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• (1530)

[Translation]

The Chair (Mr. Emmanuel Dubourg (Bourassa, Lib.)): Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen.

I will begin by extending a very warm welcome to our witnesses who have travelled to come meet with the committee members this afternoon. I thank them for that. By the way, this is our first meeting with witnesses since the beginning of this Parliament. That is very important for us.

Before I give you the floor, I am going to remind the committee members that the chief statistician will appear before us next Thursday.

Moreover, I sent you a letter, which you have all received. In that letter, the head of the library tells us how amazing Ms. Lecomte, our committee's analyst, is. I want to take this opportunity to officially announce that, as of today, our second analyst is Laura Blackmore. She will be working with us here.

Without further ado, we will go to our guests.

I assume that a number of you, if not all of you, are used to appearing before the committee. You each have 10 minutes to make your presentation. That will be followed by a round of questions.

I want to let you know that our experts will ensure that the microphone lights up as soon as you start talking. So you don't have to worry about that.

Pursuant to Standing Order 108(3)(f), we are conducting a study on the enumeration of rights holders. Our witnesses are: Sheila Risbud, from the Association canadienne-française de l'Alberta; Marie-Pierre Lavoie, president of the Conseil scolaire francophone de la Colombie-Britannique; Denis Chartrand and Valérie Morand, from the Fédération nationale des conseils scolaires francophones; and Geoffrey Chambers and Sylvis Martin-Laforge, from the Quebec Community Groups Network.

Ladies and gentlemen, we will begin.

I invite Ms. Risbud to go ahead with her presentation.

• (1535)

Ms. Sheila Risbud: Mr. Chair, members of the committee, my name is Sheila Risbud and I am the president of the Association canadienne-française de l'Alberta, the ACFA.

Thank you for the invitation to testify before you today. Your work is tremendously important for the future of French in Alberta and elsewhere.

What is the ACFA? Founded in 1926, the ACFA defends the rights of Alberta's francophone community, advances its rights and enhances its vitality. The ACFA represents more than 250,000 French-speaking Albertans, a population that grew by over 50% between 1991 and 2016.

It is astonishing that I am speaking in French today, as there was no French-language school in Edmonton throughout nearly my entire education. My parents had no choice but to use French immersion programs managed by the anglophone majority. I am relieved that, thanks to section 23 of the charter, my three children are receiving an education in French and not immersion in Calgary.

At home, in Calgary, the French-language schools are overflowing. The problem is the same across Alberta. Why? The census considerably underestimates the number of children of rights holders under section 23 of the charter. That should change immediately. The failure to enumerate all the children of rights holders in Alberta harms the vitality and sustainability of French. How many French-language schools are we entitled to in Calgary? It is impossible to answer that, as most of the eligible children are not enumerated.

Let me be as clear as possible. It remains impossible to determine with any accuracy the request justifying education in French in Alberta. Why? Because Statistics Canada counts only one of the three categories of children eligible for education in French. That problem is not new. It has persisted since 1982, when section 23 of the charter came into force. Since 1982, Statistics Canada has carried out seven censuses. In reality, those have been seven missed opportunities.

The ACFA is proud to have produced and disseminated, with the Fédération des conseils scolaires francophones de l'Alberta, the very first major study on the necessary changes to the census. We are especially proud that the study helped your committee make this recommendation:

That the Government of Canada require Statistics Canada to include questions in the 2021 Census that would allow for the enumeration of all rights-holders under the broadest interpretation of paragraphs 23(1)(a) and (b) and subsection 23(2) of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

That said, the ACFA is surprised that Statistics Canada continues to hesitate to implement your committee's recommendation. Alberta's francophone community is struggling to accept the fact that the federal government has still not confirmed the addition of questions necessary for the enumeration of all children of rights holders to the short form census questionnaire. The brief you received before my presentation today clearly explains that the long form questionnaire does not make it possible to address this shortcoming. Only questions in the short form questionnaire will satisfy the Albertan francophonie.

The ACFA refuses to believe that the future of French outside Quebec may rest between the hands of Statistics Canada. The ACFA's expectations from the members of cabinet are high. In fact, under the Statistics Act, the government, and not Statistics Canada, is in charge of laying out the questions of the short form census.

The ACFA thanks Statistics Canada for collaborating by testing the questions the francophonie needs. I invite you to look at the brief our association submitted. On page 8, under tab 2, are provided the questions Statistics Canada tested in 2019. You will see that the conclusion is encouraging. The analysis work is finished. The required questions exist, and they work.

• (1540)

There you will see the questions Statistics Canada tested in 2019, and you will see that the conclusion is encouraging. The analysis work is finished. The required questions exist, and they work.

Everyone knows what the next and last stage is. The federal government must prescribe the questions to enumerate the children of all right holders in the census short form questionnaire and not only in the long form questionnaire.

The ACFA is counting on the members of this committee to intercede with the members of cabinet to ensure that the only right decision is made soon. At this stage of the file, only one political action will help guarantee the sustainability of our minority francophone communities.

Thank you for your attention.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Risbud.

We will go to Ms. Lavoie, from the Conseil scolaire francophone de la Colombie-Britannique.

Ms. Marie-Pierre Lavoie (President, Conseil scolaire francophone de la Colombie-Britannique): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Honourable members, ladies and gentlemen, good afternoon. I sincerely thank you for the opportunity to speak to you on behalf of the Conseil scolaire francophone de la Colombie-Britannique, the CSFCB.

Your committee is all too familiar with the shortcomings of the census and the issues its data causes to the CSFCB and to the francophone and Acadian school boards in minority settings.

The sociodemographic reality of minority language communities is simple and well-known: as a result of immigration and exogamy, fewer and fewer children eligible to attend French-language schools have French as their only first language learned.

On the other hand, more and more of them learn French at school rather than at home. So the number and proportion of parents who meet the criteria of paragraph 23(1)(a) of the charter are falling significantly, while the number and proportion of parents who meet the criteria of paragraph 23(1)(b) and subsection 23(2) are rising very rapidly. These categories are not enumerated by the census.

Effectively, the CSFCB and the province cannot adequately plan the required investments because they do not have access to reliable and relevant data on the number of potential students in French-language schools. It is not enough to know how many eligible students live in each municipality; we must also know where students live in every catchment area.

That is why your committee recommended the following in 2017:

That the Government of Canada require Statistics Canada to include questions in the 2021 Census that would allow for the enumeration of all rights-holders under the broadest interpretation of paragraphs 23(1)(a) and (b) and subsection 23(2) of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

However, despite your recommendation, Statistics Canada has systematically avoided guaranteeing that the questions will be asked in the short form census.

It is indisputable that the short form census of Canadians is the only way to enumerate all the children with at least one parent with rights under section 23 of the charter. Therefore, the CSFCB is using its invitation to testify to ask the committee to plead with the federal government to require that the questions intended to enumerate the children with at least one parent with rights under section 23 of the charter be added to the short form census questionnaire.

This question is very important for the CSFCB, which has directly suffered the consequences of the undercounting of right holders through the census. In fact, the CSFCB spent weeks—and I do mean weeks—during its trial before the Supreme Court of British Columbia trying to estimate the number of right holders under paragraph 23(1)(b) and subsection 23(2) of the charter because Statistics Canada had never done it. Unfortunately, we were unsuccessful.

Despite all the efforts of expert witnesses and the invested resources, the trial judge concluded that it was impossible to estimate the number of children who were not counted. The judge relied only on Statistics Canada data, which is substantially incomplete. Therefore, the Supreme Court of British Columbia concluded on several occasions that the number does not justify certain buildings or building expansions.

I want to be very clear. The “where numbers warrant” criterion set out in section 23 of the charter depends on the enumeration of all children of right holders. That is what the Supreme Court of Canada has been telling us since the Mahe case, in 1990. That case will be 30 years old at the end of next week.

Therefore, the implementation of section 23 requires the enumeration of the children of each local community to then determine what is “justified” in a given community. To do that, we must determine the number of children residing within a very specific geographic area and not simply estimate their number and guess their geographic location.

Here is an example. You could now refer to tab 5 of our brief. I am talking about the Pemberton example. The 2016 Census enumerated 46 children of right holders under paragraph 23(1)(a) of the charter. So we are talking about 46 children in 2016. However, in 2016, 59 children with at least one parent with rights under section 23 of the charter were enrolled in our school.

• (1545)

Owing to the incomplete data of the census, the judge concluded that the community was entitled to one school that could accommodate only 55 students. Today, 79 students are attending the elementary school La Vallée de Pemberton. We have no more space in Pemberton. If you look at tab 4, you will see a photo of our school. As you can see, it consists of two portable classrooms. Imagine 79 students in two portable classrooms.

To avoid the Pemberton issue and a number of others, the francophone and Acadian school boards and provincial and territorial governments need to know the absolute number of the children of rights holders under section 23 of the charter for each of the existing and proposed school catchment areas. That is how they—and the courts, as needed, as we have seen—determine what a community is entitled to under section 23. To do so, new census questions must be put to 100% of households using the short form questionnaire.

Although Statistics Canada is the government entity charged with developing and administering the census, it is the cabinet—the Governor in Council—that is ultimately responsible for determining the content of the census. Therefore, the CSFBC expects the federal government to act accordingly.

