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Chair

The Honourable Denis Paradis

Standing Committee on Official Languages

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• (1530)

[Translation]

The Chair (Hon. Denis Paradis (Brome—Missisquoi, Lib.)): Welcome to this meeting of the Standing Committee on Official Languages.

In the first hour we will hear Catherine Cano, President and General Manager of the Cable Public Affairs Channel, or CPAC.

Mrs. Cano, thank you very much for agreeing on such short notice to come to this committee to talk about CPAC. It has been years since CPAC representatives have been invited to this committee.

Welcome.

Congratulations on being named President and General Manager of CPAC. I'm sure you'll remind us that it was a recent appointment.

You have 10 minutes to explain what CPAC is and what you do all in the context of official languages.

You have the floor.

Mrs. Catherine Cano (President and General Manager, Cable Public Affairs Channel (CPAC)): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I thank the House of Commons Standing Committee on Official Languages for this invitation. I didn't have a chance to meet all of you, but I will properly introduce myself after the meeting.

I am the President and General Manager of the Cable Public Affairs Channel, or CPAC. I am here with Joel Fortune, our legal counsel.

Indeed, the last time we appeared before this committee was on February 25, 2004. I am thrilled to be able to give you an update on our mission and our vision for CPAC.

I accepted the position of president not quite two months ago because I believe strongly in CPAC's potential and in its vocation of public service.

[English]

CPAC was created in 1992 by a broad consortium of Canada's cable companies. Today, CPAC is privately owned by six of them: Rogers, Vidéotron, Cogeco, Shaw, Eastlink, and Access Communications. Their vision was and still is to promote and advance Canadian democracy by creating a national and bilingual network: bipartisan, balanced, objective, and independent. They made a strong commitment to bilingualism by offering a channel in English and a channel in French.

[Translation]

Broadcast in high-definition for six months now, the programming is the same, but all the content is provided in one language or the other.

Our mission is twofold.

First, we provided unfiltered, uninterrupted access without commentary to the work of the House of Commons—including question period—and the House and Senate committees. We also broadcast in their entirety and in a longer format the procedures of the Supreme Court of Canada, the CRTC, conferences on public policy, press conferences, and countless panels and public assemblies.

Our mission is very important to us. Our mission is to help Canadians understand the issues, debates, procedures, role, and work of parliamentarians, and our democratic institutions. In other words, our goal is to educate people so that they may be better informed and engaged in everyday life and in the future of their country.

[English]

Our daily programs such as *PrimeTime Politics*, with Peter Van Dusen—whom I think you know—and, on Fridays, with Martin Stringer, and *Beyond Politics* are prime examples.

Under CRTC rules, all broadcast distribution undertaken with more than 2,000 subscribers must distribute CPAC on their basic service in both languages. CPAC is available in the newly created “skinny” basic packages.

CPAC broadcasts of the House of Commons proceedings and committees are under a 2001 agreement with the Speaker of the House of Commons. CPAC is commercial-free and its revenue comes from cable subscriptions. CPAC's broadcasting licence was most recently renewed for the period of September 1, 2013, to August 31, 2018.

• (1535)

[Translation]

CPAC programming is delivered to over 11 million homes in Canada in English and French. Its programming is also webcast live on the CPAC website, cpac.ca, and through our app CPAC TV2GO. What is more, Canadians abroad have access to CPAC, as our website is not subject to geoblocking.

As far as CPAC television in French is concerned, allow me to elaborate a bit on our licencing conditions. We have three.

First, we are required to provide simultaneous translation of 100% of our programming, which we do without fail, year after year, both from French to English and vice versa.

Second, we are required to broadcast in their entirety as many French-language events as possible, such that they make up at least 20% of our annual programming. The real percentage varies between 20% and 21% year after year.

As for our third condition, of which I am especially proud, we must produce and broadcast at least 25% of our public affairs programming in French. We are exceeding that objective. We reached 39% two years ago, and 43% last year. We are only partway through this year and our production already represents 32%. It is not just a quarter of our production that is in French, but more than a third.

I will keep talking about our French content, since that is what we are often asked about.

It is important to mention that CPAC produces the only daily show on public policy in French in Canada. The show is *Revue politique*, hosted by Pierre Donais, as you may know. The premise of the show is to present the issues in our society, hear parliamentarians debate those issues, and provide analysis and information to help French-Canadians better understand the positions and decisions of the country's leaders. In addition to that show, we have a weekly show that goes beyond politics called *Tête à tête*.

Our French programming also includes short vignettes called *Le saviez-vous?*, or did you know. They are educational or informative reports on our common heritage, and might focus on history, politics, or culture.

Two years ago we started producing French documentaries. Our goal is to do two or three a year. You may have seen the one on George-Étienne Cartier, called *La bataille fédérale du Québec* or the one called *The Silent Tragedy*. We are currently working on our next documentary, on physician assisted death, which will be called *Chronique d'une mort encadrée*.

We broadcast many debates among experts, as well as public policy conferences and events. For example, last week we broadcast the Quebec government's budget and the next day we broadcast all the press conferences surrounding the arrests of Quebec government ministers and political personalities from all parties.

[English]

CPAC is unique and different.

[Translation]

It is a real public service that, through its programming, serves and reflects Canada.

[English]

Programs such as *Outburst* and *The Week with Mark Sutcliffe* give the opportunity for citizens across the country to comment, offer thoughts, and ask questions. We also go on the road and produce shows across Canada. For instance we will cover every session and every second of all the political conventions coming up in April and May. We proudly produced almost 80 riding profiles during the last

federal election all across the country, and we were the only media to broadcast all of the leaders' debates without exception.

[Translation]

CPAC is the only national bilingual television channel. Our French website broadcasts live television, original content on demand, and all promotional material in French. All content produced internally is translated. CPAC also created an app—both in French and in English—for iPads and smartphones.

CPAC is the only channel that allows people to access full content as well as indepth analysis to further their knowledge. We are also a depository for an impressive number of visual archives.

● (1540)

[English]

Let's talk for a few minutes about the future and the opportunities for CPAC. We all have the good health of our democracy, and we are all working hard to make sure it thrives. A media organization and a public service such as CPAC plays an important role. I believe it can play an even bigger role in contributing to this goal and at many other levels. On top of providing unfiltered access to the proceedings of the House of Commons and the committees of Parliament, CPAC produces dozens of hours of original programming weekly. I often say it is a jewel of information and the best kept secret.

CPAC offers high-quality content on any screen, not only its television channel but also on its website and on its application, CPAC TV 2 GO, in French, in English, or with the floor sound or what we call in French, *le son du parquet*.

[Translation]

Our short- and medium-term goal is to consolidate CPAC's strength and uniqueness, pursue and accelerate modernization, and reach a broader audience, including young people because they are the future and the future of the country belongs to them. If we could pique their interest, inform them, get them to participate and get involved, we will have contributed to advancing democracy. We are currently working on a number of projects with that goal in mind.

CPAC is lucky to have two television channels and one website. Obviously, it is very present on social media, some more than others. We hope to increase our presence, on Facebook in particular.

All these platforms present different and complementary contents in divergent forms. They allow us to reach a larger number of Canadians where they are, and Canadians in turn have access to original and unique content. Our objective is simple: be relevant, innovative, and accessible.

[English]

I have a super team. Everyone at CPAC is very proud of their organization's mission and is working very hard at fulfilling it every day, 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

[Translation]

We are going to keep developing content and create original formats that are more accessible and interesting to an audience whose viewing habits have changed and keep changing.

In a year, CPAC will be celebrating its 25th anniversary, which is a good occasion for this next step in modernizing the company. With that in mind, our commitment to Canada's linguistic duality will only get stronger. This is an ambitious mission driven by adapting to an era of social media. Bilingualism and multi-lingualism benefit the country and its people tremendously on an economic and cultural level, and, as we learned, on a neurological level, not to mention the benefits of promoting this linguistic duality abroad.

Advances in technology are erasing borders. There are hundreds of millions of francophones and francophiles in the world, and some of our debates and discussions are of interest to them. I know that because I experienced that in the U.S., when I was conducting a study for the federal government on francophones in that country. I discovered that 12 million Americans spoke French or were interested in it, which was a huge discovery.

