



HOUSE OF COMMONS
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES
CANADA

44th PARLIAMENT, 1st SESSION

Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities

EVIDENCE

NUMBER 035

Monday, October 3, 2022



Chair: Mr. Robert Morrissey

Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities

Monday, October 3, 2022

• (1545)

[English]

The Chair (Mr. Robert Morrissey (Egmont, Lib.)): Committee members, we have a quorum. I call the meeting to order.

As you'll notice, our clerk is ill today, so we have a temporary clerk. I will ask her to introduce herself.

The Clerk of the Committee (Ms. Vanessa Davies): I'm Vanessa Davies. It's nice to see you all.

The Chair: Welcome, Ms. Davies.

Welcome to meeting number 35 of the House of Commons Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities. Today's meeting is again taking place in a hybrid format, pursuant to the House order of June 23, 2022. Therefore, members are attending in person and remotely, using the Zoom application.

To ensure an orderly meeting, I would like to make a few comments for the benefit of witnesses and members.

Before speaking, please wait until I recognize you by name. For those participating virtually, please use the "raise hand" function. Before speaking, click on the microphone icon to activate your own mike. When you have finished speaking, please put your mike on mute to minimize interference.

For those in the room, if you wish to speak, please get my attention by raising your hand. The microphone will be controlled by the proceedings and verification officer. The clerk and I will manage the speaking order with those who raise their hand when they go through.

You may speak in the official language of your choice. I would ask you to get my attention if translation services fail. We'll suspend while they're corrected. I would also ask members and witnesses to speak slowly for the benefit of the translators, so that they can provide an adequate interpretation. Should any technical challenges arise, please advise me and we will suspend for a few minutes.

I will remind those attending in person and virtually that screenshots of the committee's proceedings are not allowed.

Pursuant to Standing Order 108(2) and the motion adopted by the committee on Thursday, February 3, 2022, the committee will resume its study of supporting Black Canadian communities initiatives.

I would like to welcome our witnesses for the first hour. We'll begin our discussion with five minutes of opening remarks, followed by questions. We have the Network for the Advancement of Black Communities and amanuel melles; Groupe 3737 and Louis-Edgar Jean-François, chief executive officer; and the Black Business Initiative and Rustum Southwell, chief executive officer.

We will begin with Mr. melles for five minutes.

I will advise the witnesses, as well as members, that when your time is getting short, I will simply say, "10 seconds", and I will ask you to conclude your remarks.

Mr. melles, you have the floor.

Mr. amanuel melles (Executive Director, Network for the Advancement of Black Communities): Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'm pleased to join this meeting with the committee. I'm joining you from Toronto, Treaty No. 13.

I'm so pleased to be able to share some of my thoughts about the supporting Black Canadian communities initiative.

The Network for the Advancement of Black Communities is a national organization. It's a systems-change focused organization, which does a lot of convening, knowledge mobilization, capacity building, research and policy. In Ontario, we also do granting. So far, we have granted more than \$6 million in terms of capacity building for Black organizations, working closely with the Ontario government.

For this particular initiative, the supporting Black Canadian communities initiative, we have been retained by the department, ES-DC, as the expert service provider. We have worked very closely with Black intermediaries, of whom two executive directors, Rustum and Louis-Edgar, are in this session with me.

The supporting Black Canadian communities initiative has been a transformational new initiative for Black communities in this country. It is unprecedented, in the fact that it came out of a co-design process between Black leaders. There are 33 of them, and three of us are here. We met in Gatineau in the summer of 2019 and worked with the federal government to lay the foundation for what this initiative is all about.

As you know, within it there is a capacity-building component, an institute that is going to be launched, and there was capital funding. It's a significant investment in Black communities, which we have never seen federally, at least not in my time in this sector, which comes close to 30 years.

What's unique about the supporting Black Canadian communities initiative is that it puts Black community leaders in the driver's seat, so to speak. For the first time, we have Black intermediaries who are funded to regrant dollars to Black community organizations. What's also important to note is that this happened in the context of the pandemic. We have seen a lot of grassroots organizations across the country that are close to the programs working with Black communities to address the challenge of the pandemic being able to access resources to do the things that matter to them.

One of the great things about this initiative is that it allowed of lot of its recipients to use it as a platform to access other resources. The federal government last year launched the \$350-million emergency community support fund. Now, there is a big community recovery fund also. In regard to this funding that the groups have received, many of them ended up receiving additional funding from philanthropic foundations, United Way or local governments, so it has that ripple effect of enabling.

The supporting Black Canadian communities initiative is also an opportunity for us to talk about shifting the relationship between Black communities and the federal government from one of transaction to one of transformation.

I'll be happy to talk later on in the course of the Q and A about some of the things that we could do. However, a few of the things that are important to pay attention to are how we build on the co-design process that we had between Black communities and government and how we start embedding Afro-centric values into the measurement and evaluation.

One thing you heard from others who have come before you is the need to look at sustainable funding. I've always said—as I have been dealing with this space around design, funding and capacity building—that you cannot capacity build your way out of systemic challenges for Black communities. Capacity building is a good enabler, but at the end of the day, the federal government needs to consider how to sustain these changes by thinking about core and sustained funding for organizations. You have heard some of that from previous speakers—that whole area of how we work together to build on that, again, through a codesign process.

In terms of this challenge of over-reporting, maybe here is an opportunity to move from contributions to grants. The Ontario Black youth action plan works closely with the Ontario government to deploy a different system of funding that allows organizational leaders to step back, do innovation, plan more and sustain some of the work that they're doing.

The landscape has shifted. There's an opportunity through the multiple funding streams you have—the entrepreneurship fund, the supporting Black Canadian communities initiative and the announcement that was made today for the endowment fund—for us to regroup as Black leaders with the government and really reflect on how we can tweak this whole system.

• (1550)

Thank you for your time. I'll be happy to engage in the Q and A later.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. melles.

We go now to Groupe 3737 and Monsieur Jean-François for five minutes.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Louis-Edgar Jean-François (Chief Executive Officer, Groupe 3737): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

It is a pleasure to be able to exchange with the members of the committee, whom I thank for this initiative and for this information gathering.

Groupe 3737 is an entrepreneurial coaching ecosystem with a focus on business and organizational development. We do this through nine programs that support entrepreneurs and organizations at all stages, whether they are at the ideation, acceleration or growth stage. We support young and old alike with a focus on ethnocultural diversity, specifically Black communities.

We are privileged to work with ammanuel melles' and Rustum Southwell's teams, as well as Sharif Haji's Africa Centre in the west and Raymund Guiste's Tropicana Community Services in Ontario.

We work in a very synergistic way and we have an ecosystem approach.

We are privileged to manage the supporting Black Canadian communities initiative for the province of Quebec, a very successful initiative so far. In a very concrete way, together with the other intermediaries, we have been able to build capacity around the three priorities of improving governance, increasing human resources and diversifying revenues.

Today, I want to talk to you about statistics so that you can see the impact that this initiative has had, not only on Black communities, but also on the non-profit organizations that support those communities.

As you know, this initiative, supported by the federal government, was created in recognition of the United Nations' International Decade for People of African Descent. Groupe 3737 is privileged to be one of the four Canadian organizations responsible for the pan-Canadian implementation of this initiative and for providing constructive leadership.

I spoke about the three priorities of improving governance, increasing and diversifying funding sources, and improving operational and organizational management. This has enabled us to enter a digital transformation mode. As you know, in 2022, we cannot miss out on all things digital if we want to make our processes and support more efficient.

The number of non-profit organizations, or NPOs, that we support has grown from 58 at the outset to 206 today. In partnership with Employment and Social Development Canada, we manage a grant budget of \$8.6 million to build the capacity of these 206 NPOs.

That grant also allowed us to hold a national capacity-building conference, where we hosted not only the 206 Quebec NPOs I just mentioned, but also organizations from across Canada, including Ontario and Halifax.