We are very appreciative of the hard work your committee is doing with respect to the rights of the Franco-Columbian community. This study and the resulting recommendations will help ensure the flourishing of current and future students of our schools, but also of Francophone minority communities in Canada.

Thank you very much for listening to me.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Lavoie.

We will now go to the Fédération nationale des conseils scolaires francophones.

You have 10 minutes, so if you want to share your time, feel free to do so.

Mr. Chartrand, go ahead.

Mr. Denis Chartrand (Vice-President, Fédération nationale des conseils scolaires francophones): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I want to begin by thanking you for hearing from us today on such an important issue. If I understood you correctly, Mr. Chair, this is the first time witnesses have appeared before the new committee. I congratulate you on your excellent choice.

Voices: Ha, ha!

The Chair: Thank you.

As you say, this is a very important issue, so let's begin with that.

Go ahead, Mr. Chartrand.

Mr. Denis Chartrand: My name is Denis Chartrand, and I am one of the three vice-presidents of the Fédération nationale des conseils scolaires francophones du Canada. I am joined by Valérie Morand, our executive director.

Our federation represents more than 265 school trustees servicing the 28 French-language school boards operating in minority settings across the country. Those school boards are located in nine provinces and three territories—in other words, across Canada, with the exception of Quebec. They provide educational services in French as a first language to more than 170,000 students in over 700 schools.

We are testifying before you today on this important issue of collecting reliable, fair and accurate data through the census for the vitality and sustainability of francophone and Acadian communities.

• (1550)

[English]

We've submitted to you an 18-page brief, which details our position in regard to the urgency to add questions to the short-form census to better quantify the number of rights holders.

Since 2017, three years ago, the Fédération nationale des conseils scolaires francophones has been urging Statistics Canada to modify the short-form Canadian census questionnaire to help school boards quantify the number of eligible children in French-language schools in the various cities, towns and townships in Canada.

The government must require that Statistics Canada add questions to the short-form census questionnaire, not only to the long questionnaire. This is the only way to adequately quantify all rights holders pursuant to section 23 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

[Translation]

Three categories of Canadians have the right to have their children educated in French under section 23 of the charter: first, parents whose first language is French; second, parents who have received a significant part of their primary school instruction in French; and third, parents of whom any child is attending or has attended a French-language school.

However, Statistics Canada persists in counting only one of the three categories of rights holders—the first one. As a result, the census underestimates the number of children who can enrol in our schools. The data will not be useful for French-language school boards and provincial and territorial education ministries unless they help determine, and not estimate, the actual number of children in the catchment area they live in.

The short form census questionnaire is the only way to enumerate all rights holders, as it is the only way to determine the number within a specific geographic sector. Conversely, the long form questionnaire estimates a national average, which is useless in a specific community.

It is impossible to demonstrate that “the numbers justify” for a specific community based on a national average. That can only be done using actual data.

[English]

Provincial and territorial governments and French school boards must know where to invest in school infrastructure in order to fulfill their obligations pursuant to section 23 of the charter, and thus protect minority language rights and their francophone communities. At this time, because of the lack of precise data, the estimated number of children likely to be enrolled in French-language schools is constantly underestimating the needs in Canadian provinces and territories. Such shortcomings in the current census have adverse effects on the vitality of French-language communities wherever French is the language of the minority.

[Translation]

What's more, the francophonie is changing. The francophonie has changed, and an increasing number of adults speak more than one language. French is often not the mother tongue of recently immigrated francophones. However, since they and their children were educated in French, they fall under paragraph 23(1)(b) of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. This new reality must be reflected in the short-form census questionnaire's data collection.

Using only French as a mother tongue does not provide an accurate picture of Canada's francophone population in minority settings, thereby excluding an increasingly significant number of rights holders. This creates headaches for school administrators who struggle to meet the growing demand for French first-language education.

Schools are overflowing.

The lack of evidence during new school infrastructure planning very often results in schools that are too small to meet the demand. Only just built, schools must install portables to respond to an underestimated demand. I'd like to share with you the top priority of my school board, Conseil des écoles publiques de l'Est de l'Ontario, when it comes to school facilities. Built to accommodate 314 students, École Maurice-Lapointe has a student population of 718. That's an occupancy rate of 268%, and yet, there are no francophones in Kanata, they say. The school has 23 portables—I repeat, 23 portables. It actually has more portables than regular classrooms.

Now I'll turn to our recommendations.

• (1555)

[English]

Since 2017 the Fédération nationale des conseils scolaires francophones has taken some 40 initiatives to make the federal government aware of the importance of modifying the short-form census questionnaire to better quantify French-language school rights. Consequently, what follows are the FNCSF's key recommendations.

[Translation]

First, we recommend that, in the the immediate term, the short-form census questionnaire be modified to include questions that better enumerate rights holders and properly reflect Canada's francophone community. Second, we recommend that, in the medium term, the Official Languages Act be amended to expressly require Statistics Canada to enumerate rights holders under section 23 of the charter.

Comprehensive data on children eligible to attend French-language schools are essential for French-language school boards in order to battle assimilation. These data will allow school boards to better plan their infrastructure needs and to better advocate for capital project priorities before provincial and territorial ministries of education.

Currently, census data provide a very incomplete picture of rights holders under section 23 of the charter. In failing to provide the data necessary to correctly demonstrate that the number so warrants, the census hinders the implementation of section 23 of the charter.

[English]

Simply put, the short-form census questionnaire must be modified by the addition of questions to better quantify rights holders, because the vitality and sustainability of francophone and Acadian communities in minority settings in Canada are at stake.

Time is of the essence. The modification of the short-form census questionnaire must happen now, in time for the next census in 2021, in order for the federal government to meet its obligations pertaining to linguistic duality.

[Translation]

The census underestimates the number of rights holders under paragraph 23(1)(a) of the charter, as it discourages respondents from identifying several mother tongues. The socio-demographic reality of minority language communities is simple and well known. As a result of immigration and exogamy, fewer and fewer children eligible to attend French-language schools have French as their only first language learned. Thus, the number and proportion of parents who meet the criteria of paragraph 23(1)(a) of the charter—the only category recognized by the census—is falling significantly.

The number and proportion of parents who meet the criteria of paragraph 23(1)(b) and subsection 23(2) is rising very rapidly, but these categories are not enumerated by the census. There is no doubt that the vitality of francophone communities depends on education. Communities can thrive only if their schools are plentiful and thriving.

The survival of minority francophone communities is threatened by the systematic under-counting of children who have a parent with education rights. It makes it very difficult—and in some cases, impossible—for French-language school boards to justify their applications to provincial or territorial authorities for additional schools, because they do not have the evidence that the numbers warrant them.

The short-form census questionnaire of Canada's population is sent out to 100% of the population. It is the only format possible for enumerating education rights holders properly.

Thank you for your attention. I will answer any questions you may have.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Chartrand.

We will now move on to the last group, the Quebec Community Groups Network, with Mr. Chambers and Ms. Martin-Laforge. You have 10 minutes. Please go ahead.

• (1600)

Mr. Geoffrey Chambers (President, Quebec Community Groups Network): Thank you very much.

My name is Geoffrey Chambers, and I am the president of the Quebec Community Groups Network. With me today is Sylvia Martin-Laforge, our director general. Both of us will be delivering the presentation.

Good afternoon, Mr. Dubourg, Mr. d'Entremont, Mr. Beaulieu and all the other committee members.

[English]

It's very good to be back. We are pleased with the level of official language expertise and experience represented on this committee and with the geographical balance the parties have achieved in ensuring representation from Canada's English and French linguistic minority communities, which has not in the past always been the case.

Congratulations for coming together with such a formidable group.

For those new to the committee, please indulge me as I make some introductory remarks and a presentation of our background. Founded in 1995, the Quebec Community Groups Network, QCGN, is a not-for-profit organization linking more than 50 organizations across Quebec. As a centre of evidence-based expertise and collective action, the QCGN identifies, explores and addresses strategic issues affecting the development and vitality of the English-speaking community of Quebec, and it encourages dialogue and collaboration amongst its member organizations, individuals and community groups, institutions and leaders.

Canada's English linguistic minority communities exist entirely within Quebec, the only province with a francophone majority. In 2016, the official languages minority in Quebec numbered a little more than 1.1 million citizens, making up 13.7% of the province's population. For reasons that we can get into during questions, if you like, the size of our community is based on the number of citizens in Quebec whose first official language spoken, or FOLS, is English. These numbers are calculated and published by Statistics Canada.

The collective term we use to refer to our community is the English-speaking community of Quebec. We refer to individual members of our community as English-speaking Quebecers. The term “anglophone” has a specific connotation in Quebec. It refers to individuals whose mother tongue is English and excludes allophones, people whose mother tongue is other than English or French, but whose first official language spoken might be English. As a result, we avoid using the term “anglophone” because it excludes or fails to include a very significant portion of our community.

Thank you for your indulgence. I'll now continue with our comments on the matter at hand.

You are aware that schools are the heart of community. This is especially true in minority communities, for which the school is often the only visible and shared community institution. Schools are more than buildings delivering educational services. They are meeting places that bind the community and places where we reinforce our identity with our children. We will have a lot more to say about the importance of our schools during the committee's upcoming study on education. I would like to thank Madame Lambropoulos for making this proposal.

