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Chair: Mr. René Arseneault



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• (1105)

[*Translation*]

The Chair (Mr. René Arseneault (Madawaska—Restigouche, Lib.)): I call the meeting to order.

Welcome to meeting number 38 of the House of Commons Standing Committee on Official Languages.

Pursuant to the order of reference of Monday, May 30, 2022, the committee is resuming consideration of Bill C-13, An Act to amend the Official Languages Act, to enact the Use of French in Federally Regulated Private Businesses Act and to make related amendments to other Acts.

Today's meeting is taking place in a hybrid format, pursuant to the House order of Thursday, June 23, 2022. Members may attend in person in the room or remotely using the Zoom application.

To ensure an orderly meeting, I would like to outline a few rules for members and witnesses.

Before speaking, please wait until I recognize you by name. If you are on the video conference, please click on the microphone icon to unmute yourself. Please mute your mike when you are not speaking.

For interpretation, those participating through Zoom have the choice, at the bottom of their screen, between three channels: floor, English or French. Members attending in person in the room can use their headset after selecting the channel desired.

A reminder that all comments by members and witnesses should be addressed through the chair.

Members in the room who would like the floor must raise their hands. Members participating via Zoom must use the “raise hand” feature. The clerk of the committee and I will do our best to maintain an order of speaking for all members. Your patience and understanding are appreciated.

Pursuant to our routine motion, I want to let the committee members know that all the witnesses went through the required connectivity tests before the meeting.

I would now like to welcome the witnesses.

We have with us today representatives of the Association des conseils scolaires des écoles publiques de l'Ontario, Denis Chartrand, president, and Isabelle Girard, executive director.

We also have Sophie Bouffard, president of the Université de Saint-Boniface, who is participating by video conference.

Dear witnesses, welcome.

As is customary, each witness will have five minutes for their presentation. I am quite strict with my timekeeping in order to give all committee members the opportunity to ask their questions.

We will start with the Association des conseils scolaires des écoles publiques de l'Ontario. You have five minutes.

Mr. Denis Chartrand (President, Association des conseils scolaires des écoles publiques de l'Ontario): Thank you for inviting the Association des conseils scolaires des écoles publiques de l'Ontario, ACEPO, of which I am president. I am accompanied by our executive director, Isabelle Girard. I am also the outgoing president of the Fédération nationale des conseils scolaires francophones, which has already shared with you an opinion that is very similar to mine. I am a retired professional engineer.

ACEPO represents French-language public school boards in Ontario. It manages 140 schools and offers quality education programs in French. Bill C-13 is a step in the right direction, but concrete and realistic amendments are needed so we can achieve our common goal of ensuring the sustainability and vitality of French and its cultures.

We need effective coordination without duplication. We need positive measures, which are required and not just appropriate, in order to achieve this. Today, we are asking for a very specific amendment, one we have asked for in the past. You will find it at tab 1 of the binder you received.

ACEPO members should be managing many more schools in order to provide French-language education to many more students. However, securing available land to build schools is a significant challenge to implementing section 23 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. The federal government owns a multitude of sites that it routinely disposes of, but it does not offer these sites to our members. All too often, our members learn too late, and too frequently from the media, that a site has been sold. One solution is to give French-language school boards a chance to acquire at market value—we are not asking for money—federal sites that are put up for sale.

In 2018, your committee went to Vancouver and discovered the same problem. For more than 20 years, the school board has not been able to build a school west of Main Street for lack of a site. The federal government implemented a disposal process that would meet the needs of this school board. The process began in 2005, but the school board still does not have a school west of Main Street.

These problems exist across the country. For that reason the committee recommended in 2019 that the Official Languages Act include “a provision ensuring that the educational and cultural infrastructure needs of official language minority communities are identified as a priority in the Government of Canada’s disposal process for surplus real property”. Unfortunately, Bill C-13 is silent on that point.

Mr. Chair, you signed that report. Mr. Généreux, you signed that report. Mr. Samson, you signed that report. The Honourable Mona Fortier also signed that report. I mention it because, as the President of the Treasury Board, she has the discretionary authority, but not the obligation, to improve the directive on the disposal of real property.

The directive in effect since 2006 specified that when disposing of real property, federal institutions were to consider the interests of communities, including official language minority communities. Despite that, school boards were ignored. Therefore, many of them have called for the Official Languages Act to be amended so that it expressly gives school boards a right of first refusal for federal sites subject to disposal.

• (1110)

The directive was amended last year. You would think that would be a good thing. However, the changes did not improve the directive. What I mentioned earlier was included in the 2006 directive, but it has disappeared. Now federal institutions only have an obligation to inform official language communities that they intend to dispose of a site. They are not required to inform them of when or how.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Chartrand.

That is all the time we have right now. You can make clarifications by answering questions from the various political parties.

I now give the floor to Ms. Bouffard of the Université de Saint-Boniface.

You have five minutes.

Ms. Sophie Bouffard (President, Université de Saint-Boniface): Good morning, Mr. Chair and members of the House of Commons Standing Committee on Official Languages.

Thank you for the invitation to appear before you today. I am the president of the Université de Saint-Boniface. My comments will focus on the various aspects of Bill C-13 that affect post-secondary education more directly.

I would like to begin my presentation with some of the improvements to and the strengths of Bill C-13 as tabled.

The fact that federal institutions will now have to implement positive measures that they consider to be appropriate so that members of French linguistic minorities have more opportunities to pursue

quality lifelong learning, from early childhood to post-secondary education, is a significant improvement over the previous bill. Even more telling, this commitment recognizes the particular status and the vulnerability of French in Canada and underscores the need to support sectors that are essential to enhancing the vitality of French linguistic minorities and to protecting and promoting the presence of strong institutions that serve these minorities.

The Université de Saint-Boniface is one of those core institutions for the francophone population, but its survival constantly faces serious challenges. Bill C-13 rightly recognizes the key role that post-secondary institutions play in achieving the objectives. Together with its educational and community partners, the Université de Saint-Boniface is actively working on building a solid education continuum in Manitoba. It is impossible to have a strong sector, from early childhood to grade 12, without post-secondary institutions that have solid foundations, strong roots in the community and that are positioned to continually innovate.

Our universities and colleges are not just pertinent in the silo of education, they are also essential because they support our communities in the areas of health and social services, wealth creation and much more.

The national dialogue on post-secondary education in the francophone minority context has confirmed the contributions of institutions such as the Université de Saint-Boniface to intellectual life, the training of a bilingual work force, technological and social innovation, the transmission of language and culture, and the creation of inclusive French social and cultural spaces.

The report entitled “Language Used at Work by Graduates of English, French or Bilingual Post-secondary Institutions”, which was released in April 2022, supports these findings. According to this study, 49% of Université de Saint-Boniface graduates subsequently embark on a career where they work primarily in French. That is an important indicator that confirms that Université de Saint-Boniface meets a real need in Manitoba and elsewhere for graduates who are officially bilingual. Our study programs are of strategic importance.

We would like to make three suggestions.

In the bill, the federal government recognizes the importance of the contributions of provincial and territorial governments. Clearly, we need to ensure that the federal government’s investments remain foundational. However, it is essential that the funding mechanisms be overhauled.

For example, last summer, a call for proposals was launched by the Department of Canadian Heritage as part of a \$121.3-million investment in post-secondary minority-language institutions. The Université de Saint-Boniface was unable to submit projects for a number of reasons: deadlines that were too short to develop new non-recurring projects; insufficient time to work with the province, which was not able to provide a financial contribution that quickly; and the fact that the university had already reached its funding limit for new initiatives. Moreover, the new recurring provincial investment of \$1.4 million, created to enhance the education and nursing programs so as to address staffing shortages, was ineligible as the provincial contribution to a non-recurring project. That is very unfortunate.

The bill must result in the implementation of efficient mechanisms that will ensure a certain equity across the country and that will have lasting impacts.

With respect to research conducted in French, Bill C-13 states that one of the areas where federal institutions could take positive steps is support for “the creation and dissemination of information in French that contributes to the advancement of scientific knowledge in any discipline”. This statement seems restrictive. With substantive equality in mind, it should be revised to make these measures more foundational for post-secondary education in minority communities, which, in general and by their very nature, focus mainly on education. We must also better respond to the needs of the francophone population.

Finally, with respect to the clause on adopting a policy on francophone immigration, we would like to express a wish, that the policy that is developed accommodate the international student population attending post-secondary institutions, which represent an important pathway for immigration and economic and social integration into our minority communities.

Thank you.

• (1115)

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Bouffard.

We will now begin the first round of questions.

For the information of the witnesses, each political party will have six minutes to ask their questions.

The first speaker is Mr. Godin, the first vice-chair of the committee, who has six minutes.

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

I would like to thank the witnesses for being here and for participating in our study on Bill C-13. The purpose of our study is to improve the Official Languages Act. I am not convinced that this is the current government's goal, but that is another issue.

My first question is for Mr. Chartrand.

In your speech, you talked about the fact that there is currently some redundancy. In your opinion, if we want to be efficient, that redundancy must be eliminated.

Mr. Chartrand, do you have anything to add on that point?

Mr. Denis Chartrand: Thank you for your question.

As set out in the bill, no one is currently in charge. There is no champion to ensure that all departments are doing what they are supposed to do. That is what is happening now. A minister could be appointed, but it depends on whether they are a francophile or not. We have to look at what is useful to us and what isn't.

In our opinion, the act should require that someone be designated as a champion, to ensure that the directives, such as those for the Treasury Board, are respected. Furthermore, this should not be a directive or regulation, but a law.

We are asking that the issue of disposing of federal sites be enshrined in the act. That is what we are proposing. In fact, we wrote the text for you.

• (1120)

Mr. Joël Godin: Thank you, Mr. Chartrand.

We will do our research, and we understand your request

As you know, my time is very limited. So I'd like to ask you another question straight away.

When you say leader or champion, do you mean the Treasury Board?

For our part, we have heard from several organizations. They all told us that this is imperative for the effectiveness of Bill C-13, which aims to curb the decline of French and to protect and promote it. A ship can have only one captain, and we suggest that he or she be a member of the Treasury Board.

Is that a solution?

In your opinion, is that an essential condition?

Mr. Denis Chartrand: I would say so, yes.

Mr. Joël Godin: Mr. Chartrand, you also mentioned that a report was signed by various members of the committee, including Mr. Samson, Mr. Généreux and Ms. Fortier.

Ms. Fortier was not president of the Treasury Board at the time, but she is now.

Have you had any discussions with her? Has the President of the Treasury Board had any discussions with the Ontario Public School Boards' Association about improving the bill?

Mr. Denis Chartrand: She has not had any discussions with the association. However, the school board on which I sit wrote to Mr. Duclos, the former president of the Treasury Board. It was Ms. Fortier, the current president, who wrote back to us saying that the current directive allows communities to grow, which I do not agree with.

Mr. Joël Godin: You are saying that the President of the Treasury Board responded to your request by saying that the contents of the act fully address your concerns.

Mr. Denis Chartrand: She told us that this is the current process.

Mr. Joël Godin: Is her interpretation correct?

Your association works on the ground every day to defend French in Ontario and throughout Canada. In your opinion, are the statements made by the President of the Treasury Board accurate?

Mr. Denis Chartrand: No, we need a champion and we need it set out in the act. We don't need regulations that someone can change, especially not public servants.

Mr. Joël Godin: That leads me to another question.

Mr. Chartrand, do you think that proceeding with a less rigid law and allowing current legislators to set regulations is the solution for protecting French in Canada?

Mr. Denis Chartrand: As I said earlier, I am an engineer. When I cross a bridge, I would rather it be designed well, not quickly.

If we are going to modernize the Official Languages Act, we need to do it right.

Mr. Joël Godin: Mr. Chartrand, I'm delighted to hear you say that. Indeed, this is what we are trying to make the current government understand. Unfortunately, they are not listening or open to it.

I agree with you wholeheartedly: This law will enable French to overcome the resistance it is currently experiencing. If the act is not strong enough, there will be no French in Canada in 50 years. French is in decline right now.

I predict that the census in 10 years will confirm what we have recently learned, that the use of French is declining. It is sad to say, but I agree with the comments you made.

Are you familiar with the 18 recommendations made by the Commissioner of Official Languages?

Mr. Denis Chartrand: I have heard about them, but I do not know all the details.

Mr. Joël Godin: Okay.

I'd like to ask you another question about the idea of a central agency.

Is a central agency essential—and I want to reiterate that word—to ensuring that Bill C-13 is effective? Is the Treasury Board the only option for a captain to steer the ship?

The Chair: You have 25 seconds left.

Mr. Denis Chartrand: If we want to create a strong law that defends the francophone community, then the answer is yes.

Mr. Joël Godin: Thank you, Mr. Chartrand.

I have a quick question for the president of Université de Saint-Boniface.

Would language provisions allow the Université de Saint-Boniface and the other regions to be more effective? Are language provisions the answer?

• (1125)

The Chair: That's an excellent question, Mr. Godin. The witness can answer it in a future round, because your time is up.

The next questions will be asked by Mr. Serré, the committee's parliamentary secretary.

Mr. Marc Serré (Nickel Belt, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I want to thank the witnesses for being here.

I was once a school trustee in Ontario. Mr. Chartrand and Ms. Girard, I thank you very much for the very important work you do to promote the francophone community in Ontario. We will carefully study the recommendations and proposed amendments that you have made. Thank you very much.

Ms. Bouffard, I met you at the ACUFC last week. I thank you for all the work you are doing on the post-secondary summit conference.

Our committee has held over 12 meetings and welcomed 54 witnesses; 21 briefs were tabled. The witnesses were clear that they want to see Bill C-13 passed as quickly as possible. We need to study the amendments and proceed with the clause-by-clause study of the bill so that it can be passed.

Do you agree that Bill C-13 needs to be passed as quickly as possible?

Ms. Sophie Bouffard: I am not a lawyer or a politician, but I can say that the bill has been a topic of discussion for several years.

Although I work in post-secondary education, where excellence is always top of mind and we want to be as specific as possible, I think the desire to have a perfect law is a bit utopian.

I myself have seen that some progress has been made. If I understand correctly, it is possible to have a review mechanism for any bill.

Those are some brief comments.

Mr. Marc Serré: Thank you, Ms. Bouffard.

Mr. Chair, I have a motion that I would like to put before the committee, which the clerk will pass on to all members. I will read it to you:

That, in relation to the consideration of Bill C-13, An Act to amend the Official Languages Act, to enact the Use of French in Federally Regulated Private Businesses Act and to make related amendments to other Acts:

1. the Minister of Official Languages, the President of the Treasury Board and the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship be invited to appear no later than Thursday, November 17, 2022;
2. the Minister of Official Languages, the President of the Treasury Board and the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship be invited to appear no later than Thursday, November 17, 2022;
3. the clerk of the committee write immediately to each member who is not a member of a caucus represented on the committee and any independent members to inform them of the study of the Bill by the committee and to invite them to prepare and submit any proposed amendments to the Bill which they would suggest that the committee consider during the clause-by-clause study of the Bill;
4. the committee proceed with clause-by-clause consideration of the bill no later than Tuesday, November 22, 2022, at 11:00 a.m. ET; and
5. if the committee has not completed the clause-by-clause consideration of the Bill by 12:00 p.m. ET on Thursday, December 1, 2022, all remaining amendments submitted to the committee shall be deemed moved, the Chair shall put the question, forthwith and successively, without further debate, on all remaining clauses and amendments submitted to the committee, as well as each and every question necessary to dispose of clause-by-clause consideration of the Bill, as well as all questions necessary to report the Bill to the House and to order the Chair to report the Bill to the House as soon as possible.

I submit the motion to the committee for discussion. Stakeholders have made it clear that it is time for action.

Thank you.

• (1130)

Mr. Mario Beaulieu (La Pointe-de-l'Île, BQ): Mr. Chair, a point of order.

The Chair: One moment, Mr. Beaulieu. I'm taking your name down. You are the first to come forward, in chronological order. I have just had—

Mr. Joël Godin: Excuse me, Mr. Chair, but Mr. Beaulieu is not next. If we continue in order, I am next. Mr. Beaulieu has a point of order.

The Chair: Just a moment, Mr. Godin. Before we hear any points of order, I'd like to check to see if everyone has received the motion, which just arrived in my inbox.

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: No, I didn't receive it.

The Chair: It is a long motion and I have it in front of me. I just received it. Can you check, colleagues and members of the committee?

Mr. Marc Serré: Madam Clerk, did you send it to all members?

The Clerk of the Committee (Ms. Michelle Legault): Yes.

Mr. Marc Serré: Thank you.

The Chair: Mr. Beaulieu, did you receive it?

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: I would like to take the time to read it, but it's a shame we have to do that while we have witnesses.

The Chair: Right.

According to the chronological order, Mr. Godin is the first to speak, followed by Mr. Beaulieu.

Mr. Joël Godin: I'd like to make the same request as my colleague, that we take a few minutes to familiarize ourselves with the motion.

However, I think it is unfortunate and irresponsible for the governing party to have decided to intervene now, during a committee meeting where we are to question witnesses. That is my opinion.

The Chair: Mr. Godin, I'll leave you to review the motion.

We'll take a couple of minutes to read the motion and then we'll come back.

Mr. Marc Serré: Madam Clerk and Mr. Chair, is the meeting suspended?

What is the process? I'm not sure I understand what's going on.

The Chair: We will suspend the meeting for two minutes so that everyone can familiarize themselves with the motion and read it.

• (1130)

(Pause)

• (1130)

The Chair: Let's start the meeting again.

We will continue with Mr. Godin.

Mr. Godin, you may now speak to Mr. Serré's motion.

• (1135)

Mr. Joël Godin: Mr. Chair, I would like to comment on the Liberal government's attitude and approach to tabling this motion, which is basically a gag order.

We are being muzzled, yet we are working together. This has been demonstrated in the past. The Bloc Québécois, the NDP and the Conservative Party have worked together to achieve a common goal: Improve the bill to protect French in Canada, stop its decline, promote it and to encourage people to use French more and to advance this language, which is one of the two founding languages of our country.

Mr. Chair, I would like to remind the Prime Minister that Canada is a bilingual country. I would like to clarify what the word "bilingual" means in Canada. It refers to English and French. As long as I am a member of the House of Commons, I will fight to protect French. I find the situation unacceptable.

I would add the following, Mr. Chair. I am addressing you, as an Acadian, along with our Acadian, Franco-Ontarian and Quebec colleagues who are part of this government. How can you take this sort of action, not protect the French language and speed up the process of passing the bill?

How is it possible that December 1 will be the deadline for tabling amendments and, if we don't have time to review all the amendments and all the clauses, you, as the chair, will order that the amendments and other clauses not addressed be voted on without further debate?

That is unacceptable, Mr. Chair. I find this attitude shameful. We have demonstrated our intention to co-operate. In my opinion, this attitude is that of people who protect their political interests before those of bilingualism in Canada and before the protection of French in Canada.

Mr. Chair, I am disappointed in this attitude, and I hope you will listen to reason. This is a law that, I believe, is historic. If we want French to survive here in Canada, we must take the time to do our job. A witness, an engineer, said it this morning: We should be busy interviewing witnesses. Now, you have decided to put an end to this questioning and to move this motion. That witness is helping us do our job better. That witness has said that we need to take the time required. It's like building a bridge. If we hurry the work along, the bridge may fall apart. The French language may be in decline and die in Canada. I will always fight to defend French.

Furthermore, with respect to Mr. Serré's motion, I find it unacceptable to do indirectly what they did not want to do directly with the motions that were tabled in committee.

Mr. Chair, let me explain. You are playing politics by agreeing with the ministers who will testify at the end of this questioning. You are playing into their hands. Let me explain what I'm reading into this—

The Chair: Mr. Godin, I'm going to give you the floor again, but before you go any further, I want to point out that you're addressing me as if this were my motion. I understand that you are addressing the chair and that I must assume my role as chair, but you are addressing me personally. I understand what you are saying. You may continue, but I ask that you be careful.

Mr. Joël Godin: Mr. Chair, I have no choice but to direct my comments to the chair. I am following the rules and respecting the authorities.