We were able to put in place a support plan that involves the coaching ecosystem of these NPOs to document the impact of the initiative's funding on capacity building and to quantify in a concrete way the six results expected by Groupe 3737 for Employment and Social Development Canada. The plan allows us to measure the impact of these measures on capacity building, to be accountable, to quantify the effects and to determine how many and which NPOs have made the most progress in the four main categories we will see later.

In order to manage the total budget of \$8.6 million in grants that Groupe 3737 received for Quebec NPOs, we put in place a rigorous process.

We started with the applications and the NPOs. We selected organizations and then held one-on-one meetings with representatives of each of those that passed the first phase of the process. We then analyzed all projects for due diligence and signed memoranda of understanding with NPOs that passed this second stage.

These organizations also had to assess each other, so we developed a technological tool for this purpose. The approval was then given through a common platform for the four intermediaries, SM Apply. Finally, we signed off the contributions for the sub-recipients before distributing the cheques.

• (1555)

We have therefore put in place a rigorous process to manage the allocation of these funds and create a context for capacity building.

The first of the six expected results is to increase the capacity of these 206 NPOs. In addition to the total funding of \$8.6 million that I mentioned earlier, we have a team of six staff members who support these NPOs by providing them with individual support throughout their process, as well as a digital support platform for them.

The second expected result is the improvement of the overall attractiveness. To this end, we have carried out more than 2,500 interventions and held 36 monthly workshops, not to mention the national congress I spoke about, which brought these organizations together. We toured the regions and distributed the projects among six administrative regions of Quebec as fairly as possible.

Our committees show regional and cultural diversity. In these six administrative regions, we are in contact with Black communities from Africa, the Caribbean and host communities here in Quebec. Each committee has 28 members and—

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Jean-François.

• (1600)

[English]

We'll now go to Mr. Southwell from the Black Business Initiative for five minutes.

Mr. Rustum Southwell (Chef Executive Officer, Black Business Initiative): Thank you, and good afternoon, everyone.

I am speaking from Mi'gma'gi, the ancestral home of the Mi'kmaq nation, otherwise known as Nova Scotia, which is also the home of the historic Black community that's been here for over 400 years. I'm very pleased to be part of the panellists today to give you a bit of a story of the impact that investments such as the SBCCI are having in the Black community and the Black community grassroots organizations across the country.

The BBI is a targeted business development initiative created in 1996 in the province of Nova Scotia to address the unique needs in the African Nova Scotian community. The idea was for us to change and impact Nova Scotian and Canadian business landscape by promoting and assisting in the development of Black-owned businesses and aspiring entrepreneurs. We help accomplish this through a cohesive framework of several goals and initiatives, such as economic independence for individuals, an improved standard of living and wealth creation, career options for youth, and pride in communities.

We believe our purpose is changing lives by enabling economic independence. After 25 years, we have seen a considerable amount of success, which is one of the key reasons why we were selected as one of the intermediaries for the SBCCI. We've invested in agencies and organizations, such as the Black Loyalists—we helped to develop its museum by creating grants and investments—the Africville church, the Black Cultural Centre for Nova Scotia, and the youth organization known as Hope Blooms.

We've done the work that's necessary, as an intermediary, to not only provide access to the capital but also to provide wraparound services and other kinds of consulting initiatives.

In terms of being part of such an exemplary group that's created results in a short space of time, as Louis-Edgar has outlined, and working with others, like ammanuel and Raymund with Tropicana, as well as the Africa Centre, we've actually seen a successful outreach to grassroots communities.

Louis-Edgar has pointed out that his number is over 200, and we also have similar numbers in Halifax. We've done over 250 projects across the country, with about \$8.5 million in direct investments in organizations that otherwise wouldn't have had the opportunity to get funding. What we are seeing—and we saw that last week at the presentations—is that folks are now sufficiently competent to create their own sustainable strategies in terms of governance improvement and improvements in the quality of their organizations, but also in going for funding for other agencies.

We do that in several ways. We have some 60-plus subagreement holders whom we've invested in with wraparound services to help them improve the delivery of their services on the ground and strengthen their organizations. We've also gone ahead and created a base camp, which created a platform for several hundred of the organizations we invested in to problem solve and discuss issues, hence getting a better quality of Black organizations on the ground servicing their communities.

The projects that BBI has supported are really similar to the ones that Louis-Edgar identified: diversification of funding resources and strengthening the organizational governance through leadership, stewardship, continuous growth, communications and transparency. This is to help these organizations have a balance and compete equitably in the business and not-for-profit community.

We are not only helping organizations to develop, but we are filling the gaps where Black organizations and communities have found it difficult to compete. In fact, the world is in the fourth industrial revolution, the digital age, and in many cases our organizations are left behind. We also have the opportunity to use digital capacity resources. We've actually helped organizations, for example, who did not have a charitable status.

● (1605)

We've invested in organizations to do that because many grassroots organizations are without charitable status, and we know that can create a better capacity base for where those organizations would end up.

We see the SBCCI and the work that BBI does as advocates and confidantes for these organizations, where we can support organizations across the country. We've done that in several different areas and we will continue to do so. We believe that this initiative is not only groundbreaking; it is also impactful and it is definitely transformational.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Southwell. You may add anything you missed in your answers to questions during the questioning round.

We will now begin the first round of questioning with Mr. Dalton for six minutes.

Please indicate who you are directing your question to, Mr. Dalton.

Mr. Marc Dalton (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge, CPC): Thank you to all the witnesses for sharing your experiences and your insights. It's very much appreciated.

Last week we heard from witnesses in this standing committee testimony who said that it's not enough for government to throw

money at them as if anti-Black racism is over. Do you agree with this sentiment? What are some ways that government can better support Black Canadian communities?

I'm going to give each of the witnesses 30 seconds or so to share some thoughts on that. I'll start off with Mr. Southwell.

Mr. Rustum Southwell: Maybe that's a good choice for me. One thing I said was that, in our community, most of the time we see that folks believe that money is the problem, but the problem is not money. The problem is the bigger issues of marginalization, suppression and racial inequities. In order to solve some of those, you have to solve the broader good rather than only using the strategy of money.

I believe that the initiative announced by Minister Hussen this morning is another way as well, but what you're seeing is that, for one of the first times, we were recruited because of the work that we are doing on the ground, the capacity that we brought to the table, and the examples and strategies that we can give.

I believe it has to be both. You need a solid, consistent and sufficient investment and you need the transferable skills of organizations that can coach, mentor and support the strategies of grassroots organizations, so that they can be accepted into delivering this type of service as well.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Marc Dalton: Thank you very much.

Mr. Jean-François, do you have any comments?

Mr. Louis-Edgar Jean-François: We are big believers in creating resources. I think the supporting Black Canadian communities initiative is a first step in helping Black communities create resources. Then, once the initial resources are in place, it's important to ask how we can use them to increase what's available to these organizations, whose members work hard every day. Today, I think we are collectively doing a lot of important work to achieve this goal.

To answer the question, I think that this first step has been taken on the government side. For Groupe 3737, as a proxy organization working on the ground, it is important to be the eyes and ears of the government and to see what can be improved. To this end, we must continue to ask ourselves to what extent we can add resources and, more importantly, how we can collaborate and leverage these resources to create new ones. In effect, it's turning a dollar into two dollars to support these Black Canadian communities and provide them with more services.

● (1610)

Mr. Marc Dalton: Thank you, Mr. Jean-François.

I now invite ammanuel melles to comment.

[English]

Mr. ammanuel melles: The challenge that we face in Canada for Black communities in terms of anti-Black racism is historical. It's generational. It's complex. What this initiative and other similar initiatives, maybe at the local level, do is create the conditions for change. I think it's very important for us to really recognize that, federally, there are a number of departments at the moment that are touching, so to speak, the Black community. There is funding from different departments.