Given the importance of schools to the vitality of linguistic minority communities, it should come as no surprise that the Quebec Community Groups Network fully endorses the enumeration of children of all section 23 rights holders and not just one of the three categories of rights holders. A consensus has emerged amongst minority language school boards, not only in Quebec but throughout Canada, that this data should be collected by Statistics Canada on the short-form census.

More than three years have already passed since I last appeared before this committee giving evidence about the need to enumerate children of all rights holders. The Quebec Community Groups Network was delighted with the leadership demonstrated by the committee in the May 2017 report and in particular with its landmark unanimous recommendations. We understand that the implementation of this committee's recommendations may pose technical challenges for Statistics Canada, as has been explained before this committee and before the Standing Senate Committee on Official Languages in the last Parliament.

The Quebec Community Groups Network expects Statistics Canada and this government to rise to the challenge and see to it that the short-form census is used to enumerate children of all rights holders, for it is the only way to collect objective, credible and accurate data that will satisfy the courts' “where numbers warrant” legal test.

Ms. Sylvia Martin-Laforge (Director General, Quebec Community Groups Network): We offer the following observations and principles into this debate. On the one hand, the duty to fulfill the rights contained in section 23 of the charter falls squarely on the shoulders of the provinces. On the other hand, the enumeration of children of rights holders is a federal responsibility. Rightly or wrongly, section 91.6 of the Constitution Act, 1867 states that the census is exclusively under federal jurisdiction. Minority language educational rights are generally only available where numbers warrant. Linguistic minority communities always seek the largest descriptive number, provinces the lowest.

Even if it were realistic to rely on provincial and territorial governments to enumerate the children of section 23 rights holders, or rely on communities to self report these children, the data generated would be inconsistent with the goal of producing objective, credible and accurate data.

In our opinion, only Statistics Canada can enumerate the children of section 23 rights holders and produce data free from the perception of bias that will meet evidentiary standards and the legal test set by the courts.

We know, however, that many provinces—including Quebec—permit access to official language community schools beyond the scope of section 23. Whatever number Statistics Canada generates will therefore under-report eligibility in these jurisdictions.

• (1605)

Mr. Geoffrey Chambers: Allow me to be clear. The Quebec Community Groups Network asks that children of all section 23 rights holders be enumerated by Statistics Canada by means of the short-form census, beginning with the 2021 census. A resort to the long-form census will neither suffice nor be celebrated. The census is much more than an academic or intellectual exercise. It is a cornerstone for sound public policy regarding our official language communities in the education sector.

It is key that Statistics Canada enumerate children of all section 23 rights holders, not just those of parents with rights under paragraph 23(1)(a)—first official language learned and still understood—which does not apply in Quebec. The only section 23 data generated by the previous seven short-form censuses has been of no practical utility in Quebec.

The census is more than an academic exercise.

In conclusion, we note that the enumeration of children under section 23 rights holders is contained in the mandate letter of the Minister of Economic Development and Official Languages, but not the Minister of innovation, Science and Industry. This creates a kind of confusion. This is another example that reinforces the need for a central agency to lead the Government of Canada's official languages strategy.

We realize that our presentation to this committee may be preaching to the converted, but you are in a position to influence the way this conversation goes forward, and we very much urge you to throw your weight behind a correct decision in this matter. It's important to our community. We are very determined to see this go the right way, and we are 100% in solidarity with our franco-phone colleagues who testified before us.

[Translation]

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Chambers and Ms. Martin-Laforge.

Before we move into questions from committee members, I'd like to point out that, a few weeks ago, in January, a school in British Columbia was vandalized with hateful messages. On behalf of the committee, I want to say that our hearts go out to the students and staff in this unfortunate situation.

For the first round, members will have six minutes each.

Mr. Godin, you may go ahead.

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

I'd like to thank the witnesses for being here today and kicking things off. As Mr. Chartrand pointed out, we've gathered a group of high-calibre witnesses today to start our work in this 43rd Parliament.

The representatives from all four of the organizations here today have highlighted the problem surrounding data, which are vital to schools and provide the basis governments need to make appropriate investments in second-language learning infrastructure.

My first question is for you, Ms. Risbud. You indicated in your presentation that you had spoken out on this matter seven times, but to no avail.

I'm new to the committee. Being from Quebec, I'm very sensitive to issues affecting the French language and francophones. We are a minority in Canada, so it's important that people in the other provinces have access to education in their second language.

How do you remain so determined in the hope that things will eventually get better?

• (1610)

Ms. Sheila Risbud: I should make something clear. I did not speak out on the issue seven times. Rather, Statistics Canada has conducted seven censuses since 1982 that did not take into account the two section 23 provisions in question. That is the mistake.

It's true that the ACFA has been active on this issue for a very long time. Most of the witnesses here have been trying for years to get the government to pay attention to the problems the situation has created.

Mr. Joël Godin: Very good.

My next question is for all four groups.

If I'm not mistaken, censuses are carried out every five or 10 years. Seven censuses in, what do you make of the do-nothing attitude government after government has demonstrated?

I have my own thoughts on that, but I'd like to hear from each of you. Without question, you are the victims. You are the ones who have to deal with the lack of information, data and funding.

Ms. Sheila Risbud: First of all, we don't see it as a sign of bad faith. I've always chalked it up to a simple misunderstanding of the repercussions of the lack of questions in the census.

We've raised the issue numerous times and we've been calling for this change, but the situation in our communities is becoming critical, and change is needed now.

Mr. Joël Godin: Thank you.

Ms. Marie-Pierre Lavoie: I would add that there may be a lack of understanding about how society is changing. Mr. Chartrand and I both mentioned that one category of rights holders is decreasing as other categories increase. As Ms. Risbud said, the situation is becoming critical, so enumerating all rights holders' children is essential.

Our future depends on youth and children, so let's count them and provide them with the services they're entitled to.

I'd like to clarify something if I may, Mr. Godin.

Mr. Joël Godin: Of course.

Ms. Marie-Pierre Lavoie: We teach French as a first language in our francophone school boards. We don't teach a second language.

Mr. Joël Godin: Thank you. You learn something every day.

Mr. Chartrand, please go ahead.

Mr. Denis Chartrand: That's the main difference between first language schools and immersion schools. In Ontario and other parts of the country, immersion schools teach French. In our schools, we teach in French, but the two approaches are completely different.

Mr. Joël Godin: I see. Thank you for clarifying that.

Mr. Denis Chartrand: I'm going to answer the first question you asked Ms. Risbud, about still fighting the same fight after seven censuses.

Fighting and persevering is part of our DNA as French Canadians.

Mr. Joël Godin: I agree with you.

Mr. Denis Chartrand: We never give up.

Mr. Joël Godin: All right.

Eventually, though, it has to lead somewhere.

Mr. Denis Chartrand: We would like that.

• (1615)

Mr. Joël Godin: Agreed.

Mr. Denis Chartrand: I'm going to answer your question, and I'm not trying to be unkind.

On one hand, it's due to a lack of understanding by the majority population, which can include bureaucrats. French-language

schools are almost an afterthought. Provincial programming is based on English-language schools and, then, consideration is given to francophones or it isn't. I don't want to suggest that it's out of malice, but apathy or a lack of understanding may be to blame.

The Chair: Can you answer in 10 seconds, please?

Mr. Denis Chartrand: Ten seconds left, Mr. Chair? All right.

Next, there is the political dimension. We make up 5% of the population.

Mr. Joël Godin: Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Chartrand and Mr. Godin.

It is now Mr. Arseneault's turn, for six minutes.

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

It is true that we invited the cream of the crop to our first formal meeting. The bar has been set very high. You couldn't have been any clearer. I prepared some questions, but your presentations were so informative that I'm going to ask other questions.

First, when it comes to the enumeration of rights holders under section 23, you pointed out that, for 38 years, we've been neglecting the two-thirds of children who could have potentially attended French-language elementary, intermediate, secondary and post-secondary schools all over the country where services were available. We've ignored them, turned our backs on them. That's the message you conveyed to us.

Second, let's consider the short-form census versus the long-form census. We all understand quite well now the absolute importance of knocking on every single door and getting the form to every community member in Canada so we can ascertain where they are, geographically speaking. I believe that was your message. Not only is it important to know how many francophones there are in Canada—or anglophones in Quebec—but it is also important to know where they live, because that's what will show whether the numbers warrant services or not.

Can you speak in more detail about the shift in Canada's francophone community? There's been a lot of movement since I was young. The community isn't necessarily where you'd expect to find it today. When I was young, there were typical well-established French-speaking households, but now I'm seeing that some francophone households have moved. Figuring out francophones' geographic location is important.

In what way is that important to you? How does all that tie in to the short form census?

Mr. Denis Chartrand: Toronto is a striking example. When I was young—a long time ago—Ontario's francophone community was concentrated in eastern and northern Ontario. It's estimated that, by 2025, the Toronto area will be home to more francophones than the Ottawa area. Bear in mind, however, that many of those people are immigrants, and so they aren't automatically counted through the long-form census. In theory, they don't count in our schools. That's why the questions need to be added to the short-form census: these people have to be enumerated as rights holders.

Ms. Valérie Morand (Director General, Fédération nationale des conseils scolaires francophones): I'd like to add something to what Mr. Chartrand said.