I was going to say that what I can see is that the current government has no intention of protecting French. There are two groups within this government and, unfortunately, those who defend French are not heard.

I hope that my colleagues on the other side of the House will get back on track; otherwise, I will introduce an amendment.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Godin.

Mr. Beaulieu, you may now speak to the motion.

• (1140)

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: I, too, believe that they truly want to impose a gag order. The Official Languages Act has been operating under the same principles for 52 years. It has not been updated since 1988.

In all that time, the Liberals and the federal government have refused to listen to Quebecers. They refuse to hear what French Quebec has to say. We have seen this. When I was president of the Société Saint-Jean-Baptiste, I was invited to the Canadian Parliamentary Press Gallery—I don't remember if it was in the gallery or not. The organization was told that I was not a minority and that I had no business being there. That's what happened. I made a mo-

tion. There was to be a study on the situation of French in Quebec. It was the first time since the adoption of the Official Languages Act. That's how little people care about French in Quebec.

The Quebec government made requests and none of them, except for very broad objectives, were accepted. It is unbelievable. Now we are being told that a gag order will be imposed because this is important for francophone associations outside Quebec. We completely agree: We must defend French outside Quebec, but 90% of francophones are in Quebec. It is the only place where they are in the majority. It is the only place where we can successfully integrate newcomers and teach them French properly to ensure the future of the language. However, we are unable to do so.

The reason Quebec can't do it is because of the Official Languages Act, which imposes institutional bilingualism and funds legal challenges to Bill 101. Plus, there is funding for organizations that work to prevent French from being the common language and to increasingly impose English. We see it. The federal government defines English-speaking people based on the indicator of first official language spoken, which includes 33% of immigrants to Quebec. That is according to Statistics Canada documents. With that in mind, it is clear that, to maintain Quebec's demographic weight, 90% of new arrivals must be integrated and taught French. That is the minimum. However, we are far from reaching it.

The federal government is working towards marginalizing francophones and is doing so openly. It is working to provide services in English, not only in federal institutions, but in Quebec institutions, municipal institutions, community groups, unions and all civil society groups, in order to teach English to 33% of newcomers. That is totally unacceptable.

This is an attempt to muzzle us and to refuse to listen to Quebec's demands. The Government of Quebec has sent its demands directly and they included policy directions and proposed amendments. Next to none of it appears in Bill C-13. That is unacceptable.

I know they don't want to hear too much from Quebec's perspective. However, I'll quickly share some points. The Quebec government's demands are clear. According to Quebec, the current Official Languages Act does not recognize or take into account Quebec's unique linguistic situation. Quebec believes that the Official Languages Act should recognize that, of the two official languages, French is the only one that is a minority language in all of Canada.

I was surprised by the Speech from the Throne. As usual, I expected to hear that they would defend French outside Quebec and English in Quebec. However, it also mentioned that there are eight million francophones in a sea of 360 million anglophones. It was therefore quietly admitted that Quebec is part of this minority. Of course, we are a minority in Canada. We are a continental minority. We can't even ensure that French is the common language without the federal government intervening to prevent us from doing so.

• (1145)

We must recognize that French is the only minority language. Even the UN has recognized that point in a decision. I have mentioned this before, but it seems that it has not been said often enough: The UN does not recognize Quebec anglophones as a minority because they are part of the Canadian majority.

Bill 101 didn't work for anglophones, so they went to the English-speaking majority, which defeated Bill 101 with the Constitution Act, 1982. This law was intended to do indirectly what the federal government was not allowed to do directly, because language is supposed to be a provincial jurisdiction.

The Official Languages Act is often presented as the result of the Laurendeau-Dunton Commission, when that was not at all what was envisaged. André Laurendeau did not ask for this. He said he was tired of seeing francophones constantly asking for decent funding and receiving only crumbs.

Bilingual stamps were available prior to the Official Languages Act. Mandatory simultaneous translation came very late. In the federal government, everything was done in English. It was the same, for the most part, in Quebec. The British North America Act, the Constitution of 1867, supposedly imposed bilingualism at the federal level—

Mr. Francis Drouin (Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, Lib.): I have a point of order, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Go ahead, Mr. Drouin.

Mr. Francis Drouin: I appreciate the history lesson my colleague is giving us, but we are dealing with the administration of the bill, not the content. Mr. Beaulieu's comments are in no way connected to the content of the motion. I do not want to take away his right to speak, he has the right to speak, but his comments must be related to what we are discussing at this time.

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: I see this as very relevant to the motion. Gagging Quebec once again—

The Chair: Mr. Drouin, I was going to make that observation, but, however tenuous, there is still a link with what Mr. Beaulieu is telling us.

Mr. Beaulieu, I could see the connection you were making, but please try to focus as much as possible on the subject of the motion.

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: The main point I want to make is that the Official Languages Act completely ignores French Quebec. This committee was created by that act and we want to see its work continue. French in Quebec, as well as outside of Quebec, cannot continue to decline.

Before the Official Languages Act, 6% of francophones lived outside Quebec. Today, outside Quebec, just over 3% of people have French as their mother tongue and 2.1% have French as their home language.

The Chair: Mr. Beaulieu, I apologize for interrupting—

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: Now, they're telling us that they won't listen to Quebec's requests because they want to rush to help francophones outside of Quebec, but that's not working.

I'd like to quickly come back to that point. It is very important to consider the Quebec government's demands. It is the only francophone state in America. All the federal government has managed to do is say that anglophones are the minority in Quebec and that it will support them with a series of official language programs in health and education, among other things.

When the Official Languages Act was established in the 1960s, anglophones were the dominant class and elite in Canada, even in Quebec. Their institutions were in the majority and overfunded.

With the Quiet Revolution of the 1960s, the Quebec government began to wake up. As a result, the federal government decided to help francophone and Acadian communities. For a long time and over several generations, these communities had been prohibited from teaching French. Statistics Canada figures showed that 70% of francophones outside Quebec had been assimilated. A movement originating in English Canada had actually risen up in opposition to the collecting of this data.

Now we decide to help—

The Chair: I'm sorry to interrupt you, Mr. Beaulieu. You may continue to speak, but your comments must be on the motion.

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: I find this motion unacceptable because it aims to prevent debate. Bill C-13 is unacceptable for Quebec. If this gag order is passed, there is no doubt that we will continue our work and do everything we can, because their action will effectively demonstrate that the only solution for the future of French in Quebec is independence.

I think that I am one of the few people here to want that, but this will help us do it. With respect to the Official Languages Act, the Government of Quebec is asking for a differentiated approach that will introduce an asymmetry of principles in favour of the French language, because anglophones in Quebec, I said it, cannot be considered the equivalent of francophone communities outside Quebec. From the outset, francophone communities outside Quebec have needed far more support.

According to a study conducted by the Commission nationale des parents francophones titled "Où sont passés les milliards \$?", based on data collected from 1970 to 1996, 47% of the money was invested in English-language educational institutions in Quebec even though they were already overfunded. I believe that less than 30% of the money was invested in French-language schools outside Quebec. According to this study, assimilation is continuing, it is progressing at a rapid pace and yet nothing is happening. I think that this must be condemned.

I want to come back to the motion before us. Equating anglophones in Quebec with francophone minorities outside Quebec divides francophones in Canada by putting us in opposition. The rights that are granted to francophones outside Quebec are granted to anglophones in Quebec, who are already overfunded

I want to talk specifically about the proposed amendment. You said that the Minister of Official Languages, the President of the Treasury Board and the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship have been invited to appear no later than Thursday, November 17. Will all of them appear? What will happen to the other witnesses? Several other witnesses were supposed to come explain what I am currently talking about. They can't come next week, since it's a break week. That brings us to November 17.

Clearly, they don't want to listen to us. They don't want to hear from the people of Quebec. Basically, the statement in the Speech from the Throne and everything the Liberals have said about defending French in Quebec is smoke and mirrors. There is nothing in the bill in this regard. It continues to talk about official language anglophone and francophone minorities.

With respect to Part VII of the Official Languages Act and positive measures, the federal government will continue to fund all anglophone organizations that are actively working to teach immigrants English. If these organizations were working to ensure that anglophones had services in English, everyone would agree, but what they want is to be able to anglicize about one-third of immigrants, which would increase the demographic weight of anglophones. This phenomenon was already well under way before the Official Languages Act and Bill 101. The latter managed to redress the situation somewhat, but it was quickly weakened by the federal government, especially after the adoption of the Constitution Act of 1982. This is deplorable. In the Constitution Act of 1982, there were very useful principles for francophone and Acadian communities and—

• (1150)

Mr. Marc Serré: Mr. Chair, a point of order.

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: I want to come back to that second point.

I have the floor.

The Chair: Please wait a moment, Mr. Beaulieu.

Someone has raised a point of order, and we need to hear it.

I think it was Mr. Serré.

We are listening, Mr. Serré.

Mr. Marc Serré: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Beaulieu will likely continue to speak and give a history lesson, as mentioned earlier.

Mr. Chair, I see that the first hour is coming to a close. Should we take leave of the witnesses and ask them to submit a brief to the committee?

By the way, Mr. Beaulieu, the Government of Quebec declined to come testify before the committee. I just wanted to clarify that.

Thank you.

• (1155)

Mr. Bernard Généreux (Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, CPC): Point of order.

The Chair: Does this have to do with Mr. Serré's point about the witnesses?

Mr. Bernard Généreux: Absolutely.

The Chair: Go ahead.

Mr. Bernard Généreux: I disagree with Mr. Serré. Witnesses need to see precisely what is happening. I absolutely do not want them to miss this ridiculous smoke show we are witnessing. I need to address them about the motion that we are discussing right now. Mr. Chartrand mentioned my name in his testimony, so I absolutely must speak to him before he leaves.

The Chair: We are debating a motion and we still have Mr. Vis, Mr. Généreux and Mr. Godin who wish to speak.

Mr. Serré, you did not make a motion, rather you made a suggestion. Consequently, there will be no debate on that. I'm sorry. I want to do my job as chair correctly, so—

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: I wasn't done speaking, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: I have not forgotten you, Mr. Beaulieu. I am closing the parenthesis that was opened by Mr. Serré. It was not a motion. For the benefit of the witnesses and all those listening, I would like to point out that there will be no debate on this.

We will not be able to release our witnesses before the hour. In the meantime, they are free to do whatever they want, of course, but there are about five minutes left, so we ask them to stay, if possible. Then there will be a second panel of witnesses.

Before you take the floor, Mr. Beaulieu, for those who are wondering if their names were noted, I simply want to say that I have taken down their names and I will call them in chronological order. There is Mr. Vis, Mr. Généreux and Mr. Godin.

With that, I'll close the parenthesis and give the floor back to Mr. Beaulieu on the motion.

Mr. Joël Godin: I have a point of order, Mr. Chair.

I would like clarification on the order, as there seems to be some confusion.

The names you listed were Mr. Vis, Mr. Généreux and myself, correct?

The Chair: As I mentioned in my introduction when I was addressing the committee members and the witnesses, the clerk and I will note, in chronological order, the names of those who indicate their intention to speak. In chronological order, after Mr. Beaulieu, we have Mr. Vis, Mr. Généreux and Mr. Godin.

Mr. Joël Godin: Actually, Mr. Chair, I just want you to verify that information with the clerk.

Madam Clerk, is that what you noted as the chronological order regarding speaking rights? Is that Mr. Vis, Mr. Généreux and Mr. Godin?

The Clerk: I just clarified that with Mr. Vis and Mr. Généreux.

I confirm that it is Mr. Généreux, Mr. Vis, Mr. Godin and Mr. Dalton.

Mr. Joël Godin: That's why chronological order is important, Mr. Chair. Thank you very much.

The Chair: Okay, so it's Mr. Généreux, Mr. Vis, Mr. Godin and Mr. Dalton.

I thank you for that correction, Madam Clerk. Let's close the parenthesis.

Mr. Beaulieu, go ahead.

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: Thank you.

Item 2 of the motion states that “amendments to Bill C-13 be submitted to the clerk in both official languages no later than 5:00 p.m. ET on Thursday, November 17”. November 17 is almost immediately after the break week. We made requests and proposals to increase the number of meetings. It's not a question of not wanting to move forward and do the work. What we are saying is that this is the first time in 52 years that there has been an opportunity to change this law.

André Laurendeau, who made this demand in an editorial in *Le Devoir*, was a federalist. However, he considered Quebec to be the home of the Canadian francophone community and, by virtue of that, it should have special rights and be considered a nation. He presented this as the federal government's last chance to make an effort in this direction. However, that is not at all what happened. It should be noted that Mr. Laurendeau died of cancer in the meantime. It was the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism that was supposed to study the issue from the viewpoint of Canada's two founding peoples—in saying that, we are not trying to exclude the first nations, quite the contrary. That was the philosophy behind the commission's mandate.

Unfortunately, there were opponents, including Dr. Frank Scott of McGill University. The prime minister at the time, Lester B. Pearson, seemed to be open to the question of French in Quebec. Then Pierre Elliott Trudeau became prime minister. He was adamant about not giving Quebec any new powers. He even said that Quebecers spoke lousy French, bad French, and that until they could teach better French—

• (1200)

The Chair: Mr. Beaulieu, I must interrupt you and ask that you return to the motion.

Beforehand, I must advise the members that the first hour of the meeting is already over and that the presence of witnesses is no longer mandatory. However, they can stay with us if they wish, since the meeting is public. I thank them for their presence.

Also, I would like to advise the witnesses that they can forward any additional information to the clerk of the committee.

Having said that, Mr. Beaulieu, I would ask you to focus on the subject of the motion. Next time, I'll just move on to the next speaker.

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: Mr. Chair, I have the right to speak.

During the last session, you filibustered through four meetings because you didn't want us to talk about the scandal with the WE movement. We talked about all sorts of things at those meetings.

I expect my right to speak to be respected. As a parliamentarian, I have the right to speak.

The Chair: Mr. Beaulieu, the meetings have always been managed in an impartial manner, in my opinion.

All I'm saying is that you have the floor as long as you focus on the motion. If you get off topic, it is my duty as chair to recognize the next speaker. You have the text of the motion. According to the rules, you have the right to speak, but you must speak to the motion.

I'll give you the floor, but if you get off track or if what you're saying is redundant, I'll turn it over to Mr. Généreux or—

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: Of course.

I think there's a connection, because Mr. Serré's motion aims to curtail the debate. It is a sort of closure motion. That's what has been happening with Quebec for 52 years. They muzzle Quebec; they do not want to listen. The province isn't invited to the Standing Committee on Official Languages.

I have said it over and over again at previous meetings: This summer, there was a consultation that included virtually no Quebec French-language advocacy groups. A group from the Eastern Townships contacted my office. I contacted the minister's office and they finally agreed to include them.

The consultation took place in the Eastern Townships and the representatives of this group met with about 60 people. No one spoke French until this group spoke. The group felt like a bull in a china shop during that meeting.

I want to remind the witnesses that this motion is not a Bloc Québécois proposal. It is not the Bloc Québécois that wants to prevent you from speaking. On the contrary, we think that what you have to say is very important.

I would like to come back to the motion.

We are being told that amendments to Bill C-13 must be submitted by Thursday, November 17, 2022, and will be distributed to us by noon on Friday, November 18, 2022.

No more witnesses will appear. One of the things I find deplorable about the idea of respecting witnesses is that witnesses have already been excluded. They've already received an e-mail saying that they will not be appearing before our committee. That was done before we even got to the motion.

We need to look at how the calculations were done in terms of the percentage of witnesses heard. According to one of the calculations, the Bloc invited 14% of the witnesses; however, one witness was attributed to us when they were not on our list. I think it is very important that all witnesses who defend French across Canada be heard.

I can't believe that they want to bring this proposal back to the table. At our last in-camera meeting, we agreed to continue hearing witnesses until December 6. We have been doubling down on trying to get more meetings.

What I understand from some members of the committee is that, in the end, they don't want to hear witnesses. They want to get the job done very quickly. Their mind is made up.

I don't want to speak for the francophone and Acadian communities, but personally, I think this situation is unacceptable. We simply must support these communities and we want to stop the assimilation movement. To do so, we must take significant measures.

The motion states the following:

3. the clerk of the committee write immediately to each member who is not a member of a caucus represented on the committee and any independent members to inform them of the study of the Bill by the committee and to invite them to prepare and submit any proposed amendments to the Bill which they would suggest that the committee consider during the clause-by-clause study of the Bill;

However, this clause-by-clause study is extremely limited. The motion states, "the committee proceed with clause-by-clause consideration of the bill no later than Tuesday, November 22, 2022, at 11:00 a.m. ET", and the minister will testify on November 17.

When November 22 arrives, there will be major amendments proposed in the bill. That will be problematic.

What is unfortunate for people from the francophone and Acadian communities is that, for once, with a minority government, we had a chance to really change things. There was a real desire to reverse the trend and make major changes to the Official Languages Act. That's what I saw with all the opposition parties. It seems that the NDP, perhaps because of the agreement it has with the government, has also decided to shut down debate by saying that Quebec is not important.

I don't think we should accept this, Mr. Chair. If they thought they were going to muzzle us, gag us in order to move on, that will not be the case at all, trust me. We will look at the situation.

At point 5 of the motion, it says: "all remaining amendments submitted to the committee shall be deemed moved". This means that when we propose amendments, other members will have an opportunity to keep speaking and wasting the committee's time. In the end, the amendments will not be adopted.

• (1205)

Ultimately, the amendments will not be passed.

There is one important amendment. It would not change everything, but it would be a small step in the right direction. It is one of the amendments that the Quebec government has put forward and that has received the support of all of Quebec's former premiers who are still alive, including the Liberal premiers, as well as of all Quebec's major cities and all the major labour organizations. I am talking about the amendment on the application of Bill 101 to federal institutions.

Until now, it was said that the federal government did not want to encroach on provincial jurisdictions. Until now, the government did not touch companies under federal jurisdiction in Quebec. Indeed, there was nothing in the Official Languages Act that targeted those businesses.

Quebec has decided to enforce Bill 101. Two or three years ago, in a debate here, I was told by a Liberal member that there had nev-

er been any complaints in French Quebec about the Official Languages Act. Yet people often told me that they could not work in French at all in Quebec. Even truck drivers receive their safety instructions in English, which puts citizens' lives at risk. This is because Bill 101 does not apply to these companies. It is well known that Bill 101 has been greatly weakened in all its areas of application by all the legal challenges funded by the federal government.

That is sort of like what is happening with this motion. I think the federal government has been very hypocritical, if I can use that word. They say they're going to let citizens launch legal actions, but they give them funding to do so. Canada's Court Challenges Program, conveniently, was set up in 1977. Bill 101 was passed in 1977.

In its documents, Alliance Québec says it was strongly urged by the federal government to unite with other organizations. Two or three organizations were merged and were largely funded by the federal government. The Court Challenges Program, unfortunately, is a covert program. It is nearly impossible to find any information about it. It is difficult to know how much money has been spent in Quebec under this program. This shows that we need to continue to hear from witnesses to explain to us where this program stands.

I respect the comments that the FCFA representatives made to the effect that this information should not be disclosed. Their point was that if the provincial governments in English Canada know that a lawsuit in a particular area is funded by the program, they will be able to prepare, and it would be better not to tell us.

A committee once looked at the Court Challenges Program, and I couldn't believe it. Its members were not necessarily independents. Even Mr. Anthony Housefather, who was once president of Alliance Québec, was part of it.

Funding anglophone lobby groups has been a powerful lever for the federal Liberals, and for the provincial Liberals as well. They are funding the anglophone community and, in part, allophones and newcomers who might be tempted to learn English rather than French. They are openly working against French as a common language in Quebec, yet it is rarely mentioned.

Before I started here, I was told that the committee worked very well and that everything was done unanimously. That was before the Bloc Québécois came in. I don't want to presume anything, but I think that at that time, nobody was defending Quebec's interests exclusively, without compromise. In my opinion, Quebec's interests are not fundamentally contradictory to those of English Canada, and certainly not to those of the francophone and Acadian communities.

• (1210)

Moreover, Quebec's interests are not fundamentally contradictory to those of English Canada. Personally, I grew up in an anglophone environment and I have nothing against anglophones.