One of the things that is very important is to really start thinking about a whole-of-government approach. There has to be a strategy that actually connects the dots among the various investments that we have.

The other important thing is that a lot of these communities operate locally, municipally and provincially. We need to look at the landscape and ask how the federal government actually intentionally collaborates with local actors to really amplify some of the outcomes that we want to see.

As I keep saying again and again, capacity building is critically needed. As my colleagues have shared, there has been a lot of impact through changes. However, it's very important to recognize that there are systemic challenges that have put Black communities on the periphery and that require other interventions. For example, take the housing challenge. The national housing strategy, this multi-billion dollar investment.... The Black community is hardly participating in that.

How do we create the conditions for change? I think the capacity-building investment that the intermediaries are providing is enabling some of the local groups to work with other partners to really start opening their minds in terms of working on other levels of systems change.

Mr. Marc Dalton: Thank you very much.

I have just one more. I guess I'll just throw this out there: Over the past number of years—the past decades—with immigration increasing, we're just seeing a great shift, as far as even the visible minorities, who in many areas are becoming majorities. I'm from the Vancouver area.

I guess my question is this: Is that beneficial? Are we seeing something really positive as far as affecting Black Canadians, or has there been no change? We have gone through a massive change over the past, say, generation. You've all lived here for some time, so maybe I'll just throw it out to one of you—because that's all the time we have—for a quick commentary.

Mr. Southwell.

The Chair: Give a quick comment, Mr. Southwell, as we're over.

Mr. Rustum Southwell: I wish you hadn't liked me that much.

I've been here for 50 years, myself. I moved here in 1972, so I actually have seen the change. I think that in many ways it's encouraging. It's noticeable in Nova Scotia. Toronto has always been ahead. However, diversity on its own doesn't do anything. It's about people. It's about relationships. It's really about human justice and how one can be inclusive in the economy.

It's not about just saying they're not doing it because.... It's really this: How does Canada represent its very best? How does Canada represent its economy and its society in a way that's exemplary, to show an example to the rest of the world? Part of it—

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Southwell. You can follow through with that thought in other questions.

Now we have Mr. Coteau for six minutes.

Mr. Michael Coteau (Don Valley East, Lib.): Thank you so much, Mr. Chair.

Thank you to our witnesses today. It is a real pleasure to have you here as community leaders, being such a key part of this initiative and building it across the country.

I want to take a minute just to ask this, and maybe I'll start with Mr. ammanuel melles. From your perspective, how was it working with the other organizations, the ones that were distributing the money? Was there the ability for them to work together to collect the right type of data, to set the standards together, to put in place the right types of processes so that there was almost a uniform approach to working across the country? Can you talk a little bit about that process?

• (1615)

Mr. ammanuel melles: Thanks for the question.

As I said in my introduction, NABC, or the Network for the Advancement of Black Communities, was retained as the expert service provider helping the department and Black organizations to really come up with a system of granting and working together. As my brother Rustum said, for example, they have been using platforms, as has Louis-Edgar, to bring the various organizations together. They use the joint application process. They have worked hard over months to really sort out some of these things.

Mind you, this is the first experience for Black communities to have Black intermediaries across the country. It's a good-news story. The question is how to sustain and build on this story. Yes, when you think about it, more than 750 projects have been funded by the four intermediaries. You have heard two of them today about the number of projects and the investments they have made.

It takes a village to bring solutions for Black communities. What you have here is a microcosm or an example of that. Yes, I think my organization has worked with them in the department in terms of setting up, and we've been responsible around the sustainability of it. Sustainability is not only putting in dollars. It's a question of adaptability. It's leadership, capacity and governance. All of the work they have been doing is important. The key question is this: Where do we go from here?

As you and I know, in Ontario there has been a long history of investing in projects and grassroots. I think the key question is that we need to be ready to really have a discussion about how we sustain the gains.

Mr. Michael Coteau: I have a question for Mr. Southwell about moving forward.

I'm a fan of Booker T. Washington and his double-duty dollar and the whole approach about how we leverage the way we spend in order to further support Black businesses and organizations. From your perspective, as someone involved in business, can you see us using maybe the procurement process in the future and different ways to advance even beyond the scope of this work by leveraging those dollars when it comes to services and additional purchasing?

Mr. Rustum Southwell: Thanks for that question.

The strong answer for me is yes, and I'll give you an example, Mr. Coteau. We've been in existence for 25 years, the BBI, and we were always in the downtown centre. As of today, we are in partnership with a Black-led organization that owns its own building, as a tenant. Now, that's a significant investment. That's a sign of something really good. We have joined the Delmore "Buddy" Daye Learning Institute and we have just moved into the top floor of that building today.

On the wealth creation and the spend, it's really doing double duty when we say that we are changing lives by it and there has been economic independence. That is a step so that we can actually use the funds and invest the dollars that will circulate in the whole community and last a bit longer. That's one quick example.

We also have to change the way we think about how we do it. Sometimes we're actually not sure if we should use suppliers from our own community. My thing is, let's give them a chance and let's support them as well. If they don't perform a second or third time, then there's enough reason, but we have to provide that opportunity as well.

We've seen that change. Just in the interest of time, those are only some of the examples.

Mr. Michael Coteau: Thank you so much. I appreciate that.

Mr. Jean-François, thank you so much for the work you're doing. From your perspective, what was one of our really big wins through this project and maybe one of the areas that you can see us, as a government or as members, improving when it comes to the long-term building of this project? You can answer either way.

Mr. Louis-Edgar Jean-François: I'll say there are many wins.

I think one of the big wins is the fact that we have five organizations that came together with the government to put together and deliver a program. We've been able to build a synergy together. That's the first thing.

The other win is being able to bring the organizations that we supported through this incentive. I mentioned 206 here in Quebec, but in total I think we're close to 700 across Canada. We build communities of practice. These organizations are working together to synergize and to make sure that, first, they learn from each other, and that's the way to leverage actually the financing, the resources, that were allowed for their evolution.

I think the big win is being able to put together all of these organizations to work and to deliver services to the Black community

across Canada. I think that's the big win that we feel from this initiative.

It would be a shame in terms of resources, as I know this initiative and this program ends officially on March 31, 2024. Let's find a way to make sure this continues above and beyond, and a big way to do that is really to make sure we can work collectively to prioritize these four intermediary organizations and ammanuel's team to continue this work beyond.

We have work to do on our side to see how we can leverage the financing, as I mentioned earlier, but also how we can work collectively to sustain this initiative with it not being dependent on government or public funding. How can we leverage that together and make sure that it continues?

• (1620)

Mr. Michael Coteau: Thank you so much. I appreciate your time.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Coteau.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Chabot, the floor is yours for six minutes.

Ms. Louise Chabot (Thérèse-De Blainville, BQ): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I thank the witnesses for their presentations.

Mr. Jean-François, I'll start with you. I have some quick questions at the beginning, and then a more general question.

If I understood you correctly, you said that you recognized 206 non-profit organizations in the third year. How many applications did you have to reject?

Mr. Louis-Edgar Jean-François: There have been two calls for proposals, and a third may follow. After the first call for proposals, 40 organizations were selected and supported. After the second call for proposals, 43 other organizations were selected, for a total of 83.

What is extraordinary is that resources were made available to the organizations that were rejected after these two calls for proposals.

As a result, 83 of the 206 organizations we support were selected after the two calls for proposals, and the remaining 123 organizations could be supported through another initiative after being rejected the first time. I thank the federal government for this awareness and for its support of these organizations.

Ms. Louise Chabot: Previously, the program was administered by Employment and Social Development Canada. For non-profit organizations run by members of the Black community, what is the benefit of the program now being administered by four intermediary organizations?

This second question could also be addressed to Mr. Southwell, who represents another intermediary organization.