For example, École secondaire Gabriel-Dumont in Toronto has 293 spots, but 399 actual students—106 more than it should—not to mention 10 portables. Within five years, it's expected to have 526 students, another 126. That will put it at 180% capacity. Just imagine the headache that creates for administrators at the Conseil scolaire Viamonde.

Our system is burgeoning, which is not at all the case for the English-speaking majority, whose schools are losing numbers. For the past eight years, our schools have experienced an average growth of 13.5%, and even that is an underestimate because it's a national average. In regions like the one where Mr. Chartrand's board is located, the growth is substantially higher. If all rights holders were identified, the numbers would increase, as you can imagine.

These are very conservative estimates, and we can't continue to restrict the community's growth or the rights of its members to send their children to French-language schools. French is, after all, one of the country's two official languages.

Mr. René Arseneault: As I understand it, and correct me if I'm wrong, the example you gave, or even Mr. Chartrand's case, speaks to the fact that some schools have 200% occupancy rates and as many as 24 portables—the exact numbers elude me right now. That is more or less your argument to demonstrate that the long-form census is inadequate. Your example shows that rights holders aren't being properly enumerated. It's a useful example. Do you agree?

Mr. Denis Chartrand: It's a useful example, yes. While the long-form census may be statistically appropriate to establish a national average, it reveals nothing about the situation in Kanata, Timmins or elsewhere.

• (1620)

Mr. René Arseneault: How important is it for the courts to hear the numbers—

Ms. Marie-Pierre Lavoie: It's important, of course, Mr. Arseneault. The case is before the Supreme Court. Even if the Conseil scolaire francophone de la Colombie-Britannique and the Fédération des parents francophones de Colombie-Britannique win their case before the Supreme Court, we still need to be able to show the ministry of education where the students are and how many there are in order to define attendance areas and obtain the funding to build the schools. We can't build schools or provide programming because we don't have the ability to determine where the children are.

Mr. René Arseneault: I have another quick question.

The Chair: You have a minute left.

Mr. René Arseneault: Okay. The information has to come from the witnesses, even if we know it.

Didn't the British Columbia and Alberta governments send a letter to the minister in charge? Can you tell us about the letter?

Ms. Marie-Pierre Lavoie: Yes, they did.

The education minister in our province is quite aware of the fact that we lack the ability to enumerate rights holders. In the brief sub-

mitted by the Conseil scolaire francophone de la Colombie-Britannique, at tab 5 or 6, you'll find the letter sent by our minister, then deputy minister, in support of our calls to have all students counted. Keep in mind—and this bears repeating—that students are at the heart of this whole thing. Students are the ones we are supposed to be serving.

The Chair: Thank you.

We will now go to Mr. Beaulieu for six minutes.

Mr. Mario Beaulieu (La Pointe-de-l'Île, BQ): Good afternoon. Thank you for your highly informative presentations.

I have a fairly specific question.

You said that Alberta had 43 French-language schools. Does that include immersion schools?

Ms. Marie-Pierre Lavoie: That's in the brief submitted by the Conseil scolaire francophone de la Colombie-Britannique. It has 43 schools, but that number doesn't include immersion schools, which are managed by anglophone school boards.

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: There is no question that I'm in favour of enumerating rights holders and anything that supports the establishment of adequate schools.

What I find odd about how the Official Languages Act works is the expression “where numbers warrant”. That implies that, if the francophone community were to diminish anywhere, services would be cut back, even though that's the opposite of what should be done. I don't know how each province applies the expression specifically.

Does it vary from province to province? How is it applied specifically?

Ms. Marie-Pierre Lavoie: I can tell you that, in British Columbia—Ms. Morand said this earlier about the entire country—French-language school boards are on the rise. We need this data to prove we are growing and we can provide programming.

I cited the Pemberton school example earlier. The judge held that we were entitled to a school for 55 students even though it already had 59. That's four fewer students than the school already had.

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: What basis was used to justify 55 students?

Ms. Marie-Pierre Lavoie: According to the judge, the number of places should have been 55, but there were already 59 students by that time.

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: There was no objective test?

Ms. Marie-Pierre Lavoie: No.

Ms. Sheila Risbud: May I interject for a moment? The Supreme Court compares the number of known requests, in other words, the number of students already attending the school, and the number of potential requests, meaning the total number of rights holders.

What we're saying is that the potential number of students isn't calculated properly, so the numbers are too low.

Ms. Valérie Morand: I'd like to add something, if I may, Mr. Beaulieu.

I'm fortunate enough to wear two hats at the same time, one as director general of Fédération nationale des conseils scolaires francophones and one as the executive director of Regroupement national des directions générales d'éducation, or RNDGE, which is made up of 28 school board directors from all over the country.

The lack of data not only hurts school boards, but it also annoys provincial governments a lot—education being a provincial/territorial responsibility, of course—because they don't exactly take pleasure in opening up schools that fail to meet the demand and that require the use of portables. Better planning is a must. It costs a lot less than adding 23 portables after the fact. It doesn't make anyone happy—not the provincial government, not the school board and not the clients, meaning parents and students.

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: Are portables temporary structures?

Ms. Valérie Morand: Precisely.

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: These so-called temporary spaces are in use for quite a long time.

Ms. Valérie Morand: They are temporary spaces, but they'll conceivably be used for—

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: That doesn't quite answer my question. On what proportion was the decision based? As far as the case is concerned, was it 5%? Was it 10%?

The availability of French-language federal services, for instance, is based on a certain percentage. When the numbers hit 10%, more services are offered. In Quebec, it's very different.

• (1625)

Mr. Denis Chartrand: To my knowledge, there is no magic number.

Ms. Valérie Morand: There isn't.

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: That puts pressure to try to increase the numbers. When we increase the numbers, we give the impression that everything is going well, whereas when we look at the language transfers for francophones into English in the other provinces, it's quite worrisome.

At the same time, we do not want to give the impression that the numbers are not high enough because we do not want services to be cut. I think that this system is fundamentally not working.

That does not take away from the fact that we need to count the rights holders.

Ms. Marie-Pierre Lavoie: In our legal case, the judge decided on the figure of 55 students in Pemberton, but she established figures—which I would call random—in other communities based on paragraph 23(1)(a) of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, without the data.

There's no number in the charter on this, but the courts are imposing them, and that hurts us because we don't have the evidence we need. Let me repeat: our communities are growing.

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: That sounds a lot like a matter of political will. It often goes all the way to the Supreme Court and then the follow-up is not always done by the provinces. Sometimes, the federal government does it by setting up community education centres or something else.

Ms. Marie-Pierre Lavoie: If the necessary questions are not on the short form, we'll still be in court 10 years from now. We will still be fighting to get the schools we are entitled to. The money will not have been allocated and we will not have provided the services to the students.

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: In Quebec, if one generation of children does not go to English school, the next generation still has the right to study in English. The right to go to an English school is not taken away.

Is it the same elsewhere as well?

Ms. Valérie Morand: In some provinces, it is on a case-by-case basis.

In Nova Scotia, for example, there is a grandfather clause that allows the lost generations to register their children.

In the case of a couple whose children apparently attended English school because they were not able to send them to French school as the services did not exist, their grandchildren could be enrolled in French school. This is a remedial provision.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Morand.

Mr. Angus, you have the next six minutes.

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you to the witnesses for the good discussions.

I'm very frustrated with the topic at hand. It's clear that section 23 of the charter is about minority language education rights. The need is clear, and I do not understand the government's refusal to address this concern.

Year after year, this issue keeps being discussed, and all members of the committee support your claims. The government needs to put in place the changes required to support your school systems.

I will now change hats. I represent the Timmins—James Bay area, which is largely francophone.

Prior to my career in politics, I was a trustee in the anglophone Catholic school system. I realized that it was very complicated. When I was young, the francophone school system was for francophone Catholics, the anglophone Catholic system for anglophone Catholics, and the public system for the rest.

When I was a school trustee, it was not during the baby boom. There was a lot of competition between boards to accommodate students. We invited people of other faiths to choose the English Catholic system, and the French system invited anglophones to send their children to its schools. The francophone public system invited the Catholic francophones to choose the new francophone public system.

My question is simple. Because of the complexity of the regions, particularly in northern and northeastern Ontario or in the Ottawa area, is the francophone school system able to invite students to join?

• (1630)

Mr. Denis Chartrand: I want to make sure I understand the question.

In francophone public schools, the door is open to all rights holders. In addition, students who are not rights holders but who speak French and whose parents are able to help them can be admitted. It is not a right, but they can be admitted if they take an entrance exam, a French-language test.

[English]

Mr. Charlie Angus: It's a big change. When I was young, if your parents weren't francophone, you didn't go. If you weren't Catholic, you didn't go. However, now you're saying "get", so it does change the dynamics in terms of numbers, and that adds a complexity, but also an opportunity.

Ms. Valérie Morand: If I may complement the information, the Syrian refugees are a good example. When they landed in Canada, they had the opportunity to choose which system to send their kids through.

In New Brunswick, unfortunately, which is the only officially bilingual province of this country, that information wasn't relayed to this group, so most of them went to English school boards. There was a public outcry for that.