In conclusion, I would say that this is not just about meeting our obligations and licencing conditions. CPAC wants to become a source of inspiration for generations to come and encourage dialogue on the importance of our linguistic minorities, our bilingualism, and our biculturalism.

[English]

CPAC is very strongly committed to the country and to linguistic duality, and this commitment will only continue to grow stronger.

I am a proud francophone.

[Translation]

I was born in Saguenay. I am from Chicoutimi. That is why it is important to me to pursue our efforts. I truly hope that CPAC becomes the reference and destination not only for the majority of anglophones, but also francophones. We have been committed to serving minority populations from the start. We are doubling our efforts to produce high-quality programming and content in French and promote our French service to the francophone population.

I thank the committee very much for allowing me to testify today. I will be pleased to answer your questions.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mrs. Cano.

We will begin with the first series of interventions, where each member will have six minutes.

Mrs. Boucher, you have the floor.

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher (Beauport—Côte-de-Beaupré—Île d'Orléans—Charlevoix, CPC): Hello Mrs. Cano and Mr. Fortune. I am very pleased that you are here with us today.

I am surprised that CPAC representatives have not come before this committee since 2004. That is rather exceptional.

We are part of the political world and obviously we watch CPAC. We are very interested in it.

You said that CPAC was available in more than 11 million Canadian homes, in addition to being on the web and elsewhere. In percentage, how many people really watch CPAC shows? Sometimes we joke about that when we are sitting in debates at the end of

the evening. We say that there are two people watching CPAC: us and our assistant. I am surprised that 11 million Canadian homes have access to CPAC. That is quite good. However, what percentage of the population is that? Did you look at that on the anglophone side and the francophone side? The percentage is not the same for francophones and anglophones.

• (1545)

Mrs. Catherine Cano: That is a very good question, but a bit tough to answer given that it has a number of components.

The ratings vary according to the show and the programming. We have results per show, per week, on the English side and the French side. However, our programming depends a lot on the House of Commons. Our priority is indeed to broadcast the procedures of the House from start to finish. If the House sits until 8 p.m., that is one thing, but if it sits until 8:10 p.m., 8:30 p.m., or 9:30 p.m, we are still there. We are also committed to all the committees. There is some content we cannot touch.

Given that every night is different, it becomes hard to know exactly how many Canadians are watching *Primetime Politics*, which normally airs at 8 p.m., but might also be broadcast at 8:15 p.m., or 8:45 p.m.

I can tell you, however, that question period is watched by many. However, we do not have a breakdown of the numbers for French and English. Obviously, that represents an investment, but we will start to look more into whether there is a difference. The fact remains that generally speaking, francophones and anglophones alike are interested in question period. Some days, 70,000 or 80,000 people are watching.

You will ask me whether or not that is a lot of people. Yes, it is a lot. It is huge considering that question period is at 2 p.m. What is more, we are not just talking here about people on Parliament Hill. We are talking about people who are interested in what parliamentarians are doing. I would say that since the last election, it is clear that people want to understand what is happening a bit more and a bit better.

As far as the procedures of the House are concerned, it depends on whether the subject matter strikes a chord with people. Viewership peaks when the House is debating employment insurance, the right to physician-assisted death, or immigration, for example. There might be 200,000 viewers, but just for half an hour. In general, viewership is not constant. In terms of who is watching, you have to understand that attention diminishes and varies. People use four different platforms to get informed. They listen to the radio in the morning, use the web and watch television at noon, and so on.

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: They use Facebook.

Mrs. Catherine Cano: Everything is shared. That is why we want to keep doing different work on television. That being said, we also want to make our content accessible on television and on other platforms. Content from the House of Commons has to be provided to an audience that gets its information in different ways.

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: Sure.

We also see that young people—and us as well, really—are much more geared to new technologies, social media.

How has that influenced CPAC?

How do you see the future in the context of social media?

How are you going to adapt to this new reality?

Today, when we look at a 15-second clip, we pay more attention to the package than the content. We are satisfied with the first impression and don't dig deeper.

What type of challenge does that represent to CPAC?

Mrs. Catherine Cano: It's a major challenge considering that our channel relies on context and not shocking news. We practically refuse to broadcast 30-second clips because we always want to provide context. When we do broadcast short clips, the subject has already been explained and there is a subsequent debate or conversation. We never do it gratuitously. The role of our organization is to explain, allow Canadians to have direct access in order to see you, the members, and to form their own opinion. That is why we do not make comments.

Our duty is to provide explanations. Having done several studies before arriving at CPAC, I can tell you that by 6 p.m., people already know what happened during the day. They know the news and do not need us to tell them what happened. What they want is to understand what the news means, why it happened, who is responsible, what the consequences will be, who will suffer the consequences and how, and what is next. That is our role.

New technologies and social networks have extraordinary potential. Most regular channels broadcast a bit of content on a wide range of topics, while at CPAC, public policy is our niche. I would say that the issues are our specialty. We work within certain parameters.

To adapt, we must also present our content in a shorter format, including for those who need to understand in 90 seconds the implications of something that just happened. Nevertheless, any report will always be based on facts and have value-added content; in other words, include more than just news. People already know the news. For example, if something was said in the context of a committee, we go about finding out whether or not it was true.

We work in formats that attract different audiences, but we always focus on context.

• (1550)

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Mr. Lefebvre, you have the floor.

Mr. Paul Lefebvre (Sudbury, Lib.): Thank you very much for being here, especially as Mrs. Boucher said, considering that CPAC representatives have not come here since 2004.

Congratulations on your work. CPAC has been around for nearly 25 years. It is very important for this channel to be broadcast in homes across Canada.

You said that your channel is viewed in 11 million homes and is funded by cable companies. CPAC must be part of the cable package of channels for people to have access to it.

Mrs. Catherine Cano: Our channel is provided in the basic package and even the one being called skinny basic.

Mr. Paul Lefebvre: Your funding comes from people who subscribe to cable. Will the changes in the industry and the fact that more and more people are cancelling their cable subscription have an impact on your funding?

Mrs. Catherine Cano: That is a very good question.

Before I took my position at CPAC, I wondered about the state of the cable industry.

It is a reality. People may be subscribing less or more, but the numbers are not worrisome for now. As far as we're concerned, it is practically stable.

We have to have some foresight and plan ahead. Our business model is based on subscriptions. We have to find opportunities for funding in order to keep providing the programming we want. For now, this isn't having an impact on us, but we have to think a little further ahead.

Mr. Paul Lefebvre: You also talked about simultaneous translation, broadcasting events in French, and the percentage of French programming, which is 25%.

I would like to come back to broadcasting events in French. Do you have any examples of events that you broadcast or that you continue to broadcast annually?

Mrs. Catherine Cano: I gave the example of Quebec's budget, which was brought down last week. It depends on the current events. We also broadcast many roundtable discussions. For example, the Raoul-Dandurand chair in Montreal organized a roundtable on the U. S. election. It depends on the offers we receive. The Institute for Research on Public Policy organizes workshops and conferences, for example. The offers might come from French Canada, and from time to time we get offers for events elsewhere in Canada. It has to represent at least 20% of our programming.

Most think tanks are English, but there are French organizations. We are in constant contact with them and are always looking at what is going on. For example, we recently were approached by the University of Montreal for a conference. We are approached by universities in Quebec for other conferences.

Mr. Paul Lefebvre: Are there other examples from la Francophonie outside Quebec for these types of events?

Mrs. Catherine Cano: There are francophone organizations outside Quebec, in Manitoba and Alberta. They often call us. It depend on the events. Sometimes it might be public meetings or smaller, private events. If they are not private, we can broadcast them. We make it our duty to do so.

Mr. Paul Lefebvre: What percentage of the 20% is devoted to Quebec anglophone events, and francophone events outside Quebec?

Mrs. Catherine Cano: It is 20% or 21% of our programming.

Mr. Paul Lefebvre: Is that 20% of the 100%?

Mrs. Catherine Cano: I don't understand.

Mr. Paul Lefebvre: You are talking about the 20%. What percentage of that is devoted to official language minority communities?