Mr. Louis-Edgar Jean-François: I think the main benefit of these intermediary organizations is that they know and understand the reality of the non-profit organizations on the ground when they provide services to their clients, the Black communities, and when they accompany and support them.

Ms. Louise Chabot: Are you able to say that these organizations, both in Quebec and elsewhere in Canada, are familiar with these four intermediaries and that you are now a reference, or is there still some unknown?

Mr. Louis-Edgar Jean-François: There will always be some unknown. We have a good basic understanding of the concerns of the Black communities, but there are some regional nuances to master. The pan-Canadian distribution of the four intermediary organizations, which are familiar with their respective regional realities, helps to mitigate these differences.

There are elements that need to be better understood. For example, there are Black communities in the territories, a regional reality that we do not know 100% and that we still do not understand well. In terms of percentage, I would say that our understanding is between 80% and 85%. So we still have some information to obtain and understanding to develop, hence the implementation of our digital platform and the collection of data to improve our knowledge and the effectiveness of the services we offer to the Black communities.

• (1625)

Ms. Louise Chabot: You talked about holding a national conference that allowed organizations to get together and share their best practices.

You also said that you have six employees who support these organizations in their projects. In order to better understand what the supporting Black Canadian communities initiative funds, can you tell me whether your six employees are paid by this initiative, since you are an intermediary organization?

Mr. Louis-Edgar Jean-François: That is correct. These six employees only work for the initiative, which funds their salaries.

Ms. Louise Chabot: I have one last question, which we would call “the burning question” in Quebec.

You say that you are the eyes and ears of the government. Are you also the eyes and ears of the members of the Black communities in the regions?

Mr. Louis-Edgar Jean-François: Absolutely. That's what our regional distribution is for, the idea being really to ensure support for all organizations, wherever they are, and to understand their nuances.

We see ourselves as a conduit between the federal government and these organizations so that we can ultimately serve the Black communities throughout the province of Quebec in the most appropriate way possible.

Ms. Louise Chabot: I also hope that you do the opposite and act as a conduit between the Black communities and the government.

Mr. Louis-Edgar Jean-François: Yes, absolutely, it works both ways. It is a conduit between the Black communities and the government and between the government and the Black communities.

It's important to be able to act as that intermediary and to ensure a better understanding on both sides so that, at the end of the day, we can say that our work really serves our purpose, which is to help and strengthen Black communities.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Jean-François and Ms. Chabot.

[English]

Madam Zarrillo, you have six minutes.

Ms. Bonita Zarrillo (Port Moody—Coquitlam, NDP): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'm going to start with Mr. melles. My interest is definitely piqued by the comment about how we tweak engagement for the new endowment plan.

I'm going to come back to asking a question, but first I wanted to thank all of the witnesses here today for the incredible work they've done to build that capacity to get such movement with so many community groups across Canada. I will have some questions about how to sustain and keep up that momentum, because I'm hearing that call.

Mr. melles, my question is around this call for sustainability. With the announcement today for the endowment fund, how can the government maximize the initiative that runs out in March and potentially fold or glove it into this endowment fund?

What would be the best way to be able to keep up the sustainability, to keep up the infrastructure and to keep up all of that governance work that's already been done by the intermediaries and the community?

Mr. ammanuel melles: Thank you for that question.

As I've said, I think sustainability is not only dollars and cents. I think the investments are important, but we need to be able to build on the gains of the leadership that has been built and the adaptivity, or adaptive capacity, that we have been able to bring to the fore.

I think governments can do a simple thing. This is what I also was saying this morning in another meeting with a provincial minister. The federal government actually has the capacity to convene a number of other funders, including major players, using philanthropy, using the United Way. You are already working with them around the community recovery fund. Bring these Black leaders to the table and have the discussion about what it takes to sustain the gains, the good stories here.

Part of it is that there's a good story now. As I said, the landscape is shifting. We have the Black intermediaries and we have the Foundation for Black Communities. We have the Black Opportunity Fund. We have a number of key players, and we're creating a new story in Canada.

How we keep going forward with that story will require us to be bold. I think that as a federal government, within your departments, you're touching several aspects of the Black communities, such as Black entrepreneurship, where we now have the knowledge hub at Carleton University.

My peers here were talking about the platforms they have created. In our case, we have created a national capacity building portal. There are a lot of things we could do, but the most important thing is to not reinvent the wheel. We have to connect the dots. By doing that, you can bring in funders that are funding Black communities at the moment and ask what the best practices are that we need to take forward, including this amazing story we have about the endowment the minister announced today.

It's about connecting the dots. It's about not limiting sustainability to dollars and cents. There are other aspects of sustainability that we have to pay attention to. Pay attention to the lessons of the pandemic and the recovery. The other thing we have not covered today is the whole healing aspect coming out of the pandemic, where we have to really support and invest in Black communities.

Those are some of our thoughts, but I am happy to also follow up in writing to the committee on some of these ideas we have put into our own final report to the department.

• (1630)

Ms. Bonita Zarrillo: Thank you so much.

Following up on that topic around convening, and maybe even networks, Mr. Southwell, I wanted to talk to you a bit about the business community and the opportunities and the wraparound supports you talked about that have already been put into place and that you have been working on for many years.

Could you share some of those best practices that have worked to connect people, to bring people together and to help on that networking and sharing of resources?

Mr. Rustum Southwell: Thank you very much for the question as well.

We are somewhat of a granddaddy in the business of Black entrepreneurship development. I think we normally claim that we have been the longest-standing service organization in that sector.

It is with some real pride that the FACE coalition's work took on a lot of the testing ground that we had over 25 years in doing a form of cultural entrepreneurship support for a community that was normally in the margins. How do you work with rehabilitating credit while trying to do wealth creation, and how do you drive excellence in entrepreneurship delivery while trying to work with micro-enterprises as well? We now have a very vast range of companies that we now have to invest in and develop with help like the Black Opportunity Fund, FACE, BNI and other support agencies.

One of the things we're seeing now, as Louis-Edgar has pointed out, is a better willingness and capacity for the Black community organizations to work together. It's not us against anyone else. It's how we best deliver those services. We understand that there will be some overlap, some competition, but for the most part, it's really about putting those best practices on the ground, using the investments and being very rigid, with rigour, on how we do those things as well.

Our success extends to the work we've done with community organizations. I mentioned the Black Loyalists, the Black Cultural Centre and others, such as the African Nova Scotian Music Associ-

ation and those areas. Those kinds of cultural stories and those types of strategies—

The Chair: You have 10 seconds, Mr. Southwell.

Mr. Rustum Southwell: —will always make a difference.

That's my passion, as you can tell.

The Chair: Thank you.

Now it's over to Mr. Liepert for five minutes.

Mr. Ron Liepert (Calgary Signal Hill, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

My question is for each of our witnesses today. I'd like you to outline the work you have done looking at other countries. Do they have similar programs? It doesn't necessarily have to be just for the Black community.

What programs are there in other countries? How successful have they been? What we could learn from them? Can we measure our particular allocation of dollars, versus some of those other kinds of programs in other countries?

It's always hard to determine a level of success. I'm not suggesting you're saying this, but the fact is that if an organization were granted a particular sum of money and one job was created, the organization could consider that to be a success. How do we benchmark? To me, in benchmarking something like this, it would be good to compare it to similar programs that are happening elsewhere in the world.

I'd like each of you to comment on whether you've done that kind of work internationally.

• (1635)

Mr. ammanuel melles: Maybe I can get us started.

A lot of the work around capacity building in terms of these practices came from international development work. Without going very far, south of the border in the United States, there have been big foundations that have invested for almost 25 or 30 years in perfecting the art and science of capacity building.

