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—
Chair

Mr. Mike Wallace

Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights

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• (1130)

[English]

The Chair (Mr. Mike Wallace (Burlington, CPC)): Welcome to the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights meeting number 15. The orders of the day are, pursuant to Standing Order 108(2), the study of supplementary estimates (C), votes 5c and 20c.

Committee members, as you see, there is no actual voting for us to do as the last supply day was announced for the Monday we get back, by which, based on this calendar, these subsidies will be deemed reviewed by this committee. But that doesn't mean we cannot question the minister and his staff on those issues.

I'm going to be up front with everyone in terms of timing. We have the minister for half an hour. There will be a bell around noon, the half-hour bell, and then there will be a vote, which normally takes about 10 minutes. So the vote would be over at about 20 minutes to, and they're normally late, so about a quarter to. So, to be honest with you, we're not coming back for five minutes, so we have this half hour with the minister.

The minister will start with his opening statement, and then we'll do one round for sure before the bells start to ring.

Yes?

Ms. Françoise Boivin (Gatineau, NDP): Can we make the opening statement very short to give more chance to the members of the committee to ask questions? Otherwise we could just go in the lobby and hear the minister talk.

The Chair: No problem.

Welcome, Minister MacKay, the floor is yours and the shorter the better for more questions.

Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Colleagues, I will endeavour to be brief in my opening remarks. Should you choose, while the bells are ringing, if you want to go past that, it's entirely up to you.

The Chair: As chair, when the bells ring we adjourn. Thank you.

Hon. Peter MacKay: I'm pleased to appear before you once again, colleagues. I'm joined by Donald Piragoff, senior assistant deputy minister; deputy minister Bill Pentney; as well as Luc Robitaille, here to answer your questions on supplementary estimates (C). I know, Mr. Chairman, colleagues, that this is of interest to you.

I'm tasked as Attorney General, Minister of Justice, with helping to ensure that our justice system can continue to meet the needs of Canadians so that it can remain relevant, fair, and accessible, and so that Canadians can have confidence and trust in the system that serves them.

[Translation]

Our government has been moving forward on a number of priorities related to criminal justice so Canadians can continue to be proud of their justice system.

[English]

Chair, Canadians need to feel that their system is working for them. They need to feel safe in their communities, where they live, and if they are victimized, they need to feel confident that the justice system will in fact treat them with compassion, dignity, and respect.

As you know, we plan to introduce Canada's first federal victims bill of rights in the House of Commons very soon. This bill of rights reflects extensive consultations embarked on this summer, visiting every province and territory, where I met with victims of crime, advocacy organizations, provincial and territorial officials, other organizations including criminal justice associations, and stakeholders from across the country. I can say that those first-hand, front-line conversations gave me a much better understanding of how we build on our existing criminal law and federal programs. This bill will entrench the rights of victims of crime at the federal level.

One of the highlights, I must say, since becoming Minister of Justice was the opportunity to visit several child youth advocacy centres. I encourage members, if the opportunity arises, to do the same. I'm very heartened to witness the compassionate, caring work done in support of young victims and their families as they navigate an often complex and intimidating system.

I'm always heartened to witness the success that we are experiencing at these centres, creating multidisciplinary teams that effectively address the needs of their clients and help them find their way through very difficult events, lessening the trauma that they've experienced.

Chair, other issues that we've been tackling include cyberbullying, and as we have unfortunately seen in the cases of Amanda Todd, Rehtaeh Parsons, and others across the country, cyberbullying can have tragic consequences. We need a range of education, awareness, and prevention activities to combat cyberbullying, including a more robust criminal justice response. With the comprehensive legislation our government has introduced, we intend to provide one.

The legislation, Bill C-13, proposes to make it a criminal offence to distribute intimate images without the consent of the person depicted, targeting a serious form of cyberbullying that is not captured currently in the Criminal Code.

The Department of Justice is also partnering in the government's recently launched awareness campaign on cyberbullying, which includes television ads that encourage parents and teens to seek out facts and information that involve this issue so they can learn how to use the Internet more safely.

•(1135)

[Translation]

Mr. Chair, our government has always been committed to ensuring the integrity of our criminal justice system. We reiterated this commitment in the throne speech.

