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—
Chair

The Honourable Michael Chong

Standing Committee on Official Languages

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• (1100)

[Translation]

The Chair (Hon. Michael Chong (Wellington—Halton Hills, CPC)): Welcome to the 58th meeting of the Standing Committee on Official Languages. Today is Thursday, November 1, 2012. Pursuant to Standing Order 108, we are here to study linguistic duality during the 150th anniversary celebrations of Canadian Confederation in 2017.

Our witnesses today represent three groups. We will hear from Ms. Kenny and Ms. Côté of the *Fédération des communautés francophones et acadienne du Canada*, from Mr. Couture and Mr. Groulx of the *Fédération de la jeunesse canadienne-française*,

[English]

and Mr. Thompson and Madame O'Donnell from the Quebec Community Groups Network. Welcome to you all.

We'll begin with an opening statement from the *Fédération des communautés francophones et acadienne du Canada*.

[Translation]

Ms. Marie-France Kenny (President, Fédération des communautés francophones et acadienne du Canada): Good morning Mr. Chair and committee members.

I would like to begin by thanking you for inviting the *Fédération des communautés francophones et acadienne du Canada* to appear before the committee during its study of the 150th anniversary celebrations of Canadian Confederation in 2017. I am always happy to have the opportunity to speak to you.

According to the latest information from the 2011 Census, I am here today on behalf of not 2.5 million, but 2.6 million French-speaking citizens living in nine provinces and three territories. I will share some ideas about how we can make this celebration an event that defines a generation.

This is the second time this year that we have had the privilege of discussing this issue with parliamentarians. The FCFA appeared before your colleagues on the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage earlier this year during its study of the 150th anniversary celebrations. We have reviewed that committee's recommendations, and I will come back to them later in my presentation.

By way of introduction, let me read you a quote:

...Canada is the country it is today because we have learned to accept our differences, to celebrate them, to gain strength from them, but also sometimes to see past them, to our shared values and our common aspirations, freedom, democracy, justice for all individuals and for all communities.

These words were spoken by the Prime Minister of Canada during a speech in Beaubassin on August 29.

Those words distill the essence of the FCFA's vision for the 150th anniversary celebrations: a vision of sharing, exchange and dialogue that highlights the importance of seizing every opportunity to strengthen ties between all of Canada's constituent parts.

Indeed, while linguistic duality and cultural diversity are now widely recognized by the government and Canadians as values that define our nation and society, opportunities for dialogue and exchange between the various communities remain limited. It often seems that Canadian society consists of groups that, owing to distance or different backgrounds, do not have the chance to talk to each other and understand each other.

Consider the media coverage and public debate about last week's publication of linguistic data from the 2011 Census. Canadians may recognize the value of linguistic duality, but their interpretations of it differ considerably. Some claim that the new bilingualism is English plus one of the many languages spoken by immigrants to Canada. Others believe that French is for Quebec and English is for everywhere else, period. It is easy for them to overlook the 2.6 million francophones living in nine provinces and three territories.

We believe that one of the goals of the 150th anniversary celebrations must be to restore Canadians' desire to learn about each other and to move forward together. We want to be able to say in 2017 that all segments of Canadian society took the time to learn about each other, talk to each other and recognize each other as fellow Canadians while respecting their respective differences. This is not just a desirable outcome; it is of tremendous value for the growth and development of a country like ours.

For Francophone and Acadian communities, this would mean finally being seen as more than just minorities and instead being seen as distinct Canadian communities. This would mean that people would understand once and for all that French-speaking and English-speaking Canadians have equal language rights and that this equality benefits all of Canada.

Those are the key principles. Now let us look at how to put them into practice.

Dialogue and exchange initiatives that target youth have a particularly significant impact. Our communities know something about this: we need only look at the success stories of the Acadian Games, Jeux de la francophonie canadienne or youth parliaments organized by the Fédération de la jeunesse canadienne-française. We recommended to the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage that these initiatives be used as models for establishing large-scale events that would enable youth from francophone, anglophone, aboriginal and ethnocultural communities to meet and experience Canada's defining values together. Today, we are reiterating that recommendation.

Another way to help young people discover their country would be to foster greater mobility among post-secondary students through joint federal-provincial and territorial initiatives. We are not the first to have noticed that it can be easier for an Ontario university student to study abroad than in Quebec, and vice versa. Initiatives that foster student mobility would be launched during the 2016-17 school year and continue in future years, becoming a tangible legacy of the 150th anniversary celebrations. Not only would these initiatives enable young people to learn about how other Canadians live, they would also support second language acquisition and an understanding of the value of Canada's linguistic duality.

• (1105)

More generally, as the 150th anniversary of Confederation approaches, the Government of Canada could make it easier for more Canadians to learn a second official language by investing more in immersion programs, which, as we know, are struggling to meet ever-growing demand. A government that wants to highlight the entire history of Canada should make it a priority to celebrate the pact between its two founding peoples and two founding languages by striving to work with the provinces and territories to eliminate waiting lists for those who wish to learn one of these two languages.

In addition, the FCFA notes that your colleagues on the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage included in their report a recommendation to increase co-operation among local museums to create and promote exhibits about Canada's 150th anniversary. We recommend that this increased co-operation extend beyond museums to heritage and historical organizations, enabling them to forge links and work on joint projects that involve all communities. Such co-operation would promote intergenerational interaction, for example, giving seniors and youth the chance to share their thoughts on what it means to be Canadian.

These are some ideas that would make the 150th anniversary of Confederation an excellent opportunity to celebrate our shared values, including linguistic duality.

Finally, I would like to comment on the practical aspect, the mechanisms that will be implemented for the celebrations in 2017. The FCFA is delighted that the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage recommended that the government consult with all the different groups in society, including representatives of aboriginal peoples, ethnocultural communities and official language minority communities, regarding the future framework for the celebrations. It would be appropriate and helpful for the Standing Committee on Official Languages to formally endorse this recommendation.

The Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage also recommended that the government create an independent agency or corporation to plan, organize and implement the 150th anniversary celebrations. We believe it is essential that this entity be bilingual and that it include representatives of francophone and Acadian communities. From the very beginning, when the government unveils its plans for the 2017 celebrations, it must send a message that everything created, implemented, built or presented for or to the public will be bilingual. This includes museum exhibits, family activities, official ceremonies during events paid for by the Government of Canada and any tangible legacies of the 150th anniversary, such as monuments and buildings.

I would like to end my presentation with a somewhat more philosophical but nevertheless important recommendation. Many Canadians who experienced the celebrations of the centennial of Confederation in 1967 remember them still. I still have my little passport, in fact. I was very young then, but I still have my passport. This shows how successful these initiatives were; they touched people and brought them together. That is how high the bar has been set for 2017.

I recommend that this committee think big while preparing its report at the conclusion of this study. It is important to talk about the mechanisms and processes that should be in place, and I am sure that some of your recommendations will touch on that. However, the how must not obscure the why. We want to celebrate the 150th anniversary of Confederation because we want to rally Canadians around our common values and restore their desire to talk to and learn about each other, from one end of this vast country to the other. I hope that you—I hope that we—conceive of celebrations that can attain this goal.

Thank you. I am ready to take your questions.

• (1110)

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Kenny.

[*English*]

Now we'll have an opening statement from the Quebec Community Groups Network.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Joyce Bateman (Winnipeg South Centre, CPC): I have a brief question. For people who learn visually, it is useful to have the presentation in hand. Is a paper copy of the presentation available?

The Chair: No, not right now, because it is only available in French.

Ms. Joyce Bateman: The next time we see Ms. Kenny, I would like her to make her presentation available. That would help us all. Some people learn with their ears; others with their eyes.

Hon. Stéphane Dion (Saint-Laurent—Cartierville, Lib.): Others do both at the same time.

Ms. Joyce Bateman: You may be versatile, but not everyone is.

The Chair: The clerk will have the document translated.

Ms. Joyce Bateman: I think the same thing happened when Ms. Kenny testified in December. It is difficult.

I am very interested in what you have to say, but it is easier for me to understand what you are saying if your presentation is available on paper. Thank you.

The Chair: Okay.

These three organizations received their invitations to testify last week. Either they did not have time to translate their documents before giving their presentations, or they did not have the resources. The committee may be partly to blame if they did not have enough time.

Ms. Joyce Bateman: We have the resources; the clerk could take care of it.

[*English*]

The Chair: No, it's not possible. If it were possible, we would have had it done; House translation can't translate things that quickly.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Joyce Bateman: A week is plenty of time for the House. Under the act, these documents must be translated.