In Ottawa, it was a different set-up. We have a mayor who is very close to both systems, whether Catholic or public, or English and French. Therefore, the refugees were able to choose the system for their kids. That's also a new element to consider with regard to the enrolment of kids in the various systems.

Mr. Denis Chartrand: We're talking about immigration, and where they're directed when they come into the country.

Mr. Charlie Angus: Madame Lavoie, you talked about the school that is overcapacity. Now, most of the funding for education comes through the province, so it's done by per capita funding.

Are you saying that having a short-form census would allow you to negotiate in advance? When we're looking at schools, we're looking at how many students, and then you can take that back to the province.

Ms. Marie-Pierre Lavoie: Right.

Mr. Charlie Angus: How would the short form allow you to change that situation?

Ms. Marie-Pierre Lavoie: It would allow us to be in a better position to build new schools. We just opened a new school two years ago, and the ministry used the formula that is used for anglophones, the majority of children. It did not take into account the growth we're experiencing in the francophone system, nor all the other categories of rights holders. On the first day the school opened, we had to have portables on site, because the school was already at overcapacity.

That is where the negotiating part would happen. We would be able to inform the ministry of how many kids could go to our school. We don't need a 400-kid school. We need a 600 or 700-kid school. That's where the difference would be.

Mr. Charlie Angus: With regard to some of the schools in Quebec, there are English traditional towns, and a number of northern

first nations speak English. Are they part of your system or are they separate?

Mr. Geoffrey Chambers: No, in many instances they attend English school boards. Our school boards are quite well organized to provide a variety of programs that target the populations, particularly first nations populations. They do a pretty good job of that.

I'd like to make one other quick point on this question of why this information is useful. School board elections in Quebec have been organized in such a way that the participation of the community has been depressed. They're badly publicized. They're put on at difficult times. There are very, very bad lists. If we had hard data about how big the population is that's entitled to vote in these elections, we'd have a tool to argue for the creation of valid lists. The lists are terrible now. I think they're kept terrible sort of intentionally to kind of suppress the population's involvement. We'd be able to have a tool to fight back on that.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Chambers.

[Translation]

We'll go to the second round of questions. Members have five minutes each.

Mr. Godin, you have the floor.

Mr. Joël Godin: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I have two brief questions, and then I'm going to turn the floor over to my colleague.

Mr. Chartrand, if the number of rights holders increases, will that have a financial impact on the federal government?

• (1635)

Mr. Denis Chartrand: Such an increase might have an impact on transfers under the Canada-Ontario agreement in our case, or under the Canada-British Columbia agreement, where the federal government provides additional funding to the provincial government so that minority school boards can provide more services to their communities. These are not basic services, because these are, or should be, funded by the province. It's for additional services.

Mr. Joël Godin: I'm going to stop you right there. I'm fine with your answer.

Here is my second question. You have experienced this. You have a capacity of 314 students, but there are 718 students. In concrete terms, how can you fund that, day in and day out? The provincial government cannot give you grants for those 718 students.

Mr. Denis Chartrand: That's an interesting question.

As Mr. Angus mentioned earlier, the school board is funded on a per capita basis.

Mr. Joël Godin: Per student.

Mr. Denis Chartrand: For two students, it's a certain amount, and for four students, it's double. So, if there are some 700 students—

Mr. Joël Godin: Or 718 students.

Mr. Denis Chartrand: So you get 718 times the amount per student. This catches up with us when we have to pay for portables.

Mr. Joël Godin: For infrastructure.

Mr. Denis Chartrand: Yes, the infrastructure, and all the extracurricular or complementary things.

Mr. Joël Godin: Thank you very much. Let me stop you there.

I will give the floor to Mr. d'Entremont.

The Chair: Mr. d'Entremont, you have two and a half minutes left.

Mr. Chris d'Entremont (West Nova, CPC): It's not a lot.

My thanks to the witnesses for being here.

My question is along the same lines. We are seeing an increase of about 13%. I know that Nova Scotia has the only school board reporting an increase in the number of students, but what is the situation elsewhere in Canada?

Ms. Valérie Morand: Two-thirds of our school boards are in Ontario, because Ontario is the great bastion of francophones outside Quebec. So the increases are quite significant in Ontario. They are also significant in Nova Scotia because of the growing up in French program, which has made it possible to bring in many young francophones, who then continue their education in our system.

Ms. Risbud talked about Alberta. The province has a success story as it will celebrate 25 years of French-language education this month. There is a surge in enrolment. Numbers are going up everywhere. The increases are definitely greater in some provinces than in others in the country. You will understand that, in Nunavut, Yukon and the Northwest Territories, there are increases, of course, but that, proportionally speaking, they are not the same as in Ontario or in other provinces.

Mr. Denis Chartrand: The number of French-language schools—and I'm not talking about immersion here—is increasing almost everywhere in Canada, more specifically in Ontario, as Ms. Morand mentioned.

Mr. Chris d'Entremont: The big question now is about how the census is going to work and whether Statistics Canada is really going to meet the needs of the rights holders.

Have you had an opportunity to talk to the people at Statistics Canada over the last few years? There are the criteria we have been discussing, but you have to see how they will respond to your questions or requests.

Mr. Denis Chartrand: Let me give you a preliminary answer. Ms. Morand will be able to give you details later.

Yes, we have spoken with the bureaucrats at Statistics Canada. As Ms. Lavoie mentioned, they even tested the questions and they said that it worked. So we don't understand why they insist that it will only be part of the long form.

Ms. Marie-Pierre Lavoie: We have sent a number of letters on this issue.

The Chair: Okay. Thank you. Mr. d'Entremont's time has run out.

The floor goes to Ms. Lattanzio for five minutes.

Ms. Patricia Lattanzio (Saint-Léonard—Saint-Michel, Lib.): Thank you.

Thank you for being here today. We are here today with stakeholders from various organizations from across the country. We are very fortunate.

I was able to understand the distinction you made earlier between anglophones and Anglo-Quebeckers. I personally am an Anglo-Quebecker, since I was born to immigrant parents who, at the time, chose my language of instruction. So here I am. My parents chose an anglophone school for me. Afterwards, my children were given the opportunity to attend an anglophone school. In Quebec, in order for that to happen, you have to get a certificate of eligibility.

My questions will be for the Quebec Community Groups Network (QCGN).

In Quebec, the issue of rights holders is also fundamental for the anglophone minority community. Perhaps we should explain the purpose of this study and explain why we have not found a solution today. I agree with you, Ms. Lavoie, when you say that there has been an evolution. We are the children of immigrants, and our children are the ones who have taken over. We made that choice. The choice of language is widespread. How can these rights be preserved?

In the case of our anglophone community in Quebec, having this information is really essential. It is important for Statistics Canada to realize that, in the province of Quebec and elsewhere in Canada, there has been an evolution, that the population has grown and that it wants to maintain its rights.

My question is for Mr. Chambers from the QCGN.

As I understand it, you addressed this issue in your presentation here in February 2017. Having said that, I'm going to focus on the certificate of eligibility for English-language education.

Could you explain to my colleagues how that works in Quebec?

First, would access to probative data on rights holders have an impact on the process for obtaining this certificate?

● (1640)

Mr. Geoffrey Chambers: In order for the English-speaking population to be aware of their rights, there must be figures to show that a certain proportion of the population is entitled to the certificate of eligibility. Especially in rural areas, sometimes people are not aware that they have the right to follow the same path as their parents. This is because their friends usually attend a French-language school.

[English]

The right to having access to schools is not always used and, as Monsieur Beaulieu pointed out, under normal circumstances it is grandfathered, but people are not necessarily aware of that. If there isn't a good statistical basis for them to be encouraged to understand that, very serious erosion is possible.

Also having the data collected would enumerate the number of potential candidates for an English school who are excluded by the current rules in Quebec, which, as we know, are a temporary provision that is not only in violation of the Canadian Constitution, but the Quebec charter of rights and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights as a transitional provision to protect the French language in Quebec while it's at risk. We would contend that is not a permanent condition and that at some point the conventional civil rights of the society that ought to exist everywhere be returned.

Enumerating the quantity of the population that would affect would be quite useful to that debate, particularly if that population isn't that large so it doesn't look like a great demographic shift that's going to wreck or put at risk the future of the French language in Quebec.

The data could be very useful to us in getting the population to understand its rights and in the constructive debate about what the rules should be going forward.

[Translation]

Ms. Patricia Lattanzio: May I continue, Mr. Chair?

The Chair: You'll have a chance to come back to that. Five minutes go by very quickly.

Mr. Généreux, you have the floor.

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

Thank you to the witnesses for being here. I apologize for being late.

I would like to curse and swear, but I'm going to refrain. I have been a member of this committee for the last four years. We have met with you a few times, and we're still talking about the same thing today.

This Thursday, we are meeting with the chief statistician of Canada, so sharpen your pencils. Basically, the issue is political. It's not about math, and you don't have to convince anybody of the relevance of what you have been demanding for years.

One of the excuses we have been given in previous studies we have conducted is that there was no room on the form. Eventually, the choice to include one question rather than another becomes a political choice. That's it, plain and simple.

I am a printer and I know paper. I know that you can put a lot of information on a sheet of paper, as long as you want to.

Mr. Arseneault, you have a big job ahead of you.

We all agree on the enumeration. There is absolutely no reason to be partisan on this issue. It's crystal clear. This issue must be settled once and for all.