This is no reason for Quebeckers to allow themselves to be assimilated in this way.

This certainly hurts francophones outside Quebec, because it sometimes forces the Quebec government to challenge measures. For example, Quebec doesn't want to support the language provisions that we're talking about, because it will be even less likely that Quebec will have a say in the support that the federal government offers to anglophone lobby groups and all anglophone institutions.

We need only think of the health care system in Quebec, an issue that Alliance Québec has worked hard on. When the Bourassa government came back to power, it amended Quebec's health and social services act by modelling it on the Official Languages Act. Then there was Bill 178, which is one of the reasons Alliance Québec ended up shutting down its operations, since it was no longer funded by the federal government.

On the other hand, the federal government was organized. It had begun, in parallel, to fund the Quebec Community Groups Network and to bring organizations together around this pressure group. As we can see, this continues today and affects English-language access programs.

No one is against the idea of anglophones having access to health services in their language. In fact, in Quebec, just about all anglophones have access to health services in English. This phenomenon is so widespread that more and more allophones and francophones must work in English, as institutional bilingualism is required in health care institutions.

However, studies show that about 50% of francophones outside Quebec do not have access to health services in French.

Coming back to the motion.

In my view, the fifth part of the motion is the most serious. According to that element, if the committee has not completed its clause-by-clause consideration of the bill by Thursday, December 1, all other amendments before the committee are deemed to be proposed. This will disrupt all debate. December 1 will come quickly. If there is no further debate, the amendments filed will not be adopted. The motion is that the bill be neither debated—or, very little—nor amended.

As I said, this bill was an historic and golden opportunity for the francophone and Acadian communities. Since the government is in a minority situation and the opposition parties are in favour of it and really want to change things, we could have gone after major gains for the francophone and Acadian communities. We could have reversed the trend.

Mr. Chartrand's point of view was very interesting and important. He demonstrated that there are changes to be made in this regard.

If we want Treasury Board to be the central agency, this is a great opportunity to do so. However, that is not what the Liberals want. They want the Department of Canadian Heritage to remain the central agency. We have been talking about this for six years, but the problem has not been resolved.

• (1215)

To some extent, even if Treasury Board ended up being the central agency, there is no political will.

The Governor General does not speak French. The lieutenant governor of New Brunswick does not speak French. This is being challenged in the courts, and the Liberal government is defending them. There are other people who agree and have responded, including the Chair. Nevertheless, all of these points demonstrate that this is just smoke and mirrors.

I, for one, know that francophones outside Quebec are fighters. They are fierce people. I have met many of them. I see many of them. They are fighting a heroic battle to try and live in French. They can't do it, but they can at least try to speak French every day. When we ask many of the witnesses who come here if they are able to get services in French in Vancouver or anywhere else, they tell us it is not possible.

In British Columbia, for example, there are very few places left where francophones are the majority. There are some places, however, where there is still some critical mass. We went and dug into the last census and it's shrinking like crazy. There are none.

Mr. Lepage came to speak to us. He pointed out something very important. I don't know if it was in a personal communication or here, but he said we were bringing in immigrants, which is fine. However, he gave the example of an African newcomer who sent his children to French school when he came here because he took them in and did the work to enrol them. However, a year later, the father transferred his children to English school because he was told that British Columbia doesn't operate in French. People don't want to carry the weight of being a minority.

Unfortunately, the anglophone-majority provinces don't seem to regret making laws that banned French schools and creating voluntary assimilation of francophones and Métis. What was done to Louis Riel and the Métis in Manitoba was very serious. In Acadia, I understand those who said they were against the oath to the Queen. The Acadians were deported because they did not want to swear an oath to the Crown of England. They never received an apology either. That is unacceptable.

Were the Quebec government's demands heard? No. I was told earlier that ministers, by tradition, don't attend the committee's meetings. There is a new minister now. We will try to encourage him to participate.

An unusual step was taken. Proposed amendments were sent on behalf of the Government of Quebec here to the committee. I have not heard anything about it. Hardly anyone has talked about it. We have talked about it.

What are these requests? I'd be very curious to know if anyone around the table knows. I don't think anyone is aware of the Quebec government's requests. It's as if no one cares. Basically, the Quebec government's demands are very reasonable. The Quebec government is overfunding anglophone institutions. They are not only overfunded by the federal government. They are also overfunded by the Quebec government. From the outset there has been ongoing misinformation because Bill 101 never intended to prevent anglophones from having their institutions.

In the Bill 101 white paper, I think more than 75% of immigrants were assimilating into English at that point, marginalizing us. When there was the crisis in St. Leonard, young francophone schoolchildren saw their schools close, because the Quebec government was obliged to finance anglophone schools to anyone who wanted them. In English Canada, francophones were not allowed to be taught French; meanwhile, in Quebec, English schools were overfunded so that all newcomers could attend them.

• (1220)

Three school commissioners, very dedicated people but not revolutionaries, looked at what was being done elsewhere. This is what one of them told me—incidentally, he was a very religious man. In the United States, could there be French schools? In Italy, could there be French or English schools? As far as private schools were concerned, there could be, but not so for public schools.

In Quebec, these school trustees then had a referendum, a plebiscite, as they used to say in those days. They were elected on the basis of a mandate requiring the acceptance of newcomers in French schools. There was an outcry from the anglophone side.

The Chair: Mr. Beaulieu, please wait a moment.

As chair, I am more permissive than restrictive when it comes to arguments about a motion. However, I ask that you focus on the motion; otherwise, I will recognize others who wish to speak.

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: I will focus on the motion, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Godin has asked to speak. I think he wants to propose an amendment. If he speaks, can I respond to his amendment afterwards?

The Chair: Under our rules, anyone can respond to any amendment or motion whatsoever.

I don't want to stop you, Mr. Beaulieu, but I have a duty as the chair. There are two instances where I can stop someone from speaking. I can do so if the person is repeating themselves or not focusing on the point of debate.

In your case, I am looking for a connection, however tenuous, but I can't find one. As I told you, I am permissive. According to our rules and case law in interpreting what can be said around the table, one must be more permissive than restrictive. That's what I'm doing, but now you're clearly going off topic.

• (1225)

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: I have made a connection. I have always stayed within the realm of the Official Languages Act. The connection I made is this. I don't think we've heard much in this committee about all these factors. I don't think people are aware of those factors.

Also, I have often heard the Liberal government say that they are consulting. However, I'm not sure that many Quebecers know that almost all of the money invested in official languages in Quebec goes to fund anglophone lobby groups and institutions. They don't know that the only part that goes to the French component goes to francophone institutions to teach English. In fact, in Quebec, funding is provided to teach English to health professionals and provincial civil servants. We're going to see if people know that or not, because we're going to try to get that information out to everyone.

The Official Languages Act has only one purpose in Quebec, and that is to make francophones a minority in the long run. I'm sorry to say this, but when you look at what's going on, particularly at Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, you see that Lord Durham's plan is being implemented very effectively by the federal government.

I will turn the floor over to my colleague and I will take it back to respond to his remarks.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Beaulieu.

The new speaking order I just received is as follows: Mr. Généreux, Mr. Vis, Mr. Dalton and Mr. Godin.

Is that correct, Madam Clerk?

You're giving me the nod.

Mr. Généreux.

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: Mr. Chair, did you hear me?

The Chair: Yes.

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

The Chair: Please wait a moment, Mr. Généreux.

Mr. Beaulieu, I did not understand your last statement.

You have the floor.

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: I would like to speak once my colleague has finished.

The Chair: I am addressing everyone who is listening. When someone proposes an amendment, we hear arguments about it afterwards. There is a debate on this amendment—

Mr. Joël Godin: Mr. Chair, I just want to clarify something. Unfortunately, you're further away and can't see what's going on in the room. Mr. Beaulieu has asked for the floor after everyone you have named has finished exercising theirs.

The order of speaking is as follows: Mr. Généreux, Mr. Vis, Mr. Dalton, Mr. Godin and Mr. Beaulieu.

The Chair: That's what I noted.

Mr. Généreux, you have the floor.

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

First of all, I would like to offer my sincere apologies, Mr. Chartrand. Indeed, as you said, I put my name on a report that called for the federal government to give more autonomy to school boards to acquire federal buildings. I am sorry that you are not yet in a position to do that. I don't want to apologize for the Liberals, but I think they should do it too, especially since the regulations have been changed. It is a very real example of what can be done by regulation rather than by legislation.

The thing that shocks me the most is the fact that one of the signatories to the document you referred to is now the President of the Treasury Board. What hypocrisy. She was all worked up here in committee, saying that francophones across Canada should have more rights and more opportunities to develop their school system. I am also thinking of Mr. Samson. Mr. Samson is a strong advocate for the school system and was the head of a school board, but he accepts that this kind of thing is happening today within an existing law. We are debating a bill to amend that law to prevent this kind of thing from happening again. That is the last straw. Seriously, what's going on is not funny.

Mr. Beaulieu spoke at length about Quebec's issues, and he is absolutely right. We still haven't heard anything about the Quebec amendments. The bill we are considering today is constitutional in scope. Mr. Godin is right that we have been working together. I have been on this committee since 2009, except for 2011 to 2015. Every year we have produced reports, and there has almost never been any dissent among the members of the committee, from one side or the other. We have worked quite well. However, despite the work we did and the progress we made, unfortunately, we all failed. The Liberal government is coming in and changing the rules of the game, through regulation, to prevent you from having access to federal buildings. That is beyond me. It's inconceivable. Anyway, again, I apologize for that. I find it appalling.

The representatives of the Fédération des communautés francophones et acadienne du Canada, FCFA, have come here, as they have for several years. Now, almost all the witnesses are pushing us to get this bill passed quickly. The problem is that when the legislation is passed, regulations will govern how things change. That's my pet peeve, but it's written in the sky. It applies to any government, by the way. I'm not saying we're virtuous and the Liberals aren't, but Ms. President of the Treasury Board is changing the rules of the game today, when it's something she's been asking for for many years. When we form government—

Everyone agrees that there should be a champion within the government, in Treasury Board, but I am sure the Liberals are going to want to push this through without that in there and without an amendment to it. We have a responsibility.

I don't see you, Ms. Ashton, but you still haven't raised your hand to speak or to move amendments to the motion—

• (1230)

The Chair: Mr. Généreux, I'm going to interrupt you right away.

Just a reminder that you must only address the chair.

Mr. Bernard Généreux: Mr. Chair, I do not see Ms. Ashton of the NDP raising her hand. She is not even asking to speak or to propose amendments to this motion. Am I forced to conclude that she will inevitably agree to this motion, which is a gag order? The government is trying to muzzle us with respect to this legislation, which, I repeat, is constitutional and extremely important for the entire Canadian francophone community outside Quebec and in Quebec.

What will happen to the Quebec amendments? Who will come to testify? You criticized Mr. Beaulieu for going astray, Mr. Chair, but I will not go astray. You are proposing that we hear from three ministers during a single meeting. However, we are not here next week and when we come back it will already be the week of November 14.

You are proposing that the committee receive these three ministers during the same meeting. My colleague across the table, Mr. Samson, can laugh because he knows full well that we may only have time to ask one question per party of each of the witnesses. That's completely ridiculous. We want to see these witnesses and we have been waiting for them since June. They were on the witness list from the beginning.

This motion is totally unacceptable. I will let my colleague Mr. Godin take over to propose amendments because it is obvious that we will never vote for this motion. I hope Ms. Ashton will follow us, Mr. Chair, because I cannot conceive that the NDP, which is an opposition party, would support such a motion in such a hypocritical way.

The Chair: Mr. Généreux, I would ask you to please retract your last sentence.

Mr. Bernard Généreux: Rather than retract my last sentence, I'll include myself in it and say that we are all hypocrites.

French is in decline in Canada, Mr. Chair—

The Chair: Mr. Généreux, your debate is over. I am asking you to please retract your last sentence, which was directed at one of the members of the committee.

Mr. Bernard Généreux: I wasn't done explaining my position, but I will retract my last two sentences.

I'm thinking about the way the government has acted. I remember when the Liberals were in opposition, back in 2009 and 2011. They would rant and rave, calling the Conservatives this and that, saying that we were out of our minds and our behaviour was appalling. Yet now they're behaving exactly as we were at the time, if not worse.

This is an act we're overhauling, not regulations. This isn't just about giving school boards an opportunity to acquire buildings. It's about much more than that. This is a constitutional act of Canada we're talking about.

Incidentally, I would also like to know if the Minister of Canadian Heritage has agreed to our request. The committee invited him too, but he hasn't responded yet, as far as I know. I think it's important for him to be there, because the Minister of Canadian Heritage is currently still responsible for implementing regulations that change randomly from one year to the next, depending on who's in power. We want this responsibility to be given to another department in future.

I think certain things need to be written into the act, and the best example I can think of is school boards outside Quebec, which should be allowed to acquire buildings. All they're asking for is the right of first refusal. To me, that seems like a perfectly standard, simple and feasible request. They're not asking to buy all federal buildings.

Mr. Chair, I think I'll stop there, because I can feel myself getting worked up. I'll let my colleagues take it from here.

Thank you.

• (1235)

The Chair: I get it, it's a passionate debate.

Mr. Vis, the floor is yours.

[English]

Mr. Brad Vis (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'm very happy to have this opportunity to speak to this motion today.

I joined this committee largely because I am one of the few western Canadians who have a general knowledge, a good working knowledge, of the French language, and I'm also committed, as most British Columbians are, to a country where children are able to receive an education in one of the two official languages of their choice. I saw this bill as an opportunity to enshrine the constitutional right of my children and the children of many other parents in Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon to learn in French.

As a parent, when I think about education, I think about three things: English, French and mathematics. What I see in this bill here is an opportunity to get something right on the French side, not only for language minorities in British Columbia but for all parents in British Columbia who want to give their kids the opportunity to speak in both official languages, because their sense of Canadian identity is enshrined with that principle. We are not living up to a standard in this country that gives children that opportunity.

With the motion here before us today, I just frankly don't understand why the government members put this forward. We've been working so well together in good faith. It's a very collegial, professional environment. All they had to do was come to us before and work out some proper dates, but instead they took a hammer-and-fist approach that catches us off guard and leads to our wasting time.

We all want to see—everyone around this table wants to see—the French language augmented outside of Quebec and protected in Quebec. Our party, the Conservative Party, has been very clear about that, and I think it's the same for everyone around this table,

but if the government members think they can slam something down our throats...

[Translation]

It's just a motion, but I think the word “gag order” is appropriate in this case.

[English]

They think we're just going to sit here and take it. I'm sorry, but we're not. We have to work together. I don't see this as a partisan committee, but that's what it's turned into today, and that's unfortunate.

[Translation]

For example, point one of the motion talks about inviting the Minister of Official Languages, the President of the Treasury Board and the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, and maybe even the Minister of Canadian Heritage.

[English]

To have three ministers or two ministers appear in one meeting isn't quite sufficient. I know, as it was referenced today, that the Treasury Board Secretariat was a member of this committee before and had put forward reports in this committee talking about the need to preserve the French language.

In my province of British Columbia, this is especially important, because we don't know where any federal funds are going with respect to promoting the French language or even supporting the school districts in British Columbia to offer a reasonable access to French.

For those of you who don't understand, in British Columbia right now, if you want to have a place in a French immersion school, you have to go in a lottery. It's not just offered; you have to be chosen by a lottery system. That is not a good way of promoting the French language or even offering it. Then, if you're lucky enough to get a spot in a French language school, you're going to have to deal with the crapshoot that's going on in my school district right now about whether you're even going to get a French teacher.

My son is in a French immersion program at Centennial Park Elementary, and they haven't had a full-time school teacher since September, because they can't find anyone who speaks French who will commit to his classroom. The way I see it, the Ministry of Education has let down my child and all the other children he goes to school with. He's at a critical year in grade one, both for getting a general comprehension of the language and in his natural development to learn to read and write, not only in one official language but in two.

• (1240)

This law has real consequences for kids. We talk a lot about federal workplaces in this law. We talk a lot about bilingualism in federal places of work in the private sector. Well, guess what? We're never going to have a private sector worker in British Columbia who is regulated through a federal workplace and is able to meet the language requirements if we're not addressing what's happening in the school systems right now with my son and the other kids he goes to school with.

On point one of the motion, we need more than one meeting with multiple ministers to deal effectively with some really key amendments that have come forward related to linguistic clauses for French education and possible amendments on that front. That's my first point.

Second, we need to look very carefully at the clauses in this motion, which are essentially time allocation clauses. I don't believe in amendments that are going to put such a time frame on this.

It's already been repeated that since June there have been demands to have some of the ministers, members of the government, come before this committee. Obviously the House leader is working behind the scenes with the parliamentary secretary trying to get them here, but then again, to put it into a motion and bring that before committee is not the way to do this.

We all know that we want to get this bill to debate stage again at third reading and into the Senate, but you have to work with us. You have to work with the Conservatives, government, if you want to see that happen.

I could go on.

Point four of the motion, that “the committee proceed with clause-by-clause consideration of the bill no later than Tuesday, November 22”, doesn't give us enough time to address some of the witness testimony that has come forward, especially in my province of British Columbia, where we're having an educational crisis with respect to French language access and training, which we're not going to address in an appropriate way before this bill goes forward unless we give it an adequate amount of time.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Vis.

[*English*]

Sometime I'd like to be the Speaker, but thanks a lot.

I will give the floor now to Mr. Dalton.

Mr. Dalton, the floor is yours.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Marc Dalton (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

[*English*]

I must say that I'm very disappointed to see this motion being brought forward by the Liberals.

First of all, I think that as a committee we should apologize to the important witnesses who have been invited here. We didn't finish hearing the first panel, and then there's a second panel that we're missing.

This motion has essentially hijacked the process. We're hearing even less. I guess I'm really disappointed because for month after month, we heard witnesses coming here and providing valuable input to this committee from coast to coast, from every province and from Quebec. The least we could do is take them seriously and

make sure that what we put forward is not just a report, but an excellent report. That's what we want to do.

I know the Conservative Party and Conservative members on this committee want to have a bill that is excellent.

What is going on here? I have to ask myself why the Liberals would do this. It would seem like they're being supported by the NDP, but time will tell. Why would the Liberals just try to ramrod this report?

I think one reason is that we heard many testimonies from many witnesses who shared their frustration on how the bill has been delayed year after year and nothing happened. Now it seems to me that what the Liberals wanted to do was bring out a report and get it through right now, so that they can maybe say that the reason this has all been delayed for these years has nothing to do with them. They wash their hands clean of all the incompetence and delay. They speak out of both sides of their mouth in support of the bill, but they show us something else. I think that's what this motion seems to be. They're trying to focus the blame.

I also think that this motion is a way of maybe hiding their own ministers by trying to pack them all into one hour. They are the ones who know the files and they can best answer the questions that will help us with the report. This is very important.

It seems to me that a lot of this is show and limiting the amount of time. It is very disrespectful to the committee and to Parliament to say that it has to be done by December 1—and we're losing this whole meeting today—or we're going to give it to the power of the chair to do what he wants to do with the amendments.

This is just inappropriate. It's railroading the committee. This is not the way the committee needs to be functioning—in a way that's collaborative, which we have been doing. As has been mentioned, all the members here want to see this bill go forward.

● (1245)

[*Translation*]

Now I'd like to turn it over to my colleague, Mr. Godin.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Dalton.

Mr. Godin, the floor is yours.

Mr. Joël Godin: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I would like to start by apologizing to the two panels of witnesses. It's unfortunate that the government chose to move a motion, through the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Official Languages, even though it knew full well that witnesses were scheduled to come here and it would be a waste of time for them. I am really disappointed about that, and I want to apologize to them on behalf of the Conservative Party of Canada.

Next, I would like to remind the committee why motions are important and how they've been dealt with here since June. I want to look back at the motions that have been introduced.

On June 13, we moved that the Minister of Official Languages, the Minister of Canadian Heritage, the President of the Treasury Board, the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship and the Minister of Justice be invited to appear for two hours per department. That motion was adopted by the committee.