[*English*]

The Chair: I've chaired committees now for a number of years. When we invite witnesses with short notice and they have to create an opening statement and they don't have the resources to translate it in time—

[*Translation*]

Ms. Joyce Bateman: Okay.

I apologize, Mr. Chair.

[*English*]

The Chair: If we give them two or three weeks' notice, then it's possible for them and us to get it translated in time. In their defence, they were only given notice last week, and they had to prepare an opening statement. Even if we had received the statement, let's say, a couple of days ago, it wouldn't have been possible to get it all translated in time for the meeting.

What I will endeavour to do is to have all of the opening statements translated into both official languages and have them distributed to all members of the committee.

As for witnesses who are appearing in front of our committee in two to three weeks, we'll ensure that their opening statements are translated. If they don't have the resources to do it in-house, I'll instruct the clerk to ask them for the statements ahead of time, and we'll get them translated, but it simply wasn't possible for us to get that done. This is why we have simultaneous translation.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Joyce Bateman: Okay. Thank you.

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

Mr. Yvon Godin (Acadie—Bathurst, NDP): I would like to clarify that the only thing the law requires is that people be able to

express themselves in their official language. That is why we have simultaneous interpretation.

I would never want our witnesses to feel intimidated or to feel that they cannot appear before the committee on a week's notice because their documents are not available in both languages. I just want to make sure that witnesses feel comfortable. In Canada, they have the right to express themselves in the official language of their choice.

It is up to us to take care of translation for committee members. That has always been how we do things in Parliament.

● (1115)

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you, Madame Bateman, for your constructive suggestion.

Monsieur Godin, thank you as well.

We'll have an opening statement now from the Quebec Community Groups Network.

Mr. Stephen Thompson (Director, Policy, Research and Public Affairs, Quebec Community Groups Network): Good morning, Mr. Chong, Monsieur Godin, Monsieur Dion, Monsieur Gourde, and members of the committee. It is a pleasure for the QCGN to be back before this committee today.

We are especially pleased to be joined today by Lorraine O'Donnell, the coordinator-researcher of Quebec English-Speaking Communities Research Network, QUESCREN, a joint initiative of the Canadian Institute for Research on Linguistic Minorities, CIRLM, and Concordia University's School of Extended Learning.

QUESCREN is a dynamic alliance of researchers, community members, and institutions dedicated to developing research capacity related to Quebec's English-speaking communities. Significant community energy has been invested in creating and supporting QUESCREN, and there is no doubt that investment is paying off. Dr. O'Donnell has worked tirelessly to create an academic environment that is welcoming of research related to our community. Equally important, she has done so in a manner that includes the community sector. QUESCREN is allowing us to develop an organic capacity to generate research, creating an evidence base of value to practitioners and policy leaders.

The QCGN was pleased to see this committee undertake a separate study on preparations for our 150th anniversary of Confederation. A significant part of our history before, during, and since Confederation is rooted in the struggles, triumphs, and compromises of and between Canada's two official languages. Linguistic duality is not an add-on to our national story; it is the story.

We have reviewed the report of October 11, 2012, by your colleagues on the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage. The recommendations contained therein are arranged by activities: planning, legacies, participation, and museums. We will base our comments and recommendations to you in the same order.

On planning: if the Government of Canada creates an independent agency or corporation to plan, organize, and implement Canada's 150th anniversary of Confederation, the QCGN hopes that such an organization would include representation from Canada's English and French linguistic minority communities. Canada's official language minority communities are living proof of linguistic duality, with Canadians living in both of our official national languages from coast to coast to coast. The QCGN often helps our public partners identify key community leaders suitable for similar undertakings, and we would certainly offer our assistance in this matter.

On legacies: English-speaking Quebec is blessed with a vibrant arts scene that is well organized and connected to the vitality of our community. We draw the committee's attention in particular to the English-Language Arts Network, a leading arts and culture sector community organization. ELAN works in six key areas that fit very well with the legacy recommendations of the heritage committee's report. We would urge the committee to remember that the arts and culture of English-speaking Quebec are unique, reflecting our special history as a linguistic minority. The stories of both Canada's French and English linguistic minority communities deserve equal consideration and equitable exposure during the anniversary's legacy projects.

The ESCQ is also very interested in benefiting from legacy projects to digitize Canada's documentary heritage as part of Canada's 150th anniversary celebrations of Confederation. This is an excellent way to enhance a community's vitality.

On participation: the English-speaking community of Quebec has established social media networks that could augment efforts to encourage participation in the 150th anniversary. We would also remind the committee of our network of community newspapers, many of which have online and web 2.0 channels.

Tourism is an important economic activity and employer in many English-speaking communities outside of the Montreal CMA, the census metropolitan area. Regions such as the Lower North Shore, the Gaspé, central Quebec, the Eastern Townships, and western Quebec are not only historically important to the story of Confederation but could directly benefit from tourism marketing initiatives focused on the anniversary. On the same principle, incentives to encourage Canadians to explore their country during 2017 can certainly be designed to steer people to the heritage of their French and English linguistic minority communities.

• (1120)

On museums: the Quebec Anglophone Heritage Network, QAHN, is an umbrella organization engaged with its members in promoting preservation of the built, cultural, and natural heritage of Quebec. QAHN aims to advance knowledge of the history of Quebec's English-speaking communities by informing, inspiring, and connecting people through its activities. English-speaking Quebec should at once see and be seen in travelling exhibits and participate in museum projects, and our historical institutions should benefit from special marketing measures undertaken in support of the anniversary.

Linguistic duality has been a core Canadian value and must therefore be an integral part of our nation's 150th celebrations of

Confederation. This is far beyond conforming to a law; it is about honestly representing our collective history.

The English-speaking community of Quebec is one of Canada's two linguistic minority communities. Our history predates Confederation by more than a century, and our story is an important and integral part of the history of Canada. We hope this committee's recommendations reflect this reality and lead to an anniversary that truly celebrates the heritage of both our official languages.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Thompson.

[*Translation*]

We will now hear from representatives of the Fédération de la jeunesse canadienne-française.

Mr. Alexis Couture (President, Fédération de la jeunesse canadienne-française): Thank you.

Hello everyone.

Before I begin I want to apologize in advance to the interpreters. I hope I will not have to be stopped three times for speaking too fast like the last time. The other thing that is different this time from my last appearance is that I will not get the chance to skip my university classes since the university has so generously given us the week off. I am taking advantage of my time off to be here.

Above all, I want to thank you for inviting me to be here with you today. We believe—and I personally believe—that young people represent the diversity that our country has built and has welcomed over the past 150 years. It is with great pride that we represent Canada's French-speaking youth before you today.

For almost 40 years, our federation has been representing the interests of French-speaking youth and helping them to achieve their full potential by coordinating innovative activities and initiatives with associate members in nine provinces and two territories.

We provide opportunities for our youth to use French outside the classroom by providing employment and placement programs or organizing gatherings. Among our national events, we have the Parlement jeunesse pancanadien, which was held in the Senate chamber in January, the Forum jeunesse pancanadien, which will be held here in Ottawa and in Charlottetown in February, and the Jeux de la francophonie canadienne, as someone mentioned earlier, which brings together a thousand or so young French-speaking Canadians from across the country.

Our core value is the initiatives taken by and for our youth. That is where we want to begin our presentation here today. We are here above all to encourage the active participation of youth representatives in the planning process of the 150th anniversary of Confederation. We believe that it is important to give youth a place by allowing youth representatives, such as young leaders who were elected or appointed by their peers, to contribute to all of the planning stages for the 2017 celebrations. These young people have to be involved in the process to ensure that the youth-related events are a true reflection of today's youth.

The contribution of these young people is often very relevant and even surprising in every aspect in which they are included. These young people play a key role in promoting Canada's core values. Among other things, they will have to adhere to the principles of linguistic duality by sharing the vision of a country that values both its official languages. If I may—and pardon the expression—I think it is important to include young people not as tokens of youth, but as valid participants who have an active role to play and some decision-making power.

This linguistic duality we are talking about has to be promoted in every community, anglophone and francophone alike. Our two official languages have contributed significantly to shaping Canada as we know it today. They define who we are as Canadians in our daily lives. They are an integral part of who we are, of our history, and this must transcend the actions surrounding the 150th anniversary of Confederation.

To do this, a number of things can and must be done. For example, linguistic duality can be given a place in the educational programs that might be used in the schools, or official language communities can be involved in the preparations as well as the festivities. In planning this major celebration, it should be only natural to include linguistic duality. Actions speak louder than words. It is these actions that will remain etched into the memory of Canadians when the celebration is over.