Mrs. Catherine Cano: If I understand correctly, you want to know what portion of this 20% comes from Quebec and how much comes from elsewhere?

• (1555)

Mr. Paul Lefebvre: That's right.

Mrs. Catherine Cano: Okay.

Mr. Paul Lefebvre: What portion comes from francophone Canada and what portion comes from the English side in Quebec?

Mrs. Catherine Cano: In all honesty, I don't have that number with me, but I can find it and send it to you.

I imagine it's something like two-thirds from one side and one-third from the other, but I'm not sure. Obviously there is a large francophone population in Quebec. I will check this information and get back to you.

Mr. Paul Lefebvre: Thank you.

I have one last question.

You talked about a French political documentary about George-Étienne Cartier. Can you give us examples of political documentaries that you've done outside Quebec in French and in English in Quebec?

Mrs. Catherine Cano: This is new to us. We have been making documentaries for only two years. We have completed three and are working on our fourth.

For the documentary on George-Étienne Cartier, we crossed the country. We worked on *La bataille fédérale du Québec* during the election last year. The documentary on physician assisted death is, in fact, Canadian. It is not at all based on the Quebec model. It explains how the debate has gotten to this point. There are interviews that were conducted across the country. *The Silent Tragedy* is about the history of missing or murdered aboriginal women. That was a Canada-wide project.

Mr. Paul Lefebvre: I think this is so important for preserving our history.

I have one last comment.

The Chair: Actually, we are going to move on to the next speaker. You can come back later.

Mr. Paul Lefebvre: Okay.

Mrs. Catherine Cano: May I add something?

The Chair: Go ahead.

Mrs. Catherine Cano: Mr. Lefebvre, we also conducted another study. We'll share the results with you. During our licencing renewal, three years ago, the CRTC asked us to provide it with the percentage of hours of programming on minorities. It was not nothing, but I don't know the numbers by heart. We looked into the data for the last few years up to 2013.

Mr. Paul Lefebvre: But that wasn't a condition for renewing the licence.

Mrs. Catherine Cano: No.

Mr. Paul Lefebvre: It was just a request.

Mrs. Catherine Cano: The condition is that 20% of the content be in French.

Mr. Paul Lefebvre: Good, thank you.

The Chair: You may send any additional information to the committee clerk.

Mrs. Catherine Cano: I will gladly do so.

The Chair: Mr. Choquette, you have six minutes.

Mr. François Choquette (Drummond, NDP): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you both for being here today.

Congratulations on your new position.

Mrs. Catherine Cano: Thank you.

Mr. François Choquette: As this is the Standing Committee on Official Languages, my first question has to do with linguistic duality. You spoke at length about it.

Does CPAC have an official languages policy in writing? Of course you follow the rules. You said that 20% of the production is done in French. Furthermore, everything is translated. Can you describe exactly how linguistic duality applies in CPAC's daily operations?

Mrs. Catherine Cano: I believe I understand your question.

CPAC exists in both languages and the CRTC licence requires us to have everything translated. If the program is in original English, then it is translated into French and vice versa. The licence also requires us to devote 20% of our programming to long format. We therefore broadcast roundtable discussions and press conferences, among other things, in their entirety. The licence also requires 25% of our programming to be original productions.

We have daily shows in French such as *Revue politique* and *Tête à tête*. We also produce dozens of vignettes that provide historical, political, and cultural explanations. We also have interludes. They are shorter and allow us to do different things. In fact, not everything is in long format. We also broadcast a roundtable discussion in French. We have to make sure we achieve our objectives every day.

• (1600)

Mr. François Choquette: Very good.

The Standing Committee on Official Languages is currently studying the future of the Translation Bureau. We are looking at how things are going since the recent staffing cuts. Unfortunately, a lot of cuts through attrition are coming in the next few years. We are also looking at the implementation of machine translation, which has a lot of people talking.

Does CPAC use the services of the Translation Bureau? How do you operate?

As you mentioned, everything that is broadcast on your channel is available in both official languages. It is automatically translated. Do you work with the Translation Bureau?

Mrs. Catherine Cano: There are two parts to your question.

First, for all the broadcasts of the procedures of the House of Commons and the Senate, we take the interpretation that is provided to us by the House of Commons.

We have three full-time translators. They translate live, or after the fact if it is an event we recorded. We have an office of translators made up of real people who translate. We couldn't do it any other way.

Mr. François Choquette: You have your own translators.

Mrs. Catherine Cano: We translate 500 to 600 pieces of information a month. It is a lot.

Mr. François Choquette: If I am not mistaken, we are talking more about interpreters than translators.

Mrs. Catherine Cano: We have both. We use interpreters for live broadcasts. We also translate documents, such as website content or promotional materials.

I will give you an example. When the budget is presented, everything is in French and English. Tomorrow, for example, all our content for the budget will be in French and English. If the source language of the document is English, it will be translated into French, and if the source language is French, the document will be translated into English.

Mr. François Choquette: All right.

As you mentioned, you have your own translation service. Is this service in contact with the Translation Bureau of Public Works and Government Services Canada or with a university in order to continue to improve?

Mrs. Catherine Cano: That is a good question. I cannot say whether they are in regular contact. However, what I can say is that it is important to us that our translators are aware of new developments in translation because there are always new words and new interpretations. We make sure that they keep current about that. I do not know to what extent they are in regular contact with PWGSC's Translation Bureau or other government organizations.

CPAC is a private broadcaster, but we keep abreast of developments in the field of translation in Canada.

Mr. François Choquette: That is excellent.

You spoke about broadcasting, but there is a lot of traffic on your website as well. I often consult it. It is a very good platform on the Web and it is probably provided free of charge.

How important will this platform be in the future? Mr. Lefebvre mentioned earlier the importance of everything digital. How do you view this transition?

Mrs. Catherine Cano: The Internet and the website are advantageous for us because they do not have the same constraints as television. We can exceed the 20% or 25% and do much more. Obviously, we need the resources to do that. What we hope to do is see how we can increase our offerings in both French and English.

We are currently studying how we can do that and we are establishing our priorities. We are conducting small surveys to identify what people want. One thing I will be doing is meeting with all MPs to determine their consumption habits, what is relevant, what is not as relevant, and what should be given priority on our

website. There is a vast amount of potential content. Our website is rich in content, and we have to see what is most pertinent.

On the French side, I will come back to your question, Mr. Lefebvre, and talk about our program *Revue politique*. This program deals with the issues of interest to parliamentarians and their work, and also covers a lot of the work being done by francophone organizations outside Canada and the bills or public policies often put in place by another province.

Recently, we covered bilingualism in Ontario. Any time there is a subject of interest to francophones in Canada, the show makes a point of including it in its programming or its editorial content.

● (1605)

The Chair: Thank you.

Ms. Lapointe is next.

Ms. Linda Lapointe (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Hello. I would like to welcome you and thank you for joining us today.

Earlier, you talked about looking for more revenue in your financial framework. What are you considering? What are you looking at?

Mrs. Catherine Cano: It is a little early for that. Part of my mandate is to examine the different options. I think we have to keep an open mind.

Of course, there is no advertising on the television side, and that is not going to change.

Moreover, we produce documentaries. Another network might perhaps be interested in a second or third window of opportunity. These are possibilities.

There are also the social networks and YouTube. Some people have gone the trial and error route. We can learn from that and it gives us an advantage. My objective is to do an in-depth study of what works and what doesn't, not just with respect to potential revenue, but also with respect to the consumer experience.

There are things on some sites that work well. People are used to getting everything free of charge, so it is now more difficult to include advertising. We have to be smart about it. Our objective is not to drive people away, but to encourage them to consult our sites more frequently. It is quite the task. This is what almost all media organizations have to do now. Everyone is looking for the business model that is in sync with the explosion of new technologies.

Ms. Linda Lapointe: Thank you.

Therefore, it's coming; it's a work in progress.

Mrs. Catherine Cano: Yes. I have only been on the job for two months. Therefore, I have not yet had the time.

Ms. Linda Lapointe: Congratulations. You have been on the job for less time than we have.

Mrs. Catherine Cano: Oh, oh!