On October 6, I moved that, in the context of the study of Bill C-13, and given the issues raised, the Minister of Official Languages, the Minister of Canadian Heritage and the Secretary of the Treasury Board be invited to appear at the rate of two hours per minister after October 18, 2022, for an appearance as soon as possible. The motion was agreed to. On October 27, I reiterated that motion. Now, unfortunately, the ministers have indirectly done what we didn't want to do directly by adopting motions.

There is a motion on the table right now. Out of respect for all French-speaking Quebeckers and all francophones in Canada, I would like to move an amendment to the motion moved by my colleague, Mr. Serré, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Official Languages. I won't comment on his way of delivering a message to us from cabinet, because I respect the man too much. Here is my amendment.

I move that point one of Mr. Serré's proposed amendment be amended by adding the words "the Minister of Canadian Heritage" after the words "Treasury Board". I also move that the words "as well as their departmental officials" be added after the words "Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship".

• (1250)

The Chair: Hang on, Mr. Godin. I'm taking notes but I fell behind.

Mr. Joël Godin: I sent my amendment to the clerk. I can ask her to send it to the committee members' P9 accounts if that would make it easier to follow along. In the meantime, I'll read it out to you. If you can't write fast enough, I'll go slow, and I can repeat anything you miss.

After the words "Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship", I would like to add the words "as well as their departmental officials". After the words "be invited to appear", I would like to add the words "for two hours per minister, in separate meetings, no later than Thursday, November 24, 2022". I would be replacing "November 17" with "November 24".

On point two, in the second line, I want to replace "Thursday, November 17" with "Thursday, November 24". As you can see, the official opposition is acting in good faith. In the last line, "November 18" would be replaced by "November 25". We realize that we need to move forward, and that's what we're demonstrating with this amendment.

On point four, I want to replace "November 22" with "November 29".

I would also delete point five entirely, to avoid limiting the clause-by-clause study of this vitally important bill.

That's my amendment. If anyone wants to debate it, I'm ready to answer my colleagues' questions.

The Chair: Let's take a few seconds to make sure everyone's received it in writing, if you don't mind.

Has everyone received the amendment and had a chance to read it through?

Okay.

If there are any further subamendments, they'll have to be moved one at a time.

Are there any questions about Mr. Godin's amendment?

Mr. Beaulieu, the floor is yours.

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: On the one hand, the amendment makes sense, because it provides more opportunities for debate.

However, I'm still wondering why we're not having a discussion to come up with real solutions. There are Acadians here, Franco-Ontarians—

The Chair: Mr. Beaulieu, I have to stop you there, because I have to do my duty. We are seized with an amendment, and we need to focus on it.

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: Concerning the amendment, on the one hand, it's important to have more time. Point one calls for the ministers to appear for two hours in separate meetings. I'm not sure I understand what that means. For instance, I think we should get about two hours with the Minister of Immigration alone, because we've seen some strange things happening in that department. That would make perfect sense.

I'm being told that that's what the amendment provides for. Okay.

We heard from the Minister of Immigration's staff, and no explanations were forthcoming. Nearly 80% of francophone African students have their applications rejected, yet when they apply to go to an English-language university, they suddenly get accepted. There are a lot of weird things going on. Furthermore, this department sometimes refuses to comply with the Official Languages Act in Quebec. I once went to protest in front of IRB, the Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, because a lawyer was being denied the right to plead his client's case in French, as the client had requested. He came to testify here. That's a violation of not only Bill 101, but the Official Languages Act too. We were supposed to hear from Mr. Dionne's attorney.

That's what I have to say about point one—

• (1255)

The Chair: Mr. Beaulieu, I can confirm that point one of the amendment moved by Mr. Godin, which I'm looking at right now, calls for the ministers to be invited to appear "for two hours per minister, in separate meetings".

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: All right.

Point two would require that "amendments to Bill C-13 be submitted to the clerk in both official languages no later than... Thursday, November 24, 2022". I would change that date to December 6, as we had planned, because there's no reason to change it.

It's a little odd, because we had agreed on a procedure. We had agreed to maximize the number of meetings, if possible, so we could hear from as many witnesses as possible, and we were supposed to take stock on December 6. That was duly voted on. Now, we're faced with—

The Chair: I understand, Mr. Beaulieu, but we're talking about an amendment right now.

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: Yes. Part of my subamendment would replace, on point two, “Thursday, November 24” with “Tuesday, December 6”. Then, in the second part about the distribution of the amendments in both official languages, I would want to replace “Friday, November 25” with “Wednesday, December 7”.

We want to meet with the ministers, but there are witnesses who have very important testimony to deliver, and we're not getting a chance to hear from them. For example, there was a witness who was supposed to come tell us about all the Quebec-bashing anglophone lobbies that are receiving subsidies. The federal government speaks through these anglophone lobbies, so it's important for this perspective to be heard.

Now I'd like to turn to point four.

The Chair: Just a second, Mr. Beaulieu.

If I understand correctly, you agree with point one of Mr. Godin's amendment. Correct me if I've misunderstood what you were saying.

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: No, you got it right.

The Chair: Also, you're moving a subamendment to point two of Mr. Godin's amendment.

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: Correct. I want to replace “Thursday, November 24” with “Tuesday, December 6” and “Friday, November 25” with “Wednesday, December 7”.

The Chair: Okay.

We're going to proceed one subamendment at a time. That's the only way to do this without getting mixed up. If you have anything more to say, Mr. Beaulieu, we'll come back to you afterwards.

Let's deal with your subamendment to Mr. Godin's amendment.

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: I can't stay past 1 p.m. because I have another meeting, so I would ask that we adjourn debate and continue at the next meeting.

The Chair: We're going to suspend the meeting in a couple of minutes, so that won't be a problem. Do we have enough time to deal with this subamendment?

I see that we have less than two minutes left. Should we suspend?

Mr. Joël Godin: Point of order, Mr. Chair.

My Bloc Québécois colleague moved that debate be adjourned. I think we need to deal with that first, and then we can see about the rest.

The Chair: I'm sorry, I didn't realize he was asking to suspend debate immediately, before the vote on his subamendment.

Is that what you're moving, Mr. Beaulieu?

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: I move that debate be suspended.

The Chair: I'm sorry. I thought you wanted to do that after the vote on your first subamendment.

In any case, it's already time for us to adjourn. The meeting is therefore suspended until Thursday. On that day, you can pick up where you left off, Mr. Beaulieu.

● (1300)

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: The meeting is suspended.

[The meeting was suspended at 1:01 p.m., Tuesday, November 1]

[The meeting resumed at 11 a.m., Thursday, November 3]

● (5900)

The Chair: Welcome, everyone.

I just want to remind all those attending the meeting virtually or in person that we are resuming Tuesday's meeting, which was suspended, not adjourned. That means today's meeting isn't a new meeting, but rather the continuation of the 38th meeting of the House of Commons Standing Committee on Official Languages. This meeting is taking place in a hybrid format and in public.

Today we are continuing the debate on the motion moved by Mr. Serré. To structure the debate and follow the usual procedure, we're going to start by continuing the discussion on the subamendments moved by Mr. Beaulieu and then vote on them one at a time, as necessary. We will then discuss Mr. Godin's amendments and vote on them. Lastly, we will discuss Mr. Serré's main motion and then vote on it.

If there are no questions about this, we're all set to pick up where we left off, with Mr. Beaulieu. Is everybody on the same page?

Ms. Ashton, you have the floor.

● (5905)

Ms. Niki Ashton (Churchill—Keewatinook Aski, NDP): Good morning, everybody.

Mr. Chair, I also have an amendment to introduce today.

The Chair: No problem, Ms. Ashton.

However, since this is our first time resuming a meeting that we didn't officially adjourn, I just want to make sure there are no questions about procedure. If everyone is on the same page, we can move on immediately to the subamendments that Mr. Beaulieu was about to propose.

Mr. Généreux, the floor is yours.

Mr. Bernard Généreux: Mr. Chair, we understand the principle and it's all perfectly fine.

Now, if I understand correctly, there could be three amendments, or rather one amendment and two subamendments. We may spend a lot of time discussing them today, so I just want to make sure we get a chance to speak during this meeting, which will be two hours long.

Thank you.

The Chair: Great.

Let me give some clarification to answer your question, Mr. Généreux. When we suspended on Tuesday, Mr. Beaulieu was about to present his subamendments. We're going to hear from him now.

I also have a list, in chronological order, of the members who asked to speak afterwards. After Mr. Beaulieu, we'll go to you, Mr. Généreux, and then to Mr. Vis, Mr. Dalton and Mr. Gourde. Those are the names that were on my list when we suspended the meeting on Tuesday. Other members can be added to it, but for now, I'm going to follow the list in that order, because this is still the 38th meeting.

I think that's clear for everyone.

Mr. Beaulieu, over to you. You were about to move a subamendment.

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: Yes, I was. I want to come back to Mr. Serré's motion. I agree with the gist of it in general. It calls for no limits on the clause-by-clause study. I agree with that, but I would like us to have time to hear from witnesses, because that's very important.

Ever since the Liberals and the NDP formed an alliance, we've been hit with time allocation motions and closure motions. Since the last election, not including Government Business No. 20, there have been 27 fast-tracked bill stages, five motions adopted using 18 time allocation motions, eight closure motions, 11 time allocation motions, four super closure motions, including two aimed at fast-tracking the committee stage, the report stage and third reading, and two to fast-track the second reading in committee stage, the report stage and third reading.

On October 26, there was a time allocation motion on Bill C-9, which would amend the—

The Chair: I apologize for interrupting you, Mr. Beaulieu, but you mentioned Mr. Serré, and I think you meant Mr. Godin.

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: Sorry, yes, I did mean Mr. Godin.

The Chair: Okay, so you're not opposing Mr. Godin's amendment.

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: I'm going to move subamendments that are along the same lines as his motion, but that will make it better.

The Chair: All right, but the procedure could get complicated. That's why I said earlier in my introduction that we're going to have to deal with one subamendment at a time.

On Tuesday, you were in the middle of moving your first subamendment. You can move more than one, but—

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: I actually only have one subamendment to move, but it contains multiple points.

The Chair: Okay. Please explain for our benefit.

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: To conclude my earlier remarks, it's important for us to have time to debate. This is an essential debate. When we look at all the closure motions and gag orders that have been adopted—

Mr. Marc Serré: I have a point of order, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Let's hear it, Mr. Serré.

Mr. Marc Serré: We've had more than 12 meetings, we've heard from 54 witnesses and we've received 21 briefs.

As you've mentioned twice now, Mr. Chair, Mr. Beaulieu was about to introduce a subamendment. But now we're back to debating my original motion and Mr. Godin's amendments. Does Mr. Beaulieu actually have a subamendment to move? He said yes twice, but then he started giving a history lesson.

I think it's time we got to the amendments, because time is short.

Thank you.

● (5910)

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: I just wanted to finish commenting on Mr. Serré's motion.

The Chair: I understand.

Friends, I know we're in the midst of a passionate debate, but let's have some order here. When I recognize a member, that person has the floor, so everyone has to wait until that person is done, unless I need to call them to order, which I don't think will happen.

Mr. Beaulieu, on Tuesday, you were in the middle of moving a subamendment to Mr. Godin's amendments, and you were just telling us there are several parts to it. That was where we left off.

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: Great.

Coming back to my motion, what I want to emphasize is that it's also very important to have enough time to hear from all witnesses. The last witnesses we received, who represented the francophone and Acadian communities, raised some vital points, so it's not just for Quebec.

I think the Quebec government is the only one that prepared a document outlining its position. Essentially, Quebec wants to be in charge of language planning on its territory, because it's the only majority French-speaking region in Canada and North America. Its document says that we need to recognize that Quebec is the primary homeland of francophones in Canada.

If Quebec is weakened, all francophone and Acadian communities will be weakened too, because Quebec also provides teachers and staff for other regions. Many Quebecers go work outside Quebec. It's also the main market for the francophone and Acadian communities, especially in the arts sector. There are many great artists from francophone and Acadian communities, like Kevin Parent.

The latest statistics show that more and more francophones are becoming anglicized in Quebec. That's very troubling. Even though some significant progress has been made in terms of integrating allophones into francophone society, that progress is levelling off.

That progress is largely attributable to the Cullen-Couture agreement on immigration, which allows Quebec to choose its own foreign workers. Because of this, it has been able to choose more “francotrope” immigrants, meaning people from countries that are part of La Francophonie or who speak Latin languages, like Latino-Americans. These people are easily able to learn French and integrate into Quebec society. That has been a major factor.

The other factor has been Bill 101 and its education provisions. Bill 101 is the Quebec's single greatest contribution to inclusion, because it has brought children from all backgrounds together by sending them to the same schools. Since then, many more allophones have become familiar with French and Quebec. This has also made it possible for Quebec children to become accustomed to living alongside immigrants. That is hugely important, because there needs to be openness on both sides, if we want to promote integration.

The problem is that the federal government has interfered in all kinds of ways. One of the things that the Quebec government is requesting is a demand that comes up frequently, namely that the Official Languages Act recognize that, of the two official languages, the French language is the only minority language throughout Canada.

Since the creation of the Bloc Québécois, we have often stood up to say that the francophone and Acadian communities and Quebec's anglophone community are in totally different positions. From the beginning, Quebec's anglophone community has really been an elite group among Canada's anglophones, and its institutions have been dominant and overfunded. I'm talking about schools, hospitals, universities and so on.

● (5915)

During the 1960s, the Quebec government tried to take action in the education sector. There was a commission on education, the Parent commission's report and a commission on language. It was a pivotal moment. That was when the CEGEP system was set up, along with the Université du Québec network. Graduation rates among francophones were lower. Progress has been made, but the fight is far from over.

The fact that the federal government sees Quebec's anglophones as a minority equivalent to the francophone and Acadian communities has always been criticized. I once read an editorial written by Lise Bissonnette, back in 1977, I think, where she said it makes no sense to use the same criteria. Quebec's anglophones are nothing like the francophone and Acadian communities. She said that maybe Quebec's anglophones should be paying for francophones outside Quebec. I'm not repeating her suggestion, but that was a spontaneous reaction to the situation.

I agree that it makes no sense. In a way, it's helped perpetuate the privilege that Quebec's anglophones have enjoyed since the days of British colonialism. After 1763, all kinds of things happened in Quebec. At one point, French schools were no longer even getting funding—

The Chair: Mr. Beaulieu, I would ask you to stick to the subject at hand, namely the amendments moved by Mr. Godin.

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: All right. I'm getting there.

One of Quebec's requests is recognition of the fact that, of the two official languages, French is the only minority language throughout Canada. I think that's very important. The Official Languages Act needs to adopt an asymmetrical approach in favour of French. The act keeps getting in the way of the enforcement of Bill 101, the Charter of the French Language.

The Chair: Mr. Beaulieu, what specifically are the subamendments you're moving to Mr. Godin's amendments?

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: I'm explaining my motion as a whole.

There is a first part, which I started to talk about at the last meeting. It would extend the duration of Mr. Godin's amendments to give us time to receive witnesses. That's where I left off.

Now I'm going to continue along the same lines. The last part of my motion calls for us to study, on a priority basis during clause-by-clause consideration, the amendments—

The Chair: Mr. Beaulieu, I suggest we start with the first part. Don't worry, we'll move on to the second part next.

However, I'm not clear on how you want to amend Mr. Godin's amendments. Can you enlighten us?

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: I'm going to read out my motion, but what I would like is to present it in its entirety. Then we can dispose of it.

I see that Mr. Serré seems to have something to say.

● (5920)

Mr. Marc Serré: Mr. Chair, Mr. Beaulieu has been talking for 20 minutes now.

With all due respect to my colleague, the usual procedure is to move an amendment or subamendment and then to have a discussion.

The Chair: Mr. Serré, that's a valid point of order.

Mr. Marc Serré: I just want to know if this is a filibuster or if some subamendments are actually going to be moved. We haven't heard a single subamendment in 20 minutes.

Is this a filibuster?

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: Fine.

Mr. Marc Serré: I was just wondering.

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: Well, we're just wondering if the Liberals are trying to muzzle the committee.

Mr. Marc Serré: Mr. Chair, I just want to know if the member is filibustering or if he's going to move subamendments. He's been talking for 20 minutes now but has yet to introduce anything. He's just filibustering.

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: I think this is important. At the same time, I have to wonder if the Liberals are trying to muzzle us committee members.

The Chair: I think everyone around the table knows that I have been extremely lenient and generous so far as regards any discussion surrounding Mr. Serré's main motion. We listened at great length to Mr. Godin when he moved his amendments to Mr. Serré's main motion. As chair, I was extremely lenient, because that is my duty.

Mr. Beaulieu, on Tuesday, you got us started on a discussion by moving your subamendments, but then we had to suspend the meeting. Now, I was okay with you giving us a recap, but please get back to Mr. Godin's amendments, or I'll have to move on to someone else. There are four other people who want to speak.

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: History is very important. If we don't know our history, we have no way of knowing where we are, and we can't move forward into the future.

I'll get back to the amendments.

The Chair: Fine. I'm giving you one last chance to move your subamendments, Mr. Beaulieu. Otherwise, I'll have to move on to other colleagues.

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: Fine.

The subamendment I had started to talk about would amend Mr. Godin's amendments to point two of Mr. Serré's motion, which use the words "no later than 5:00 p.m. on Thursday, November 24, 2022". I move that this be replaced by the words "no later than Tuesday, December 6, 2022". Next, regarding the submission for amendments, I would replace "by noon on Friday, November 25, 2022" with "by noon on Wednesday, December 7, 2022". Basically, I want to replace November 24 with December 6 and November 25 with December 7, the following day, for consistency.

As for the third point of Mr. Serré's motion, I'm not touching it.

The fourth—

The Chair: Let's stop there, Mr. Beaulieu. The rule is to deal with one thing at a time. Don't worry, I'll come back to you afterwards.

It's perfectly clear, if we look at Mr. Godin's amendments—

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: Mr. Chair, I have a point of order.

The Chair: Go ahead.

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: You're basically splitting up my subamendments. Mr. Serré and Mr. Godin got to present their motions in their entirety. You're splitting mine up, but I think I would normally be entitled to move all of my subamendments at once.

The Chair: Okay, but are your next subamendments directly connected to the one you just moved?

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: Yes, they are directly connected to the motions moved by Mr. Serré and Mr. Godin. For example—

The Chair: So they can't stand alone.

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: Yes, just as theirs can't stand alone.

The Chair: Forget about theirs. Mr. Godin moved a motion containing a series of amendments. It's already done.

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: I can send them to you in writing too—

The Chair: What I mean is that if we vote on the subamendment you've moved and then you come back with your other subamendments—

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: That's not going to work.

The Chair: All right. In that case, go ahead.

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: On point four—

Mr. Bernard Généreux: I have a point of order, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Yes, Mr. Généreux.

Mr. Bernard Généreux: Mr. Chair, Mr. Beaulieu just said he can send the series of subamendments he wants to move to you or to the clerk. Could we get a copy?

• (5925)

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: Sure.

The Chair: We would really appreciate it.

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: I don't know if they've been sent already. If not, they're in the process of being sent to the clerk.

The Clerk: What I've received are the two motions to change the dates on points one and two of Mr. Serré's motion, as amended by Mr. Godin, by replacing November 24 with Tuesday, December 6, and then—

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: You've received the whole motion.

The Clerk: I just received an email. Do I have your permission to circulate the full document I just received?

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: Yes.

The Clerk: It's been sent.

The Chair: All right. I think we all just received it.

Mr. Beaulieu, you can keep going and refer to your document. In fact, that will make it easier for everyone.

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: Great.

Regarding the amendments to point two of Mr. Serré's motion, you can read what I just mentioned. I don't think I need to repeat it, but I can if you want.

As for point three of Mr. Serré's motion, we're not touching it. It calls for the clerk of the committee to write immediately to each member who is not a member of a caucus represented on the committee and to invite them to prepare and submit any proposed amendments.

On point four, to make it consistent with point two, we move that Mr. Godin's amendment be amended by replacing "no later than Tuesday, November 29, 2022, at 11:00 a.m. ET" with "no earlier than December 8, 2022, at 11:00 a.m. ET".

Next, in the sentence "the committee proceed with clause-by-clause consideration of the Bill no later than Tuesday, November 29, 2022, at 11:00 a.m. ET", we move that the date be changed to Thursday, December 8, 2022.