[English]

Our government has also reinstated legislation in the House of Commons to help ensure that the protection of Canadians is at the forefront of decisions about mentally disordered accused persons who have been found to be not criminally responsible and who pose a heightened risk to public safety. This legislation, Bill C-14, currently before the Senate, will ensure that the safety of the public should be the paramount consideration in the decision-making process, as contemplated in recent jurisprudence.

Our government also wants to ensure that our children are better protected against sexual exploitation, and we have just introduced legislation that will ensure that child sex offenders receive tougher sentences.

Mr. Chair, our government has always been committed to ensuring the integrity of our criminal justice system, and we reiterate that commitment within the Speech from the Throne. Other initiatives we continue to work on include legislation to protect service animals, on impaired driving, and on a response to the recent Supreme Court decision in Bedford.

The items that the Department of Justice has submitted to be tabled under supplementary estimates (C) will further our work towards protecting Canadians and ensuring safer streets and communities.

Chair, you will note that net increase of \$3.76 million for the Department of Justice can be explained as follows.

One major area of expenditure is with respect to grants and contributions to enhance the victims fund to expand the reach of the federal victim strategy, especially for child advocacy centres, as previously mentioned, and time-limited operational funding for non-governmental organizations that serve victims.

There was also an increase of \$3.78 million to deliver initiatives under the "Roadmap for Canada's Linguistic Duality 2013-2018". This road map is led by the Department of Heritage and was announced in budget 2013.

[Translation]

These initiatives reflect the efforts being made by the Department of Justice to establish an increasingly relevant and accessible justice

system that meets the needs of Canadians by guaranteeing them improved access to justice in both official languages.

[English]

Chair, the majority of these funds, \$3.6 million—and I will conclude here—are for grants and contributions to allow the department to continue the training component of the access to justice in both official languages fund.

The supplementary estimates (C) indicate a reduction of approximately \$1.42 million as funds being available within the department's authorities, which represents a transfer of funds to Shared Services Canada as part of an initiative to modernize and streamline information technology systems.

To conclude, I thank you and the committee members for the invitation and for the important work you do, and I look forward to your questions.

•(1140)

[Translation]

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Minister.

[English]

Our first questioner is Madam Boivin from the New Democratic Party.

[Translation]

Ms. Françoise Boivin: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'm fully aware of the limits of this morning's exercise, given that time allocation motions moved in the House have an impact not only on the bills in question, but also on our work in committee, which is extremely unfortunate.

I listened to the minister's speech as we look at these very particular supplementary estimates. He took this as an opportunity to talk, for the umpteenth time, about his plan for a victims' bill of rights, which I am anxiously awaiting to see introduced in the House. I am also anxious to discuss the cyberbullying bill as soon as possible. I hope we will have the opportunity to study them more thoroughly in due course. I also hope we will have enough time to do our jobs properly.

I would like to take this opportunity to prepare the minister for his next visit, since I imagine he will be back to discuss the main estimates.

This week I had the honour of meeting Chiefs Carl Sidney, Dave Joe and Georgina Sidney who told me about a justice program that exists as an agreement between the federal government and the Yukon. This agreement would give them the power to administer justice on their territory.

About \$500,000 is still needed to implement that program. I would simply like to inform the minister that I expect him to be ready to discuss this matter at our next meeting. I am someone who likes to make the first move. I like discussing things openly, rather than showing up at the last minute with propositions. Now he knows. I hope to hear some good news at that time. I hope he will tell me that that agreement, which has existed since 2011, will finally be implemented. The only thing missing is the implementation agreement. I am stunned by this.

Votes 5c and 20c have to do with official languages. This is interesting, because we are currently studying part XVII of the Criminal Code.

With regard to part XVII of the Criminal Code and in relation to vote 5c, I would like to ask the minister if he has been following our analysis of the scope of part XVII regarding its practical application. Based on what we have heard, there are some major deficiencies when it comes to bilingualism in our courts.

The Commissioner of Official Languages appeared before us and said we will never be able to talk about access to justice until it is fully accessible in both official languages. Criminal law falls under federal jurisdiction. Is the minister prepared to broaden the scope of part XVII for bail hearings?

As for the upcoming victims' bill of rights, will the additional sums mentioned be used exclusively for that, or will they be used to make up for other programs that already exist on the ground?

Hon. Peter MacKay: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Ms. Boivin, I appreciate your interest in this issue and the victims' bill of rights. Our government intends to introduce that bill in the House of Commons in this session of Parliament.

Ms. Françoise Boivin: So, before the end of June?