I hope we will have some insightful answers on Thursday. I say this because I know the chief statistician will be listening to what is being said today. I hope he's ready. I would not want him to tell us that he does not have room on his paper, because I will show him some paper. At some point, enough of this nonsense.

I hear you and, sincerely, I have tremendous admiration for all that you do and all that you have done over the last 50 years to have the rights of rights holders recognized. I believe that we must make your work easier.

Accountability is one of the things that has always struck a chord with me. Even today, money is still being sent to the provinces, and the provinces do whatever they want with it. We can't figure out what they do with that money. We talked about early childhood. Mr. Arseneault, how many studies have we done on that? Each time, we came up against the issue of accountability.

Do you have any comments on that? With regard to the chief statistician who will be appearing before us on Thursday, go for it.

• (1645)

Ms. Valérie Morand: At the moment, we are very concerned. When the new cabinet was sworn in, a mandate letter was given to Minister Joly, who is responsible for the francophonie and official languages. It was clearly indicated that she had to change the census. People had hope when they saw that it was in the minister's mandate letter.

However, there is no mention of the short form or the long form. If we change the long form, we are no further ahead and we are back to square one. You know the issue. As you are well aware after hearing us, the ultimate decision rests in the hands of Mr. Bains, the Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry. Yes, it is in Ms. Joly's mandate letter, but it is in her colleague's hands. You can see the danger of this ending up in file 13, as they say.

In short, we are concerned about this.

Mr. Denis Chartrand: I am an engineer by profession, so I like working with numbers. I am sure the chief statistician, who will appear before you, will tell you that with the long form, which is sent to 20% of Canadians, he can give you a close estimate. I am not questioning that, but it is a national average. That is not what we need. We need numbers in specific locations.

Mr. Bernard Généreux: All right. If I may, Mr. Chair, I am going to use the 35 seconds I have left to table a notice of motion. I am going to distribute it, if I may.

The Chair: This is the motion you already filed.

Mr. Bernard Généreux: Right. I apologize. I have not been on the committee long enough.

So I will present it. Would you all allow me to present it in the last 10 minutes of the meeting?

The Chair: Yes, I think it is best to wait, because our guests are here. We can take advantage of the discussions and then we can debate it, if you like.

Mr. Bernard Généreux: Thank you very much.

The Chair: Thank you.

We now will go to Ms. Lambropoulos.

You have five minutes.

• (1650)

Ms. Emmanuella Lambropoulos (Saint-Laurent, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

My thanks to all the witnesses for being here today.

[English]

My questions are for the QCGN, as I'm an English-speaking Quebecker as well.

I think pretty much everybody on this committee is on the same page, in that the short-form survey is the one that would most benefit linguistic minority communities across the country. Obviously in Quebec we have a very different situation, and the current questions that are asked on this survey are not necessarily ones that benefit Quebec's anglophone or English-speaking communities.

Because we are going to be drawing on recommendations based on what witnesses have said, would you mind telling us specifically what questions would benefit English-speaking Quebeckers with regard to this survey?

Mr. Geoffrey Chambers: Yes. Right now, really, the census gathers only information about people who aren't eligible for English-speaking education in Quebec. We would like to have a series.... I think there was a study or a test survey done by Statistics Canada last summer that reduced the package of inquiry down to five simple questions that not every person filling out the census would have to answer.

Essentially, the first question is an eliminating question, so 80% or 90% of the people would just be answering one more question than they're currently answering. If they were to fall into the 10% of the population, roughly speaking, who might have qualifications under this second or third method of qualifying, they would have a cascading set of questions. What we would get to is numbers for students who would qualify on all three bases, one of which would be eliminated in Quebec for the time being, but would still be good to know. The other two would actually define what our total potential population is, which is a matter that's very much in doubt.

As you know, our school population has declined from about a quarter of a million people in the 1970s to about 80,000 now, which creates a great deal of strain and stress on the system. In a situation where our best estimates suggest that the actual eligible population might be 20,000 or 30,000 more, not having to sit in front of you saying that it's our best estimate like we're counting on our fingers, but rather that Statistics Canada has proven this, would be a huge advantage.

The questions that should actually be added to the census are the ones that were tested last summer and have this descending effect,

so the complaint that the addition of the questions would wreck the short-form census by making it much longer wouldn't really be valid. It would add only one question to most people's responses. That's what we're hoping the government will see its way clear to doing—and expecting, which is better than hoping.

Ms. Emmanuella Lambropoulos: Would you send our committee those questions, so that we have access to them when we're writing up the draft?

Mr. Geoffrey Chambers: Absolutely.

Ms. Emmanuella Lambropoulos: Thank you.

This question is similar to what my colleague asked earlier, but if you don't mind, could you go into a little more detail? How exactly would knowing the exact number of rights holders and the number of eligible students help our community?

Mr. Geoffrey Chambers: If you have a community that has the right, literally the constitutional right, and it should be available to 100,000 students, but there are only 83,000 using it, that creates a situation in which you know you have objective data that will allow you to address that question. If you were just expressing that an opinion, in a climate of a lot of pressure from governmental policy-makers who would prefer us to reduce our scale of operation, one of the basic tools of argument isn't available to you.

We really need to have that data objectively available from a third party. I think our statistics are pretty good, but they are our statistics; they're not Statistics Canada's absolutely objective data. It would help in that way.

It would also help, as I mentioned earlier, in arguing for better electoral lists and a better process allowing the community to continue to be.... We already have an electoral participation in the school board process, and Ms. Lattanzio knows about that, that is seven or eight times what the majority population.... We're doing well relatively speaking, but it's still under 20%. We are sure that, with a better electoral process, which we've been arguing for, we'll get a better participation rate. We need to have the tools to argue for that and to argue for the municipal elections to be held in a format where there's some publicity and for elections to be held in a way in which the communities are allowed to get involved and promote them. Having data about the community helps with that.

• (1655)

[Translation]

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Chambers.

[English]

I'd like to give 15 or 20 seconds to Ms. Risbud, if you'd like to comment.

Ms. Sheila Risbud: I just wanted to let you know that in our submission on tab 2, page 8, you'll find the questions that we're talking about.

[Translation]

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Mr. Beaulieu, you have two and a half minutes.

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: Thank you.

Statistics Canada currently assesses only one criterion, mother tongue. According to data from a few years ago—I do not have the most recent data—about 11.5% of schoolchildren in Quebec attend English-language schools, while there are about 8% whose mother tongue is English.

In your provinces, do you have similar data indicating whether more or fewer students attend French-language schools than those with French as their mother tongue?

Mr. Denis Chartrand: We do not have that data, but you are right: the only question currently asked is not about rights holders, but about the mother tongue. We also know that many newcomers choose to attend our schools because they speak French, but their mother tongue may not be French. I am thinking of North Africans, for example.

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: What happens then?

Mr. Denis Chartrand: They have to go through an admissions committee. When we hear them speak, we know that they speak perfect French, so we accept them.

Ms. Marie-Pierre Lavoie: I am thinking specifically of my children, who went to French school. Today, when they are asked what their mother tongue is, they say they have two. My children speak English just as well as French.

So how are they supposed to answer that when they fill out the form?

Mr. Denis Chartrand: Sorry to interrupt, but you are absolutely right.

My wife is Japanese, and my children's mother tongue is Japanese. They spoke Japanese before they spoke French. Today, they speak French like me, even better, I hope. They also speak English and Spanish. However, their mother tongue is Japanese.

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: In your opinion, do rights holders ever find no French school in their area?

Ms. Marie-Pierre Lavoie: Oh, goodness, yes! It happens everywhere, Mr. Beaulieu. There are 700 French-language schools in the Fédération nationale des conseils scolaires francophones network. I received a request from my school board this past December to open a school in Duncan. There is enormous potential in Duncan, which is exactly halfway between Victoria and Nanaimo. Children there do not have that service. They don't have a school because we cannot prove that there is enough demand to have a school there.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Lavoie.

Mr. Angus, you have two and a half minutes.

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

[English]

I'm interested in the question of retention rates, particularly in the transition into high school. We know that many parents want their children to be educated to learn French, but then, in looking at university, there's that transition to the English system. I'd be interested to hear across the board if it's a standard percentage or if it's more in areas where there are fewer francophone services.

This is one of the questions that came up with the fight to get that university in Toronto. People asked why Toronto. Mr. Chartrand,

you're so correct. There's such a large francophone population that people don't even realize is there, and that university would have helped the retention rates at the high school level. I would like to hear your perspective on retention.

Mr. Denis Chartrand: My perspective is yes, you're correct. If there are fewer francophone services—university, colleges, etc.—you'll have a lower percentage of retention going through high school. Where there's the whole range of services, the retention is fairly high. We have very few—less than 3%—youngsters who will go to English high schools. Most of the cases are because they're in smaller communities, as you've just mentioned.

• (1700)

[Translation]

I'm talking about French-language public schools in Ontario.

Ms. Marie-Pierre Lavoie: I echo what Mr. Chartrand said, but the number of students starting primary school is increasing and more and more students are finishing high school as well. Of course, students leave for different reasons. At home in British Columbia—and it is happening everywhere—students in the French-language system who finish high school do better on the English exam than English-speaking students, and they have no problem making the transition to English-language college or university.