Lastly, we move that point five be deleted from Mr. Serré's motion and replaced with the following text, which I started to explain earlier:

That, in the context of the clause-by-clause study of Bill C-13, the committee study, on a priority basis, the amendments that take the place of the requests of the Government of Quebec and the Francophone communities outside Quebec, namely:

1. That Bill C-13, in Clause 2, be amended by replacing line 17 on page 1 to line 16 on page 2 with the following:

"AND WHEREAS the Government of Canada is committed to respecting Quebec's choices regarding its language management, provided for in the Charter of the French Language;"

2. That Bill C-13, in Clause 2, be amended

- a. by deleting lines 19 to 44 on page 2.

- b. by replacing line 6 on page 3 with the following:

"that French is the official and common language of Quebec;"

- c. by replacing lines 16 to 29 on page 3 with the following:

"AND WHEREAS the Government of Canada recognizes that English or French linguistic minority communities are present in every province and territory and that the English linguistic minority community in Quebec and the French linguistic minority communities in the other provinces and territories have different needs;

AND WHEREAS the Government of Canada recognizes that the existence of a majority-French society in a Quebec where the future of French is assured is a legitimate objective and a fundamental principle of the Canadian official languages regime;"

3. That Bill C-13, in Clause 3, be amended by replacing line 39 on page 3 with the following—

● (5930)

The Chair: Mr. Beaulieu, I apologize, but I'm going back to my original idea. We're going to talk about your first subamendment, because now you're suggesting amendments to the bill before we've even heard from all the witnesses and carried out the clause-by-clause study. We can't have that. That's not a subamendment to Mr. Godin's amendment. Far from it.

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: If I can just—

The Chair: If you don't mind, we'll start with the parts relating to Mr. Godin's amendments.

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: Can I just comment on what you just said?

The Chair: No, Mr. Beaulieu. What you're doing is not right: You're moving amendments to the bill before we've even reached the clause-by-clause study.

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: I'm not moving amendments to the bill. I'm just saying what the clause-by-clause study should start with.

The Chair: That has nothing to do with Mr. Godin's amendments. So here's my decision: Unless you retract it, we're going to deal with your first subamendment, which is about Mr. Godin's amendments, as written by you.

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: But we want to replace the final amendment moved by Mr. Godin. We're saying that we need to do the clause-by-clause study, that there should be no limits, but that it should start with Quebec's demands, because they haven't been addressed at all.

The Chair: Mr. Beaulieu, I'm not going to repeat what I just said. You cannot move amendments to the bill—

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: If you really insist, we can start with the first two subamendments. I just want us to talk about all of my sub-

amendments, because I don't think they're out of order: I'm specifying which amendments I believe we should start with.

The Chair: Before we move on, Ms. Lattanzio has a point of order.

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

The subamendments we're studying go beyond proposing amendments to the procedural elements of Mr. Godin's amendment. They also propose amendments to the substance of the bill we're studying.

In my opinion, these subamendments may be inadmissible. I would therefore like to submit them to the clerk and hear her point of view. She can tell us whether we can dispose of them in their current form.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Lattanzio. That's basically what I was going to say.

Madam Clerk, I would like to hear your opinion on this.

The Clerk: During the clause-by-clause study, the committee must study the proposed amendments and subamendments in the order in which the clauses appear in the bill. It's not possible to change the manner in which the committee deals with amendments during the clause-by-clause study.

Does that answer your question, Ms. Lattanzio?

Ms. Patricia Lattanzio: Actually, Madam Clerk, I would like you to tell us if the motion submitted to us is admissible, because I think Mr. Beaulieu's subamendments are mixed. Some would amend Mr. Godin's amendments regarding the procedure and time frame, while others seem to concern the substance of the bill.

Those last subamendments are being moved even though we haven't even set a deadline for submitting them yet. It seems like an attempt to get a head start on the other committee members, even though the committee hasn't even set a deadline yet. It seems like these subamendments are an attempt to get in through the back door.

I think they're inadmissible, and I'd like to know what you or the Chair think about this way of proceeding.

The Clerk: The proposed subamendments to the amendments that Mr. Godin would like to make to points one to five of Mr. Serré's motion are in order. However, the section starting with "That, in the context of the clause-by-clause study" and what follows is not in order.

If you would like to suspend the meeting to talk about it over the phone, Mr. Arseneault, that would be easier.

● (5935)

The Chair: No, we don't need to suspend. I think it's all clear. It's evident—

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: Mr. Chair, could—

The Chair: Go ahead, Mr. Beaulieu.

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: That means that if the committee wanted to decide to start with certain parts of the bill instead of examining each clause in order, it wouldn't be allowed to do that. The committee wouldn't be allowed to decide—

The Chair: Mr. Beaulieu, it means that would have to be done through a motion.

That's not the case here, because we're studying subamendments to amendments moved by Mr. Godin. The only parts that are in order are the ones you sent us in writing, which are about points one to five inclusive of Mr. Serré's motion.

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: If we move these amendments in a separate motion, would they be admissible then?

The Chair: No, you can't do that, Mr. Beaulieu.

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: But you just said a motion could be moved. That being said, the clerk seems sure of her facts: All committees studying bills must proceed in the order in which the clauses appear. Do I have that right?

The Chair: Yes.

For now, we have a window, if I may put it that way: We're discussing amendments moved by Mr. Godin. That means your subamendments need to focus strictly on them. If there is nothing else to discuss, I am allowing you to call for a vote on the subamendments that you are moving and that are about points one to five inclusive of Mr. Serré's motion, in accordance with the document you just sent us, but nothing more. Is that all right with you?

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: There were some people who had asked to speak. I don't know if they want to say anything.

The Chair: Yes, they can speak on this topic.

Mr. Bernard Généreux: Mr. Chair, I think I agree with the clerk and with everyone. However, one of the amendments we moved was to delete point five of Mr. Serré's motion.

The Chair: That's right.

Mr. Bernard Généreux: Mr. Beaulieu's subamendments say, by adding something, that nothing will be added. So point five seems to have disappeared there too. That means the subamendments only concern points one to four of Mr. Serré's motion.

The Chair: Yes, Mr. Beaulieu's written document seems to agree with the deletion of point five of Mr. Serré's motion as proposed by Mr. Godin.

Are there any other questions about the subamendments moved by Mr. Beaulieu?

When I was talking about point five earlier, it was my understanding that Mr. Beaulieu's subamendments were along the same lines as Mr. Godin's amendments and that they both wanted point five deleted.

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: Mr. Chair, I challenge your decision.

The Chair: Just a second, Mr. Beaulieu. Ms. Lattanzio has her hand raised.

Ms. Patricia Lattanzio: Mr. Chair, could you issue a formal ruling that any subamendment moved by Mr. Beaulieu to replace point five of Mr. Serré's motion is inadmissible, in accordance with what the clerk told us?

The Chair: I rule that anything that Mr. Beaulieu might propose to replace point five of Mr. Serré's motion that Mr. Godin's amendment would delete is inadmissible.

Mr. Bernard Généreux: Mr. Chair, to make sure we're all on the same page and, above all, to make sure this goes on the record, I would like the clerk to take a moment to verify whether the subamendments moved by Mr. Beaulieu are in fact inadmissible. I want to know whether the clerk can publicly state, during this meeting, that these subamendments are inadmissible. Take all the time you need.

The Chair: Let's take a moment for reflection and suspend the meeting for a few minutes.

• (5935)

(Pause)

• (5945)

The Chair: I call this meeting back to order.

Mr. Beaulieu, the very thing I was afraid of has come to pass. This is exactly why I wanted to deal with your subamendments one by one. However, you told us that your document contained one single subamendment.

As I said earlier, everything relating to points one to four is admissible. However, your last section seems to include points concerning the clause-by-clause study, which is inadmissible according to our rules. If you really insist that your document is a single subamendment that can't be split up, I will have to deem the entire document inadmissible.

For the sake of fair play, I suggest that you submit your amendments about points one to four as written and forget about the rest. Otherwise, I'll have to reject the entire document. I'll let you decide how you want to proceed.

• (5950)

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: In that case, let's do that.

I'd like some clarification on one thing, though: From our understanding, the clause-by-clause study is almost always done in chronological order, but is there any provision in the act saying the committee isn't allowed to change that?

The Chair: I'm not going to answer that question because it's not what we're talking about right now, but you have the beginnings of an answer in what you just said. We can't do it, but it's because you—

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: Then let's stick to the first subamendments, and maybe we can look into this later on.

The Chair: We are currently dealing with subamendments, so we have to focus on that. If I understand you correctly, you agree that we can deal with your proposed subamendments for points one to four. Just answer yes or no.

Mr. Bernard Généreux: Mr. Chair, before Mr. Beaulieu answers, I have a question for you.

The Chair: Okay, Mr. Généreux, go ahead, if it's a point of order.

Mr. Bernard Généreux: Is it possible to move an amendment to Mr. Beaulieu's subamendments at this time?

The Chair: No, that's definitely not possible.

Since Mr. Beaulieu was insistent that the entire series of amendments made up his subamendment, I would have to reject the entire document because it contains one part that is inadmissible, but I want to give him a chance.

Mr. Beaulieu, I take it you're willing to drop the last part of your document. We are going to agree that your subamendments are just those amendments relating to the first four points of the original motion and vote on them. Do I have that right?

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: Yes.

I just have a question for the clerk, but she can answer it later: Where in the procedure does it say that a committee isn't allowed to change the order in which it does the clause-by-clause study?

The Chair: We'll talk about it later.

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: Okay.

The Chair: Is there anything more to discuss about Mr. Beaulieu's subamendments relating to points one to four, on page 1 of the document he sent us?

The Clerk: Can I ask a quick question?

The Chair: Sure.

The Clerk: Just to clarify, can we read out the text of the subamendments again to make sure everyone is on the same page?

The subamendments that were suggested at the end of the last meeting are different from the ones we received today. For one thing, I would like to know whether Mr. Beaulieu is dropping his two subamendments about changing the dates to December 6 and 7.

I just want to make sure everyone is clear on what the committee will be voting on.

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: How is this version different from my other version? I thought they were the same.

The Clerk: In the one you just sent us, there are no changes to the dates of November 24 and 25 that are mentioned on points one and two. Those were subamendments that were proposed at the end of the last meeting and were communicated to the committee members. Technically, unanimous consent would be needed to withdraw those subamendments.

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: On point two, I do want to move that November 24 be changed to December 6. We're keeping that.

The Chair: Madam Clerk, paragraph two of Mr. Beaulieu's subamendment does match what he told us earlier.

The Clerk: Yes, I can confirm that paragraph two is fine. I'm just talking about paragraph one.

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: Point one of Mr. Serré's motion proposed a deadline for receiving the ministers. We're not touching that.

Point two set a deadline for submitting amendments to Bill C-13. We're going back to what was proposed in our original agreement, before Mr. Serré's motion, namely to make a decision on December 6 and potentially start the clause-by-clause study.

Mr. René Arseneault: Okay.

Are there any other questions?

Is that clear, Madam Clerk?

• (5955)

The Clerk: I think it's all right. If it's clear for the members, I think that—

Mr. Bernard Généreux: Mr. Chair, I have an observation to make.

The Chair: I need to recognize Ms. Lattanzio first, Mr. Généreux.

Ms. Lattanzio, the floor is yours.

Ms. Patricia Lattanzio: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Given that the clerk said that the subamendments that Mr. Beaulieu moved this morning were different from the ones moved at the last meeting, do we need unanimous consent to accept these changes before we can dispose of the subamendments?

If we accept them as is, I would like them to be read out in full, from paragraph one to paragraph four, so everybody understands it all before the vote.

The Chair: Madam Clerk, do you have any comments to make on this procedural question?

The Clerk: Yes, in theory, the unanimous consent of the committee members is needed to accept these changes, and I can read out the points if you like.

The Chair: Okay.

Is there unanimous consent to allow Mr. Beaulieu to amend his subamendments?

Mr. Bernard Généreux: We agree, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Everyone seems to agree.

Madam Clerk, I would ask you to please read out the subamendments.

The Clerk: Point one of Mr. Serré's motion would not change.

Point two would now read as follows: "amendments to Bill C-13 be submitted to the clerk in both official languages no later than Tuesday, December 6, 2022, and distributed to committee members in both official languages by noon on Wednesday, December 7, 2022;".

Before I move on to point three, a vote could be held on this subamendment first. I'll read out the others afterwards, so as to deal with them one by one.

The Chair: Yes, let's deal with one subamendment at a time.

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: Mr. Chair, I would like some clarification about one thing. If the first part of my subamendment isn't adopted, could my motion regarding point four of the original motion be submitted? It's the one calling for the committee to proceed with clause-by-clause consideration on December 8 rather than November 29.

Mr. Marc Serré: Mr. Chair, I have a point of order.

The Chair: Go ahead, Mr. Serré.

Mr. Marc Serré: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Earlier, everyone, including all the parties and the clerk too, were in agreement that all of the subamendments introduced by Mr. Beaulieu constituted a single subamendment. Therefore, we don't have to vote on each paragraph of his document.

The Chair: You're right, Mr. Serré. That's what I thought too. I got a little mixed up. Let's just say it's the chair's fault.

Madam Clerk, you just read out paragraph two. Can you keep going until paragraph four?

The Clerk: Sure.

Nothing changes on point three of the original motion with regard to Mr. Godin's amendments.

As for point four, the words “no later than Tuesday, November 22, 2022, at 11:00 a.m. ET” would be replaced with the words “no earlier than December 8, 2022, at 11:00 a.m. ET”.

The Chair: Are there any other questions about these subamendments?

• (6000)

Mr. Bernard Généreux: Yes, Mr. Chair. I asked to speak earlier.

The Chair: Go ahead, Mr. Généreux.

Mr. Bernard Généreux: Regarding the subamendments, everything is fine.

My observation is about the final part of Mr. Beaulieu's subamendments, which was ruled inadmissible. His intent was to emphasize Quebec's demands. We fully agree with what he was proposing, because the Liberal Party's motion basically seeks to silence all the witnesses who were scheduled to appear before this committee over the next few weeks—

The Chair: Mr. Généreux, I would ask you to stick to your point of order.

Mr. Bernard Généreux: I actually just want to talk about the fifth part of Mr. Beaulieu's subamendments, which was dropped, and his intent. I want everyone here to understand that Quebec is being silenced here in committee, with this motion.

The Chair: Mr. Généreux, I'm sorry, but that's not a point of order.

Do you have any comments about the subamendments as moved by Mr. Beaulieu and read out by the clerk?

Mr. Bernard Généreux: No, that's fine, we can move on to the vote.

Mr. Marc Serré: Mr. Chair, the decision made here earlier was based on Bosc and Gagnon's *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*. I would ask the opposition parties to consult it. It clearly explains why the final part of Mr. Beaulieu's subamendments were inadmissible. The clerk has already made a statement on this, so I don't understand why the two opposition parties are harping on this point.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Serré. That is indeed what we all agreed on after hearing the clerk's recommendations.

We are still talking about paragraphs one to four of Mr. Beaulieu's subamendments as written. All the rest of it was inadmissible. Are there any other questions or comments on this before we proceed to a vote?

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: I'd like to jump in to add some additional information.

The Chair: But you can't amend your own subamendments.

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: No, but I can defend them. Since Mr. Vis has asked to speak, I can go after him.

The Chair: Mr. Vis, I'm sorry, I didn't see you there. Go ahead.

Mr. Brad Vis: Mr. Chair, I just wanted some clarification. How do we define francophone communities outside Quebec? Does it mean people who want to learn French and who go to a French school, but whose first language is English, or does it only mean people whose first language is French?

The Chair: Mr. Vis, are you referring to Mr. Beaulieu's subamendments?

Mr. Brad Vis: Yes, I'm talking about the last part.

The Chair: There is no last part anymore.

Mr. Brad Vis: Okay, sorry. There was so much going on that it was hard to follow.

The Chair: True.

[English]

You're right.

[Translation]

Are there any other questions?

Madam Clerk, we're ready to vote. It's going to be a recorded vote, right?

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: Mr. Chair, Mr. Gourde wanted to speak.

The Chair: I'm sorry, Mr. Gourde. Go ahead.

Mr. Jacques Gourde (Lévis—Lotbinière, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

To clarify the situation for everyone, can you confirm that we're about to vote on Mr. Beaulieu's subamendments relating to the amendments that Joël Godin would like to make to Mr. Serré's motion?

The Chair: Yes, that's correct.

Mr. Jacques Gourde: That's good. We'll get there yet. I'm pretty sure a lot of people are finding it difficult to follow us. As we say back home, this is often as clear as mud.

We will start with the basics. We will vote on the subamendments, then we'll come back to Mr. Godin's amendments, and after that maybe we can finally vote on Mr. Serré's motion.

I think everyone now knows exactly where we are, or very close to it.

The Chair: Mr. Gourde, to pick up on what you said, I'd say things are just a bit clearer than that, but we will find our way.

I don't see any hands up, Madam Clerk, so I think we'll proceed to a vote.

• (6005)

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: Mr. Chair, may I provide some additional information on the merits of my subamendments?

The Chair: I think you already had plenty of time to do that, but I'm going to give you some time to speak. Is there anything we didn't understand or anything else you want to do?

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: I just wanted to point out that the purpose of my amendment is to give us a little more time to hear from witnesses, because that's important. We may have heard a number of witnesses, but I don't know that we have heard the 50 witnesses we were promised as part of this study. Several other witnesses were supposed to come before us. We were to hear from some witnesses with very interesting and important views, including Charles Castonguay, who wanted to talk a bit about the immigration issue—

The Chair: Mr. Beaulieu, right now we're dealing with your subamendments, and I think Mr. Dalton wants to speak to that.

Mr. Dalton, you have the floor.

[*English*]

Mr. Marc Dalton: Thank you.

We support the subamendments of Mr. Beaulieu—not on number 5. It is a little confusing, and my colleague here, Jacques Gourde, referred to it when he talked about amendments and subamendments. Just as a commentary on this, it's very disappointing because this committee was working very well.

This seems to be quite intentional by the Liberals, to blow up the whole process. This is a very important bill. The Conservatives are very supportive of it, and we wanted to do something good, yet we've wasted the last meeting. We had witnesses who are not here now, who were not able to testify. We had more today, and in the meantime we have a drop-dead date, according to the motion from MP Serré, of December 1, saying that if it doesn't work out, we'll pass it on to the chair and he's going to make all the amendments.

To me, this is a real lack of respect for all the witnesses over the years who have been waiting for something excellent. We want to see an excellent bill being brought forward. I think we all do on this committee, so it's very disappointing that we're having to go through this whole process because of this motion.

It would seem to me that the Liberals are quite happy to have this debate going on about these subamendments so that they can say, “Oh, the opposition is just filibustering, and we'd better take care of it.” They're just trying to turn the tables around, when they have basically exploded this whole report.

The subamendments say that we are going to expand the initial motion in terms of having ministers coming here for longer. The initial motion was to have all three of them at one time during one hour. It is disrespectful to the committee, to the Canadian public, to

Quebec francophones and to those who speak French outside of Quebec.

This whole process is very disappointing. I put the blame squarely on the shoulders on the Liberals, and it appears to be supported by the NDP, but we'll find out.

That's just the commentary I have right now.

Thank you.

[*Translation*]

I'm really disappointed with what is happening here with this motion, which was originally moved by the Liberals. Everything seems to have been engineered to blow up the work of the committee and this study on the bill.

The Chair: Mr. Dalton, thank you, but your comments must relate to the subamendments.

Ms. Ashton, you have the floor.

Ms. Niki Ashton: I think we've had plenty of debate. Of course we are here to hear from people, but I would also like to move a motion, as I said at the start of the meeting, so that we can move forward and make amendments to the bill. We need to meet the expectations of francophone communities in Quebec and outside Quebec who are desperately waiting for a modernized act.

Today marks our 16th meeting. We've been saying since June that we want to move forward, effectively and efficiently, with improvements to the bill, and the proposal we would like to make later today is along those lines. Obviously everyone has valid points to make today, but the francophone communities across the country expect us to act effectively and efficiently, as they told us 15 meetings ago. I look forward to the opportunity to move my motion a little later.