Ms. Linda Lapointe: A little earlier, you spoke about your objective of consolidating and modernizing. You mentioned social media. How do you plan to modernize CPAC?

Mrs. Catherine Cano: We have a super team of experienced people with an incredible institutional memory. It is important to add people from all generations to this staff. We are talking about different consumers, people interested in being informed in a different way. Therefore, it is important for us to have that kind of representation on our staff in order for us to adapt and achieve our objectives.

We are reviewing our presence on social networks. For example, things are going very well on Twitter, where we have 70,000 followers. That is fantastic. This platform is growing. We are also on Facebook, where 80% of people go to get information. More people could follow us. The idea is to encourage or to get people to discover us.

As you know, there are a lot of offerings in the current world of information. How do we let people know that our content is different and worth looking at? That is the challenge for everyone, for all news organizations, not just CPAC. We have to have a presence where people are present. It is clear that we have to be on Facebook and we are going to do a lot on that platform.

We are talking about content with a lot of young people. Our idea is to survey a certain generation to find out what interests them about what is going on in Parliament and with public policy, and what they would do. I spoke about this with some young people I met. Often, it is the human side. We present the work you do in the House of Commons and in committees.

During the election campaign, our riding profiles were very successful. We reported on the candidates in their ridings. This allowed people to see and understand the issues in the regions. It led to an understanding of people's priorities, for example. All regions are different. Many of you are from very different areas. There is a lot of information. It allows people to understand their country.

My dream is that CPAC will be the forum that will help people discover all the different regions across the country and the different regional realities, because we do not always have the opportunity to hear debate about that in Parliament. It happens more in your day-to-day work in your office in Ottawa or in your riding. That is one of our priorities for the fall. We want to build on what we tried during the election campaign and to capitalize on it. It was a real success. Honestly, besides the debates, it was what we heard people talking about the most.

● (1610)

Ms. Linda Lapointe: Thank you very much.

I will leave some time for my colleague...

The Chair: In any event, it is now Mr. Samson's turn.

Ms. Linda Lapointe: Yes, I know, but that was so very interesting.

I will now turn it over to Mr. Samson.

Mr. Darrell Samson (Sackville—Preston—Chezzetcook, Lib.): I very much appreciate it, Ms. Lapointe.

Ms. Linda Lapointe: That said, I would have gladly continued.

Mr. Darrell Samson: No doubt.

I would like to congratulate you on your new position.

First, I am quite pleased that CPAC is included in the skinny basic package, as you mentioned. That is vital and extremely important.

My colleague asked a question about francophones outside Quebec. I am very interested in that. I would really like to know what the percentage is in order to determine how that could perhaps be increased. You do not have to give me that information today.

One idea comes to mind: you could meet with me tomorrow and we could do a four- or five-hour interview. That would make for a good percentage. I think that would work well.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Darrell Samson: We are going to play a little game, because I know the committee chair very well and I know that he will soon cut me off. Therefore, I am going to very quickly ask you four questions and I would like a 30- to 45-second answer, please.

First, I would like to talk about some comments my colleagues from New Brunswick have made to me. Many people switch from one language to the other when giving a speech. Alternate paragraphs or pages are given in French and English. There is a French stream and an English stream. People using the English stream to listen to me—many people like to listen to me—do not want to change the stream when, all of a sudden, I switch to French, or to English.

Have you ever thought of having the text in the other language appear at the bottom of the screen so that people do not have to change stream? They could listen to the speech in the language they prefer and, if all of a sudden we speak in the other language, they could see the text scroll along the bottom. I hear these comments fairly often.

Please provide a 45-second answer.

Mrs. Catherine Cano: Everything that is broadcast on television, we broadcast directly on the web. If you give a speech in the House, it is on the web. There are three options on the Internet: French, English and the floor. You do not have to listen to the interpretation, and I am pleased about that. I understand the question; it is a really good one.

It is impossible to provide a written translation of what you are saying as you go along because we do not know what you are going to say. There would be errors in the text in both English and French. However, I will think about what you have asked me. There must surely be a compromise.

Having said that, I believe that, in several places, you can change the audio by changing your television settings. The floor audio option is also available. I know that is the case in Ottawa, but I would have to check what is available elsewhere in the country.

Mr. Darrell Samson: A long time ago, someone said that the word “impossible” does not exist, and that it was to be found only in the dictionary of fools. I believe Napoleon Bonaparte said that. Therefore, a solution can certainly be found. We could give you the text in advance, as is the case in the House. If you already had the text, the translation could be done quickly.

Mrs. Catherine Cano: Yes, of course.

Mr. Darrell Samson: My second questions concerns youth and schools.

I have been an educator for 30 years. I would like to know what strategies are used to engage youth. That is part of your future action plan. How do young people in school access CPAC? Do they know it exists? I have never really heard them talk about it. We need to find a way to appeal to young people. How can we engage them more? Perhaps this could be done in the schools, but we have to find away to do it.

Could you briefly comment on that?

Mrs. Catherine Cano: You are quite right. I couldn't agree with you more.

We are planning to contact all schools because CPAC is a well-kept secret. Our content is good and is considered to be objective and non-partisan. We have credibility when it comes to explaining what a bill or a procedure is. We are going to have a team examine what can be done even at the elementary school level. We often think of universities, which is obviously a good idea. However, the more young people understand at an earlier age about what Canada is, what it is made up of and how it works, the more engaged they will be as citizens.

•(1615)

Mr. Darrell Samson: Absolutely, the entrepreneurial spirit takes root in kindergarten. Thus, we could start talking about politics in kindergarten. That is of great interest to me.

I would briefly like to touch on the issue of establishing a data bank or bank of information. I am not as familiar with all the projects as you are, but if we documented the important role played by the Prime Minister, the Speaker of the House, and the chairs of committees, and the work done, we could easily access that information.

For example, in order to engage people, parents, the community, students, teachers and other people in my school board, I created a themed questionnaire on communication, transportation, and early childhood development, among other topics. People who completed the questionnaire could win a prize. Once completed, all the information was committed to paper. Anyone looking for information on a topic of interest to them could ask for it at any time. There was no need to call anyone because I could obtain all the pertinent information on the subject from the questionnaires.

That could be one approach. I am just throwing ideas out to you. I certainly don't have all the answers.

Mrs. Catherine Cano: To be brief, that is an excellent idea.

Mr. Darrell Samson: In a four-hour interview, I could certainly share more ideas.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Mrs. Catherine Cano: We will an opportunity to meet again. I am quickly taking notes, and making a mental note of all this.

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

Mr. Généreux, you have the floor.

Mr. Bernard Généreux (Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, CPC): Thank you, chair.

Ms. Cano, I am beginning to have doubts about your background. You never once said “là, là” since the start of the meeting. I find that surprising.

Mrs. Catherine Cano: *C'est trop plaisant!*

Mr. Bernard Généreux: Oh, oh!

It was a pleasure meeting with you. We did not know one another, but our meeting was very productive. I put forward several ideas. You asked how CPAC could have a greater presence in Canadians' lives. I believe that was your original question. I asked you several questions and I am now going to ask some in this committee.

I believe that the following question is an extremely important one. As far as I know, almost every MP has a website. By typing our names in Google or other search engines, people are increasingly directed to our personal website rather than parliament's website. I am wondering whether you could ask MPs to include a link on their personal website. It would be useful, even on the House of Commons website. In fact, this is basically about the democratization of information. These links would make this information available and provide quick access to CPAC.

My wife and I are big fans of CPAC. My wife is an anglophone and I am a francophone. I apologize to the interpreters, but we try to follow the debates in the language in which they are conducted. We do not have access to the stream that carries the floor audio and inevitably we have to switch between the French stream and the English stream every time we listen to CPAC. It is somewhat exasperating. Mr. Samson raised this issue.

The idea is to promote your organization which, I believe, is privately owned. You do not have a competitor in the public sector given that you are the only organization doing what you do. Your funding comes from cable companies, right?

Mrs. Catherine Cano: It comes from the subscriptions.