Of course, we will still advocate for French-language colleges and universities because we need them, but students have no trouble making the transition. So that is not what makes students choose to leave. It's not because they only have access to an English-language university. They don't have any trouble, and when they go to university in English, they do very well.

In British Columbia, we have a 100% graduation rate. Our students who start Grade 12 all finish their studies. We have no dropouts, which is quite remarkable.

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

I would like to take one minute to ask the following of the Quebec Community Groups Network, or QCGN.

On page 2 of your brief, you state:

[English]

“The term 'anglophone' has specific meaning in Quebec.” As a result, you avoid using the term “anglophone” because it excludes 46% of your community.

[Translation]

Can you tell us where the 46% comes from and whether allophones are included in that percentage?

Mr. Geoffrey Chambers: Yes. They are Canadians who have a better knowledge of English or some affiliation with the language, but who may be from Asia or even the United States.

[English]

Their first language could be Spanish, could be Swahili. In regard to their language package for Canada, they would identify in English. In Quebec they would go to an English doctor. They would go to an English movie, but they will be told that they couldn't, if they're recent immigrants, go to an English school.

On the other hand, in some cases a period of time would have passed. They might have come from Italy in the 1960s and been sent, possibly in some cases against their will, to an English school, because the francophone schools were not *accueillant*. Those children had the right to come to English schools, but just two years later, following the same piece, wouldn't. It's a bit irrational. In estimating the size of our community, and the needs of our community and the character of our community, it would be very useful for us to have this data, not limited to its argument based on school access.

Ms. Sylvia Martin-Laforge: Could I give another example?

The Chair: Yes, quickly, please.

Ms. Sylvia Martin-Laforge: The Filipino community is sending their kids to French school. We have now many programs to help the Filipino mothers and fathers, to help them help their kids in French school.

You might go to a French school, you might go to an English school, or maybe one day you will be able to go to an English school.

[Translation]

The term “English-speaking Quebeckers” is so much more unifying for our community.

The Chair: Okay. Thank you.

Given that the witnesses are here, can we benefit from their expertise?

We have a motion to discuss, but some committee members were not able to ask any questions. I propose that we take an extra 10 minutes, which we could share, if I have your consent.

What do you think?

Mr. Chong, you have the floor.

[English]

Hon. Michael Chong (Wellington—Halton Hills, CPC): On that question the chair of our committee has posed, in your view “anglophone” means “first official language spoken is English and maternal language is also English”, whereas “allophone”, or the rest of the community, is “first official language spoken is English, but maternal language is a language other than English or French”. Is that correct?

• (1705)

Mr. Geoffrey Chambers: I don't think etymologically that's exactly how those words ought to be defined, but that's definitely the sense in which they're used in the political climate in Quebec. Consequently, people will be asked sometimes if they are anglophone, allophone or francophone, with the idea that if you say you're an allophone that you default to all services in the French language,

which is not what many of those people will choose if they're allowed to make their own choice. In most service categories, they do get to make their own choice, with the exception of education.

The day somebody from the Indian subcontinent arrives in Montreal, he or she or that family might decide they are part of the English-speaking community; they might move to an English-speaking neighbourhood; they might choose a doctor, but they're going to be called allophone and be allophone, by public policy measures.

Hon. Michael Chong: Those folks are currently being captured by the census—

Mr. Geoffrey Chambers: Yes, but without the distinction.

Hon. Michael Chong: —it's just that this particular data doesn't apply in respect of Quebec because section 59 has never been approved—

Mr. Geoffrey Chambers: Yes.

Hon. Michael Chong:—by *l'Assemblée nationale* or the Government of Quebec.

Do you have a position on section 59?

Mr. Geoffrey Chambers: There is a very good case for there having been a restriction in the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s, but there's a diminishing argument for its validity going forward. The French language in Quebec is in good shape, partly because there's a lot of vigilance to support it. We're not against that, but it's going to go some day. It is a violation of civil rights.

Hon. Michael Chong: So your position is you would like to see the National Assembly, or alternatively the Government of Quebec, declare its approval of section 59?

Mr. Geoffrey Chambers: Absolutely. As we graduate high school students who are as capable of taking a job in the Quebec economy as the high school students that come out of the majority schools, the francophone schools, it will seem more and more irrational to have this distinction, whereby people are not failing to participate in the larger project of Quebec being a French society at a working level, but come from our community.

[Translation]

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Chambers.

Your turn, Mr. Duguid.

Mr. Terry Duguid (Winnipeg South, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

[English]

I represent Winnipeg South, and for 5% of the population I represent their first language is French and 17% are bilingual—I made sure both my daughters went through French immersion—and so the French fact is growing in our community.

And thank you so much. I've learned a lot today about how to serve my community better.

We have the French school division in my district, the DSFM, which many of you would know. The French-only K-to-8 school is Noël-Ritchot. He was the bishop to Louis Riel. Guess what? There are many portables outside.

My district is exploding in growth. It's 40% new Canadians. It's very much like a suburb of Toronto. We're building new schools while portables are outside the French-only school. I wonder whether there's evidence to suggest that parents who should be sending their children to Noël-Ritchot are going to be sending their kids to the new French immersion schools instead.

The Chair: You have less than a minute left.

Mr. Terry Duguid: Are permanent residents, refugees and others who don't have citizenship or other status counted in the census? That's probably a question for next week.

The Chair: You have 20 seconds.

Ms. Valérie Morand: I would like to provide an answer to your first question as to whether there is evidence that parents are choosing French immersion rather than French as a first language. We don't have hard data, but we know it does happen for a number of reasons. If there's not a nearby school, parents will be tempted to send their kids to French immersion. If the French language school is located very far away, they're reluctant to have their kids on the bus for a long time. We have kids travelling over an hour to get to school and an hour back, two hours and sometimes more. Those are dedicated parents, who are determined to have their kids enrolled in a French language school, but if you don't have a nearby school, that's playing against your clientele.

Mr. Terry Duguid: Or if it's too crowded.

Ms. Valérie Morand: Or if it's too crowded.

• (1710)

[Translation]

The Chair: Thank you very much.

I now give the floor to Mr. d'Entremont, who has two minutes.

Mr. Chris d'Entremont: Thank you very much.

On Thursday, we will have the opportunity to ask questions of the chief statistician. What direct questions should we ask him? As that song from the 1980s said...

[English]

She Blinded Me with Science, they've blinded me with details that are not important.

[Translation]

Mr. Denis Chartrand: Why do they not want to include the questions?

Ms. Marie-Pierre Lavoie: Yes. How would that hurt?

Mr. Denis Chartrand: As the gentleman said, if the paper is too short, get longer paper! I am just an engineer.

Ms. Marie-Pierre Lavoie: The questions were tested this summer and they work. It is just a matter of including them in the short form and not only in the long form.

Mr. Chris d'Entremont: The questions may have already been tested, but it remains to be seen whether the government will accept them. This is not a question for Statistics Canada, but for the government.

The Chair: The question has been answered.

I give the floor to Mrs. Lalonde for two minutes.

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde (Orléans, Lib.): Because I waited until the end, I am allowed five minutes. I've been patient!

Good afternoon. It's nice to meet you or see you again.

There has been a lot of talk about why you are here and how important your presence is. I have always said that when you build a school, it fills up. I firmly believe that is one reason.

If I may, I would like to talk about Ontario specifically, because I represent the riding of Orléans.

Over the past few years, if we could have had a short-form census with all three questions, or at least the questions that tell us what we want to know, would that have made things better with the provincial government? How would that have improved things for you and prevented the need for so many portable classrooms? There were still 17 to 23 in some locations.

Mr. Denis Chartrand: Because your question is about Ontario, I will answer it, but it will apply to all provinces.

Having questions on the form will not guarantee more schools, but it will give us the data we need to fight. Right now we have no data except our own, but we are told it doesn't count. Probative data will help us fight for a school in Toronto.

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde: Basically, it would confirm what you are already know.

I have another question.

You seem pretty sure of what Statistics Canada might tell us or the position it has already taken. Why is that?

Ms. Martin-Laforge, go ahead.

[English]

Ms. Sylvia Martin-Laforge: I have an answer to Monsieur d'Entremont's—

[Translation]

The Chair: Unfortunately, there are only 15 to 20 seconds left to respond.

[English]

Ms. Sylvia Martin-Laforge: StatsCan is going to tell you all the reasons...or you're going to tell them all the reasons they should do it.

They're probably thinking that the risk of putting in more questions and doing this in the short form opens the door to other groups and other questions. I think that the constitutional right and what we're trying to do in Canada around the two official languages and the linguistic minority is primordial.

They are risk-averse, I believe, in that they would not want to do this because it would open the door to other groups.

That's my take on not accepting that answer from them.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde: Mr. Chartrand, would you like to answer?

The Chair: We need to discuss the motion that has been tabled. It is therefore time to thank the witnesses from the Association canadienne française de l'Alberta, the Conseil scolaire francophone de la Colombie-Britannique, the Fédération nationale des conseils scolaires francophones and the Quebec Community Groups Network. I'd like to thank you and wish you a safe trip home.

Colleagues, we are going to suspend for two minutes while we say goodbye to our guests.

• (1715) _____ (Pause) _____

• (1715)

The Chair: Ladies and gentlemen, we are back in session.