I would also ask my colleagues, with all due respect, to keep from making assumptions about how the NDP will vote. Ideally, we should vote and then hear the proposals from all parties, so that we can finally move forward and end these theoretical discussions that only serve to waste the time of francophone communities across the country.

• (6010)

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Ashton.

I will now turn to Mr. Beaulieu.

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: I thank Ms. Ashton for saying that it was also important to protect the French language for francophone communities outside Quebec. However, Quebec is not a community, it is a nation, a people, and we have the right to self-determination. This is a nuance that I wanted to bring forward.

As well, to get back to the importance of hearing from more witnesses—

The Chair: Mr. Beaulieu, while we appreciate the nuance, it is my duty to keep us focused on the subamendments you introduced.

You may go ahead with your comments on that topic.

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: Okay.

The subamendments are intended to give us more time to hear from witnesses. Initially, according to what was proposed, we were not going to hear any more witnesses. Mr. Godin's proposal was interesting because it gave us a little more time to hear from witnesses, but I think we still need more time. That's why we want to move the date to December 6, since there are a number of witnesses we haven't heard from.

Francophone and Acadian communities are not a monolithic group. Some communities have told us that the bill has to be significantly strengthened. There are also many diverse views that we did not hear. Some stakeholders confirmed that immersion schools, for example, promoted the assimilation of francophones and therefore it would be important to make amendments to the bill to enhance funding for schools where the students' first language is French. Alternatively, immersion schools should, at the very least, be run by and for francophones. I think everyone would like that. In short, francophone and Acadian communities are not a monolithic group, where everyone thinks alike. There are diverse views.

It's true that the situation in British Columbia is far from easy, as Mr. Vis was saying. We heard from Mr. Lepage. He is not from British Columbia, but he also had opinions that differed a bit from those of the other groups we heard. He talked about a right to redress, and I think francophones outside Quebec do have a right to redress, because of the ban on French-language education that was imposed for several generations.

Other witnesses were expected to bring forward important points of view. I'm thinking of all the groups that are funded under the Official Languages Act—

Mr. Marc Serré: Mr. Chair, I have a point of order.

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

Mr. Marc Serré: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

In all honesty, as Ms. Ashton said, it is time for action. I thank Mr. Beaulieu for talking about francophones outside Quebec, but he does not represent them. The stakeholders who have come here, before the committee, have told us clearly that it is time for action.

Today we are not even talking about the amendments, we are talking about something else. Can we proceed to a vote on Mr. Beaulieu's subamendments?

• (6015)

The Chair: Mr. Serré, that wasn't a point of order, that was rather a comment.

Mr. Beaulieu, I too was going to stop you, because we're dealing with your own subamendments. What would you want to add on that?

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: I wanted to add that they are very important. Contrary to what my colleague claimed, some people from the francophone and Acadian communities have told me that what is in the bill is not acceptable and that the bill must be strengthened. We could come back to Mr. Lepage, but there are others who have started speaking out as well. I could go over all this in detail. Some

of these people have not yet been able to come here to testify. Those we heard from also wanted to bring forward very significant amendments to Bill C-13.

For example, some wanted the central agency to be Treasury Board, not Canadian Heritage. It is important that we have the time to hear from these people. However, we were told that the Minister of Canadian Heritage would not be appearing before us. I thought that was a shame, because under Bill C-13, Canadian Heritage is the designated central agency, even though Treasury Board is given some powers. The only people from Canadian Heritage we heard from were public servants. Public servants cannot express their opinions freely and will only say what they are told to say, which is understandable. The minister, however, is accountable to Canadians and can give us his opinions and defend his bill. I find it unacceptable that we cannot even hear him testify. That is one of the reasons why we must take the time we need. Maybe the Minister of Canadian Heritage could not come before the dates scheduled. Perhaps the deadline was too short. Nonetheless, it is essential that we hear from him and that he be able to speak to this.

As I was saying earlier, there are witnesses we have not heard yet, for example, on the divisiveness issue. In Quebec, we work very hard to integrate newcomers. We are being pressured to increase immigration levels, but if we do so without having the means to integrate newcomers and help them learn French, this basically amounts to proposing that we make ourselves even more of a minority, plain and simple. That is absurd.

These witnesses could tell us about all the groups in Quebec that receive funding under the Official Languages Act, such as the Quebec Community Groups Network, and their mandates. It is often implied that Quebecers are racist and that our desire to ensure the future of the French language causes us to turn inward, when the opposite is true. It's about including newcomers. However, providing funding for these groups directly undermines the integration of newcomers in Quebec, because the linguistic indicators they use include a very large percentage of newcomers who need to learn French in Quebec. This is vital to maintaining our demographic weight. It is therefore important that we hear from these witnesses.

I'm assuming that no one here truly and knowingly wants to make francophones in Quebec even more of a minority and, in a way, continue supporting what Lord Durham proposed in that past. I don't think anyone here wants to do that, so we have to make it clear. However, this is effectively what will happen, if we pass the bill as is. This is not even an interpretation.

We expected to get a unique perspective on this from a number of witnesses, such as the president of the Société Saint-Jean-Baptiste de Montréal, the oldest institution in America that defends a nation. This organization is over 180 years old—

The Chair: Mr. Beaulieu, you are straying from your subamendments.

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: Okay, but it's important that we have time to hear from these witnesses. The person I'm talking about received a call and was informed he was not invited to testify. We are talking about the main institution that defends the francophonie and the francophone and Acadian communities in every battle, one of the main civil society organizations that defends the French language in Quebec, and its president will not come before us to testify. That is absurd.

There is a whole series of witnesses. I'm sure that the Conservatives and even the Liberals have approached witnesses who have important things to tell us. We can't just hear from the federally funded groups if we want to encourage a diversity of views. I'm not saying that these groups are not important and that they don't fight every day to continue to live in French, but, whether we like it or not, assimilation is devastating for these people. When we say that there is—

• (6020)

The Chair: Mr. Beaulieu, I was explaining to all members last Tuesday that there are two situations where a chair has a duty to interrupt someone who is speaking on debate about an amendment or subamendment: when they are repeating themselves, or when they are getting off topic.

At this point I consider that you have thoroughly covered the issue. I don't think you can convince us any further as to why you are proposing your subamendments, unless you have something new to tell us. You have moved your subamendments and you've made your point.

Is there anything you want to say that we should hear but haven't heard yet? If not, we need to move on.

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: All I would like to add is that it's important to hear from witnesses. That exposes us to other ideas on many topics.

The Chair: Mr. Beaulieu, you've already told us that.

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: That's fine.

The Chair: Does anyone else wish to speak?

Mr. Gourde, you have the floor.

Mr. Jacques Gourde: Mr. Chair, if the government party ends up getting what it wants after all this work we've done, we will have to pull a lot of witnesses from a very long list, and you will be the one bearing the consequences. Even Quebec Minister Roberge would like to testify before the committee. How will you go about saying yes or no to certain witnesses who want to come here, since we won't have enough time?

From a historical perspective, the work we're doing right now is really significant. I don't see what could be more important than our work to reform the Official Languages Act. Why move so quickly and then do a less meaningful job? What is the rush? Could it be that the party in power is hiding its intention to call an election and wants to finish this before then?

The Chair: Mr. Gourde, we're getting off topic.

Mr. Jacques Gourde: No, Mr. Chair. You have a duty to ensure that every witness who wants to come here will do so. We are talking about an exercise that has not been done in 50 years and will

certainly not be done again for another 50 years, and here we are, saying no to witnesses. There is nothing so urgent that we have to stop this work in December. No subsequent study will be more important than the study on the reform of the Official Languages Act.

We have just wasted two full four-hour sessions dwelling on commas when we could have heard from six to eight witnesses. It suits the government not to talk about the reform of the act.

So, Mr. Chair, you are the one who is under pressure. I don't know what orders you've received. I hope you didn't receive any, but prove to us that it is possible to do a good job on this reform with this kind of government approach.

The Chair: I imagine that Mr. Godin considered all the questions you just asked me before introducing his amendments, but that pertains to those amendments.

Anyone else wants to speak on Mr. Beaulieu's subamendments?

Go ahead, Mr. Généreux.

• (6025)

Mr. Bernard Généreux: Mr. Roberge, Quebec's new minister of the French language, contacted our colleague, who is not here today. Mr. Roberge told him he was seriously concerned about this Liberal motion, for the simple reason that he was part of a comprehensive list of people who were to testify before this committee. This list included Marc Power and Darius Bossé, who drafted the amendments of the Fédération des communautés francophones et acadienne, the FCFA. There was also the International Association of Conference Interpreters, the Canadian Bar Association, the Government of Quebec, obviously, and the Association des juristes d'expression française du Manitoba. We also wanted to have the Commissioner of Official Languages appear for an extra hour.

Other parties included the Fédération nationale des conseils scolaires francophones, the former chair of the Conseil scolaire francophone de la Colombie-Britannique, Marie-France Lapierre, the Fédération de la jeunesse canadienne-française, Employment and Social Development Canada, the Barreau du Québec, the Assemblée communautaire fransaskoise, the Alliance des femmes de la francophonie canadienne, as well as passengers who had filed complaints against Air Canada and representatives of the airline. All of these people would have liked to come and testify to help complete our study.

As Mr. Gourde just said, we've just wasted about four hours for nothing. If we had received some of these witnesses, we could have finished the study, but instead they are trying to muzzle the committee members. The Quebec minister of the French Language took the trouble to call Mr. Godin's staff to express his concerns about the motion before us today.

I will choose my words carefully because I see people who have been here for a long time, such as Mr. Samson, who is a parliamentary secretary. One thing is certain: As parliamentarians, we have extremely important responsibilities towards the Canadian francophonie. I have been here since 2009 and I can attest to what we have seen since 2009. This is a long-awaited bill, and people have been talking about it for a long time. A first version was introduced but fell through. The bill was then reintroduced in a new version and now, under the pretext that it takes a bit of time to study it, we are telling these witnesses that we have heard enough and it is time to take action, to use Ms. Ashton's words earlier.

I completely agree with Ms. Ashton, but as Mr. Gourde just said, this is a historic piece of legislation, and we won't be talking about it for another 50 years. Anything that changes in this bill after it is passed will be changed through regulation. The organizations that came here to testify, including the FCFA and all of its members, among others, will no doubt have to come back here in a year or two to say that this or that was not included in the legislation. I'm sorry, but it will be too late. We are looking at it now and we need to take the time to get it right.

We have collaborated really well so far to ensure we move this bill forward as quickly as possible. Again, the party in power is not stepping up to ensure that this bill progresses as it should in committee. We are being muzzled and that is a real shame.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Généreux.

Is there anyone else who wants to speak to Mr. Beaulieu's subamendments?

We will then proceed to the recorded vote on Mr. Beaulieu's subamendments.

(Subamendments negatived: nays 6; yeas 5. [*See Minutes of Proceedings*])

• (6030)

The Chair: Let's get back to Mr. Godin's amendments, then. I think Ms. Ashton—

Mr. Bernard Généreux: Mr. Chair, I have a point of order.

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

Mr. Bernard Généreux: I would like to move a subamendment. May I do that right now?

The Chair: Ms. Ashton had the floor before you.

Mr. Bernard Généreux: In that case, I will let Ms. Ashton move her subamendment and then I'll move mine.

The Chair: I'll put you on the list, Mr. Généreux.

Go ahead, Ms. Ashton.

Ms. Niki Ashton: The amendment I want to move relates to Mr. Serré's main motion.

After point four I would add the following paragraph: "5. subject to the approval of the Whips of the recognized parties and the availability of meeting times of the House of Commons, that the Committee hold additional meetings in order to undertake the clause-by-clause study of the bill;"

Then the old point five would become point six, but the words "Thursday, December 1, 2022" would be replaced with the words "Thursday, December 8, 2022", which would be the new deadline for the completion of the clause-by-clause study. That way, we would give ourselves a total of six meetings and we could potentially have longer meetings or even more meetings between now and then.

We sent a copy of the amendment to the clerk so that she can forward it to the committee members.

Mr. Jacques Gourde: On a point of order, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: You have the floor, Mr. Gourde.

Mr. Jacques Gourde: Mr. Chair, you said we were considering Mr. Godin's amendments, but Ms. Ashton just introduced a new amendment to Mr. Serré's motion that does not pertain to those amendments.

Meanwhile, Mr. Généreux said that he was prepared to move a subamendment to Mr. Godin's amendments. According to procedure, shouldn't we first hear this subamendment?

The Chair: You're quite right, Mr. Gourde. I'm sorry and I apologize to you and everyone in the committee for not paying more attention.

Ms. Ashton, we are dealing with Mr. Godin's amendments at this time. In other words, we are not yet considering the main motion.

Mr. Bernard Généreux: Is it my turn then, Mr. Chair?

The Chair: Go ahead, Mr. Généreux.

Mr. Bernard Généreux: I would move a subamendment.

At the end of point four of the main motion amended by Mr. Godin, after the words "the committee proceed with clause-by-clause consideration of the bill no later than Tuesday, November 29, 2022, at 11:00 a.m. ET", I would add the following: "but that, before proceeding to the clause-by-clause study of the bill, Quebec be invited to appear or to submit its position before the deadline for amendments, in order to protect its proposed amendments".

• (6035)

The Chair: Given that the committee knows Quebec refused to send any representatives here, how—

Mr. Bernard Généreux: In light of the communications between the Government of Quebec and Mr. Godin's office this morning, I think we would be wise to invite the Quebec government representatives again, since they have some very serious concerns about the current motion.

The plan was to have representatives from the Quebec government here while also allowing them to directly move amendments to the bill. We should invite them again so they can introduce their amendments themselves.

The Chair: Okay. I understand, but we know that all provincial governments were invited to send representatives to come before the committee.

Mr. Bernard Généreux: Yes, but the Government of Quebec has had a new minister in office for three weeks. So, maybe we should give him another month. The fact that he got in touch with Mr. Godin's office this morning shows that the Quebec government is interested in the bill, and more specifically in Mr. Serré's motion.

The Chair: Okay. Could you reread your subamendment before we move on to questions?

Mr. Bernard Généreux: Yes.

I move to add the following to the end of point four of Mr. Serré's motion as amended by Mr. Godin: "but that, before proceeding to the clause-by-clause study of the Bill, Quebec be invited to appear or to submit its position before the deadline for amendments, in order to protect its proposed amendments".

The Chair: That's clear.

Ms. Ashton, you have the floor.

Mr. Marc Serré: Then it will be my turn, Mr. Chair.

Ms. Niki Ashton: I have a question on procedure.

A letter dated October 13 and signed by Martin Koskinen, the Quebec premier's chief of staff, explicitly states that the Quebec government had sent all the amendments it wanted to propose to the committee and that it wouldn't be sending any representatives. This letter is not six months old, it was written two weeks ago. I understand that there are always new ministers and other changes, but this letter was practically written yesterday.

We are doing serious work here. We've had 16 meetings on this matter and we have received all the documents from Quebec. I think we have all taken the time to look at Quebec's proposals. We do appreciate the fact that the government called Mr. Godin's office, but I don't understand why the Government of Quebec, through the premier's chief of staff, would tell us that it wasn't planning to send representatives to the committee and then suddenly change course.

Are we playing political games, or do we want to make progress on the work we are doing here on a historic bill to act in the interests of Quebec and francophones across Canada? That's what I'm wondering.

Mr. Bernard Généreux: Mr. Chair, may I respond to Ms. Ashton?

Mr. Marc Serré: No, it's my turn to speak.

The Chair: I will recognize Mr. Serré and then I may suspend the meeting for a few moments.

Mr. Serré, the floor is yours.

Mr. Marc Serré: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

We've held almost 16 meetings and received 54 witnesses and 21 briefs. As Ms. Ashton mentioned, the Government of Quebec has submitted its recommendations and amendments to the bill. It said it wouldn't be sending representatives to the committee. So, I don't know why that would change all of a sudden because the Conservative Party and the Government of Quebec are talking to each other. The Quebec government refused to send representatives to the committee. It has sent us amendments and we will take them

into consideration. It is important to work with the Quebec government and we already have the amendments it has proposed.

I therefore don't understand why the Conservative Party is proposing this subamendment, other than to delay the bill yet again. We've received witnesses, we've heard clearly what they had to say, and now it's time for the committee to move forward and vote to continue its study.

The Chair: Thank you.

Before we address the substance of the subamendment proposed by Mr. Généreux, I have to say it may procedurally be inadmissible, since it introduces a matter that is foreign to the main motion and waters it down. In other words, it may stray too far from the amendment.

I would like to hear the Clerk's thoughts on that.

● (6040)

The Clerk: I can read you what the *House of Commons Procedure and Practice* has to say on the subject, but it's not up to me to decide. That decision is up to the Chair.

Page 542 of Bosc and Gagnon states that a "subamendment cannot enlarge upon the amendment, introduce new matters foreign to it or differ in substance from it."

The Chair: Mr. Généreux, based on that rule, I would say that modifying point four in the original motion amended by your colleague, Mr. Godin, to include elements that would lead us to consider something other than the date change proposed by Mr. Godin, would be considered as distinct and unrelated to the amendment. I would ask you to respond before I rule on this.

Mr. Bernard Généreux: I think that the terminology I used in my subamendment is not foreign to Mr. Godin's motion in amendment as a whole, quite the opposite. In fact, my subamendment emphasizes the importance of Quebec and its needs in relation to the Canadian and Quebec francophonie.

The Chair: I understand, Mr. Généreux.

Mr. Bernard Généreux: Therefore, I don't think that my terminology enlarges upon the amendment, quite the contrary.

The Chair: Mr. Généreux, I understand what you're trying to do, but from a technical perspective, the amendment Mr. Godin is making to point four of the original motion, which you want to amend, consists in a change of date and has nothing to do with inviting witnesses. According to the rule you can't change an amendment through a subamendment if it doesn't reflect the sense of the main amendment.

Mr. Bernard Généreux: Mr. Chair, I have to say I'm puzzled. The new point five Mr. Beaulieu proposed for the main motion was rejected, and you want to reject my subamendment concerning Quebec as well. That's strike two, and we have to wonder what that really means.

The Chair: Mr. Généreux, I would ask you to show respect for the Chair. I do not play baseball and there is no strike two. You heard the Clerk read us what the *House of Commons Procedure and Practice* has to say about this on page 542.

As Chair, I have to decide and rule on this matter—

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: Excuse me, but before you do that, I would like to raise a point on the subject.

The Chair: Yes, Mr. Beaulieu, I saw you. You're next on my list.

I'm talking about Mr. Généreux's subamendment here.

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: I have a point of order.

The Chair: In light of what the Clerk told us, Mr. Généreux, would you like to withdraw your subamendment, or would you prefer that I rule on the matter?

Mr. Bernard Généreux: I will leave it to you to decide, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: On a point of order, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: The floor is yours, Mr. Beaulieu.

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: I would like us to reread Mr. Généreux's subamendment. I really don't see how offering this opportunity to the Quebec government is unrelated to Mr. Godin's amendment. A new minister has just taken office. The Government of Quebec could not have known that there would be a gag order, that debate would be limited and that its proposals would probably not be heard.

The Chair: Mr. Beaulieu, I will answer that.

At page 542, *House of Commons Procedure and Practice* tells us about cases where a subamendment goes beyond the amendment itself. Let's keep in mind that Mr. Godin's amendment sought to modify point four of Mr. Serré's motion by changing the date in it. The amendment reads as follows:

4. the committee proceed with clause-by-clause consideration of the Bill no later than Tuesday, November 29, 2022, at 11:00 a.m. ET;

The amendment therefore replaces November 22 with November 29. That's the subject of the amendment.

Page 542 tells us that a subamendment cannot enlarge upon the amendment. I'll give you a hypothetical example: Mr. Généreux could have proposed December 3 instead of November 29. Mr. Godin's amendment consists in the change of date. This is not about inviting witnesses or specifying which ones.

Is that clear to you? The decision I have to make concerns the form and not the substance of Mr. Généreux's subamendment, which I'm not criticizing.