Another essential component of what we are advocating is the possibility of offering French-speaking youth from francophone communities across the country to leave the school setting and attend community celebrations.

Our definition of French-speaking youth is simple. If a young person can speak French, he or she is invited to the federation and is welcome to join our activities. We are becoming a rallying point between the communities. Our experience shows that young people choose to speak French when they are in the right environment to do so. We must not underestimate the importance of environment on young people's linguistic choices.

In that context, it becomes essential to provide opportunities to celebrate in this language. We have to focus on programs or gatherings at schools, but also outside the classroom, in order to amplify the positive impact on youth. The 150th anniversary can become a tool for building a community's identity and for bringing communities closer together. These get-togethers can be physical or virtual.

• (1125)

As you know—it is a growing reality—young people are very active and engaged on the web. We have to use this reality to our advantage and provide them with a platform for virtual gatherings. This is an opportunity to open dialogues between the different Canadian communities. This platform could be used in conjunction with the various activities that are organized for the celebration. This web space must bring young people together in order to make Canada's 150th anniversary resonate with them.

To support this web world, it will be essential to use it together with the other communications tools 2.0 that young people are already accustomed to using and which they use all the time. For this

idea to work, the content has to resonate with them. The best way to achieve that is to ask young people to work on this, by challenging a group of young people to lead discussions, add content or share accomplishments achieved by young people, for example.

We have to go to where the young people are and not try to bring them elsewhere. This idea can be taken even further by training young people across the country and assigning them the task of promoting the 150th anniversary among their peers in various ways, for example, by running events, organizing discussions or by meeting young people in the communities. The impact of the event will be unequivocal and this mission will give young people across the country the most rewarding, unforgettable and valuable experience.

Let us not forget that the communities have already planned activities for 2017. We have to consider the efforts being made and improve them or pair them up with new initiatives. We believe there is room to be proactive on this and that there are countless opportunities to promote linguistic duality.

For example, at the federation we are currently planning the sixth Jeux de la francophonie canadienne, which will be held in Gatineau in 2014. In 2014, we will be ready to announce the host city for the 2017 Jeux de la francophonie canadienne. These games are the largest gathering of French-speaking youth in Canada and involve the participation of young people from every province, every territory and every linguistic background. This initiative perfectly reflects FJCF's values of inclusion. It represents opportunities to exchange ideas that will have a lasting impact and will promote a sense of Canadian pride.

The 150th anniversary celebration is an opportunity to promote Canada's rich diversity, but it also has a role to play in promoting existing initiatives by Canada's anglophones, francophones, Métis, first nations, as well as new Canadians and ethnic communities. In that sense, we believe we must build on these activities and on what will be accomplished by 2017 in order to prepare the communities for their role in the festivities.

We think that the 150th anniversary is a good opportunity to promote bringing Canada's French-speaking communities together. It is an opportunity to remind everyone that Canada's francophonie is alive and well, very active and very dynamic in every province and territory of our great country.

We think that involving young francophones in organizing the 150th anniversary celebration is key to bringing people closer together. It reinforces a sense of belonging to the country. Ultimately, these gatherings encourage an understanding of the different realities that we live in from coast to coast to coast.

French-speaking youth in minority communities identify first with their province or territory. They do not hesitate to say they are Franco-Albertans or Acadians, but they also strongly identify themselves as Canadians. We see the same pride among youth from Quebec when they attend our national events. The opportunity to build bridges to bring Canadians closer together is at our feet and to do that we must build on inclusive Canadian initiatives.

In closing, I would like to say that the essential thing in all of this for the Fédération de la jeunesse canadienne-française, is without a doubt the importance of including young people through initiatives set up by and for young people. If we want to succeed then we have to establish winning conditions at the initial planning stages.

We are very pleased to have had the opportunity to speak to you today. We thank you again for this invitation. We want to remind you that the 150th anniversary is the ideal time to cement our gains and work together to bring every community even closer together.

Thank you.

• (1130)

The Chair: Thank you.

We will now move on to questions and comments. We have one hour and twenty minutes.

We will begin with Mr. Godin.

Mr. Yvon Godin: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I want to welcome our witnesses.

I want to begin by putting things into perspective. At the Standing Committee on Official Languages, we were wondering whether to do this study on the celebration for the 150th anniversary of Canada's Confederation. My team and I thought it was too soon on the heels of the study by the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage.

I would like our committee to add something different to what was done at the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage. If not, I wonder what the point is of our study.

Look at the study that was done on the Vancouver Olympic Games. VANOC, the team and the organizations were already in place. There was already talk of a budget. There were questions to be asked. We could have asked whether the organizations had the means to serve the linguistic communities if need be.

In this case, preparations for the 150th anniversary are just starting. The study conducted by the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage took a year. What is the difference between them and us? We are the Standing Committee on Official Languages, and as such, our mandate is to ensure that the official languages are respected.

Mr. Thompson, you said that everything should be planned to make everything equal for anglophones and francophones.

[English]

You're saying that French and English have to be equal in all those celebrations. I want you to be more clear on it. Are you saying that if they're going to celebrate in Alberta, they should make sure that francophones are as equal as anglophones, for example, to make sure they understand the two peoples, *les deux peuples*? Is it the same thing for home, in Quebec? Would we do the same? I'd like to hear more, at the same time keeping in mind that I'd like to have your view on it.

I saw the heritage meeting, and the QCGN had not.... When were you invited?

Mr. Stephen Thompson: I'm sorry, sir. Could you—

Mr. Yvon Godin: I didn't see you on the list of witnesses for the study of the heritage committee. Were you invited to appear? Did you go?

Mr. Stephen Thompson: I don't recall our being invited to that.

Mr. Yvon Godin: You were not invited.

Mr. Stephen Thompson: I don't recall our being invited.

Mr. Yvon Godin: Well, that's not a good start, if we're talking about how the francophones and anglophones have to be.... Would you say that's not a good start?

Mr. Stephen Thompson: It was surprising to see the heritage committee's recommendation specifically address the question of official languages and the participation of linguistic minority communities in the planning. It was a surprise that Canada's English-language minority communities were not invited to participate in that committee's study.

• (1135)

[Translation]

Mr. Yvon Godin: Ms. Kenny, you appeared before the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage as part of this study. I want to know the difference between the two. This is not the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage here. We are the Standing Committee on Official Languages, which is the only committee whose existence is prescribed by law.

I would like you to say a few words about what is expected of us. In your view, are there any recommendations we can make that would be any different than those made by the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage?

What is more, do you think it is too soon for us to be holding these meetings?

Ms. Marie-France Kenny: First of all, I would like to say that the federation sort of invited itself to the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage, or rather we asked to appear before the committee. I am not certain that the federation would have been invited had we not asked.

It is unfortunate, but 42 years after the law was adopted parliamentarians do not automatically think of the anglophone community in Quebec and francophone communities outside Quebec.

The role of this committee with respect to the 150th anniversary celebrations is different than that of the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage. The main thing I see is that Canadian society has an opportunity to succeed where it has not been able to in the past 42 years. We must unite these two solitudes, as they are known, the anglophones and the francophones of this country. They must come to know one another.

This is what I told the committee:

[English]

"I'm a proud francophone. I'm bilingual, but I'm a proud francophone."

[Translation]

And that is what we have not been able to make people understand in one way or another. Anglophones are not against francophones and francophones are not against anglophones. All I want is to have the right to raise my children in French and to live part of my life in French. I live in Saskatchewan. My neighbour across the street does not speak a word of French.

Mr. Yvon Godin: Ms. Kenny, I believe Mr. Thompson said that the two groups must be treated equally. That truly would be education of the two peoples by the two peoples.

Ms. Marie-France Kenny: You are quite right. We need to promote the linguistic duality.

Mr. Yvon Godin: I would like to hear what Mr. Thompson has to say about that.

[English]

Were you presenting it that way?

Mr. Stephen Thompson: Our message was specific to Canada's English linguistic minority communities. Should the information or the celebrations be available in the French language in Alberta? Absolutely. This is the 150th anniversary of Confederation. Confederation is the story. A significant part of that story is the compromise and the turmoil around Upper and Lower Canada and the Maritimes, and the two languages getting together, and the accommodations that were made in law in the BNA Act to allow our country to begin. Not telling that story in both of our official languages across Canada is incomprehensible.

The Chair: Okay, thank you, Mr. Thompson and Monsieur Godin.

[Translation]

Mr. Gourde, you have the floor.

Mr. Jacques Gourde (Lotbinière—Chutes-de-la-Chaudière, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I would like to thank our witnesses for being here this morning. I do not agree with my colleague, but we can have different viewpoints. That is part and parcel of committee work.