When the intermediaries and the departments came together with Black community leaders, NABC—my organization—was able to bring some of those best practices to inform the design of this entire initiative. The Black intermediaries you see today are building from the best practices of many intermediaries who have done this work specifically around capacity-building grants. I'm talking about big foundations like the Ford, MacArthur, Kellogg and other foundations that come together in a network called Grantmakers for Effective Organizations. Their site is geofunders.org.

My organization is part of that network. Those best practices that are informing our capacity building, our understanding of capacity building and the organizational cycle that organizations went through come from that practice.

Within Canada, there's also a lot of knowledge and a body of practice. I think one of the things we could do as the next phase of sustaining this is to come together. That's why I liked the congress that Groupe 3737 organized in Montreal that brought together more than 200 leaders to exchange lessons learned. At the core of systems change is collective learning.

I think we can come together and build minimum standards around governance, leadership, evaluation, data and so on. There are a lot of examples. United Way Canada and United Way Greater Toronto have built these community impact standards. Imagine Canada has this standard. There's a lot of stuff we can do.

The big question now is how we move forward as we look at the next few years. We're laying a good foundation now. We have funded so many grassroots projects—more than 750—through this initiative alone. To sustain them, we need to start looking at new designs and new organizational models—place-based and quadrant-based—in various parts of the country. Look along linguistic groups and various intersectionalities so that we can organize groups. Bring other funders to talk about how we sustain this.

Thank you.

Mr. Rustum Southwell: I will jump in here, if Louis-Edgar doesn't mind.

I think amanuel did a good job on the not-for-profits in those sectors, so I might take my few seconds to identify to Mr. Liepert that, yes, there has been significant work, and some of it is south of the border.

The U.S., some years ago in the 1950s, created an organization called NMSDC—the National Minority Supplier Development Council—which was to do exactly that. It was to drive not only the federal government but the private sector to invest in a very strong economy of persons and racially visible communities and entrepreneurs.

That example helped to create CAMSC, which is now in Canada. It's a sister organization that drives procurement in those areas. Many entrepreneurs from racially visible ownership sometimes have difficulty getting into the network of larger corporations, as well, in the supply chain. That supply chain management is key.

• (1640)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Southwell.

We now go to Mr. Long for five minutes.

Mr. Wayne Long (Saint John—Rothsay, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Good afternoon, colleagues.

Good afternoon to our witnesses. Thank you very much for your presentations.

My question will be for Mr. Southwell in Halifax.

First and foremost, I hope Fiona wasn't too bad for you, Mr. Southwell. Did you make it through okay?

Mr. Rustum Southwell: Yes, I did actually.

Mr. Wayne Long: I'm glad to hear that.

Mr. Southwell, can you comment on how significant today's announcement of \$200 million for the Black-led philanthropic endowment fund would be for your organization?

Mr. Rustum Southwell: Yes. When, in our history, we reflect on this day, we'll realize how visionary and how massively that investment was going to play out. It doesn't only create a platform of sustainability. If it is managed well, continuous funds can be endowed to the community into perpetuity. I think it's going to lift the standard of Black communities for generations to come, which is something we were asking for. Several folks in the community, for many years, have actually placed that as a key area.

I think, as the word gets out about what is being suggested here, the size and vision.... In doing that, it's a major and historic step today.

Mr. Wayne Long: Thank you for that.

For full transparency, I didn't know what BBI was until I had a coffee, about three weeks ago, with Jocelyn Eatmon-Stevens. Jocelyn is a good friend of mine. Jocelyn is the BBI coordinator for New Brunswick. She was telling me that there are 16 organizations or entrepreneurs that BBI is now supporting in New Brunswick. I think the work you are doing is absolutely fantastic. The work that she does in New Brunswick is fantastic.

I want to drill down a bit.

How does the SBCCI function differently now that the funding flows through intermediary organizations, rather than directly from ESDC? What's the difference?

Mr. Rustum Southwell: I would like to believe we are a lot quicker in getting the funds out.

Mr. Wayne Long: I bet you're quicker.

Mr. Rustum Southwell: That's a major question. I was speaking to one of my team, who is no longer with us. We were saying, "What are the benefits?" One thing we thought is that the community having a perspective of transactional versus transformational approach has made a huge difference.

Where the challenges came in was with who does what, as you would have heard, for example, whether was co-funded or how flexible the funds were to be used. We were doing the specific track areas, rather than general funding. That has been an issue, as I think you heard last week, in some of the areas we've seen as well.

What I know is that, working together, ESDC has listened to the suggestions and helped us where they can. We know they couldn't do everything, but they are doing their best to deliver the pieces that we are hearing...and that we, as the intermediaries, have helped to organize and put back.

Where we saw changes was, for example, charitable status, digital. Those areas were brought on to adjust to the immense needs in those areas. If you can understand, this was designed in 2018, before COVID and certainly before George Floyd. The world has changed tremendously in that period of time. We've seen that. We've managed to have a conversation to support that as well.

• (1645)

Mr. Wayne Long: Thanks for that.

Can you talk about the SBCCI grants? What role does BBI play after they've been awarded?

Mr. Rustum Southwell: Like Groupe 3737, Tropicana and the Africa Centre, we are an intermediary. Not only do we distribute the funds and adjudicate the organizations that get the funding, and we do that with community folks, by the way. The BBI team manages the process, but it is our own community that is making those investment decisions.

We also provide ongoing monitoring. We have a base camp that's set up for the subagreement holders to network. We've actually just invested in our own platform. I know Louis-Edgar spoke about SM Apply. Because of that we have designed our own system that will be able to do a lot of the monitoring as well. We also do evaluations.

There was one point made last week in the conversation. I think someone else mentioned it earlier on. The reporting burden for the amount of funds is a lot for some of the centres, so whether it's BBI group, Groupe 3737, Africa Centre or Tropicana, we do follow up with our staff teams and with the organizations getting their reports and we're monitoring those. Sometimes the field officers go out.

I'll just add that we do everywhere except Quebec on our side, in Canada.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Southwell and Mr. Long.

That concludes the first hour. We're a bit over. We started at 3:40. That will conclude the first group of witnesses. We will suspend for a moment while we transfer to the second witnesses.

• (1645)

_____ (Pause) _____

• (1645)

The Chair: We will resume the committee hearing on the Black communities study.

For witnesses, we have Mr. Haji from the Africa Centre, and Mr. Salmon from the Ontario Alliance of Black School Educators.

Gentlemen, you each have five minutes to give your opening presentation, which will be followed by a question round from the committee members. You have the option of speaking in the official language of your choice. If translation stops, please let me know by using the "raise hand" icon.

We'll now begin with Mr. Haji for five minutes.

Mr. Sharif Haji (Executive Director, Africa Centre): Good afternoon, everyone.

I would like to start by thanking the committee for the opportunity today. I would like to acknowledge that I am joining you from Treaty 6, the traditional and ancestral territory of Cree, Dene, Blackfoot, Saulteaux and Nakota Sioux.

I also want to underscore that we are in the decade of people of African descent—a decade dedicated to cognition, justice and development.

My name is Sharif Haji. I have the privilege to serve as the executive director of the Council for the Advancement of African Canadians in Alberta. We are known as the Africa Centre. We are a non-profit, charitable organization that has been in existence for the past 16 years with a strong relationship and partnership with the City of Edmonton.

We also have offices in Calgary. We consider ourselves as the largest Black-led non-profit organization in the western provinces of Canada. The Africa Centre is one of the SBCCI intermediary organizations. Also, we are a former recipient of the funding prior to becoming an intermediary based out of western Canada. I have the opportunity to speak from both sides: what it's like as a recipient and my experience as an intermediary organization.

We became an intermediary just a year ago in September 2021 through an RFP run by ESDC—a western Canada-based intermediary. We have not been part of the first call for proposals, but we joined the other three intermediaries in the second call for proposals. Even as a latecomer to the intermediary role, thanks to the other intermediaries—my colleagues, who were just on the call a few minutes ago—the Africa Centre was able to hit the ground running and execute its initiative at the same base as other intermediary organizations. It's a lesson of showing that walking together and learning from each other is what rose us to a level that we could be on the same base as the rest.