Mr. Bernard Généreux: I don't know whether, after our meeting, you determined if it would be possible to establish closer ties with the public sector, that is, the government in Ottawa and also the MPs, so that it would be easier for people to find you. After our meeting, I downloaded the app on my cell phone. As I mentioned to you, in my opinion the background colours are very drab and not welcoming.

In these surroundings it is very nice, but don't try to attract young people with such colours. I am sure you will not have any success. I believe you will inevitably have to rebrand CPAC. It is even difficult to see your grey logo on our phones. If it were yellow, it would be more visible. Do you know what I am trying to say? You need to revisit your organization's image.

Earlier on someone mentioned the importance of going to see people in the regions. We talked about this at our meeting. We did a report on it. On the way back from New Brunswick, we had a brief stop in our area. A broadcast about MPs and what they do, not just in Ottawa but also in their riding, would probably be very popular. We could promote it. In fact, we also promote the content you broadcast.

I wonder if you have some comments about this. I am bombarding you with comments, but I don't really have any questions for you. According to the discussions we have already had, you are prepared to make certain changes.

We talked about young people earlier. They are obviously the future. We talked about programs made by and for youth, which would not use colours such as these, of course. It would even be possible to work with local communities.

Given that your funding comes from cable companies, could you work with local broadcasters? In my area, local television is really popular even though it does not really have public affairs programs.

Could you establish ties with these regional broadcasters? They could help you shed a little more light on the world of federal politics.

• (1620)

Mrs. Catherine Cano: You have made many good arguments. I am nodding in approval, because it is music to my ears. Some people might think it is somewhat difficult, but it isn't.

I believe that partnerships are the future. We should not become isolated, especially at the local level, where there are many stations. Of course, it depends on the situation. We are broadcast by cable companies with more than 2,000 subscribers, but not by those with fewer subscribers.

Of course it depends on the project. We currently have an idea for a project. If it gets off the ground, there would be an association with the regions, and local television and radio. This is something entirely new.

In any event, all media realize that they need to stick together. I would like to tell you just how touched I am by how CPAC is being received. Most organizations want to meet with me to establish partnerships so that we can help one another out. We really complement one another. We certainly do not offer the same thing as the others, and that is the way it should be.

As for your idea about renewal, it is obviously part of the strategy to rebrand. The brand here is strong. If we want the public to see the work that is done and truly understand the process and the democratic institutions, we have to be accessible. We have to adapt to the changing times. That is something we will be thinking about in the next few months.

In fact, I had taken note of it the last time you spoke to me about it. You made me laugh a lot. I saw you again because we need to hear these kinds of comments. It is a pleasure to meet with you one-on-one. We are all in a different place, we all have concerns, and it is important to remind us of that.

For us, it is a moment in time: we will be celebrating our 25th anniversary. I am new. We have a fantastic team. We have done

many things. Our current app is great. However, we are working on making it more accessible. For example, we want our mobile app to make it possible to click on five things that are currently happening. It would replace something that perhaps does not provide enough options. The material or content are there. We just have to work on the language and the discourse. We have to make better use of communications.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Cano. We will come back to that shortly.

I have two questions before we move on to the next person.

Some people have mentioned to me that they find it confusing that CPAC's channel location varies from place to place.

At some point are you planning to do something so that people will be able to tune into CPAC on the same channel number?

Mrs. Catherine Cano: That is a dream. I have to say that it is not up to us. That decision must be made by the different cable companies. Having said that, we are aware of the problem.

In Ottawa, for example, given that access to CPAC English audio is on channel 24, people wonder why the French is on channel 614. That's because all French-language networks, such as TFO or RDI—which is on channel 613—have a channel number in the 600s. It is somewhat logical for CPAC to be with the other French-language stations. In Montreal, and actually everywhere on the Vidéotron network in Quebec, CPAC is grouped with news networks such as RDI, CBC News Network, MSNBC and CNN.

Moreover, Vidéotron will soon be broadcasting in HD. It will be among the other networks that broadcast in high definition, which is a good thing.

We could ask ourselves the following question. If CNN is on channel 33 almost everywhere, why is CPAC, which has 100% Canadian content, not on the same channel everywhere? We want to ensure that Canadians can easily find us. We are working on it.

• (1625)

The Chair: Thank you.

I would like to make a brief comment. Our committee's mandate also mentions the promotion of our country's linguistic duality outside Canada. I am just bringing this up to see whether you can collaborate and help us promote Canada's linguistic duality elsewhere.

Now that the point has been made, I give the floor to Mr. Arseneault.

Mr. René Arseneault (Madawaska—Restigouche, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Welcome.

Thank you for the interesting information. I am truly proud and pleased to learn that, as part of your mandate, you ensure that all documents are translated into both official languages. It is good to hear, especially at the Standing Committee on Official Languages. As an Acadian, I am particularly attuned to that because I know that the North American francophonie was established in Acadia in 1604, to be precise. I say that in all modesty. Moreover, this was in our friend Darrell Samson's province.

Ms. Cano, I was involved in community radio as a volunteer for just over 12 years. I remember that in the beginning we had to fight to obtain a CRTC licence. We had a specific mandate, which clearly established what we could and could not do, as well as the requirements and objectives to be achieved.

Did CPAC have the same experience when applying for its CRTC licence?

Mrs. Catherine Cano: Do you want to know whether it was difficult?

Mr. René Arseneault: Is your mandate spelled out by the requirements of the CRTC licence?

Mrs. Catherine Cano: Yes, we have licence conditions. For example, for French programming we absolutely have to have a specific percentage.

Mr. René Arseneault: That is the 25% you mentioned earlier.

Mrs. Catherine Cano: That's right. We could lose our licence if we do not achieve those objectives. That is a minimum, and we could obviously do more. Our original French programming already accounts for one third of the total, which is more than the established 25%.

We are governed by the CRTC licence, but also by agreements that we have entered into with the House of Commons.

Mr. René Arseneault: To summarize, what does the CRTC require in order for CPAC to stay on the air?

Mrs. Catherine Cano: With respect to French?

Mr. René Arseneault: I am referring to your licence in general, whether it is the French or English component.

Mrs. Catherine Cano: All right. That is a broader question and it will take me a little longer to answer.

First, we must broadcast all proceedings of the House of Commons and its committees, as well as those of the Senate. The House of Commons' proceedings begin at 10 in the morning, most of the time. That is the priority. As a broadcaster, we cannot broadcast other news or content as long as the House is sitting. That is a challenge for us. We adapt our programming every day based on the sitting hours of the House of Commons. We only know a few hours in advance when the House will adjourn its debates.

When the House is not sitting, we fulfill the other requirements or criteria of our licence. We have to broadcast eight hours of House of Commons' committees each week. Our intent is to subsequently broadcast all committee meetings. There are only so many hours in a week and we do not have to broadcast all committee meetings. We broadcast only the meetings approved by the House of Commons for broadcast. We do not decide whether they will be televised; that is up to the clerks and the chairs of the House of Commons' committees.

This also applies to Senate committees. We have to broadcast 24 hours of committee meetings, and the remainder are broadcast afterwards.

There is access to two portals on our website: one is exclusively for the House of Commons and the other is for the Senate. You can find all committee proceedings that are televised, either live or on demand.

• (1630)

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Cano.

Mr. Nater, you have two minutes.

[English]

Mr. John Nater (Perth—Wellington, CPC): I have a couple of questions. I'll ask them together and let you answer them.

First, you mentioned you were the only station to carry all the leaders' debates in the most recent election. I thank you for that. Can you give me some idea of the viewership of those leaders' debates? Certainly, it's the first time we've had five in different formats. Could I get some idea of the viewership on CPAC of the leaders' debates?

Second, regarding the original content in the non-House of Commons procedures, you're certainly beholden to the House of Commons schedule. Is the original content, such as *PrimeTime Politics*, available on demand even when the House of Commons has gone over time? Can you access that at the regular time instead of having it pushed back because the House of Commons is sitting later? Is that available on demand or is it simply a live version?

Mrs. Catherine Cano: I'm going to ask you to repeat the last part of the question, because I've tried to remember everything.

As for the debates, their ratings, I don't have them with me, but I can forward you what we have. We were asked after the first one. It really depends, but it was quite good. But it was new for CPAC to be working nationally like this, and I think in the next round it would be more known. It was in the hundreds of thousands, but I don't have the number with me.

