. They weren't always equal. There was a lot of discrimination.

As a kid, I was discriminated against because my name isn't very usual. I have a two-word last name; that's kind of odd. A lot of people couldn't spell it or pronounce it. With these types of things, you had to work for that respect. I'm proud to be the first person of Italian Canadian descent ever to be elected in my riding. In fact, I'm one of the few Roman Catholics to ever be elected in my riding—or at least of Roman Catholic descent.

I want to get to this issue of the promised \$12.5 million from the Liberal Party. There were a lot of promises from the Liberal Party. We have Copenhagen coming up; they promised to reduce our greenhouse gas emissions and inflated them by 35%. That was a promise and they signed a contract on that. They promised to establish a national day care program. They didn't do that. They promised to eliminate the GST. They didn't do that.

They were the government in 1940. They were the predominant government from the period of time from 1940 all the way through until today. They've had almost all of the time in government. From 1993 until 2005, they were the government. If this is a priority for them, if this bill is not simply about driving a political wedge and pulling people apart, then I don't know how else to frame it, because for 13 years they could have undertaken this.

It wasn't new. In 1988, Brian Mulroney said that on behalf of all Canadians he wanted to acknowledge and apologize to the Italian community. If that wasn't sufficient... That's what this bill says: that it wasn't sufficient.

Okay, but they were in government for 13 years. In 1988, there was a commemoration under CHRP of \$10 million to the Taras Shevchenko foundation to commemorate Canadian First World War internment, so there was a model in place. If they didn't feel what Mr. Mulroney did at the time was sufficient.... For 13 years they did nothing on it, until they were on their deathbed. Also, they signed the Kelowna accord literally hours before they were tossed out for stealing Canadians' money.

Then they have deals like this as well. They come back with a bill that's going to cut groups apart. It names a specific Italian congress that is apparently going to represent all Italians when I know that's not true—because I know all the groups.

I've been to luncheons with the Canadian Italian Business and Professional Association in Toronto. I have attended those. I have attended events at the Columbus foundation. I've attended Italian clubs across this country. I've been in Vancouver for the Italian Canadian business entrepreneur of the year awards.

It's separate. There is no umbrella organization. To establish a fund that would divide people—and believe me, this bill would—is a step backwards. That's my view.

The Chair: There was no question there?

Mr. Dean Del Mastro: There is no question.

The Chair: There was no question, so with that, we've made our rounds.

I thank all our witnesses for their answers.

I really appreciate your coming to this meeting today.

With that, the meeting is adjourned.

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