I think this is an opportune time to be undertaking this study. At one of our first meetings, we heard from a representative of the Department of Canadian Heritage, who told us that the department was listening to people and organizations in order to establish and build the framework.

I would like to know the role that your respective organizations' would like to play in the process and in this major celebration. We cannot afford to not get this right. This is an ideal opportunity to promote linguistic duality in Canada. We have work to do over the next four years.

What part would you like to play in this major celebration and, at the same time, how would you add value to this celebration? I would like to hear from each organization in turn.

Ms. Marie-France Kenny: We recommended that a committee or organization be established and that is what we want to happen. It must include someone who represents the official language

communities. I have heard my colleagues everywhere say the same thing.

I do not want a celebration that someone on the other side of the country is going to organize. We want to be involved. We want to be there. We want to help organize it. We want to participate and contribute.

Our francophone communities, our young people and our seniors want to be there. We want to be part of the decision-making process. That is how we view our role. We do not want to just be consulted and then told what to do. We want to be there and to contribute.

• (1140)

[English]

Dr. Lorraine O'Donnell (Coordinator, Quebec English-Speaking Communities Research Network (QUESCREN), Quebec Community Groups Network): Good morning.

I'm in agreement with Madame Kenny. I work with English-speaking communities and research, but my own background is as a historian. I've had the wonderful fortune of working on several community-based history projects with different ethnocultural groups making up the English-speaking communities of Quebec. I've worked on a history of the Irish community, the Jewish community, and the different communities in Quebec City.

In answer to your question, the English-speaking communities are already very interested in the question of history, and have developed a really good infrastructure of local history groups, heritage organizations, and arts and culture organizations over the years. We're very well positioned, I would say, to work in cooperation with the committee or with Canadian Heritage to support the bigger picture throughout the province of Quebec. We definitely have the track record and the structures.

Also, on the research side, interestingly, a growing number of historians are not only English speakers, but French speakers studying English-speaking Quebec, who I think would have a lot to offer as well.

I believe we have knowledge to contribute, but we also have contacts on the ground across the province to support the bigger picture at the local level and to get information at the local level up to the big picture.

[Translation]

Mr. Alexis Couture: We definitely agree with Ms. Kenny and the FCFA position on creating an organization to coordinate and oversee these celebrations.

I would also like to take the opportunity to properly answer Mr. Godin. At the beginning of this meeting, he referred to the Vancouver Games and how the committee went about organizing the celebrations.

I think this is the right time for the committee to study the issue because an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure. If the issue of official languages is part of the debate from the outset, rather than being a secondary consideration after plans have already been made, then their inclusion is much more productive and pertinent.

Having said that, Ms. Kenny told us that she still has her Expo 67 passport. Obviously I was not born, I was not even a twinkle in my parents' eyes. I am not even sure that they had met—

Mr. Yvon Godin: They were in university.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Alexis Couture: If we want to have that kind of impact, if we want, 50 years from now, the young people—they will not be as young then—to come to this same committee and tell us that they kept such and such an object from the 2017 celebrations, young people will have to participate.

It is also very important that we ensure that these celebrations do not take place in just educational, entrepreneurial or even cultural contexts; they must be true community celebrations. That means we have to be included in all these community events to truly celebrate the present, past and future of Canada, and not just one of those three elements.

That is why I am repeating what I said earlier about meaningful participation. All too often, token youth, whether anglophones from Quebec or francophones from Canada, are invited, consulted and thanked, and then excluded from the decision-making. It is important that each of these communities be represented effectively and that they be given a real role to play.

Mr. Jacques Gourde: Thank you.

• (1145)

The Chair: Thank you Mr. Gourde and Mr. Couture.

Mr. Dion, you have the floor.

Hon. Stéphane Dion: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you to our guests.

I am trying to be very practical and determine what recommendations will come out of your presentations. Most important is what will be retained. I believe that there is a consensus in French and in English for an independent structure responsible for organizing the celebrations for the Confederation anniversary. If that is correct, please confirm this for me and tell me why you prefer that option, rather than the department or minister being responsible for organizing the celebrations.

You want to be part of this organization. Who else will be included? The structure will not be efficient if it is too unwieldy.

Finally, I will summarize what I retained because as, Ms. Bateman mentioned, we do not have copies of the presentations. We are not blaming anyone; those are the facts. Perhaps it was overlooked.

In the three presentations, there was a great deal of interest in the mobilization of students, waiting lists for immersion schools, museums, history, monuments, tourism, all forms of artistic and cultural expression, training youth so they can serve as facilitators at all these events, and considering the events that you are planning for 2017 to see how they could complement these celebrations.

[English]

That was my summary. If I forgot something, I would like to know.

[Translation]

Thank you.

We could perhaps start with Ms. Kenny.

Ms. Marie-France Kenny: First of all, I believe that it is important to create an independent organization. Canadian Heritage is currently doing an excellent job. However, I am not sure that it has the resources required to continue fulfilling its current mandate while doing this additional work. Perhaps more resources should be allocated.

Even if Canadian Heritage were to organize the celebrations, there should nevertheless be an advisory committee within the department to represent different groups in society, such as francophones inside and outside Quebec, youth, anglophones inside and outside Quebec, the First Nations, the Métis, and ethnocultural communities.

If we want to have this major celebration, three people—whether from a department or an independent committee—will not meet the needs of the entire population.

Earlier, in addition to telling me that I am old, Mr. Couture spoke about initiatives created by and for young people. That is what we need to discuss and do for all groups in Canadian society, in addition to the two official languages.

Hon. Stéphane Dion: What about my summary of the priorities?

Ms. Marie-France Kenny: I am not saying that we have to build monuments or other things. However, if we do, we believe that it is crucial that such initiatives be bilingual. If we want to promote linguistic duality, everything has to be in both French and English across the country.

[English]

Hon. Stéphane Dion: Mr. Thompson and Madam O'Donnell, did I forget something?

Mr. Stephen Thompson: I don't think you did, sir.

I'd just like to support what Madame Kenny said. Is this a governmental function or is this a function that government can lead? I would suggest that it may be a function that government can lead.

When you think about Confederation itself, it's the start line for Canadian government as we know it today. It's not the whole story, but it's the zero hour, the start line for who we are now. For our government, it's who we are now.

Is it the government's function to run that one department within government, or would they be the ones to bring together the stakeholders in an independent body that could make this an expression of how Canadians feel about Confederation, free of the day-to-day friction of politics in Ottawa and free of interdepartmental friction? We want to raise the committee's work above that, above the fray.

At 3,000 feet, when you're a pilot, the air becomes calm. You're out of the ground effect of air turbulence. You want a committee or that independent body to be able to work above 3,000 feet, where the air is calmer.

Certainly academics would be stakeholders. As for a private partner, there is economic benefit to be gained from this arrangement, but there's also an enormous contribution that the private partner can contribute in terms of sponsorship, and of course, it's the role that the private partner played in Confederation, in what led up to Confederation, in the *raison d'être* of Confederation.

The official languages community would certainly have a role, but there are other players within the public partner that Madame Kenny mentioned, first nations certainly being very important.

I see this being a committee that is not governmental in nature, and I think that's why it should probably be an independent not-for-profit organization.

• (1150)

Hon. Stéphane Dion: Thank you.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alexis Couture: I am going to echo the comments made by Mr. Thompson and Ms. Kenny. Even within the government, it is not just Canadian Heritage that will have an interest in the 150th anniversary celebrations. It would be worrisome if that were the case. This event concerns all departments, and several partners will have key roles. In this sense—the analogy of the pilot is an interesting one here—it would be good to take a step back to see the bigger picture and then coordinate more specific measures in the different departments.

As we mentioned, there are other key partners: the First Nations, of course, the Métis and immigrant communities. Canada remains a country of immigrants. The vast majority of the people who live here today are not descendants of the people who lived in Canada in 1867. That is striking. These people must also be invited to take part in the discussion.

Your summary was very good. I agree completely. It is important to establish an organization that can see past the political, technical and administrative aspects, in order to provide a broad vision of what these celebrations can be. I believe that this organization should be independent and representative.

Hon. Stéphane Dion: I suppose that everyone will say that the head of such an organization should be bilingual.

Mr. Alexis Couture: That would be an excellent thing to mention.

Mr. Yvon Godin: If he is not qualified, he cannot have the job.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Dion.

Mr. Trottier, you have the floor.

Mr. Bernard Trottier (Etobicoke—Lakeshore, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I would like to thank our guests for being here.

I am happy to see you again. We see each other so often now that we could be on a first-name basis.

Welcome to those who are here for the first time. I will still address you formally.