As to your second question, you want to know how much original programming we do other than the.... Is that right?

Mr. John Nater: No, basically, when you're required to cover gavel to gavel—

Mrs. Catherine Cano: Yes.

Mr. John Nater: —and often.... For example, tonight we have 12 votes at the end of the sitting day so potentially your programming could be pushed. For your original content that would get pushed on regular television, is it live on the iPad app or online beyond that?

Mrs. Catherine Cano: That's a very good question. In fact, we actually produce 38 hours of original content per week, and you're right, sometimes it gets pushed when the House sits late. Our goal, but it's not happening now, is.... It is online eventually, but not necessarily online at the same time. For instance, we have a show called *Scrums* at seven o'clock normally, but more often than not we don't have it on television because the House is still sitting. It does air later on that night, but our goal is to put it on the web at seven, because if it's not available on TV, it doesn't mean it's not available. We do it anyway. For us it's content that we should absolutely take advantage of with our other platforms because it has already been produced. That way people who would like to listen to it at seven will have it somewhere at that point.

[Translation]

The Chair: Thank you very much, Ms. Cano.

[English]

Mrs. Catherine Cano: Can I just add one thing?

[Translation]

The Chair: Go ahead.

Mrs. Catherine Cano: I just wanted to answer Mr. Généreux.

On the website, you have the floor audio option, where you do not hear the simultaneous interpretation. Unfortunately, it is only available on the website, but at least it is available. All television content is broadcast live on the Internet.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Ms. Cano.

I would also like to thank Mr. Fortune for being here.

I would like to mention to committee members that Ms. Cano began her career here, in Parliament, as a page.

Congratulations. Thank you very much for appearing before us. It was very interesting.

We will suspend our meeting for about five minutes.

•(1630) _____ (Pause) _____

•(1640)

The Chair: We are resuming our meeting.

Mr. Arseneault, you have the floor.

Mr. René Arseneault: I am replacing the member who moved the motion.

We are studying the motion, right?

The Chair: We are getting to it.

Yes, Ms. Lapointe?

Ms. Linda Lapointe: Mr. Chair, we need to discuss some things. Could we go in camera for five minutes?

The Chair: We can go in camera for the time it takes to discuss the travel budget.

Ms. Linda Lapointe: Yes, that's it.

The Chair: Is it agreed?

Hon. members: Agreed.

The Chair: We will meet in camera.

[Proceedings continue in camera]

•(1640) _____ (Pause) _____

•(1705)

[Public proceedings resume]

The Chair: We are no longer in camera.

We will continue our proceedings. We are studying the motion moved by Mr. Généreux concerning the contribution of the Hon. Mauril Bélanger.

I give you the floor, Mr. Généreux.

Mr. Bernard Généreux: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I reread the motion. I believe it accurately conveys what I wanted to say and faithfully reflects my intention. I move that we adopt the motion, unless others have comments.

I believe that the motion truly highlights Mr. Bélanger's commitment to the francophonie over the years. I feel that is quite obvious. I wrote my motion quickly, on the corner of a desk, but it conveys very well what I wanted to say.

If I may, I move that the motion be adopted.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Généreux.

Ms. Lapointe, you have the floor.

Ms. Linda Lapointe: I would like to propose an addition after the third paragraph, in order to make the motion a little bit longer. The first three paragraphs are fine. It would read as follows:

With his strong sense of commitment and enthusiasm, Mr. Bélanger has made, and continues to make, an unforgettable difference for official language minority communities from coast to coast to coast. Therefore, the members of the Committee would like to invite organizations representing English- and French-speaking minority communities to join them in recognizing Mr. Bélanger's commitment and in thanking him for his exceptional contribution.

Mr. Bernard Généreux: I'm fine with that.

The Chair: Good.

Ms. Linda Lapointe: We will probably add a little something in the English version.

Randy, do you want to read it?

Mr. Randy Boissonnault (Edmonton Centre, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Généreux.

We could perhaps share the text another day. However, I can read you the previous paragraphs in English:

[English]

The members of the Committee would like to pay tribute to the determination, perseverance and courage that Mr. Bélanger has shown as he continues to champion our official languages with passion and dedication despite the adversity he now faces on a daily basis.

With his strong sense of commitment and enthusiasm, Mr. Bélanger has made, and continues to make, an unforgettable difference for official language minority communities from coast to coast to coast. Therefore, the members of the Committee would like to invite organizations representing English and French speaking minority communities in Canada to join them in recognizing Mr. Bélanger's commitment and in thanking him for his exceptional contribution.

•(1710)

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Everyone seems to be in favour of the French and English amendments.

(Motion agreed to)

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: I have a question. Will you move the motion in the House? How will that work?

The Chair: It requires a committee report. We have to find a way to do it.

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: Excuse me, it's wonderful that the committee has done this, but it seems to me that this motion should be tabled unanimously in the House.

The Chair: What is the procedure, Mr. Clerk?

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: She added a feminine touch, which I think is great.

The Chair: The committee can choose to table a report, and this text would be the report.

Are you favourable to making this a report of the committee and that the committee table it in the House?

Ms. Linda Lapointe: Yes, that is very important.

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: I think that would be a good thing.

An hon. member: In that case, would it be called a report?

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: No, it's a motion. The rules may have changed, but in the past, we've presented the motion itself.

The Chair: I'll ask the clerk to find out how we can present it in the House, if you agree.

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: That would be very good. In that case, the chair would present it.

The Chair: Okay.

Mr. Clerk, would you please take care of this?

The committee wants to present the report, right?

Mr. Bernard Généreux: Presenting it in the House of Commons is one thing, but it would have to be read. In that case, I would like to read the French part, and Mr. Boissonnault can read the English version of the motion to the House.

Mr. Randy Boissonnault: We can share the reading.

Mr. Bernard Généreux: That would demonstrate the committee's unanimity to the House. We could notify the Speaker, I could read the French part, and you could read the English part. That would demonstrate the committee's unanimity with respect to this motion.

The Chair: Mr. Clerk has heard your comments, and I'll ask him to follow up on our discussion about this.

Mr. René Arseneault: Mr. Chairman, can we call this a recommendation or a tribute motion in the context of official languages?

The Chair: It would be a tribute motion. If we need the word "report", we'll include it.

Mr. René Arseneault: The word "report" does not go with a tribute.

We'll let the clerk figure it out.

The Chair: Mr. Clerk will make arrangements for this to be presented in the House. We'll try to get the support of the Speaker of the House.

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: Yes, probably. He's a good friend. He'll want to. I think this is for a good cause.

The Chair: Definitely.

It's approved.

The next topic is the Francophonie. I'd like to read you the draft statement prepared at the request of the Standing Committee on Official Languages on Monday, March 21, which is today:

At its meeting the day after the Journée internationale de la Francophonie, the House of Commons Standing Committee on Official Languages acknowledged the importance of this day, which celebrates the French language and cultural diversity on five continents. With approximately 274 million French speakers worldwide, La Francophonie is a vibrant linguistic space with a rich culture and history. The Committee members are proud that Canada is part of La Francophonie and that French is one of our country's official languages. During its meeting, the Committee also acknowledged Canada's active role in the international francophone community as a member of the Organisation internationale de la Francophonie, and through the interparliamentary activities of the Canadian Branch of the Assemblée parlementaire de la Francophonie.

Do you agree with this statement? The Journée internationale de la Francophonie was Sunday, March 20.

Yes, Darrell?

Mr. Darrell Samson: Mr. Chairman, at the end of my member statement today, I invited francophone foreigners to come settle in—

The Chair: In Nova Scotia.

Mr. Darrell Samson: No, in minority communities across Canada. Nova Scotia is certainly one of them.

Canada attracts a lot of immigrants. Things are fine in English, but for the minority francophone community, I wonder if there are ways to stimulate, support and attract francophone immigrants to ensure the vitality and longevity of our communities. I'm very concerned about this.

The message could state that Canada welcomes members of the international Francophonie and that, if francophones want to immigrate to Canada, we would be ready to welcome them to our minority communities and so on. It might be nice to add something to that effect.