Mr. Généreux, I would ask that you present your motion, please.

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

Since you have all received my motion already, I will give you the background. Last week, I met with the director general of the Cégep de Rivière-du-Loup, who alerted me to a problem that affects not only the Cégep de Rivière-du-Loup, but all CEGEPs and French-language universities in Canada. They belong to the same association and this issue affects them. Some students, particularly those from African countries, are turned down almost systematically. That is not right. The refusal rate can be as high as 80% for students from certain countries. We need to address this serious issue.

As you know, students start CEGEPs and universities in the fall, but it's a long process to gather everything they need to apply. I do not think we will have this issue resolved by the fall, but at the very least, we should look into it. We could have many witnesses here, by videoconference or in person, to talk to us about it. I am sure the Association of Canadian Colleges would have something to say about this.

Why is it that, when CEGEPs and universities welcome students from everywhere else but Africa, there is no problem? It's not just a question of the students' personal wealth. I am sure you know that they are asked to have \$10,000 in a bank account and to prove that they will use those funds to return to their country.

What are the conditions? What evaluation grid do officials use to decide whether or not to grant study permits in Canada?

Next, why is there a rejection rate of up to 80% for young people from African countries who want to come and study in Quebec, but also in Canada—it has to be said, because in French-language universities... Furthermore, Mr. Arseneault, correct me if I am wrong, but we have heard comments on this in the past. I think Ms. Lecomte could attest to that.

You can propose amendments. I am very open to debate. In fact, I could share a CEGEP professor's arguments with you. This issue has been dragging on for a number of years, and apparently African students now feel discouraged when they apply, because they are almost always rejected.

So, what are the real reasons for this? It's important that we get an answer.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

• (1720)

The Chair: You are welcome.

Mr. Duguid, you have the floor.

[*English*]

Mr. Terry Duguid: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you to Mr. Généreux for raising this important topic.

I have a large and growing African community. Many of them are francophones. I am very sensitive to the topic you are raising. I would just ask you to consider that we need a very thorough opportunity to discuss the motion, to see if there are any amendments we would like to make and give this motion the respect it deserves.

We have witnesses coming on Thursday. This is a very important topic, as we've seen today with the census. I wonder if we could defer this matter to the first Tuesday we are back after break week to have this as an important item on our agenda with a fulsome discussion. I'm sure you will find support.

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Mr. Généreux, we are listening.

Mr. Bernard Généreux: Regardless of all our goodwill here in committee, I'm sure we will not be able to exert pressure or change things for this fall. The registration process is already under way right now. I am thinking more of next year or subsequent years. That's why I am very open to amendments, by the way.

In your riding, French speakers from Africa in a majority situation will often move to other French-speaking communities in Canada, and I am convinced they are facing this issue. Young Africans want to come here to study, precisely because these communities exist in Canada, but they cannot do so. We have actually heard that.

However, in Quebec, it is fundamentally wrong that the rejection rate is as high as 80% for students from some African countries. Why do we not want to welcome them? Is it a question of money? I need to know the real reasons. Surely there must be an evaluation grid on which public servants base their decisions.

One of the realities of CEGEPs is that after a second or third application, all of a sudden students are accepted. It seems that age is one factor among others. In any case, some CEGEPs have reportedly been told that age is a factor. My mother went to university until she was 90. I don't know why anyone would get turned down at age 23 by a CEGEP or a university. It's completely ridiculous.

• (1725)

The Chair: Thank you. I want to pick up the pace of the meeting, because we have more comments to come.

Mrs. Lalonde, the floor is yours.

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde: Mr. Généreux, I must tell you that I am delighted that you are making this motion. I would like to think about it and perhaps support it with some amendments.

There are a number of accents in Orleans too. Here in Ottawa, we have a college called La Cité. I believe that each of our communities derives huge benefits from international post-secondary students. Each institution benefits from them greatly, not only financially, but also culturally.

I believe that this is an important matter that the committee should look at. I have read the motion, but I would like to think about it a little more, if I may.

The Chair: Mr. Angus, the floor is yours.

[*English*]

Mr. Charlie Angus: We have a number of foreign students coming to our region. They've added immensely to our communities. I wonder if this is a question for our committee or for immigration, because I question whether this is a denial of service based on language or a question of the areas where immigration is going to pay closer attention to whether or not the students are able to meet certain criteria. I'm not presupposing this, but from the immigration work we do in our offices, we know it's easier from certain countries and not as easy from other countries.

That's the question. If rejections at CEGEP are higher than those in other regions, that may be a question within the province. However, I raise as an issue that these are questions that may be within the purview of the immigration committee to look at, because they look at these issues in terms of rights and how we are accessing....

We certainly are working very hard in our region to bring African francophone immigration to our region to build up the francophone community. We have a francophone college that does excellent work with it. I would ask people to consider whether this is for the immigration file.

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Beaulieu, you have the floor.

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: I feel it is important to look at this matter. I see it as a very good idea, really.

The media has pointed to economic reasons, but is that really the case? Is it meeting the needs of the CEGEPs and francophone universities, in Quebec or elsewhere?

The Chair: Okay. Thank you.

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: I agree enough to say that we could discuss it in depth.

The Chair: We could discuss it in depth, of course.

Mr. Godin, you have the floor.

Mr. Joël Godin: Mr. Chair, I feel that the suggestion that my NDP colleague made is an interesting one, because, at first sight, it is an immigration problem. The unique feature in Quebec is that it runs its own immigration, with the French fact front and centre.

I feel that it is wise to consider which place would be more effective.

The Chair: Okay.

Mr. Joël Godin: So, as my Liberal colleague is whispering in my ear, I invite the subcommittee to look at the matter.

I agree that it should be looked at there. It's the best place.

The Chair: Exactly.

Ms. Lattanzio, you have the floor, on this item.

Ms. Patricia Lattanzio: You are ahead of me. I feel that you raise a very important point.

It is assumed that there is language discrimination, but is that the real problem?

You are way ahead of me, as I was going to suggest discussing it at the subcommittee.

The Chair: Okay.

Ms. Patricia Lattanzio: So, there you go. It is a very interesting question.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Lattanzio.

Ms. Lambropoulos, the floor is yours.

[*English*]

Ms. Emmanuella Lambropoulos: I agree. I think the immigration committee would be the better committee to look at this. However, immigration is a key factor in making sure our French communities across the country grow, so having something around immigration on this committee definitely makes sense. I would want to see us study something with regard to immigration, maybe how to attract French immigrants to these communities, but not the acceptance, because that really isn't the role of this committee.

• (1730)

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Mr. Généreux, the floor is yours.

Mr. Bernard Généreux: In closing, I want to add that, if there has been discrimination based on language—and we would have to prove that—it would be up to us to deal with it. I feel that we have to proceed with the study in order to find out.

Can the study be split in two, because some parts can be studied at the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration? Perhaps, and Ms. Lecompte is very aware of everything we have heard in the last four years. We have heard about this on a regular basis.

I sincerely believe that it is a fundamental problem, and a fundamental problem should be resolved at the Standing Committee on Official Languages, not at the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration.

The Chair: That is excellent. I understand.

Mr. Arseneault, the floor is yours.

Mr. René Arseneault: But you forgot me, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: No, but I want...

Mr. René Arseneault: First, the subcommittee has to meet. This morning, I was all by myself, without even a cup of coffee to make me happy.

The Chair: Oh dear.

Mr. René Arseneault: We can talk about the subcommittee later.

Mr. Généreux, I would not want to change the nature of the motion, but here is my opinion.

Let us move away from the context of post-secondary education and foreign students. We have heard that Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada has not achieved its objective for francophone immigration, a minimum of 4%. If I recall correctly, the figure is not even 1.8%. After the report we did two or three years ago—Ms. Lecompte will remember the year, as she is our collective memory—a door kind of opened for francophone immigration that was a little more effective.

I do not want to change the nature of the motion, but should we not take advantage of it to do some follow-up and see what the situation is after our recommendation, after that door opened for francophones? The issue still is immigration.

Mr. Bernard Généreux: I am very open to that. Personally, I want the Standing Committee on Official Languages to look at the francophone side of the issue. I do not want to take over any of Immigration's work...

The Chair: Okay. We all understand. You have had your say on this and the subcommittee will look at the motion.

Before we leave, I want to remind you that we are meeting with the Chief Statistician on Thursday. As we all know, the following week is a break. So I propose that the subcommittee meet on Thursday morning, if you are available. We also have Tuesday morning, which suited the vice chair, and which we are going to keep. The Chief Statistician is scheduled to appear on Thursday, but we have a list of guests for when we are back after the week's break, and the topic is still the enumeration of rights holders. So the subcommittee has to meet to establish an order of priority for the witnesses we are going to hear from in the next two meetings.

So basically, the ideal would be for the subcommittee to meet on Thursday. Come and see myself and the clerk so that we can set it up.

Go ahead, Mr. Généreux.

Mr. Bernard Généreux: I would just like to give my opinion on that.

We are going to meet with the statistician. But in the light of what has been said today, I think that, if people have not understood it yet, they will never understand it, even if we have 40 more meetings. We have been talking about this for five years.

The Chair: Thank you.

With that, we bring our meeting to a close.

Meeting adjourned.

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