We also brought a network and access, as well as local lenses from the community, to reach and support a higher number of organizations based out in the western provinces of Canada that had been missed during the first call for proposals. That highlights the fact that engaging a western intermediary organization was an overdue step to ensure regional equity and representation across the country for Black organizations seeking SBCCI funding.

The process is uniform for all intermediaries, and this has been helpful so that we can walk together in our alignment, whether it is a call for proposal dates, announcements or disbursement dates so that we don't bring confusion within the Black grassroots organizations. We also coordinate on processes, such as information sessions, grant reviews, etc.

As far as selection is concerned, we had to put an independent committee in place, and that independent committee was identified through a call for expression of interest. We had 47 members of a committee that applied, and we ended up identifying nine committee members across the country as members of a grant review committee that provides recommendations, ranks applications, looks into an alignment with the purpose of a call, and then provides recommendations for funding. Each committee member independently reviewed the processes and the applications, provided ratings and then came together to discuss and create a consensus in terms of the way moving forward.

With regard to the organizations we supported following the call for proposals, in response the Africa Centre received a total of 147 applications of which 130 of them met our criteria for funding. Out of the 130 applications, we have prioritized funding 68 grassroots organizations with an investment of \$2.6 million. About 70% of these were based in the western regions of Canada, with Alberta representing the highest number, followed by B.C. in the west. However, in terms of overall ranking, Alberta had the highest number that we've funded, and Ontario was the second. The least was Manitoba as far as funding is concerned, as well as the number of applications that were received.

• (1650)

Areas that we focused on were governance, as well as operational excellence. Out of the 68 that we funded, there were 54 organizations that were not funded and were deferred for subsequent calls for proposals.

I quickly will highlight now—

The Chair: Mr. Haji, your time has gone well over.

You will have to give whatever information you want to give to the committee during the questioning period. Thank you.

Now we have Mr. Salmon for five minutes, please.

Mr. Warren Salmon (President, Ontario Alliance of Black School Educators): Thank you so much.

Good afternoon, everyone. It's a pleasure to be here. I want to thank you for the invitation and for facilitating this.

I'm Warren Salmon. I am the founding president of the Ontario Alliance of Black School Educators that was founded in 2013. The purpose of ONABSE is to promote and facilitate the education of all students, African Canadian students in particular. It's also to establish a network of African Canadian educators and others involved in the educational process to create a forum for the exchange of ideas and strategies to improve educational outcomes. We do this through an annual conference and other activities. It's also to identify and develop African Canadian professionals who will assume leadership roles and positions in education and to influence public policy concerning the education of African Canadian people.

Some of the functions include work to eliminate and rectify the effects of racism, harassment and sexism in education, to significantly raise the academic achievement level of students and to place particular emphasis on the type of learning that builds positive and realistic self-concepts among African Canadian students. It's also to establish and promote the degree of awareness, professional expertise and commitment among African Canadian educators necessary to enhance and contribute to the efforts of other educators and community persons. It provides financial and human resources for recruiting African Canadian school personnel, certified and support personnel. It supports training for all personnel to impact the education and socialization of African Canadian students; to meet and share ideas, proven programs and effective techniques for demonstrating that African Canadian students can learn; and to support and research positions on key educational issues that affect all children and students of African descent as they relate to public policies. It's also to address the economic gap experienced by the African Canadian community.

Our membership includes educators, administrators, students, parents, communities, member school districts, institutions and businesses. We are, as I said, Ontario focused.

Before we were founded, there were a number of Black educator networks in numerous districts, and we've given them a seat on our board. That includes districts in Windsor, Toronto, Peel, Durham, York Region and Ottawa right now. We're a provincial affiliate of the National Alliance of Black School Educators, which is based in Washington, D.C., and we also have a sister organization, the Nova Scotia Alliance of Black School Educators.

We're the recipient of two SBCCI grants, one for charity readiness and one for grant writing capacity support. Right now, we're a non-profit, but we are looking at becoming a charity, and that will help us to increase our capacity and growth to do it in a more timely manner.

That's my introduction, and I look forward to answering further questions.

• (1655)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Salmon. You're under the time allocation, which is great.

We will now proceed with one round of questioning of six minutes each.

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Thank you, Chair.

I want to thank the witnesses for appearing today.

We have heard some testimony so far that talked about the importance of specific funding aimed at Black entrepreneurship, because there are so many difficulties with applying to the general fund. We heard about the importance of education.

My first question will be for Mr. Haji.

I know it's important to have this kind of funding for Black entrepreneurs. In my riding, we had a recipient who was a pharmacist from Nigeria who ended up starting a medical facility, brought in three doctors and has a pharmacy that supports our palliative care system in Sarnia. Amazing things can happen.

You were a recipient, and now you're an intermediary. Why is it important to have that intermediary organization?

Mr. Sharif Haji: It's important to have the intermediary organizations.

I will put my hat on as a recipient. It was easy for us to work with Tropicana, which was the intermediary that funded us, and receive funding that supported our operational excellence in the area of HR, systems management, data management and related to staff. That was significant for us to be able to build capacity.

As far as an intermediary is concerned, that is the element, because it is quicker for us to be able to get the funding. It is easier for us to be able to reach the funder, and it is easier to discuss in terms of the eventualities we face, based on the agreement that we signed with our intermediary organization. That nimbleness, flexibility and understanding of local nuances is quite helpful in terms of making the changes that are needed for us to be able to achieve the objectives we need to achieve through the funding.

• (1700)

Ms. Marilyn Gladu: Mr. Salmon, you talked about the need for Black school educators.

Can you share with the committee some of the best practices you have encountered that you think the federal government could help support?

Mr. Warren Salmon: Sure. One of our main activities is hosting an annual conference that brings educators from across Ontario, and actually across Canada, the U.S. and other parts of the world, together to share the best practices that are going on in education. School districts within Ontario, and districts across the country and other countries, face a lot of the same challenges. We're sharing ideas to help us address these issues and concerns.

It's really one of the best practices, and something that we could definitely use support for. I've actually been contacted by educators from across the country, in B.C., Alberta. They're looking for how they can better organize and put together organizations to really help support students and educators. That's one thing that comes to mind.

One thing we've also been looking at is support for supplemental education and other forms of education. Looking at some of the stats in terms of student achievement, in a lot of the public schools, there's definitely room for improvement.

There are also some examples of other initiatives that are getting great results. I think that's something else that could definitely use some support.

Ms. Marilyn Gladu: That's very good.

If I run out of time on this next question—this next question is a hard one—I invite both of you to submit any of your comments in writing.

When we're trying to change a culture and we're trying to get to a position of equity among people in Canada, normally culture change involves what they call “antecedents of behaviour”, where you have positive incentives to try to drive right behaviours or right attitudes. We have funding for resources and education and things like that, which are positive things. However, you should also have some negative consequences that discourage wrong behaviours or wrong attitudes, and we don't really have much of that here.

It's very important how you measure your progress. Today we're measuring things like the amount of dollars of funding and the number of training courses and things like that.

What should we be measuring? Are there carrots and sticks, positive and negative things, that we should be putting into place to help accelerate our path to equity?

The Chair: Please be brief. As Madam Gladu pointed out, you could follow up in detail to the committee with a written response to her question.

Go ahead, Mr. Haji.

Mr. Sharif Haji: I think government sets the tone, and then with the systems we have, there are quite a number of puzzles that need to be linked together.

In this case, from my perspective, this was a setting of tone by the government. There are other players in the field. The Calgary Foundation is reaching out to work with us in terms of supporting Black leader organizations on the operational side of dollars. The Edmonton Community Foundation is doing the same. As we speak, we now have 15 other organizations that we are serving as an intermediary outside of the federal government, and these are dollars from the provincial government or from foundations in Edmonton and Calgary.