Hon. Peter MacKay: Yes, I hope so. It depends on the Leader of the Government in the House.

[English]

We have a lot of legislation, as you know, currently before the House, including the cyberbullying bill that you mentioned, that we hope will receive adequate debate and arrive here in this committee, as you've indicated.

Ms. Françoise Boivin: So you still recommit, for the cyberbullying, to give the opposition ample time to debate, ample days to review the bill?

Hon. Peter MacKay: Certainly, that is our intention. But as I said we are fighting a very busy schedule and there is a disproportionate number of bills emanating from the Department of Justice. But this is a priority for us, certainly for me, as I know it is for you. We want to give not only the House but this committee in particular ample opportunity to hear from witnesses and to give it proper examination.

With respect to the monetary sum of \$100,000 that you indicate is somehow not forthcoming for Yukon's victim services programs—

Ms. Françoise Boivin: It's \$500,000. The Teslin Tlingit Council; they just need one little push to have this implemented.

Hon. Peter MacKay: Okay, if you will give me the organization at the conclusion of this session, I will undertake to look into it, by all means.

Ms. Françoise Boivin: Excellent. Thank you.

The Chair: Is there anything else?

Ms. Françoise Boivin: Well, he's got his notice. He hasn't addressed the language issue, though.

Are you willing to look into maybe opening up section 17 a bit? Is there any openness from your department on that issue?

• (1145)

Hon. Peter MacKay: I should say that I met, prior to the release of the report, with the commissioner. He has made some very specific recommendations with respect to increasing access to justice for Canadians, particularly those outside of Quebec and New Brunswick where service in both official languages remains a challenge. I know I can speak personally for my own province of Nova Scotia, where we do have a significant Acadian population, that this remains a challenge.

One of the big challenges, with which you're familiar, is the lack of francophone judges able to conduct sometimes very sophisticated, complex trials, both civil and criminal, in French.

Ms. Françoise Boivin: But it was interesting that the Department of Justice officials were telling us there were sufficient judges. Sometimes I wonder who is saying the right thing. Are there sufficient judges and just a question of allocating them to the right territories, or is it that there is a lack of judges?

Hon. Peter MacKay: It's not the number of judges, to be clear; it is in fact the number of those with the language skills to conduct trials without translation.

Ms. Françoise Boivin: That's what I'm saying. Your Department of Justice officials were at our committee and were saying that they were.... It's sad that I don't have the quote here, though I can provide it to you, but they definitely answered a question from my colleague Mr. Godin by saying that there were ample bilingual, able judges to hear, that it was not a problem. We're addressing section 17. So is it that under section 17 there is no problem but that for the rest of the justice system there is? What the hell...?

Hon. Peter MacKay: Well, as you know, having practised law, Madame Boivin, we don't appoint provincial court judges. I can speak only for the federal judges, for whom we are making efforts and providing training, and not only for our own judges, those federally appointed, about whom I suggest I agree with my department, particularly among Federal Court judges, we have ample numbers of bilingual judges.

I'm speaking to the provincial court level, from which the majority of criminal jurisprudence emanates. There is a challenge there. We have undertaken a program to provide language training to provincial court judges, particularly those outside Quebec and New Brunswick.

The Chair: Thank you for those questions, Minister.

From the Conservatives, we have Monsieur Goguen.

Mr. Robert Goguen (Moncton—Riverview—Dieppe, CPC): Thank you, Minister, for appearing. Thank you to the officials for appearing again.

On February 20 you announced funding for Justice Canada to host an event for National Victims of Crime Awareness Week. It will be in April 2014. And of course you were recently in my riding of Moncton—Riverview—Dieppe at the YWCA, where you made another important justice announcement.

As you know, of course, the YWCA is an important member of our community, and they do great work. Could you elaborate on why the funding for these community organizations is so important, Minister?

Hon. Peter MacKay: Thank you very much, Monsieur Goguen. You've been very active in your constituency, and I was appreciative of the opportunity to meet with your local members of the YWCA in Moncton. They're doing a great job raising awareness in and around the community of Moncton, New Brunswick about issues that victims are facing, issues that victims very often run up against, and about how victims can access programming to help them and help their families.

Victims Week, as you noted, will run this year from April 6 to April 12, and the theme is "taking action", which is something I think we can all agree has to occur. Funding for National Victims of Crime Awareness Week is provided through the victims fund, which is administered by the Department of Justice. It is a \$120-million fund and has been in place since 2006.