As my colleague, Mr. Gourde, said we are here to listen to you. We have four years to plan this major celebration. We do not want to

redo the work that has been done by the Department of Canadian Heritage, but we want to discuss the planning to ensure that the celebration promotes linguistic duality as a cornerstone of Canadianism and our country.

We want a lot of people to participate in the preparations for the celebration, as you mentioned in your comments. I think that this is a very important objective.

We also want to focus on creativity. How can we create a structure that promotes creativity? We do not want the celebration to be something that is imposed by government. How can we get Canadians to share their creative ideas with us? I would like to hear your comments on this.

In 1967, I was two years old, but I know that the celebration was creative. I remember the song by Bobby Gimby, *Ca-na-da*. It was striking.

Given the new technologies we have and Canada's new strengths, what can we do in 2017? What can we do to promote creativity so that people remember 2017 for a long time?

Perhaps we will begin with Mr. Couture because, when we think about creativity and new ideas, we often think about young people.

• (1155)

Mr. Alexis Couture: Thank you for your question.

Creativity and youth do go hand in hand. It is a positive stereotype. However, I work in the legal field so creativity is not really my area of expertise.

For the past little while, we have been talking about an independent organization. I believe that such an organization should have the mandate to define the vision of the celebration. When we at least have a framework or a certain context within which to work, then different partners at different levels can determine how the experience is delivered and how to participate. The important thing is that, when it comes to implementing the ideas on the ground, the things that will directly affect Canadians, we do not ask an officer from Canadian Heritage to come to our communities and emcee a banquet. This would not be very well received, unless it was a truly exceptional officer. We must therefore rely on our communities, institutions and organizations that are already working on the ground.

Furthermore, as you mentioned, the new technologies will allow us to communicate and share ideas much more quickly than 50 years ago. I have a hard time imagining what it will be like 50 years from now.

In this context, we must create the opportunity using certain resources. We can use material freely and then change it, adapt it, reinterpret it and disseminate it. It will be interesting to see the sharing and communication portals, for example. Forums are already outdated. This tool does not even really exist any more. We are now on Twitter and social media sites where we can initiate and direct discussions.

Finally, we should not hesitate to think big in terms of creativity. I think that one of the most interesting ideas in terms of creativity is to bring people together who do not know each other and who do not necessarily have a common understanding, and tell them to have fun.

It is easy to imagine a first nations representative from Alberta talking to someone of Scottish descent from Cape Breton and creating an artistic or cultural project together. I think that initiatives like this could produce extraordinary results for a low cost.

You are probably familiar with the Grand-Pré national historic site, which was designated a UNESCO world heritage site this summer. A few years ago a large landmark tree at Grand-Pré fell. Three artists used the wood to create a 360 degree, three-dimensional sculpture. Part of the sculpture was carved by an anglophone artist from the region, another by an Acadian artist and another by a first nations artist. The merging of these three cultures created something phenomenal and unimaginable. I think that we could create something similar for the 150th anniversary of Confederation.

Mr. Bernard Trottier: I am going to use my remaining time to talk to the representatives of the QCGN.

[English]

What kinds of structures should we put in place to ensure creativity, within the context of linguistic duality? How can we promote that and make sure that whatever we do in 2017 has that in place?

Dr. Lorraine O'Donnell: I was present in Quebec City in 2008 when we were celebrating 400 years of the history of Quebec. A very concrete suggestion that seemed to work extremely well was that the city, I think with federal and provincial funding, provided project funding, and people could apply for projects. One I was involved with was a very innovative, digitally based exhibit on the history of the local Jewish community. It was creative in the sense that it allowed the community to work together. It built community vitality while creating its own history and communicating it online.

Projects ranged from that to planting a certain number of trees. I think the argument was something about the historical territory or something like that. They were absolutely swamped, apparently, with projects and had a hard time choosing among them, so I don't think the ideas are lacking.

To answer your question, you could provide a framework defining what is being celebrated and describing the opportunities for developing projects. It could be projects devised to have a certain content, whether linguistic duality or the history of the minority language communities or the history of Confederation as an act, or something like that. Then the ideas will come.

• (1200)

Mr. Stephen Thompson: Mr. Trottier, on the linguistic duality part of your question, don't forget that francophone youth outside Quebec and anglophone youth inside Quebec are the most bilingual youth cohort in the country. Putting those two groups together to develop projects together is by definition an exercise in linguistic duality. The product you will get out of it will reflect linguistic duality.

Mr. Bernard Trottier: Thank you.

[Translation]

The Chair: We are going to take a break, but before that, I have a few questions.

Clearly, federal institutions—departments, agencies, crown corporations, commissions or others—will comply with the Official Languages Act in the context of the 150th anniversary.

[English]

I think it's clear that if an independent commission were to be set up, obviously it too would have to abide by the Official Languages Act and respect the two official languages.

What about third party organizations? What about independent groups across the country that receive federal government funding for the 150th anniversary? Should they be required to conduct their 150th anniversary celebrations in the two official languages?

The reason I ask is that there are two models for this. In some grant and contribution agreements with the Government of Canada, there is a bilingualism clause. In most grant and contribution agreements, there is not.

For example, the Government of Canada hands out about \$150 million a year to independent sport organizations throughout Canada. Each and every one of those agreements, to my knowledge, has a bilingualism clause. That's why Hockey Canada and the Canadian Ski Council operate in both official languages. However, most other grant and contribution agreements in Canada don't have a bilingualism clause, because those groups don't operate in both languages.

If we do give money to third party independent organizations to celebrate the 150th, should those grant and contribution agreements contain this bilingualism clause, which obviously will cost more money? That's something I think the committee might be interested in hearing about from you.

Ms. Marie-France Kenny: If I may start, yes, if we want to celebrate what makes this country great, linguistic duality is a big part of it. There should not only be a linguistic clause; there should be a strong linguistic clause.

I live in Saskatchewan. I don't want to be an afterthought, as in "Maybe we should have invited some francophones or some token francophones"; I want to be part of organizing that celebration. I want francophones and anglophones to meet and celebrate together. I want to talk to my neighbours. I want my neighbours to talk to me. We need to get to know each other, and we don't do that enough.

Francophones have a tendency of having francophones and then anglophones have their own, so I can see partnerships. If you're giving money to the City of Regina, I think it needs to be bilingual. If you're giving money to the Province of Saskatchewan, there needs to be a clause that says that it's bilingual. For me, it's unreal and actually unpatriotic not to do so.

Mr. Stephen Thompson: Our position at the QCGN has always been that federal responsibility follows federal money, so the Official Languages Act follows federal money. Now, in our own specific position or circumstance, you can understand how sometimes that position is difficult in practice. The argument would be that all federal payments to Quebec carry with them the requirement of delivery of services in English, so there are problems, but as a point of principle, federal money carries with it federal responsibilities.

However, if I take off that hat for a minute and put on the hat of a person who works for a community sector organization, do we want to put bilingual requirements or linguistic clauses on organizations whose purpose is to promote and create an environment in which one of our official languages can be nurtured and grown? If a francophone community sector organization wants to do something to celebrate the 150th anniversary of Confederation in Alberta, do you want to put a bilingual requirement clause in one of their grant contributions? I would suggest probably not, because what you're trying to do there is create a space for one of our official languages to be spoken and to be experienced, and to create an environment where it's safe to do so; to now introduce the requirement to speak English in that same project seems to defeat the purpose of the organization in the first place.

That's a tough question.

• (1205)

[Translation]

Mr. Alexis Couture: I think that it is important to make the distinction between operations and the service offering on one hand, and promotion on the other.

I cannot see how a \$5,000 contribution agreement for a cultural group in Havre-aux-Maisons in the Magdalen Islands could involve the requirement to operate in both languages. I think that this is first and foremost a question of scale. When a group is given a lot of money because they are carrying out a big project, then it is important to be inclusive. It is important that the government seek to promote some small, unifying community events. It would then be even more worthwhile to emphasize the importance of promoting linguistic duality and thus achieve a balance between these two things.

The federation makes an effort to make our events accessible to young people who are not necessarily fluent in French. However, we clearly operate in French, and that is important for us. That being said, we promote linguistic duality at our events. We need to find a balance between these two elements. Every dollar does not have to be associated with a requirement to operate and provide services in both languages. It should depend on the context.

The Chair: Thank you.

We are going to take about a 10-minute break.

• (1205)

(Pause)

• (1215)

The Chair: Let us continue with the 58th meeting of the Standing Committee on Official Languages. We have 30 minutes for questions and comments.

Mr. Lauzon, you have the floor.

• (1220)

Mr. Guy Lauzon (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I would like to welcome our guests. Your presentations were very interesting.