These are some of the things that will shift entirely. The tone will shift how we deliver and create equity collectively. One system of the orders of government alone cannot do it, and as an organization, we cannot do it alone. Creating that ecosystem is what will influence the system and create an equity in all systems.

• (1705)

The Chair: Mr. Haji and Mr. Salmon, you could follow up, if you choose, in writing to the committee.

A voice: Sure.

The Chair: I will now go to Mr. Coteau for six minutes.

Mr. Michael Coteau: Thank you so much to both of you for being here.

This is an important study we're doing to better understand how to best position government to work with community leaders like you, and Black Canadians across the country. I want to say thank you for the work you're doing and the leadership you're taking.

I'll start off with Mr. Haji.

I'm familiar with the programs on the east coast and Ontario. We do have programs, even provincially, in Ontario that specifically go to Black-led organizations that are specifically serving the Black community.

Out west, prior to this program and this initiative, was there anything that existed?

Mr. Sharif Haji: To my knowledge, the terms "Black-led organization", "Black-focused organization" or "Black-serving organization" were not familiar in the west until this initiative.

Mr. Michael Coteau: Wow.

Mr. Sharif Haji: This is something that started post-George Floyd, as well as the start of this initiative. We are now having a conversation with our foundations on the ground, like the United Way, speaking about the municipalities, speaking about Black-focused and Black-led organizations.

It has been a change of narrative from this side of the country as far as the focus of allocation of resources to Black populations is concerned.

Mr. Michael Coteau: What has the relationship been like with your partners across the country, as one of the four lead groups? What has that relationship been like across the country in regard to working together, learning from other regions and contributing to their growth as well?

Mr. Sharif Haji: It has been an advantage for us. As an organization that joined with intermediaries that have already done one call for proposals, it was a very good collaboration in terms of learning, sharing experiences and learning how they had run the first call for proposals. It made our work quite easy to run the second call for proposals and then implement it in that way.

Mr. Michael Coteau: The last question is to you, sir.

There will be critics out there who say, "Why do you need to do this? Why can't you just have organizations apply to the larger fund?" What would your answer be to anyone, out in Alberta, for example, out west, who just says to apply to the regular fund? What is the difference between what we're doing here and what has happened in the past?

Mr. Sharif Haji: We have not sought out becoming an intermediary or playing as a fiscal agent for a number of funders, whether it's the provincial government here or the foundations here. They came to us and said, "You are delivering this initiative, and we think this is an opportunity that we can leverage." That is how we have utilized it.

Another thing that I want the committee to know is that on the western side, Alberta has the third-largest Black population and the fastest-growing Black population in the country. It has the youngest Black population in the country. There are quite a number of complexities that come under this. This informs how Black grassroots organizations and groups establish and organize themselves, want-

ing to respond and provide services for those nuances of complexity for new immigrants.

It's quite different from the eastern side of the country, because of that. Established social connections and social capital exist there, which don't exist in the west.

Mr. Michael Coteau: Thank you so much for the work you're doing out west. I'm sure the work you're doing there will benefit us here in Ontario as well.

Mr. Salmon, thank you for being here. I'm aware of the work that you've been doing over the years in education and in building the Black community overall—professionalism and best practices. You talked a bit about how the funding helped your organization accelerate its ability to transform. I think you mentioned getting charitable or not-for-profit status.

How much time is an initiative like this saving you in the long term? Are we talking about years of acceleration to get to where you need to be? Is this speeding up the process of your doing even better work for, essentially, young Canadians?

• (1710)

Mr. Warren Salmon: Thank you for the invite and for the questions.

Yes, definitely, the financial resources will really help accelerate things by a few years, I think. Otherwise, because we're a non-profit, we haven't received a lot of funding. We're generating funding through our initiatives, so this really helps to move us forward, I would say, by a few years. It really better positions us to serve our students, our teachers and our families in Ontario.

Mr. Michael Coteau: At the end of the day, the most important message here is that under regular circumstances, it would be very difficult for organizations that may be the same size as yours, very grassroots and community-based. On community support, I know a lot of the resources come out of the volunteers who work for you to get things done. The big message here is that we have literally hundreds of new organizations that are tapping into federal resources to deliver programs to communities.

We heard last week from one of our witnesses that out of all the foundations in Canada combined, for every \$100 that's spent, about 7¢ goes to support Black community and Black-led organizations. To me, that's just a shame. There's a lot more we could be doing to build if the right resources were there. I would suggest that there's a systemic piece at play if that's the situation.

I think my time is up. Mr. Chair, is that correct?

The Chair: Your time is up, Mr. Coteau.

If either witness wants to comment on your comment, they can do it in their answers.

[Translation]

Ms. Chabot, you have the floor for six minutes.

Ms. Louise Chabot: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I thank our witnesses for their commitment and their work.

Mr. Haji, you say that your centre was selected as an intermediary organization in the second call for proposals. That certainly met a need.

You also say that 130 organizations met the funding criteria, but you only selected 68. Was it the lack of finances that prevented you from retaining the others?

[English]

Mr. Sharif Haji: Thank you very much. That's a good question.

Yes, it was basically a lack of finances for us to provide for those 54 we have not funded yet. It's deferred at least until.... They didn't get any funding.

[Translation]

Ms. Louise Chabot: My other question is for both Mr. Haji and Mr. Salmon.

Since the beginning of the study, I have noted that the supporting Black Canadian communities initiative has generally been beneficial and has met the needs. However, we know that it will soon expire.

What do you see happening in the next few years? In addition, what good and not so good things can be learned from the program? Indeed, there have certainly been some pitfalls as well.

Mr. Haji, you may begin.

[English]

Mr. Sharif Haji: Sustainability is something that we talked about quite a lot. This is one way of building the capacity, but sustaining the gains that have been made.... From my perspective, it will be a loss if we stop this program in 2024 on the dot without having a transition plan, moving forward. That could include leveraging other opportunities that exist and building the fundraising capabilities of some of those organizations. What is some of the other funding, the corporate funding, municipal funding and provincial dollars that exist? How does that transition into that level?

We've seen some signs at our end in the last year, but it requires time for that transition to occur and for that transition to successfully happen. It would be prudent for the government to keep this in mind and work with the intermediaries to ensure a sustainable transition plan.

• (1715)

Mr. Warren Salmon: Okay, I'd like to say that sustainability is definitely an ongoing concern. In looking at the organizations that have tapped into the funding, we see that there is definitely a lot of proof to support that it works, but the big concern is how long the funding will be around. Will it survive transitions of power and stuff, and what's the plan to really make it sustainable over a long run?

It's great that it's here now, but this definitely is a concern. I think there needs to be a commitment to making it sustainable regardless of who's in power and just over a long period of time.

Those are some of my thoughts.

[Translation]

Ms. Louise Chabot: Thank you, Mr. Salmon. In other files, there is also talk of transition plans. So I think it's a matter of consolidating what you've started.

Mr. Haji, I am addressing you in your capacity as representative of one of the four intermediary organizations. Between now and the end of the initiative, have you planned, or is there a plan in the program, for a discussion between the four intermediaries and the government, whichever government it may be, on the strengths and weaknesses of the program?

[English]

Mr. Sharif Haji: We talked about strategic planning in terms of moving forward and what the next steps are. We also talked about the stories of what happened. The funded organizations' evaluations are just taking place. We haven't concluded them. We expect that there will be lessons learned from those evaluations, and that will be some of what will be informing our moving forward. However, it is very early in the initial discussions. We haven't solidified a road map for a transition plan yet, but the conversation has started around having strategic discussions in terms of moving forward in a way that is informed by the learning that we gather from the existing funded organizations.