There is also money available, and I hope to get a further question on the work of the Canadian child advocacy centres. They are also funded separately and do much of the important, practical, on-the-ground work to help victims navigate the system.

So awareness is very important. YWCAs and YMCAs do a tremendous job in their communities. They are of course very closely associated with the lives of many people living in this country, and they're often there to help answer questions and help guide people through the justice system. YMCA Moncton is a great example of a proactive group with very committed professional individuals, as you know, and I was pleased to have the opportunity to meet them.

Mr. Robert Goguen: Thank you. That's all for me.

The Chair: From the Liberal Party we have Mr. Casey.

Mr. Sean Casey (Charlottetown, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Minister, you recently introduced Bill C-26 into the House and in response to a question in question period you referenced an increase in child sexual crimes over the last two years.

Were the figures that you cited the Juristat figures for the period ended March 2012?

• (1150)

Hon. Peter MacKay: I'll have to get back to you. The figures I have that I believe you're referring to, Mr. Casey, show an increase of 3% over the last calendar year, which is above and beyond the 3% increase from the year before that. I'm not sure whether they came from Juristat or were generated internally by the Department of Justice. I will get you the source.

Mr. Sean Casey: Bill C-26 increases penalties for child sexual offences and other sexual offences, and in 13 different sections these are increases over and above increases that you made in Bill C-10, I expect you're aware of that.

Given that you increased penalties in Bill C-10 and your figures indicate that child sexual offences over the last two years have increased, why are you increasing them again? It strikes me that if the goal of increasing them is to have fewer offences, your increases in Bill C-10 failed.

Hon. Peter MacKay: Surely, Mr. Casey, you've done more than just read one of the nine sections of the bill. C-26 goes well beyond just increasing sentences and, by the way, it makes them consecutive. It makes it possible for them to be served back to back for separate offences and separate victims, which is an important component of the bill. It also goes further: it now also allows a spouse to be competent and compellable, and able to testify. It delves into the area of child pornography, which in itself is exploitive of children and very harmful in communities.

Perhaps one of the more important components is a Public Safety lead, which allows for greater sharing of information on those who have been convicted of child sex offences. It allows us to ensure that some of our allies are also provided with information about convicted child sex offenders who are travelling outside Canada. Perhaps one of the more important, if not controversial, sections refers to public access to high-risk convicted sex offenders. Individuals can now find out if a pedophile is living in their neighbourhood or near their school.

Mr. Sean Casey: Do you not agree that stats that show that child sexual offences have increased in the last two years indicate that the increases that you put in C-10 haven't worked?

Hon. Peter MacKay: I'd answer that two ways.

First, I would say that C-10 would hardly have had effect in the time period we're looking at. Secondly, and perhaps most importantly, it indicates to me that we have to do more. It indicates very clearly that we have to take more steps toward prevention, deterrence, and denunciation. I can think of nothing, and I suspect everybody around this table would agree, that is more offensive or corrosive in a young person's life than to be sexually abused; we need to condemn that in the strongest terms in our justice system and in our schools. It is abhorrent to think that a country like ours is seeing a 3% increase in child sex offences, and I intend to do anything in my power to prevent that.

Mr. Sean Casey: Mr. Minister, several of the tough-on-crime measures brought in by your government have had a rough ride in the courts to your chagrin, at least according to your public statements. I understand that within your department there have been some investigations as to what the appropriate timing and circumstances would be in which to invoke the notwithstanding clause. Can you confirm that, and share with this committee what is being undertaken with respect to an examination of when to invoke, and the circumstances under which to invoke, the notwithstanding clause?

Hon. Peter MacKay: I'm not aware of any examination of the invoking of the notwithstanding clause.

Mr. Sean Casey: Do you deny that there is a process within your department to examine this question?

Hon. Peter MacKay: I'm not aware of any ongoing examination of when to invoke notwithstanding. There's always examination of legislation for purposes of charter compliance. This is scuttlebutt; this is news to me.

Mr. Sean Casey: Thank you.

A private member's bill is coming before the House, C-560, dealing with the Divorce Act. Back in 2009, your predecessor, Mr. Nicholson, indicated that the best interests of the child are always paramount. Given that this question is about to come before the House, what are your views on that, sir?

• (1155)

The Chair: If you're comfortable answering the question, I'll allow it. You did open the door with your opening speech on other legislation, but you didn't mention this particular one.