•(1715)

The Chair: Comments?

Mr. René Arseneault: I'd like to add to what my colleague from Nova Scotia said. We should also make it clear that it is possible for francophones to immigrate to Canada. That's important because francophone communities are being diluted.

The Chair: Go ahead, Sylvie.

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: I agree, but we have to be careful about how we word it so as not to interfere with provincial jurisdiction. It's fine for the other provinces, but if the wording is off, Quebec will have something to say about it.

The Chair: Yes, but we're talking about francophone immigration. Francophone immigration to minority communities means provinces other than Quebec.

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: Okay, then, it's fine.

The Chair: This doesn't apply to Quebec. If we were talking about Quebec, we'd be talking about anglophone immigration.

Mr. Darrell Samson: It's an invitation to immigrate to Canada. There are communities ready to welcome people.

The Chair: We'll add something about that.

Is everyone okay with the statement?

Some hon. members: Okay.

The Chair: The statement is approved.

The next topic is the witnesses list for the study on the Translation Bureau.

I have here the list of witnesses proposed by members of the House of Commons Standing Committee on Official Languages .

The witnesses proposed by Mauril Bélanger are Richard Clément, director of the Official Languages and Bilingualism Institute and associate dean of the Faculty of Arts of the University of Ottawa; Sylviane Lanthier, president of the Fédération des communautés francophones et acadienne; and Lola Bendana, president of the Language Industry Association.

Here are the witnesses proposed by François Choquette: Emmanuelle Tremblay and André Picotte, president and vice president, respectively, of the Canadian Association of Professional Employees; Linda Cardinal, University of Ottawa professor and holder of the Research Chair in Canadian Francophonie and Public Policies and minority languages specialist—that won't cost us much for transportation; Donald Barabé, former vice-president of the Translation Bureau; Alan Bernardi, president and CEO of the Language Technologies Research Centre; Charles LeBlanc, University of Ottawa associate professor and member of the Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies; and Jean Delisle, University of Ottawa emeritus professor.

Here's the list of individuals who have contacted the clerk to express their interest: Louise Brunette, Université du Québec en Outaouais professor; and Shaunpal Jandu, projects and public affairs lead with Canadian Parents for French.

That's all.

François, over to you.

Mr. François Choquette: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Like Mr. Bélanger, I am one of the instigators of this study. That's why I proposed several witnesses. That being said, I believe there needs to be a balance.

Emmanuelle Tremblay and André Picotte will testify together. Basically, there is just one group of witnesses that will appear for about 10 minutes if the committee agrees to invite them.

Linda Cardinal is a champion for everything related to the Translation Bureau. She has often spoken publicly in that role, as has Donald Barabé.

The University of Ottawa is already represented. If the committee would rather remove some of the witnesses I've proposed, I suggest removing Charles LeBlanc and Jean Delisle, who are also from the University of Ottawa.

The Chair: What about Mr. Bernardi?

Mr. François Choquette: I proposed four witnesses. Three of them would appear as a group: Ms. Cardinal, Mr. Barabé, and Mr. Bernardi.

• (1720)

The Chair: Okay.

Mr. François Choquette: I would agree to removing Charles LeBlanc and Jean Delisle from the list because they are from the University of Ottawa too.

The Chair: Okay.

Mr. François Choquette: I'm proposing that to the committee so there can be a balance.

We can easily hear from at least three witnesses in two hours, or even four, if need be. The clerk would organize it, invite the witnesses, and make sure they are available. We can't let this study go on forever and prevent us from moving on to other important studies.

I don't know Louise Brunette or Mr. Jandu. I don't know what their connection is to the Translation Bureau. Before we invite them, maybe we should look into what they know about the Translation Bureau. I don't know them at all. Do they have a more general interest in speaking to the Standing Committee on Official Languages? Are they familiar with the guideline and the Translation Bureau?

The Chair: Thank you.

Paul, over to you.

Mr. Paul Lefebvre: I am of somewhat the same mind.

How much time should we allocate to this? If it's a day, does that mean there will be two meetings? That would give us four hours to hear from witnesses.

Mr. François Choquette: Mr. Lefebvre, may I remind you that we passed a motion to spend three to five committee meetings on this. We already had one committee meeting with Ms. Achimov from the Translation Bureau.

Mr. Paul Lefebvre: I wasn't here that day.

Mr. François Choquette: That means we have at least two meetings left, but I suggest that we make it three more meetings.

Mr. François Choquette: Two or three meetings. We have seven witnesses.

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: We'll need at least three meetings to hear from these witnesses.

Mr. François Choquette: There are seven witnesses: three proposed by Mr. Bélanger and four proposed by me.

The Chair: We could schedule four witnesses per meeting and put two of the witnesses at the bottom of the list.

Mr. François Choquette: Yes.

The Chair: That would be eight witnesses.

Mr. François Choquette: Yes.

The Chair: For a total of two meetings. Is that okay with you?

Mr. François Choquette: It's okay with me.

The Chair: Ms. Lapointe, over to you.

Mr. Paul Lefebvre: It's not me—

Ms. Linda Lapointe: Mr. Lefebvre, the chair gave me the floor. I was cut off earlier, so I'm going to be more assertive this time.

My colleague, Mr. Arseneault, tells me that there isn't anyone from New Brunswick on the list. Can we add names?

Earlier, we agreed to a budget to bring people in. Would it be possible to bring people from that bilingual province? I agree with the witness lists proposed by Mr. Bélanger and Mr. Choquette, but I think we should also get someone from New Brunswick, if possible.

You made an excellent point.

The Chair: Bernard, over to you.

Mr. Bernard Généreux: Mr. Chairman, please forgive me for not taking the time to propose witnesses.

After we announced that we would be studying this topic, a translator in Quebec launched a petition for the removal of the president of the Translation Bureau. It would be interesting for the committee to hear what that translator has to say.

The Chair: I suggest that we keep to the original plan for two days and four witnesses and add another meeting with four more witnesses.

Ms. Linda Lapointe: Okay. We would have to move—

The Chair: As Bernard and René suggested, there are two other places we could go. Is everyone in agreement on this? I can see that we are.

Yes, Dan?

Mr. Dan Vandal (Saint Boniface—Saint Vital, Lib.): We should have witnesses from across Canada. There's no witness from western Canada. I know that Sylviane Lanthier is from Saint-Boniface.

The Chair: There are three witnesses, so there's one more spot.

• (1725)

Mr. Bernard Généreux: I agree with Dan.

The Chair: There are three witnesses.

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: Are there people in Newfoundland and Labrador who need our help? There are francophones in Newfoundland and Labrador.

The Chair: We don't have to decide right away. We already have a third full day with three possible witnesses.

The person you mentioned, Bernard, is from New Brunswick.

Mr. René Arseneault: That person can talk about minorities.

The Chair: Where is the other witness from?

Mr. Darrell Samson: Manitoba.

The Chair: Okay.

Mr. Darrell Samson: If we're looking for a fourth witness, I'm sure that people from New Brunswick, the only bilingual province, would have plenty to say. If we're looking for other witnesses from

the east, Nova Scotia passed a law on services in French that gives the government certain responsibilities toward minority communities. That could enrich our discussions.

The Chair: Darrell, can you give us a name?

Mr. Darrell Samson: Yes.

The Chair: Bernard?

Mr. Bernard Généreux: The lady's name is Geneviève Sauvé, and she's from Val-des-Monts, Quebec.

The Chair: Okay. The clerk will make a note of that.

To summarize: three days, four witnesses per meeting per day.

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: From 3:30 p.m. to 5:30 p.m.

The Chair: We will hear from four witnesses between 3:30 p.m. and 5:30 p.m. I'll adjust speaking times accordingly.

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: That means we won't have any in camera.

The Chair: No, no in camera.

Yes, François?

Mr. François Choquette: Mr. Chairman, I suggest that we hear from four witnesses in two one-hour blocks: two witnesses during the first hour and two more during the second hour. We will focus on two witnesses at a time. That's easier than listening to four witnesses at a time, which makes us more likely to forget things. That's my suggestion.

The Chair: Okay. We'll have two witnesses per hour. That's settled.