The Chair: Thank you, Madame Chabot and Mr. Haji.

To conclude, we have Ms. Zarrillo for six minutes.

Ms. Bonita Zarrillo: Thank you very much.

I want to just get right into it because we have a short time. I want to follow up on what Madame Chabot was talking about.

We did have a big announcement today around the endowment fund. There has been a lot of talk about sustainability. Has the intermediary model been kept in place for this endowment fund, and will it be able to work with the current infrastructure that has already been built and that we know is working to expand the scope and get more partners involved? Is there talk about this transition to the endowment fund?

Mr. Sharif Haji: I will concur with my other colleagues earlier in the call in terms of the importance of the announcement that was made today, but, to my knowledge, I don't think it was built on the continuity of the work that the intermediaries have been doing. It's built in a way that is like a regular RFP. That's my understanding. I don't know how the two will tie in.

My colleague, ammanuel, mentioned in the earlier call that there are quite a number of dots that need to be tied together to make sure that the impact or the investment that is being made in Black communities in Canada is sustainable over the long term.

• (1720)

Ms. Bonita Zarrillo: Great.

Mr. Salmon, I wonder if you would have a comment on that.

Also, you mentioned this movement from a non-profit to a charity. If the endowment fund ends up being a transition vehicle, what barriers or challenges might you see for the size of the organizations that, potentially, you work with that maybe can't move either to non-profit status or even to charity status? How can they be supported?

Mr. Warren Salmon: First of all, I'd like to really welcome and applaud the endowment fund. It's really good timing for us because, through the SBCCI, we're looking to become a charity. The other support we're looking for is grant-writing support. We definitely look to apply for the funding. This has really helped to better position us to potentially access these funds.

For other organizations that are smaller... There are different stages of growth. We've been a volunteer organization. The hope is that, through the funding that we're receiving, we can help to hire some staff, grow and better position ourselves to serve our constituents.

There are also some things that can help smaller entities to really accelerate their growth and better position themselves to serve their constituents and provide services. I think that would be very helpful as well.

Ms. Bonita Zarrillo: I'm going to ask a quick question.

There are always intersections. This committee also does a lot of work with persons with disabilities. MP Dalton and I were up at an event recently where we were working with the Black community and persons with disabilities as an intersection. I wonder if there are any organizations you've been working with over time that you could share with this committee? We do have a study coming up around disability. We want to make sure that we capture that.

I wanted to close out by saying that, if either of you have comments that you'd like to share, then I'll just step back. My last bit of time will be shared with Mr. Haji and Mr. Salmon to put their comments on the record.

The Chair: Here's your opportunity.

Go ahead, Mr. Salmon.

Mr. Warren Salmon: As far as disabilities, I could submit that to the committee at another point in time. No one really comes to mind. There are a lot of different organizations that we work with in different capacities.

Again, I just want to thank the committee and the government for these efforts to help to support us, help us grow and really help sup-

port the Black community. It's long overdue, as Mr. Coteau alluded to. The percentage has to be more reflective. I think there's still work to do to get us to that point. I really applaud these efforts and I hope that we can continue to work towards that.

Thank you.

The Chair: Mr. Haji.

Mr. Sharif Haji: Thank you for the question on intersectionality. It is something that we deal with. People with disabilities are on one side. There are other intersectionalities as well, whether it is sexual orientation, other religious beliefs and all of those kinds of things within the Black population's diversity.

I will be able to provide some organizations that we have funded through SBCCI of those who have the mission of providing services to people with disabilities. I will provide that to you via email.

The only other piece I wanted to add that I was not able to capture is that, despite our efforts to reach Black-led organizations in the west, a gap still exists. I wanted to highlight that. We want to cover as many as we can. There's still a gap in the western provinces of Canada. There are very few updates. In some provinces such as Manitoba, when you compare it with the rest of our provinces, even when population is considered... This kind of regional inequity is something that we need to start looking into in terms of addressing it.

That was something I wanted to highlight in my first five minutes.

• (1725)

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Zarrillo and Mr. Salmon, and thank you, Mr. Haji, for your presentation.

That concludes the witness round of questions from the committee.

I would remind the committee that the Wednesday schedule, as it sits, is to hear from the final group of witnesses in the first hour. The second hour will be drafting instructions on the report as well as anything else you want to bring.

Thank you, committee members, and thank you to the witnesses for your time presenting today.

The meeting is adjourned.

Published under the authority of the Speaker of
the House of Commons

SPEAKER'S PERMISSION

The proceedings of the House of Commons and its committees are hereby made available to provide greater public access. The parliamentary privilege of the House of Commons to control the publication and broadcast of the proceedings of the House of Commons and its committees is nonetheless reserved. All copyrights therein are also reserved.

Reproduction of the proceedings of the House of Commons and its committees, in whole or in part and in any medium, is hereby permitted provided that the reproduction is accurate and is not presented as official. This permission does not extend to reproduction, distribution or use for commercial purpose of financial gain. Reproduction or use outside this permission or without authorization may be treated as copyright infringement in accordance with the Copyright Act. Authorization may be obtained on written application to the Office of the Speaker of the House of Commons.

Reproduction in accordance with this permission does not constitute publication under the authority of the House of Commons. The absolute privilege that applies to the proceedings of the House of Commons does not extend to these permitted reproductions. Where a reproduction includes briefs to a committee of the House of Commons, authorization for reproduction may be required from the authors in accordance with the Copyright Act.

Nothing in this permission abrogates or derogates from the privileges, powers, immunities and rights of the House of Commons and its committees. For greater certainty, this permission does not affect the prohibition against impeaching or questioning the proceedings of the House of Commons in courts or otherwise. The House of Commons retains the right and privilege to find users in contempt of Parliament if a reproduction or use is not in accordance with this permission.

Also available on the House of Commons website at the following address: <https://www.ourcommons.ca>

Publié en conformité de l'autorité
du Président de la Chambre des communes

PERMISSION DU PRÉSIDENT

Les délibérations de la Chambre des communes et de ses comités sont mises à la disposition du public pour mieux le renseigner. La Chambre conserve néanmoins son privilège parlementaire de contrôler la publication et la diffusion des délibérations et elle possède tous les droits d'auteur sur celles-ci.

Il est permis de reproduire les délibérations de la Chambre et de ses comités, en tout ou en partie, sur n'importe quel support, pourvu que la reproduction soit exacte et qu'elle ne soit pas présentée comme version officielle. Il n'est toutefois pas permis de reproduire, de distribuer ou d'utiliser les délibérations à des fins commerciales visant la réalisation d'un profit financier. Toute reproduction ou utilisation non permise ou non formellement autorisée peut être considérée comme une violation du droit d'auteur aux termes de la Loi sur le droit d'auteur. Une autorisation formelle peut être obtenue sur présentation d'une demande écrite au Bureau du Président de la Chambre des communes.

La reproduction conforme à la présente permission ne constitue pas une publication sous l'autorité de la Chambre. Le privilège absolu qui s'applique aux délibérations de la Chambre ne s'étend pas aux reproductions permises. Lorsqu'une reproduction comprend des mémoires présentés à un comité de la Chambre, il peut être nécessaire d'obtenir de leurs auteurs l'autorisation de les reproduire, conformément à la Loi sur le droit d'auteur.

La présente permission ne porte pas atteinte aux privilèges, pouvoirs, immunités et droits de la Chambre et de ses comités. Il est entendu que cette permission ne touche pas l'interdiction de contester ou de mettre en cause les délibérations de la Chambre devant les tribunaux ou autrement. La Chambre conserve le droit et le privilège de déclarer l'utilisateur coupable d'outrage au Parlement lorsque la reproduction ou l'utilisation n'est pas conforme à la présente permission.

Aussi disponible sur le site Web de la Chambre des communes à l'adresse suivante :
<https://www.noscommunes.ca>