Hon. Peter MacKay: This particular private member's bill will receive, I'm sure, the rigorous examination that all private members' bills receive. I am familiar with the one you're referencing. I can tell you, having practised some family law—as you have in Prince Edward Island—that the long-held legal maxim and the jurisprudence definitely supports that the best interests of the child will remain the primary concern. I see no change in that regard.

Mr. Sean Casey: The bill proposes to weaken that in favour of parental rights. Do you realize that?

Hon. Peter MacKay: Yes, I do realize that.

The Chair: You have one more minute, sir.

Mr. Sean Casey: Thank you.

In your opening statement, you talked about NCR. Recently, three of your cabinet colleagues were vocal in their criticism of the Manitoba Criminal Code Review Board and publicly discussed a specific case before the board. I compliment you, Minister, in that you didn't. Could I have your views on the appropriateness of that?

Hon. Peter MacKay: It was, as you've indicated, a provincial review of a very high-profile case. Let's not beat around the bush: we're talking about the case of Vincent Li, who murdered Tim McLean in the most horrifying manner imaginable.

The exchange you're referring to, which took place primarily involving a member of Parliament from Manitoba, the province where this occurred, is I think a reflection very much of the way that many in the community felt upon hearing the news that this

individual, some six years after having committed that horrific act, was going to be released without conditions into the community. I think it was a natural reaction and that this person was very much speaking out on behalf of what they were hearing from their own constituents.

But as you've noted, as Attorney General and as Minister of Justice I did not delve into the details of what could still find its way back before the courts in some fashion.

Mr. Sean Casey: Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you for those questions.

Our next questioner, from the Conservative Party, is Mr. Dechert.

Mr. Bob Dechert (Mississauga—Erindale, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Minister, you mentioned in your opening statement today that Canadians need to feel that the justice system is working for them and need to feel safe in their communities. You've also referenced several justice initiatives, including the cyberbullying bill, Bill C-13, and the tougher penalties for child predators act, Bill C-26.

Can you tell us a little bit more about those particular measures and how you feel they will help to build confidence in the Canadian justice system?

Hon. Peter MacKay: This bill, as I was just discussing with Mr. Casey, is very much aimed in its intent and purpose at protecting children, at being more proactive or forward-leaning, if you will, in certain measures that we hope will empower police but also send a very strong message that this type of aberrant behaviour will not be tolerated and will be prosecuted to the full extent, requiring that those convicted of certain sexual offences against children will now receive stronger sentences. Subject to minimums and maximums, penalties can be served consecutively, back to back. There is also an increase in the penalty provisions as they pertain to violations of certain supervision conditions, either parole or court-ordered prohibitions.

For example, those very prohibitions that are intended to protect the child from having contact with a sex offender, the abuser—frequenting a place where children are often found, such as a school yard or swimming pool, and violating those sections that are designed to protect and envelop a child in a protective environment.... If those are violated, there are stronger penalties to attach.

I mentioned removing the prohibition upon a spouse's testifying on certain charges, such as child sex offences and child pornography, making spouses competent and compellable before the courts. House arrest, parole, statutory release, unescorted temporary absence provisions again—all of those are now viewed as...an aggravating circumstance under this legislation.

I believe as well that our moral and legal obligations to share certain information, whether with other agencies such as Border Services or with our allies outside of Canada, about the travelling of Canadian convicted sex offenders...are also something for which this bill will provide greater safety. Finally, establishing a publicly accessible database that will disclose the names of high-risk sex offenders is, I believe, an important tool not only for the police, but for the public to protect their loved ones.

• (1200)

Mr. Bob Dechert: Thank you, Mr. Minister.

I certainly hear from my constituents that there is a concern amongst many of them about the justice system being something they can trust to make sure that the sentences fit the crimes perpetrated. It's my view that the provisions you brought forward will help restore some of their faith in the system.

Could you tell us what you think might be the reason that child sex crimes seem to be going up in Canada?

Hon. Peter MacKay: That is a very difficult question to answer, Mr. Dechert, because I can't imagine any world where this type of offence could be seen as the slightest bit appropriate. Touching a child, touching an innocent person who in many cases is relying on the very person, the perpetrator, for protection is the ultimate breach of trust. We have seen far too many of these cases where it was a family member, a coach, a religious person, an individual who had greater access to that child. Why we are seeing an increase in these offences defies logic.