A number of you mentioned that the celebrations should be held in both official languages, and I agree with that. Can you give me some examples of how that could work? When celebrations are held in both languages in a place like Chicoutimi, for example, which is a very francophone city, should we get the anglophones involved?

My question is for Ms. Kenny.

Ms. Marie-France Kenny: It is a bit difficult for me to answer that question because I do not represent my anglophone friends. However, I can tell you right now, speaking as a francophone, that if there are anglophones in Chicoutimi, they must participate and celebrate with us.

Mr. Guy Lauzon: Do you think that the celebrations should be held in both languages?

Ms. Marie-France Kenny: We want to encourage dialogue and, in order to do that, the celebrations must be held in both languages.

[English]

Mr. Guy Lauzon: Mr. Thompson, in Lethbridge, Alberta, for example, we're going to celebrate the 150th anniversary. Should the planning include both anglophone and francophone participants?

Mr. Stephen Thompson: I will answer your question but use the Chicoutimi example, not the Lethbridge example.

The English-speaking community of Quebec has consistently explained to this committee that ours is a concern over our community culture, and not necessarily language. We are a very bilingual population. How would linguistic duality be expressed in a celebration of the anniversary in Chicoutimi? How would we recognize ourselves?

If there were a community in Chicoutimi, which there is—a small one—that was consulted during the planning of whatever celebration was available in Chicoutimi, and if they were reflected in some way—if they were mentioned in the script, if there were some sort of cultural product, a song, a play, a visual art representation of the community in the Chicoutimi area—that would be a reflection of the community of linguistic duality in the celebrations in Chicoutimi.

We're not talking about a split script here. That's not what we're trying to convey.

Mr. Guy Lauzon: Okay, but with all due respect, maybe I would like to come at it from a different perspective.

Quite frankly, I was born a francophone. I had to learn to speak English as an adult. I'm forever learning, trying to perfect my French. What really helps me is being in a francophone milieu or a bilingual milieu, like the House of Commons or like this committee, because I hear a lot of French, and that helps me to perfect and absorb more French. I know it's difficult, but using that example of Chicoutimi, if the anglophones were there at that event, and they were listening to 50% French, they would, through osmosis, pick up some of the French, and vice versa. The francophone community, from the English community, would....

I think we have to go to two official languages. If the francophones are doing their event with some anglophone participation, and vice versa, I think.... It keeps us from advancing as quickly. Trying to become bilingual is a very onerous undertaking, as you well know, but I think we have to take every advantage.

If we ever want to get to the point where we're saying, "Let's be bilingual and celebrate both official languages", then we should do it in both official languages. That would be my take.

• (1225)

[Translation]

Mr. Couture, did you have something to add?

Mr. Alexis Couture: I think that your question involves two important issues: representation and accessibility. With regard to representation, it is important that the communities, whether they be anglophone or francophone, feel as though they are represented in the celebrations, regardless of where they are located.

Mr. Guy Lauzon: Equally?

Mr. Alexis Couture: It must be equal, based on their weight and their role. I think it is just important that they be represented.

You spoke about Alberta. Some of the first settlers of Alberta were francophone. It is thus important that francophones be represented. This also holds true across the rest of the country. Both language communities must be represented. The communities could, with the organizers, determine how they would be best represented.

The second point is accessibility. I think that organizing an event that is completely bilingual in all regards sometimes detracts from the event. However, if the event is accessible to someone who does not speak both official languages, then we have met one of our objectives. I think that it is important to do it this way, that is, to make sure that the communities are represented and that the events are accessible.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Benskin, you have the floor.

[English]

Mr. Tyrone Benskin (Jeanne-Le Ber, NDP): Hello. *Bienvenue.*

All of your presentations were wonderful. I always enjoy hearing from Madame Kenny because we have some common views.

When it comes to language, we haven't had a good talk, as a country, in a long time, and for me

[Translation]

the 150th anniversary celebrations represent the perfect opportunity to have this discussion, this conversation, and to share what is happening. For me, it is very risky to start talking about

[English]

bilingualism as an entity, as a commodity, as a thing that we have to have equal. It's about accessibility, as the very eloquent Mr. Couture has expressed.

I just learned something from you about Alberta: out there,

[Translation]

the first settlement or village was a francophone community. That is something that we need to know about our country. We need to know about this type of history.

[English]

Would you comment on the importance of accessibility? For me it doesn't mean it has to be equal French, equal English; it means that if it's a French community, the event or the project is in French, but it is accessible to those who don't speak French so that they understand where that community comes from, the history of the community, and celebrate the community without the community having to—for lack of a better term—water it down.

It's the same thing with the English community. Its celebration is in English in Quebec, with accessibility in French so that

[Translation]

when francophones arrive at that celebration, they will see that the English community understands the history of the French community.

[English]

May I ask for your comments or opinions on that philosophical statement?

Ms. Marie-France Kenny: I agree with the question of accessibility. I don't want people to just read things to me in French and English. I want celebrations to reflect linguistic duality. I want to see francophone artists, anglophone artists, Métis and first nations artists. I totally agree.

I was chair of the celebration of the 100th anniversary of the City of Regina. They named me because I was a good organizer and the crown corporation I worked for volunteered me. I happened to be French, and I was the only one. Consequently, there was a small French component in the celebrations that might not have been there had I not been on that committee.

If a city or a region wants to plan something, it's important to do it jointly. It's important that the French don't do a francophone show with little English, or the English don't do an English show with little French. We need to sit together, plan it together, and celebrate together.

• (1230)

Dr. Lorraine O'Donnell: I have a couple of comments on accessibility.

In terms of process, some really good ideas are coming up about developing projects in certain ways, ensuring that once they're complete they become available in both languages.

At the process level, I would point the committee to work by Benoit Côté of l'Université de Sherbrooke, who has developed an innovative program of bringing together French and English students in the province of Quebec called PÉLIQ-AN. There is good process work.

I would like to also underline content. At the break we were speaking with Monsieur Dion about what exactly is being celebrated, which isn't something we've discussed very much today. To the extent, for instance, that the focus is actually on Confederation as an act—the history of the meetings at Charlotte-town and in Quebec City and so on—I think some very interesting accessibility issues will open up, because we will see that Confederation itself was, as Stephen and others were saying, an act of compromise and of working out very important issues between what were at the time conceived to be the two nations that were working together, the English and the French. I would emphasize that accessibility needs to be perceived at both the process and the content level, so that the understanding of what is being celebrated is innately inclusive and people see themselves recognized in the content as well.

[Translation]

The Chair: Okay. Thank you.

Mr. Chisu, you have the floor.

Mr. Corneliu Chisu (Pickering—Scarborough East, CPC): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

I would like to thank the witnesses for their presentations. I will address you in English because my English is better than my French.

[English]

I think I'm the only person on this committee who was born outside the country—well, probably not—but I come from a trilingual country in which Hungarian, Romanian, and German are spoken, and I appreciate very much the bilingualism of Canada.

I can tell you also that it is one of my roles to promote the French language in my riding, which is divided between the cities of Pickering and Scarborough. In the city of Pickering, we have had the privilege of raising for the first time the Franco-Ontarian flag. In my riding we also have a French immersion school, which was just established. It is very important for me to see that the celebration of the 150th anniversary of Canada reflects this duality and these two languages of our country.

I'd like to ask you how we are involving the provincial and municipal levels, all three levels of government, in these celebrations. I know that at the federal level we have the Official Languages Act, which says that we must respect the French and English languages, but what are we doing with the provinces? The celebration of 150 years is not only a federal government celebration, but a celebration for all the country—all three levels of government—and it is an act that is very important for our country.

I'm asking you how you see, as an example from my point of view, the association of Franco-Ontarians being involved to promote all the events in the two official languages. This is a need.

In my riding, for example, people came from Quebec to the city of Pickering 40 or 50 years ago for various reasons, and they love the French language, despite the fact that they are anglophones or something else.

How do you see us being able to capitalize on the cooperation of all three levels of the government for this?

• (1235)

Ms. Marie-France Kenny: One thing that might be important is that every province and territory has a minister responsible for francophone affairs. They are called the *Conférence ministérielle*. They're actually meeting right now, in an economic forum right here in Gatineau, and I have to say that we now have a minister responsible for anglophone affairs in Québec, so I think it's important to involve *la Conférence ministérielle*.

I also think—and Mr. Chong alluded to this too—that when we transfer money to a province, it's not just a case of remembering that there are francophones in your province, but making sure that they're involved from the outset in any programs or projects that we're creating, so it's important to have a linguistic clause,

[Translation]

a strong linguistic clause. I emphasize that it should be strong because sometimes a linguistic clause exists, but let us just say that it may not necessarily be very concrete.