I'll go back to Mr. Généreux.

• (6045)

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: I asked that Mr. Généreux's subamendment be reread. Would that be possible?

Mr. Jacques Gourde: I have a point of order, Mr. Chair. I'm trying to help you. I may have a solution.

The Chair: Okay. Go ahead, Mr. Gourde.

Mr. Jacques Gourde: Mr. Chair, I've been on committees for 16 years and I've encountered this kind of situation before. You may well rule on the debate by stating that Mr. Généreux's subamendment is out of order in the context of Mr. Godin's amendment. However, if Mr. Généreux were to move the same thing, but this

time as an amendment to Mr. Serré's main motion, would that then be in order?

The Chair: We can always modify amendments, provided that the modification is not proposed by the mover of the amendment, if I understand the rules correctly.

To answer your question, Mr. Gourde, that's a possibility.

Mr. Jacques Gourde: If you rule that the subamendment is out of order in the context of Mr. Godin's amendment, then we could move this same change, but as an amendment to Mr. Serré's main motion.

The Chair: Yes, but the person who moved the amendment can't be the one to move the change.

Mr. Jacques Gourde: Okay.

In short, Mr. Généreux could propose exactly the same thing, but as an amendment to the main motion.

The Chair: That's right. However, Mr. Godin cannot do it.

Mr. Jacques Gourde: Okay.

The Chair: Mr. Beaulieu, was your intervention earlier about this or was it on another issue?

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: I wanted to speak on your point of order.

I asked if we could reread Mr. Généreux's subamendment. Can we start by reading it again?

The Chair: Go ahead, Mr. Généreux.

Mr. Bernard Généreux: I propose that point 4 of the original motion amended by Mr. Godin now read as follows:

the committee proceed with clause-by-clause consideration of the bill no later than Tuesday, November 29, 2022, at 11:00 a.m. ET, but that, before proceeding with a clause-by-clause analysis, Quebec be given the opportunity to appear or to submit its positions before amendments are submitted, in order to protect its requests for amendments.

Basically, the Government of Quebec would like us to give them the opportunity to make proposals or recommendations on some of the things that have already been proposed.

The Chair: Are you okay with that, Mr. Beaulieu? Do you want to comment?

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: This does have implications for the content of the amendment, because if we adopt Mr. Généreux's subamendment, it means that the period for witnesses to appear will have to be extended to allow the Government of Quebec to appear before the committee, if it wants to.

The Chair: Before I get to the substance of the issue, I need to analyze the form and presentation of the subamendment. I don't want to give away any clues to the political parties around the table, but if we look carefully at Mr. Godin's amendments, there may be other places that would be more suitable for Mr. Généreux's subamendment.

Having said that, I'll deal with the matter now.

First of all, Mr. Généreux, do you want to withdraw your subamendment?

Mr. Bernard Généreux: Actually, rather than withdrawing it, as Mr. Gourde suggested, could I move it as a subamendment somewhere else, as you just mentioned?

If I understand correctly, the problem with the form is that Mr. Godin's amendment to point 4 of Mr. Serré's motion refers to a date, but not my subamendment, which introduces new elements in the amendment.

So my question is, can my subamendment be moved in connection with another amendment?

The Chair: Go ahead and move it to see if there's unanimous consent.

Mr. Bernard Généreux: Do I need to seek unanimous consent?

• (6050)

The Chair: Actually, what would your second choice be?

Mr. Bernard Généreux: I would need to look at where I could move my subamendment. Everyone understands that the idea is to give the Government of Quebec another opportunity to appear before the committee and present its amendments, or at least to submit them before we proceed to our clause-by-clause of Bill C-13. I think everyone will agree on this proposal.

Mr. Chair, can we suspend the meeting for a few minutes, so I can look for the right place to move my subamendment?

The Chair: Before we suspend the meeting, I will go to Ms. Lattanzio.

Ms. Patricia Lattanzio: I want to clarify something. As I understand it, my colleague Mr. Généreux is going to withdraw his subamendment and introduce a new subamendment when we get back from the break. Am I understanding this correctly?

The Chair: I understood that Mr. Généreux was going to move his subamendment somewhere else not connected to Mr. Godin's amendment to point 4 of Mr. Serré's motion.

Ms. Patricia Lattanzio: Has this subamendment been withdrawn? That's what I'm trying to understand.

The Chair: Mr. Généreux, can you confirm that you're withdrawing your subamendment for the moment?

Mr. Bernard Généreux: Mr. Chair, I need three minutes. I just want to make sure to get this right.

The Chair: Okay. I'll suspend the meeting briefly.

• (6050)

(Pause)

• (6050)

The Chair: We will now resume the meeting. Go ahead, Mr. Godin.

Mr. Bernard Généreux: You meant to say "Mr. Généreux", didn't you?

The Chair: I'm sorry. Go ahead, Mr. Généreux.

Mr. Bernard Généreux: There was some confusion earlier, but I think I might be a little more on the ball.

Voices: Ha, ha!

Mr. Bernard Généreux: I see my microphone is on, and Mr. Godin is listening. I've been caught red-handed.

Getting back to Ms. Lattanzio's question, I move that the sentence I wanted to add to Mr. Godin's amendment to point 4 of Mr. Serré's motion be withdrawn and that it be added as a new point 5 instead, since point 5 in Mr. Serré's original motion has been deleted by another amendment moved by Mr. Godin. This new point 5 would read as follows: "that, before proceeding, the Government of Quebec be given the opportunity to submit its positions or to appear."

We could call a vote on that. I think everyone pretty much agrees.

The Chair: Yes. If there is unanimous consent, I may suggest something else to allow you to do what you want to do, Mr. Godin.

Mr. Bernard Généreux: You mean Mr. Généreux.

The Chair: Yes, I'm sorry.

Is there unanimous consent for Mr. Généreux to amend his subamendment so he can add to point 5 of the original motion?

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: Removing point 5 was actually about getting rid of the deadline for our clause-by-clause.

The Chair: There would no longer be a point 5.

Point (a) of Mr. Godin's amendment is about inviting witnesses, for example.

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: It was my understanding that Mr. Godin's amendments—

Mr. Bernard Généreux: Mr. Chair, it doesn't matter whether it's in point 1 or point 5. I'm almost tempted to tell you to put it wherever you want. What matters is that Quebec government officials are invited back to appear before the committee to present their amendments in person or propose new ideas before we proceed to our clause-by-clause consideration. We all agree on that.

• (6055)

The Chair: Okay. We have five minutes left, because I've been told that the technical team has to finish at 1 p.m. sharp.

So, is there unanimous consent for—

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: Mr. Godin's amendment struck out point 5 of Mr. Serré's motion precisely so that there would be no deadline for our clause-by-clause. At that point—

Mr. Bernard Généreux: In that case, let's put it in point 1.

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: We can put it in point 1, since Mr. Généreux seems to agree.

It's important to understand that one of the main purposes of Mr. Godin's amendment was to drop the deadline for our clause-by-clause. So, if we want to avoid distorting this amendment or moving away from its substance, since that was probably not Mr. Généreux's intention, perhaps we should propose this change in point 1 of Mr. Serré's motion.

The Chair: Mr. Généreux must ask the committee for permission to do that.

Mr. Bernard Généreux: I am seeking permission from the committee to propose that point 1 of Mr. Serré's motion be amended by adding the following, after the deadline for ministers to appear, although I don't remember the new date, because Ms. Ashton had proposed amendments: "that, before proceeding with the tabling of amendments, the committee be given the opportunity to allow the Government of Quebec to submit its positions or appear before the committee".

The Chair: Is there unanimous consent for Mr. Généreux's proposal?

Ms. Patricia Lattanzio: Mr. Chair, before we proceed to the vote, I would like to ask for clarification. At this point, are there any witnesses who have been called and have agreed to appear before the committee by November 24? Has the clerk already scheduled any witnesses before November 29, and if so, who?

I wonder how this will be handled if Mr. Godin's amendments are adopted.

The Chair: That's a good question and is relevant to Mr. Godin's amendments.

Madam Clerk, can you tell us which witnesses have confirmed their attendance?

The Clerk: Minister Fraser and his officials have confirmed their attendance for Tuesday, November 15, the date of the committee's next meeting.

I've also ensured that the witnesses from Power Law will be able to move up their appearance and join us for two hours on November 15. The committee will have to decide who it wants to hear from on November 15.

As for Thursday, November 17, the Minister of Official Languages and the President of the Treasury Board have confirmed that they can appear before the committee for two hours.

Representatives from Power Law were originally scheduled to appear for two hours on Tuesday, November 22.

I also have a list for Thursday, November 24, but I haven't invited any witnesses yet, because I was waiting to see how the committee wanted to arrange its schedule.

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: Were there any other invited witnesses who have had their appearances cancelled?

Ms. Patricia Lattanzio: Mr. Chair—

The Chair: Go ahead, Ms. Lattanzio.

Ms. Patricia Lattanzio: I want to reiterate what's been said, to make sure everything's clear. The witnesses who were called to appear on November 15, specifically Minister Fraser and representatives from Power Law, have confirmed their attendance.

We will hear from Minister Petitpas Taylor on November 17.

As I understand it, the only remaining time slot is on November 22, which was originally reserved for the Power Law representatives. Do I have that right?

The Clerk: If Minister Fraser is coming on November 15, and if that's the committee's priority, I'll ask the Power Law representa-

tives if they're still available to come on November 22, their original date.

Ms. Patricia Lattanzio: Power Law representatives could appear on November 15 for one hour, but if they want to appear for two hours, it will have to be on November 22. Is that right?

The Clerk: It's up to the committee to decide.

However, I would draw your attention to the motions passed by the committee to have each minister appear for two hours. That's why I invited only Minister Fraser on November 15.

• (6100)

Ms. Patricia Lattanzio: All right. Have the Power Law representatives confirmed they can appear on November 15?

The Clerk: Yes, they have confirmed that. However, I just received a message from Minister Fraser's office, so I haven't had a chance to discuss it with the Power Law representatives yet.

Ms. Patricia Lattanzio: Can we suspend the meeting to deal with the matter pertaining to witness management before we dispose of Mr. Généreux's amendment?

The Chair: I have to suspend the meeting anyway, because it is 1 p.m. Eastern time, and the technical team has informed me that the meeting can't go past that time because there is not enough technical support. It's too bad, because we were on a roll.

Let's keep all that in mind. We'll meet again in just a week's time.

The sitting is therefore suspended.

[*The meeting was suspended at 1:01 p.m., Thursday, November 3.*]

[*The meeting resumed at 11:06 a.m., Tuesday, November 15.*]

The Chair: I call this meeting back to order.

Welcome back to meeting number 38 of the House of Commons Standing Committee on Official Languages, suspended on November 3, 2022.

This meeting continues. It is both a new meeting and meeting number 38.

Today's meeting is taking place in a hybrid format, pursuant to the motion adopted by the House on Thursday, June 23, 2022. Members may participate either in person or via Zoom.

We will pick up where we left off, resuming debate on Mr. Serré's motion, Mr. Godin's amendments and Mr. Généreux's subamendment.

Mr. Généreux, before I give you the floor, I will read the subamendment to put things into context, since it's been a week and a half.

Mr. Bernard Généreux moved the following subamendment:

That the amendment be amended by adding after the words “the Minister of Official Languages, the President of the Treasury Board, the Minister of Canadian Heritage and the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship and their officials be invited to appear for one two hours for each minister in separate meetings no later than Thursday, November 24, 2022”, the following: “but that, before proceeding with a clause-by-clause analysis, Quebec be given the opportunity to appear or to submit its positions before amendments are submitted, in order to protect its requests for amendments”.

As a brief reminder, we are reversing the procedure. We are considering the subamendment proposed by Mr. Généreux, the amendments proposed by Mr. Godin and the main motion moved by Mr. Serré.

Mr. Généreux, you have the floor.

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

I would like to seek unanimous consent to withdraw my subamendment.

The Chair: Is there unanimous consent for Mr. Généreux to withdraw his subamendment?

Mr. Joël Godin: I'm waiting to see what happens.

I'm afraid of what's coming next.

The Chair: I see everyone nodding their heads. Everyone seems to agree on that.

By unanimous consent, Mr. Généreux's subamendment is withdrawn.

Mr. Marc Dalton: We could also withdraw the amendment.

The Chair: So we're back to Mr. Godin's amendment.

The floor is open for debate.

Mr. Beaulieu, did you want to speak to that?

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: I will speak later.

The Chair: Mr. Godin, I see that you want to say something, but you were on the list of people who were supposed to speak when we suspended the meeting.

I will therefore give you the floor.

Mr. Joël Godin: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'm glad to see you in person today. It's far more efficient.

However, we do unfortunately need to use the hybrid format to meet in some circumstances. All that to say, I wish to inform you of something, Mr. Chair. I am very transparent and very collaborative. Unfortunately, I will be participating in the meeting virtually this Thursday, so I can hardly criticize you.

Mr. Chair, I would indeed like to speak again on my amendment to Mr. Serré's motion.

The Chair: Before I go any further, does everyone in the room and participating virtually have Mr. Godin's amendments in front of them?

I believe they were distributed by the clerk the week before. Everyone should have them to follow along.

Mr. Joël Godin: Mr. Chair, I can explain my amendment. That was actually my intention.

The point of my amendment is to ensure that the committee can do its work properly and meet the objective of hearing from the four ministers whose departments will be affected by Bill C-13, specifically the Department of Canadian Heritage, Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada, as well as the Treasury Board and Official Languages.

I think it's important that we hear from those four ministers. We would have preferred them to come during the debate, so we could have them answer our questions, confirm our assumptions and help draft our amendments as part of the process. Unfortunately, two of these ministers decided to appear at the conclusion of our testimony. That is their prerogative, not that I necessarily agree with it. I don't share their point of view, but we have to move forward at some point.

We also need to correct the dates, because time is running out.

Mr. Marc Serré: I have a point of order.

The Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship did not cancel his attendance. He would have been here, if the motion had passed.

Mr. Joël Godin: Mr. Chair, that's not a point of order.

Mr. Marc Serré: I wanted to clarify that the minister did not refuse to appear.

The Chair: Mr. Serré, that is not a point of order.

Thank you for clarifying that, but Mr. Godin is right.

Mr. Joël Godin: Mr. Chair, thank you for agreeing with me and confirming that that was not a point of order.

So as I was saying, we wanted the four ministers to appear before the committee. I think it's important to point that out and really stress that, which is the point of my subamendment. I want to ensure that we can do our work properly and proceed with our clause-by-clause with no time limits.

That's my first comment, to help set the tone to start debating this subamendment.

The Chair: Mr. Beaulieu, go ahead.

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: I'd like to amend Mr. Godin's subamendment.

In point 1—

The Chair: Just a moment, Mr. Beaulieu.

After speaking with our analysts and our clerk, to make things easier, more fluid and less confusing, it is being strongly suggested that we proceed one item at a time, rather than everything all at once. This is at my discretion. I would suggest that you present your subamendment one point at a time, if you wish. I assume there'll be a number of points.

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: There are four.

Mr. Joël Godin: Mr. Chair, I want to make sure I understand what you mean by “one point at a time”.

The Chair: Rather than proposing four subamendments to your subamendment, since Mr. Beaulieu is proposing subamendments, is that not right, Mr. Beaulieu?

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: It is one subamendment with several points.

Mr. Joël Godin: I'd like to finish my thought. I wouldn't want my colleague's parliamentary privilege to be breached or for him not to be able to propose more than one subamendment.

The Chair: That was certainly not my intention. On the contrary, I would suggest that we study all the subamendments, but in order to avoid confusion, I'm suggesting that we look at them one at a time. If there is a point (a) in his subamendment, let's discuss it, debate it and vote on it. Then, Mr. Beaulieu would present point (b), for example.

I'm not suggesting in any way that we limit committee members to just one amendment. That's not what I'm saying. Our rules of procedure must be followed.

Do you understand, Mr. Beaulieu?

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: Yes.

I could present all the points at the same time. It's pretty straightforward.

The Chair: Go ahead.

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: Incidentally, we checked the procedure followed at our last meeting. We were told that the order of clauses could not be changed. My proposal was dismissed on that basis. We checked, and the order of the clause-by-clause can be changed, as long as there is unanimous consent. We can come back to that. That was an aside.

In point (a), I would change "November 17". November 17 is fast approaching.

The Chair: Excuse me, Mr. Beaulieu, but the amendment clearly states November 24.

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: Right.

Mr. Joël Godin: I have a point of order.

I'm hearing discussions and comments from the support staff. I think only the members in the room should be given the floor to speak.

The Chair: I haven't given the floor to anyone besides committee members thus far. What you're really saying is that people around the table need to keep their voices down.

To our wonderful support staff, please take note.

Mr. Beaulieu, go ahead.

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: Thus, "Thursday, November 24, 2022" would become "Thursday December 1, 2022".

Next, I would add the following:

The committee also invite the following witnesses to appear and that they be divided into three different blocks for a minimum of one hour to hear the evidence of each of them: (1) the Quebec Bar and French-speaking jurists, (2) the francophone school boards of Ontario, British Columbia and Acadia, and (3) the Université de Moncton and Alphonse-Desjardins Québec, provided that all the evidence is heard no later than December 8, 2022;

I will provide this in writing.

The Chair: So there are two points related to Mr. Godin's amendments.

The first has to do with changing the November 24 date suggested by Mr. Godin to December 1.

There is also the second point.

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: That's what I just read.

The Chair: The second point would follow the fourth paragraph of Mr. Godin's amendments.

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: This could go after the first paragraph.

The Chair: It's about inviting witnesses to appear.

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: Yes.

The Chair: Yes, that would be fine. It has to do with inviting witnesses, including the Quebec Bar. With regard to associations of French-speaking jurists, there are quite a few. There is one in New Brunswick, one in Nova Scotia, one in Manitoba, one in Ontario, and so on. There is one for almost every bar.

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: I'll double check that.

The Chair: All right.

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: These are associations of French-speaking jurists.

The Chair: These are all the existing bar associations of the provinces and territories.

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: I believe the plan was to hear from jurists.

The Chair: There is the francophone wing—

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: I could add "among those already scheduled as witnesses".

The Chair: There is the Canadian Bar Association, which has a francophone wing. That's probably what you meant.

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: If that was already planned, then yes.

The Chair: Okay, so French-speaking jurists would be added to the witness list.

Which boards are we talking about?

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: The francophone school boards of Ontario, British Columbia and Acadia.

The Chair: There is also the Université de Moncton.

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: Yes, and I'm also adding Alphonse-Desjardins Québec.

The Chair: That's great.

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: That organization was already included.

The Chair: Are there any questions?

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: There's more to my amendment. Would you like us to deal with that part first?

The Chair: If the other amendments aren't related to the same subject, perhaps we could continue and come back to them.

I won't cut you off and we'll come back to it, otherwise we might get confused.

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: I have no problem with that proposal, if everyone else agrees.

The Chair: Mr. Godin, go ahead.

Mr. Joël Godin: Mr. Chair, if we want to do a really good job, and I think that's what everyone wants, can we get the subamendment in writing?

Madam Clerk, could that be provided to us? Please understand that—

The Chair: We're in the process of sending it.

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: That's right, it's coming in virtually.

In the meantime, I can continue, if you like.

The Chair: I understand, but I'd prefer to address them one at a time, so we don't waste our time, unless you tell us that what you're proposing is related to the others. Otherwise, let's finish with this amendment before we move on.

Don't worry, Mr. Beaulieu, you'll get a chance to speak.

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: Okay.

The Chair: We're waiting for the written text to come in. I may not see you on the screen because of the lighting. I don't see any raised hands.

I'm told that the clerk just received it and is forwarding it to all committee members.

Are there any questions on the subamendment?

Go ahead, Mr. Godin.

Mr. Joël Godin: Mr. Chair, my first comment is that it's important to think carefully because we're getting caught up in the schedule. Unfortunately, the tabling of my colleague Mr. Serré's motion means that the committee's work is no longer moving forward and we're wasting time discussing procedure. Meanwhile, it is the French language that suffers.

It might be worth giving my colleague Mr. Serré the opportunity to seek unanimous consent to withdraw his motion. That's my first comment.