But what I do know is that I suspect you and others on this committee, and certainly those in the policing community, those who are victims' advocates, those who are tasked to protect, fully embrace all efforts to increase our protection of children, to increase the accountability within the justice system when it comes to the treatment of offenders who breach that trust. I believe that is found in Bill C-26.

I believe there are important steps in that direction. Is there more we can do? Yes, I believe there is always more that we can do, and some of that important work is being done thankfully across the country by child advocacy workers and victim services. Certainly police, front-line policing, is far more attuned. I think of the incredible work that is done by the Canadian Centre for Child Protection in Winnipeg, Manitoba.

We can touch on the subject of how much more information and offensive information, quite frankly, is now available on the Internet. The ability to lure children into certain vulnerable positions is also something we're looking at and is contained in the cyberbullying bill.

But I think it's incumbent upon all of us to try to do more to protect Canadian children.

The Chair: Thank you, Minister.

Madam Pécelet, the floor is yours.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Ève Pécelet (La Pointe-de-l'Île, NDP): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you, Mr. Minister. You raised some points regarding part XVII of the Criminal Code. I would like explore this in greater

detail, given that we are currently examining the application of part XVII of the Criminal Code.

My question has two parts. First of all, when the bill passed a few years ago, the Senate committee had recommended broadening the scope of part XVII of the Criminal Code and applying it to parole hearings. It also recommended that judges be required to give an accused a notice of the possibility that he or she would have to stand trial in either of Canada's two official languages.

I would like to hear what you think of those recommendations. Do you think it would be a good idea to implement them immediately in order to improve access to justice in both official languages? You talked about a number of problems regarding resources related to judges and translation, which is understandable.

The second part of my question has to do with the supplementary estimates (C), specifically the \$3.6 million to promote official languages and access to justice.

Considering the \$3.6 million and Roadmap 2013-18, what does the government intend to do to improve the application of part XVII of the Criminal Code and therefore improve access to justice in both official languages?

• (1205)

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

[*English*]

Hon. Peter MacKay: I certainly hope so, and let me say first that I look forward to receiving the report on the important work that's been undertaken by this committee on part XVII. I know you're doing a very in-depth study. You mentioned the \$3.6 million annually that is part of the road map for Canada's official languages. That money, as you know, is very much to address the issues that you're mentioning, to improve access, to ensure that those who find themselves before the court for a variety of reasons will be able to receive service in both official languages or in the language of their choice. This is in addition to ongoing resources of \$9.9 million, which is there annually to help provinces. Again, I come back to Madame Boivin's earlier question about what we are doing at the provincial level to help ensure that judges in the provincial court are given necessary support in addition to extrajudicial services, so for court services for prothonotaries, for property-related searches, or for anything related to federal contraventions prosecuted under their respective provincial offences. Again, the federal government bears responsibility in that regard.

I want to give you just a couple of examples of investments that I believe are working and achieving the ends that we all seek. The Provincial Court of New Brunswick has a linguistic training program for provincially nominated judges. The federal government contributes to this project to help complete French legal terminology language training, which is another important nuance here, because, as we know, there is language associated with law that is not often found in common parlance in English or French.

For l'Association des juristes d'expression française de l'Ontario, there is a fund, a contribution of over \$170,000 specific to the Province of Ontario to help with French language minority communities. These programs and many others that I could list, which are happening in the territories, in British Columbia, and right across the country, are federal contributions through which we're partnering with provincial and territorial governments and their departments of justice or attorneys general to help further their language requirements. This will, obviously, take time. This will obviously require sustained effort and investment.

I might add that particularly in the north, where there are other languages and a significant number of aboriginal languages and first nations languages, we're also trying to help provide resources for translation and training, and, I might add as a final point, for those who are signing for the deaf.

Ms. Ève Pécelet: What about the first part of my question about the...?

The Chair: Thank you very much for your question. I did allow the minister to finish the answer.

Ms. Ève Pécelet: He will be back.

The Chair: The bells are ringing, so the process for me is to call the meeting.

I want to thank the minister and his officials for coming. As you know, the bells are about half an hour and then it will be about 10 to one or five to one, so I'm not coming back.

But, we do expect the minister and his staff to come back for the main estimates. We look forward to that and then to the introduction of any bills that actually get through the House and come to us.

Thank you very much for your time.

● (1210)

Hon. Peter MacKay: I look forward to it. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: The meeting is adjourned.

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