We've just dealt with three meetings.

As for future topics, do you have—

Yes, Mr. Choquette?

Mr. François Choquette: I think Mrs. Boucher raised her hand before me, but I don't mind speaking before her.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Chair: Your turn, Mrs. Boucher.

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: Mr. Arseneault mentioned this, but I would really like us to talk about how, when people are in pain, they really appreciate care being provided in their language. Friends of mine went to Vancouver recently. They got very sick, and they were unable to get medical care in French. I think that would be an interesting topic. Can people in official language minority communities access health care in their language?

The Chair: Are you proposing an additional topic? That's not on our list.

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: Right. Earlier, he opened a door. I think it would be good because we hear horror stories.

The Chair: No problem.

I will put health care services on our list.

Mr. François Choquette: Mr. Chairman, is it my turn?

The Chair: Yes, go ahead.

Mr. François Choquette: Mr. Chairman, there are several topics in the analyst's document. She did a very good job. She included all of the topics we mentioned.

One of the topics is access to justice in both official languages. I will take advantage of the commissioner's appearance during our next meeting. He published a study entitled, "Access to Justice in Both Official Languages: Improving the Bilingual Capacity of the Superior Court Judiciary", but there was no follow-up on that.

I moved a few motions. I will read motion no. 6 if that's okay:

That the committee undertake a study on the implementation of the recommendations in the study entitled, "Access to Justice in Both Official Languages: Improving the Bilingual Capacity of the Superior Court Judiciary" by the Commissioner of Official Languages in 2013 in partnership with the French Language Services Commissioner of Ontario and the Commissioner of Official Languages for New Brunswick...

Mr. Arseneault talked about his province, which is the only bilingual province in Canada. I would just like to add that we can undertake this study when the committee decides the time is right.

• (1730)

The Chair: I took some initiative on this. As I told you during a previous meeting, French rulings in Quebec are not translated. As a result, judges elsewhere in the country do not use French-language jurisprudence even though there are excellent francophone judges. That material should be translated in Canada. I decided to meet with the chief justice of the Superior Court, and I suggested we have a working lunch. I'm not sure if we can call a chief justice to testify here because of the separation of powers, but he agreed to participate in a working lunch with us. After that, I would invite representatives of the Barreau du Québec to come give us their thoughts about what the chief justice might tell us.

Mr. René Arseneault: Which chief justice are you talking about?

The Chair: The chief justice of the Quebec Superior Court.

Mr. Samson, your turn.

Mr. Darrell Samson: Thank you.

I really like the topic of access to justice in both official languages. We put that topic on the list, and it's something that really interests me. The only proposal I have for now would be to wait until the Minister of Canadian Heritage and the Minister of Justice appear before we dive into this. Their testimony will lay the groundwork.

The other topic is the study of the state of official languages in official language minority communities across Canada. That would give us an opportunity to see if there is some alignment. As part of the study, will we look at the Official Languages Act? Will there be a report before the study? This is one of the most important topics because, as I pointed out, the Official Languages Act has not been reviewed in over 30 years. I think that's part of the roadmap. Our plans must enable us to ensure that there is some alignment and that it strengthens the federal government's initiatives and provides more encouragement to provinces with official language minority communities.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Darrell Samson: Can anyone answer that question? Is the study on the Official Languages Act supposed to result in recommendations or to review some of the provisions?

The Chair: I think we will start with the Minister of Canadian Heritage. My understanding is that the Prime Minister said we were going to have a new roadmap. I think we should start by asking the Minister of Canadian Heritage questions about the Prime Minister's statement.

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: I agree with Mr. Samson. I think this is one of the first studies we should undertake. If the Official Languages Act has not been reviewed in 30 years, it's time we looked at it together. This is 2016.

The Chair: Mr. Choquette, over to you.

Mr. François Choquette: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Before answering Mr. Samson's question, I would like to remind everyone that we are talking about my motion. I therefore request your support, but I would note that there is no date. We will undertake this study when the committee is ready.

Afterward, I will comment on the study that Mr. Samson requested.

The Chair: Mr. Choquette, does your motion include what I said just now about bilingual rulings?

Mr. François Choquette: My motion does not preclude the addition of your question about bilingual rulings, nor does it prevent us from inviting representatives from the Barreau du Québec. It is about the recommendations in the commissioner's study. Of course, it is also about access to justice in general for both official language communities. It is about access to justice in both official languages. That is the substance of motion no. 6, Mr. Chairman.

The Chair: Mr. Lefebvre, do you have something to say? No?

Go ahead, then, Mr. Samson.

Mr. Darrell Samson: I just want to say that I am in favour of this study, but how will we proceed? If we pass motions now, we will have to deal with the other motions because we can't just pass motions on the fly.

We suggested topics. If we agree on the topics, we'll prepare the motions. There could be seven or eight motions on these topics, and we can decide later when to study them.

I would not want to vote in favour of a motion and realize later that there are no other motions or topics. I want to know how we are going to proceed before we go any further.

I'm not ready to vote on the motion unless someone explains to me exactly what the process is.

• (1735)

The Chair: Mr. Lefebvre, over to you.

Mr. Paul Lefebvre: I kind of agree with Mr. Samson.

Mr. Darrell Samson: Just kind of?

Mr. Paul Lefebvre: Very much, actually.

In his member statement in the House of Commons today, Mr. Samson talked about immigration. I think that immigration and economic development are very important issues. It's clearly an important issue in minority francophone communities. There were objectives that the provinces and the federal government failed to achieve, so it's important to review those objectives.

Getting back to the motion we're discussing, it's about access to justice in general. That's fine. I myself am a lawyer for minority communities. However, if we put too many irons in the fire, we'll get distracted. Before we put our irons in the fire, we should discuss this amongst ourselves a bit more and take a little more time. I understand the idea behind the motion, but we have been striving for consensus since the beginning. Can we carry on like that? Clearly, access to justice is an issue, but we have to decide how many things to prioritize. Are we going to have five priorities? Seven? Three? Four?

The Chair: Before moving on to the next speaker, Mr. Généreux, I just want to mention that the commissioner will be here on Wednesday.

Mr. Paul Lefebvre: Yes.

The Chair: Mr. Généreux, it's your turn.

Mr. Bernard Généreux: I just want to add that, if we look at updating the Official Languages Act or changing it, we need to focus on that. We shouldn't tack anything else on to that. We should do it truly independently of any other topic we want to study.

Yes, we can walk and chew gum at the same time, as they say. We can do both. We can study the act and other topics at the same time, but we shouldn't. I think that the act is a fundamental document that should be the subject of focused study, not combined with all kinds of other things.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Généreux.

Mr. Choquette, it's your turn.

Mr. François Choquette: I will withdraw my motion because otherwise we won't be able to move on to other things. However, I will be moving it again because it is extremely important. I believe

that equal access to justice is essential. My former colleague, Yvon Godin, who is Acadian like Mr. Arseneault, worked very hard on this file. I will definitely keep pushing on this. However, I understand that it makes sense to wait before bringing this subject back for discussion.

However, I would like to comment on what Mr. Samson said about a review of the Official Languages Act. Bills have already been introduced in the Senate about amending the Official Languages Act, including Ms. Chaput's bill. Unfortunately, Ms. Chaput will be retiring or retired recently. It remains to be seen whether someone will take over the bill.

I think Mr. Samson will agree that there is no point redoing work that has already been done. We should see what happens with Ms. Chaput's bill and take it from there.

Does Mr. Samson agree with me about the review of the Official Languages Act?

The Chair: Allow me to interrupt. It's 5:39 p.m., and we've already gone overtime for this meeting. I'll think about what was said here, and I'll sit down with the clerk and the analyst and try to come up with a plan that takes everyone's concerns into account in order of priority, importance or deadline.

With respect to translation, today we settled on three days. We already have plans to hear from the commissioner and the Heritage Minister.

If you agree, we'll consider what was said and try to come up with a plan for you. We'll have another discussion about a list of priorities. We'll also take into account your motion and what was said today.

Is that okay with you?

Some hon. members: Okay.

● (1740)

The Chair: Okay. Thank you very much.

Meeting adjourned.

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