[English]

I think such a clause will go a long way.

Involving the *Conférence ministérielle* is a great idea, too.

Mr. Corneliu Chisu: What about the municipal and the regional levels? For example, the Region of Durham is not bilingual. Then there is the city of Toronto. You can have a ministerial level at the province, but how are you involving the municipality? You need to go a little bit deeper.

Ms. Marie-France Kenny: If we're transferring money to a city, there should be a linguistic clause there also, saying that there's a francophone community...

There might not be. If there is no anglophone community or no francophone community somewhere, I'm not saying we should involve somebody who doesn't exist. However, if you're talking about the city of Edmonton, there is a large francophone component, and I understand that in Pickering there is too. Then there's a francophone organization in the province or even locally that can help and deliver. I think we should have agreements that make them work together and not separately.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

I'm going to go to Madame Michaud.

[Translation]

Ms. Éline Michaud (Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier, NDP): Thank you very much.

First, I would like to thank you for your presentations. They were all very interesting.

This seems to confirm something that we already knew and that was brought to light when representatives from the Department of Canadian Heritage appeared before the committee, and that is that you really want the community to be deeply involved in choosing the direction that the celebrations held in each part of Canada will take. I hope that your message will be heard.

I would like to come back to the issue of linguistic clauses because it concerns me a little.

You spoke about the importance of making events accessible to everyone. I would imagine that the goal is to try to encourage dialogue and a better understanding among the different founding nations. One of the communities in my riding is the community of Shannon, which, in the past, had a large Irish population. That is an important heritage to showcase.

However, I am wondering how we can provide access to all linguistic groups in every corner of the country without a mandatory linguistic clause. Earlier, it seemed to me that some of you were not certain that such a clause was necessary. I would like to know how you foresee achieving this type of accessibility if some sort of obligation is not imposed in this regard.

Mr. Thompson, you can start.

[English]

Mr. Stephen Thompson: Language clauses are something we've been working on lately at the QCGN in consultation with Agriculture Canada around Growing Forward 2. Language clauses are definitely something the QCGN and the English-speaking community have supported. I'll let Madame Kenny speak for her organization, but they are universally supported. The Commissioner of Official Languages has spoken in their favour as well.

Language clauses are tricky sometimes, when you step into areas of provincial jurisdiction and areas of concurrent jurisdiction, such as agriculture and immigration, but there is a mechanism that Agriculture Canada recently talked to us about. It's about securing rights from products that are derived from federal spending.

Federal money comes into a project, for example, and produces a written piece of material. The province may not be obligated to have that material accessible in both official languages, but what the federal government does in the negotiations is secure the rights to that material. The federal government then takes it, translates it, and makes it available in both official languages. In that way you can make the material accessible.

• (1240)

[Translation]

Ms. Éloise Michaud: Do you think that this idea could apply to the 150th anniversary celebrations and would ensure that events are representative of and accessible to both official language communities?

[English]

Mr. Stephen Thompson: It would depend on the nature of the project. If the project were done in partnership with a province that

for whatever reason, legal or otherwise, was reticent to provide the information or product in both official languages, this would be a mechanism whereby the federal government could ensure its accessibility in both languages.

[Translation]

Ms. Éloise Michaud: I am going to ask Mr. Couture and then Ms. Kenny to respond but to please keep their comments fairly briefly since I also have questions about other things.

Mr. Alexis Couture: It is important to keep in mind the context and the scale. There are specific contexts and specific scales. For example, if funding is granted to towns or provinces, there would be very strong linguistic clauses associated with that funding because those bodies have the ability to comply with them. However, if the funding is for a neighbourhood party and extremely strong linguistic clauses are imposed, no one will apply for funding because they will not know how to comply with those clauses.

The idea is to develop a model that would make it possible to measure the accessibility of an event and to then make people aware of how to make their event accessible. An ironclad linguistic clause is not necessarily how we are going to succeed in making events accessible.

In short, it depends on the context and the scale.

Ms. Éloise Michaud: Thank you.

Ms. Kenny, what do you think?

Ms. Marie-France Kenny: I agree with Alexis. If I had a family get-together and if, for some reason, we received funding—I cannot imagine that we would—I would not expect to be required to do everything in both languages.

However, if we are talking about money transferred to a province or even a municipality, I think it is essential for there to be a language clause. Too often, our communities must fight in order to get their fair share.

The language clause should not consist of giving money to francophones. That is not what this is about. Ensure that francophones are at the table and that everyone works together. That is what I would like to see in a language clause. It is not a matter of allocating money; it is a matter of talking.

Ms. Éloise Michaud: Perfect. Thank you.

The Chair: You may ask a quick question.

Ms. Éloise Michaud: Okay.

My question is for Mr. Couture.

I listened to your comments. We must be around the same age. It is interesting to hear you talk about youth. Your organization is a national one. You said that it would be important to have a role to play in the preparations or in the festivities. What role would you like to play in that?

Mr. Alexis Couture: Our organization, like many other community organizations across the country, obviously wants to be involved. We also want to host events that bring young people together. This goes back to the comment I made earlier when I was talking about initiatives by and for young people. What is done by and for young people applies to us and to anglophone communities in Quebec, and they will have a much greater impact than if these initiatives are designed and implemented by someone else.

So whether we are talking about being involved in the Jeux de la francophonie canadienne, which will be held in 2017, or the Forum jeunesse pancanadien, or creating an entirely new event, these are certainly some of the things that we would really like to do.

Ms. Élane Michaud: Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Wilks, go ahead.

[English]

Mr. David Wilks (Kootenay—Columbia, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thanks to everyone for being here today.

Ms. Kenny, in your comments you stated that we should try to have events on a large scale to learn the main values of Canada. I wonder if you would like to speak to that a little more so that I can understand what you meant by it.

Ms. Marie-France Kenny: If we're talking about values, one of my values is equity, justice. I think that if we went around the table, we'd be hard pressed to find somebody who is against this value. For me, the value of equity applies to official languages not being equal. I have equal rights. My needs are different from an anglophone, and needs of anglophones in Quebec are different from francophones, and we must make sure that we meet those needs.

In terms of values, my values are the same as QCGN. They're the same as my neighbour across the street in Regina, who doesn't speak a word of French. We have the same values, yet we have a tendency not to talk to each other, or to think that we dislike each other before we even talk to each other, so can we just start by talking to each other and understanding each other? That's one of the values.

Mr. David Wilks: Further to that, in part of your comments you referred to common values. I wonder if you could expand upon common values with regard to French and English Canadians and how they pertain to 2017.

•(1245)

Ms. Marie-France Kenny: I think that if we look at values, all Canadians value having a prosperous country. I think our values are to be respectful to one another, although we have a tendency to not always be respectful. I think if you ask anybody, you'll find that the common values are to share in the celebration and to share together—not francophones and anglophones, but together.

I think it's time. It's time. It's been long overdue. We haven't done it in the 42 years since we've had this wonderful Official Languages Act. We haven't talked to each other, whether it's Quebecers or outside of Quebec, and I'm not talking about francophones, but about people in general. We have a tendency not to talk, and we need to talk.

Mr. David Wilks: Mr. Thompson, in your comments you mentioned that Canadians must be encouraged to travel across Canada to see all the opportunities that are open to them. I think that for the most part, the national park system seems to do a relatively good job at providing in both official languages.

I'm from British Columbia, and my home town is Lethbridge, so I was waiting for you to talk about Lethbridge. Where do you see improvement that we can make for both official languages outside what we seem to focus on a lot, which is the national parks?

Mr. Stephen Thompson: The recommendation to encourage Canadians to travel across the country during 2017 was one of the recommendations from the heritage committee's report.

Where or how do we reinforce linguistic duality outside the national parks? We have national institutions, small “i” institutions, in which linguistic duality does exist. One of them is VIA Rail Canada. There's a wonderful train that runs the length of Quebec and up to the Gaspé. We have a wonderful highway system, the Trans-Canada Highway system, with provincial and national parks. We have Canadian sites and provincial sites of national interest, germane and directly related to Confederation and the reasons for Confederation. Making those sites accessible, especially the provincial sites, is a way to do it, I think. Promoting travel in 2017 through the national carrier and through VIA Rail Canada would be another suggestion.

Mr. David Wilks: Thank you.

Mr. Couture, without taking away from anyone else in this room, you are the future of Canada, the youth.

I grew up in southern Alberta as a youth. English was dominant, with very little French. Outside of immersion, how do we get the youth involved so that we share the importance of both official languages?

[Translation]

Mr. Alexis Couture: I will be brief.

I think it is important to increase our understanding and our knowledge of the communities. I am Acadian and I have had the privilege of living in Nova Scotia and Quebec. I am familiar with this issue. When I was in Quebec, I spoke about Acadia and people were not familiar with it. In Acadia, people were not familiar with francophones in Alberta.

I think it is important for people in the francophonie across the country to better understand each other. This starts with education and large gatherings, where young people have a chance to meet each other and learn about each other. Young people come out of these gatherings with a Canadian vision of the challenges and not a regional, provincial or municipal vision. They realize that they are not alone and that there are francophones all over. Furthermore, challenges are shared and they are important to everyone. We will become closer with these kinds of gatherings and exchanges, both virtually and physically.

You are asking how we can increase the importance of something. But when we do not know that something exists, it is hard for it to have any importance.

•(1250)

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Dionne Labelle, go ahead.

Mr. Pierre Dionne Labelle (Rivière-du-Nord, NDP): Good morning, everyone. Thank you for being here.

I will not hide the fact that I have mixed emotions this morning. This is something imposed by the government party. We obviously have no control over the committee's agenda. Furthermore, there is currently no budget allocated or planned for the 150th anniversary of Confederation. According to Heritage Canada representatives, there is no framework as of yet. There are few people working on it. So we found it premature to be talking to different organizations before we even had a full picture, especially since we had other concerns. I am thinking about the effects of the cuts to French-language services at the CBC. Support has also been cut for French-language weekly community newspapers and cuts have been made to Destination Canada, an initiative that helped promote francophone immigration outside of Quebec. I am also thinking about the planned closure of the Quebec City marine rescue sub-centre and the effects the merger of the embassies on the services that will be available in French. There is also the matter of stagnation. Last week, the stagnation of bilingualism outside of Quebec seemed particularly evident to me.

I would like to take this opportunity to say that we must be vigilant. The budget for the 100th anniversary of Confederation was \$743 million. We do not know exactly what we will have. In addition, the department that will be in charge of this budget will also be in charge of the Roadmap. We do not know what the budget for the Roadmap will be. I am concerned, because in our evaluation of the Roadmap, we noted that we had a hard time determining which initiatives were the responsibility of different departments in protecting linguistic duality, and which responsibilities fell under the Roadmap.

And there is another thing. I am not sure if this is something you are concerned about. There will obviously be more money. However, the scope of the Roadmap could be limited in other ways, for example by assigning money from the 150th anniversary to the Roadmap. I am worried about this happening.

Ms. Kenny, what do you think about that?

Ms. Marie-France Kenny: I admit that this is the first time I have thought about it. I had not thought about it before you mentioned it. However, I must say that I am not particularly concerned by it. The celebrations will be something completely separate, in my opinion. I do not see how it could be part of the Roadmap.

As for the funding that already exists as part of programs in certain departments, that was a concern last time and it still is. We are concerned that departments that had official languages programs could decide to no longer run them, claiming that they will include everything in the Roadmap.

As we know, this is an isolated event. It can be renewed, based on the economic climate, at the will of the government in power. It would be concerning, but as for the celebrations, I do not see how it could all be combined. I am not particularly concerned by it.

Mr. Pierre Dionne Labelle: Okay. It was simply a feeling I had that I wanted to share with you.

We will watch this issue closely.

Ms. Marie-France Kenny: Yes, we will watch it closely.

Mr. Pierre Dionne Labelle: Mr. Couture, I would like to get back to the issue of young people.

When celebrations for the 150th anniversary will be held, I will be close to retirement. I imagine that will be the case for a number of people in the room.

•(1255)

Mr. Yvon Godin: Hey, hey!

Mr. Pierre Dionne Labelle: I am looking in that direction, and perhaps also at Mr. Dion.

Mr. Yvon Godin: There are a few old folks around.

Hon. Stéphane Dion: But no, retirement will be at 67.

Mr. Pierre Dionne Labelle: That will not be the case for us, but for them, when they hit retirement.

I think the committee members—and I would say that includes you as well—are not representative of Canada as it is now, aside from Tyrone, who is obviously a member of a cultural community. We are talking about the link between young people, cultural communities, the Youth Parliament, and so on, and I think that there is something there. In terms of a legacy for future generations, I think it would be good to find 150 youth from various communities, preferably bilingual, and to let them organize the 150th anniversary. I would ask them how they envision the Canada of tomorrow. That would be fantastic.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Dionne Labelle.

Mr. Couture, go ahead.

Mr. Alexis Couture: That is not a bad idea. If you want to manage budgets, which will certainly be very large, you will also want some kind of technical support. At least I know that I would not want to manage them alone.

I would like to highlight the importance of being inclusive when planning something like this. I have heard a number of mentions of the idea of an independent organization managing the 150th anniversary. But if this organization has a board of directors, why not have youth representatives sit on it? As was mentioned, these would be youth representatives with important voices, and not young people who would be there simply because they are young.

The Chair: Thank you.

Ms. Bateman, you have two minutes.

Ms. Joyce Bateman: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

[English]

Thank you, all of you, for coming today.

[Translation]

I have a question about the potential composition of a committee. What do you think the mandate and the composition of the committee should be?

We can perhaps start with Ms. Kenny.

Ms. Marie-France Kenny: As Alexis said, I think the composition should be representative.

Ms. Joyce Bateman: Would it be made up of 30 people? Two people? How do you envision it?

Ms. Marie-France Kenny: It is difficult to answer that. We are talking about huge celebrations across Canada. However, I would say that there must absolutely be an anglophone member from Quebec, an anglophone member from outside Quebec, a franco-phone member from outside Quebec, young people, first nations members, Métis members and representatives from ethnocultural communities. So that is a dozen or so people. The goal would be to ensure that the various groups present in Canada, particularly young people and seniors, are represented on the committee.

[English]

Ms. Joyce Bateman: Mr. Thompson, do you have a slightly different vision on that composition, or a different mandate or governance model?

[Translation]

What is your take on that?

[English]

Mr. Stephen Thompson: My understanding, Madam Bateman, was that the point of the study being undertaken by the language committee now is to ensure linguistic duality in the celebrations of the 150th anniversary of Confederation, so I don't think we have a comment to make on the full composition of whatever governance mechanism is put in place to manage the process. We just reiterate what has been said here today, which is that we certainly support our colleagues here at the table to ensure there is representation from Canada's official language minority communities, English and French. That would be our concern.

[Translation]

Ms. Joyce Bateman: Thank you.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you very much, Madame Bateman and Mr. Thompson.

We are finished our testimony. I want to thank the three groups and our six witnesses for appearing in front of us today. I think your testimony was quite helpful to us and to the analysts.

We have two items of business before we adjourn. We only have two minutes left in this meeting.

[Translation]

Our meeting scheduled for next Thursday has been cancelled, since the House of Commons has adopted a Friday schedule for Thursday.

[English]

We will simply meet on Tuesday of next week.

Second, we have a budget that must be adopted for this study. I understand it has been moved by Mr. Gourde.

[Translation]

It is for \$23,200.

[English]

Is there any debate on the motion to adopt this budget?

Go ahead, Mr. Godin.

[Translation]

Mr. Yvon Godin: I would just like to know if that amount includes the committee report.

The Chair: Absolutely.

Mr. Yvon Godin: Is it included in the budget?

[English]

The Chair: Any time a committee adopts a study, it implies in parliamentary language that a report will be....

• (1300)

Mr. Yvon Godin: That's not my question. My question is, does this budget include the write-up of the report?

The Chair: Yes, it does.

Mr. Yvon Godin: It talks effectively about people coming in.

The Chair: Yes, it does.

Is there any further debate?

[Translation]

Ms. Joyce Bateman: We do not have the time, do we?

[English]

The Chair: Please be very quick.

[Translation]

Ms. Joyce Bateman: I would like to bring up something to consider in the future. I would like us to use our videoconferencing tools, since the government invested in this equipment. We have \$18,000 for travel expenses, but it might be possible to reduce that amount by using videoconferencing.

[English]

The Chair: Okay, if it's the wish of the committee to do—

[Translation]

Mr. Yvon Godin: I have questions about that, but it would be too much.

[English]

The Chair: We have had this debate before. Unless it's a suggestion, I will take it under advisement. Until I get a clear direction from the committee to do that, we will continue to prepare the budget in this way.

Without further ado, I will call the question. All those in favour of the budget as moved by Mr. Gourde?

(Motion agreed to [See *Minutes of Proceedings*])

The Chair: Thank you very much.

The meeting is adjourned.

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