Also, Mr. Chair, regarding the following quote, "The committee also invite the following witnesses to appear and that they be divided into three different blocks", unfortunately, I don't have the breakdown of the various parties and witnesses requested by committee members based on their political affiliations. As you know, we must respect the distribution.

The Chair: I must stop you there, Mr. Godin.

Mr. Joël Godin: Yes, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: I gave you the floor, but on the subject of Mr. Beaulieu's subamendment. The first point you raised had to do with Mr. Serré's motion.

Mr. Joël Godin: It was an introductory comment.

Now, Mr. Chair, let's look at Mr. Beaulieu's subamendment, which talks about witnesses. I think this is related to the subamendment, unless we're not on the same page.

The Chair: We weren't on the same page, but now I'm with you.

Go ahead.

Mr. Joël Godin: We should be on the same page here at the Standing Committee on Official Languages.

The committee also invite the following witnesses to appear and that they be divided into three different blocks for a minimum of one hour to hear the evidence of each of them: (1) the Quebec Bar and French-speaking jurists, (2) the francophone school boards of Ontario, British Columbia and Acadia, and (3) the Université de Moncton and Alphabétisation Québec—

As I just mentioned, it would be important to have a breakdown of the witnesses chosen by each party.

The Liberal Party triggered the last election. They got the most MPs, but not the majority they wanted. Two years have been wasted.

Furthermore, the Conservative Party is the second party, and the Bloc Québécois is the third, followed by the NDP. From what I understand, the current witnesses are being proposed by the Bloc Québécois. So I guess I'm wondering why the second official opposition party would be given this privilege.

Do you understand the connection I'm making with the subamendment, Mr. Chair?

The Chair: Yes, I hear what you're saying.

Mr. Joël Godin: Now I'll come back to the second point, which refers to a date. The motion said November 17, my amendment proposed November 24, and now we're talking about December 8.

This is based on what I received from the clerk.

The Chair: December 1 is in the first point, and December 8 is the date for witnesses.

Do I have that right, Mr. Beaulieu?

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: December 8 is for the second point, but I haven't talked about that yet. We've only talked about the first one.

Mr. Joël Godin: December 8 is the date in the first point.

Is that right, Mr. Beaulieu?

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: No, I didn't have the right—

Mr. Joël Godin: Mr. Chair, I just gave the right information to the member who moved the subamendment.

We are working as a team, Mr. Beaulieu.

I seem to be trivializing that, but it's important to keep up.

So, regarding point 2 of Mr. Serré's motion, the amendments to Bill C-13 should be submitted to the clerk in both official languages on December 8 and until noon on December 9.

Second, during clause-by-clause, the amendments related to the requests of the Government of Quebec and the francophone minority communities should be debated without any time limit, before being put to a vote.

What I'm trying to illustrate is that calendar dates are not useful to us. I think we need to talk about meeting numbers and work periods.

If everything gets delayed for even one meeting, we'll have to pass another subamendment. We will be wasting our time and not making any progress. Once again, Mr. Chair, the French language in Canada will be what suffers.

I'm therefore having some serious doubts. Once again, I invite the Liberal Party, of which Mr. Serré is a member, to withdraw its motion as far as dates are concerned and not impose time limits on us.

On the other hand, I do fully agree with point 5 of his subamendment:

5. During clause-by-clause consideration, amendments related to requests from the Government of Quebec and the francophone minority communities be debated without any time limit before being put to a vote.

I totally agree with this point, but I would apply it to everything. We shouldn't limit ourselves in terms of identifying clauses related to organizations. We need to work and not limit the debate on amendments.

So those are my first comments regarding my colleague's suggestion. We agree, but some adjustments are needed. Now I would like to hear from my other committee colleagues.

The Chair: I'm going to follow the order in which I see the hands raised.

Those who are participating virtually, please raise your hands.

Mr. Beaulieu, you will have the floor first, followed by Mr. Dalton.

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: I'd like to clarify one point. The witnesses we're talking about in point 1 are not Bloc Québécois witnesses. None of them are.

However, we do see them as important. If indeed, as indicated in the Speech from the Throne, the federal government has a responsibility to defend not only English, as has always been the case, but also French, then we need to hear from these witnesses and have a diversity of views to come up with something important.

The Chair: It's important to set the record straight.

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: Each of them, specifically the Quebec Bar and French-speaking jurists, has important points of view to share. The same is true for the francophone school boards of Ontario, British Columbia and Acadia. We all know what a struggle it is for these organizations to find sufficient funds to run minority language schools. It's also important to hear from the Université de Moncton and Alphonse Desjardins Québec. As I said, we didn't invite them. Fortunately, there are also people from Quebec who were invited by parties other than the Bloc Québécois. All of this testimony must be completed before December 8. I think that's entirely feasible.

The Chair: Thank you for the correction regarding who invited the witnesses. It was very timely.

Mr. Dalton, go ahead.

Mr. Marc Dalton: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I am a little concerned that we are wasting time discussing dates. We are talking about November 17, November 24 and December 1. We're debating dates and wasting time. It would be much more efficient if the subamendment would specify the number of hours and the number of witnesses that will appear before the committee so we can continue. We missed an opportunity to hear testimony because we had to have this debate.

Of course, we'll have to do our clause-by-clause. That's normal. We've done several clause-by-clause studies here, but right now it looks like we're going to have to run on a very strict schedule, like a train, under Mr. Serré's motion. On such and such a date, we'll have to do this; on such and such a date, we'll have to do that. It all has to be done before December 1, and that will affect your powers, Mr. Chair.

In other studies, we've talked about the government's response to COVID-19 and the health of interpreters. We have a responsibility to hear witnesses who have already been called. We need to do that work. Then we can move on to the clause-by-clause.

Thank you.

The Chair: Mr. Godin, did you want to speak on the same subamendment, the one moved by Mr. Beaulieu?

Mr. Joël Godin: Yes, Mr. Chair.

The Conservative Party of Canada submitted a list of witnesses in response to the clerk's request. I believe that was on September 1. We had a list of 47 witnesses we wanted to hear from. The Liberals, the NDP and the Bloc Québécois all did the same. We had a meeting at this committee to pare down that list. I had suggested that we pare down the list of witnesses so we could move forward a little more quickly, without cutting corners.

My colleague's amendment is proposing witnesses. Can the other parties around the table add witnesses at this point? For example, I read in the paper this morning that a company like Air Canada, whose representative was on our list, simply said that it was waiting for Bill C-13 to pass, because it didn't want to comply with Quebec's Bill 96. If we want to do a good job as parliamentarians, we need to hear from these witnesses, we need to understand their reality.

Mr. Chair, I am not the CEO of an airline in Canada; I am a member of Parliament. If I want to do my job well, I need to hear from these people. We haven't heard much about Part 2 of Bill C-13. Mr. Serré's motion asks that we move quickly, that we hurry, and if we are not finished by a certain date, we will have to move on. Once again, what is going to suffer? The French language will suffer.

I'm concerned that if Mr. Beaulieu is allowed to add witnesses, the other three parties will have to go through the same exercise to add witnesses. His comments are relevant, but where do we land? I think that's the appropriate word.

Those are my comments for now, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: I don't see anyone on the screen.

Mr. Beaulieu, go ahead.

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: We also need to add CN. The deadline for federally regulated businesses to register under Bill 96 is December 1. CN has already announced that it will not register, because it expects that the new Official Languages Act will allow them to circumvent Bill 101. Coincidentally, CN is among the companies that most often disrespect French-language rules. Reports from the Commissioner of Official Languages denounce such companies. The Official Languages Act already applied to these companies, before it applied to several other companies under federal jurisdiction. This hasn't stopped them from flouting French-language rules. The new version of the act, with Bill C-13, will not fundamentally improve anything.

I'm always open to parties coming up with alternative witnesses. That said, we are already making concessions. If the deadline is December 8, it will further restrict the time for witnesses to appear compared to what was originally planned. There would certainly be less time to hear all the witnesses than without the motion. I think it's a good compromise.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Beaulieu.

I'll go to Ms. Ashton.

Ms. Niki Ashton: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

With all due respect to the conversation taking place here at committee, I'd like to express my concern that we've already devoted about 15 meetings to this bill. We have already heard repeated messages from our witnesses. However, what matters most is the strong desire and clear demand from francophone communities across the country that we move this bill forward much faster than we are now.

I want to recall the words of the FCFA, which issued a statement on November 9 about how long it's taking to study Bill C-13. We in the NDP take this statement very seriously. It really explains our desire to get this bill moving faster than we are now.

The FCFA statement reads:

After six years of work and consultations, the FCFA believes that parliamentarians have everything they need to modernize the Official Languages Act.

The decline of the French language, as illustrated by this summer's census data, shows once again how urgently this modernization is needed. More than ever, francophones need a strong, modern law that is respected.

The FCFA would like to see Bill C-13 passed by the House before the end of the year.

I think it's critical that we respect the FCFA's position, which is also the position of several stakeholders who have been communicating the same message over the past few weeks and months. I know we all want to do a good job, a quality job. We all want to propose amendments.

My concern, however, is that the communities on the front lines are clearly telling us what they want. I think it's critical that we, as a committee, respect those requests, act on them and make sure we do our job on this bill and get it back to the House before the holidays.

The Chair: Thank you for your comments, Ms. Ashton.

I'll now go to Mr. Godin, followed by Mr. Beaulieu.

Mr. Joël Godin: Mr. Chair, I'd actually like to commend my NDP colleague, Ms. Ashton, with whom I have the privilege of sitting here on this committee. We've always had a great working relationship. We don't always share the same political views or philosophies, but I really appreciate her and the great work she does.

Now, I would like to point out, with all due respect to Ms. Ashton, that on June 13, 2022, a decision was made here in committee. It reads as follows:

It was agreed, — That, in relation to the consideration of Bill C-13, An Act to amend the Official Languages Act, to enact the Use of French in Federally Regulated Private Businesses Act and to make related amendments to other Acts,:

- a. the Minister of Official Languages, the Minister of Canadian Heritage, the President of the Treasury Board, the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship and the Minister of Justice be invited to appear for two hours per department;

Mr. Marc Serré: Mr. Chair, I have a point of order.

Are we talking about Mr. Beaulieu's amendment right now? Is this just more filibustering from the opposition to further delay things?

I just wanted to confirm what's going on here.

The Chair: Ms. Ashton was commenting on Mr. Beaulieu's sub-amendment, suggesting that we should move on, since we've heard from many witnesses. It was a direct comment to Mr. Beaulieu, and Mr. Godin is responding to Ms. Ashton with a counter-argument.

So there is a link, and I have to respect that.

Mr. Joël Godin: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

You're following closely.

- b. the Commissioner of Official Languages be invited to appear for a one-hour meeting on Wednesday, June 15, 2022;
- c. the clerk invite witnesses to appear during the meetings on the weeks of June 6, 2022, and June 13, 2022;
- d. as agreed to on Wednesday, June 1, 2022, subject to the approval of the recognized parties' whips, and the availability of meeting slots from the House of Commons, the committee hold additional meetings for two additional hours per week starting the week of September 19, 2022; and
- e. the committee meet in camera...

That's my point, Mr. Chair. It was important to present the whole decision that was made here. Item (e) of a June 13 decision by the Standing Committee on Official Languages states:

- e. the committee meet in camera after 20 sessions...

Ms. Ashton mentioned earlier that we need to move quickly and that we've had about 15 meetings.

It is not bad faith on the part of the opposition parties. I am excluding the NDP because they are part of the Liberal-NDP coalition. However, I am talking about the other two opposition parties. This is not a filibuster. It's on the record that we decided on June 13 that we wanted to have 20 meetings and then go in camera to see where we would land.

Now we're being accused of filibustering. That's totally inappropriate. It's dangerous to say that kind of thing.

The Chair: Let's get back to the subamendment.

Mr. Joël Godin: I do think we need to add some witnesses.

I agree with the list of witnesses suggested by Mr. Beaulieu, but the privilege of adding witnesses also needs to be extended to us.

The Chair: Mr. Beaulieu, go ahead.

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: I, too, have greatly appreciated Ms. Ashton's work and her collaboration over the years that we have served together on the Standing Committee on Official Languages.

The FCFA is the organization that, according to the federal government, represents francophones outside Quebec. However, it's also important to note that 90% of francophones are in Quebec. All of the witnesses from Quebec and the groups defending the French language in Quebec that have appeared before us have always been excluded by the Official Languages Act, which has created a rift between francophones in Quebec and francophones outside Quebec. They are completely opposed to Bill C-13.

Yesterday I attended the launch of a book entitled *Le Piège des langues officielles*, or "The Official Language Trap", by Éric Poirier. I encourage everyone to read it; it's very interesting. He's a very important author from Quebec. He wrote that significant changes are needed to ensure that francophones in Quebec maintain their demographic weight, given that, until now, the Official Languages Act has served only to promote English as an official language in Quebec.

We were hopeful following the Speech from the Throne. Today, Antoine Robitaille published a very important article. He reviewed the whole process that's been followed since the throne speech. The more time passes, the more vague things become and the less the federal government appears to defend French in Quebec.

I think this is very important, and I hope Ms. Ashton will continue to support francophones and the French language in Quebec.

Until now, the NDP has been in favour of applying Bill 101 to federally regulated businesses. At the Standing Committee on Science and Research, the NDP once again formed an alliance with the Liberals to rule out a study that had just begun on scientific publication in French. They simply stopped the study. That is troubling. I hope the NDP will maintain the positions that it has held until now on the French language.

Ms. Niki Ashton: Mr. Chair, I have a point of order.

The Chair: Go ahead, Ms. Ashton.

Ms. Niki Ashton: I want to ensure that what is said in committee really reflects reality. With all due respect to Mr. Beaulieu, that is not at all what happened at that other committee. The clerk should be consulted. The clerk clearly said that the witnesses Mr. Beaulieu is talking about didn't want to appear before committee. So it wasn't the parties—

Mr. Joël Godin: Mr. Chair, I have a point of order.

Ms. Niki Ashton: —that ended the debate.

I wanted to correct the record on what happened there.

The Chair: We are a fairly disciplined committee, given the parliamentary rules. We're dealing with Mr. Beaulieu's subamendment.

Thank you, Ms. Ashton, for your comments.

Mr. Godin, I haven't forgotten about you.

Mr. Beaulieu, I would ask you to limit your comments to your subamendment, because that's what we're talking about.

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: All right.

The Chair: I'd really like to focus on the subamendment, and then we'll look at the others afterwards, as we've said.

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: In any case, I wasn't at that committee. I'm reporting what I saw on Twitter.

The Chair: Right, so let's stick to the subamendment.

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: That said, I would be willing to—

The Chair: Just a moment. Mr. Godin had a point of order.

Mr. Joël Godin: Mr. Chair, I just wanted to point out that Ms. Ashton was doing exactly what Mr. Beaulieu was doing earlier.

We're not judging; we have an opinion.

The Chair: Right.

Mr. Joël Godin: Opinions are being expressed. I think they both have the right to express themselves; that's also important.

That said, I don't believe either of them was at that committee.

The Chair: Precisely. Everybody is working in good faith, I don't want to chastise anybody, but if we can, let's limit our comments to the subamendment. That way we can get back to Mr. Beaulieu who has other subamendments to propose.

Mr. Beaulieu, please go ahead, on your own subamendment.

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: Mr. Godin seemed to suggest that I'm adapting my subamendment to allow parties to invite their witnesses. I don't know if it's possible to do that.

The Chair: No, you can't do that. We are talking about your subamendment, as you sent it to us in writing.

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: All right.

Mr. Joël Godin: Mr. Chair, he could do so if he obtained unanimous consent.

The Chair: One moment; I'll check on that.

There are two possibilities. One, with the unanimous consent of the committee, you could withdraw your amendment and propose a new one; or, again with the unanimous consent of the committee, we could add more witnesses as per your subamendment.

Is that how you'd like us to proceed, Mr. Beaulieu? I'd be happy to ask for unanimous consent.

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: Yes, let's see if there's unanimous consent. I'd just like each party to be able to—

The Chair: I want to be sure I understand you correctly, Mr. Beaulieu. In your subamendment, you're asking to expand the list of witnesses. Is that correct?

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: Yes. Otherwise, a point could be added to allow each party to determine which witnesses should be given priority in the same period.

The Chair: If there's unanimous consent, it will pass; otherwise we will go back to your subamendment and vote.

Is there unanimous consent?

Mr. Marc Serré: No.

The filibuster continues. What's going on here is terrible.

The Chair: You're right, Mr. Serré. There is not unanimous consent.

Is there any further discussion on the proposed subamendment?

Mr. Beaulieu, go ahead.

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: I just wanted to respond to Mr. Serré, who mentioned a filibuster. I personally think that his motion is a kind of filibuster.

The Chair: Let's focus on the subamendment. Are there any other questions? We will proceed with the recorded vote, Madam Clerk.

Mr. Joël Godin: It's up to you, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Do you have a proposal, Mr. Godin?

Mr. Joël Godin: Mr. Chair, the committee can choose between a unanimous vote, adoption by consent or a recorded vote. Is that correct, Madam Clerk?

The Clerk: There's a vote by a show of hands, a recorded vote or unanimous consent.

Mr. Joël Godin: We request a recorded vote, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: We will therefore proceed with a recorded vote on Mr. Beaulieu's first subamendment. Go ahead, Madam Clerk.

(Subamendment negatived: nays 10; yeas 1. [*See Minutes of Proceedings*])

The Chair: Mr. Beaulieu, as I had indicated, you may continue to present your subamendments.

Please go ahead.

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: The second point of Mr. Godin's subamendment states that amendments to Bill C-13 must be submitted to the clerk in both official languages no later than 5:00 p.m. on Thursday, November 24, 2022. I propose changing that to December 8. Second, I propose that the amendments be distributed to committee members in both official languages by noon on Friday, December 9, 2022, in writing.

If we want to limit the debate, and if we want to be truly effective, we may need to make some adjustments. I think it's important to do that, if our goal really is to have a discussion, a real debate, and come up with the best possible bill. This means that our views cannot all be pre-determined. It allows us to meet a deadline while still having time to propose our amendments.

Otherwise, it's as though everything is already decided, and we just want to take action.

The Chair: Are there any questions or comments?

Seeing no one who wishes to speak, I will call the question.

(Subamendment negatived: nays 6; yeas 5. [*See Minutes of Proceedings*])

The Chair: Mr. Beaulieu, go ahead please.

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: The vote is getting closer and closer. Maybe the results will be better on the next subamendments.

I'll leave the third point as it is; I won't change anything.

The fourth point states that the committee will conduct its clause-by-clause consideration of the bill no later than Tuesday, November 29, 2022. I propose instead Tuesday, December 13, at 11:00 a.m.

I think that would give us time to have a real debate.

The Chair: Mr. Godin, go ahead.

Mr. Joël Godin: It seems to me that, with the motion tabled on November 1 by my colleague Mr. Serré, we are caught in a sort of funnel.

Point 1 indicates that the Minister of Official Languages, the President of the Treasury Board, the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship—obviously, the Minister of Canadian Heritage isn't mentioned, although he should be—are invited to appear no later than November 17, 2022.

I would remind all committee members that today is November 15, 2022. So that meeting would take place this Thursday.

Point 2 of Mr. Serré's motion reads as follows:

2. amendments to Bill C-13 be submitted to the clerk in both official languages no later than 5:00 p.m. ET on Thursday, November 17, 2022, and distributed to committee members in both official languages by noon on Friday, November 18, 2022;

Mr. Chair, I feel compelled to say that the best thing that could happen to this committee right now is for my colleague Mr. Serré to withdraw his motion so that we can get on with the real business. So I'm reaching out to him again.

The Chair: Are there any other comments related to Mr. Beaulieu's third subamendment?

Mr. Beaulieu, please go ahead.

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: I wanted to add that I agree with what Mr. Godin just said.

The Chair: You're talking about your subamendment.

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: We invite people to vote in favour of my subamendment.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Beaulieu.

Mr. Marc Serré: Mr. Chair, I won't be withdrawing my motion.

The Fédération des communautés francophones et acadienne and the Assemblée de la francophonie de l'Ontario were clear. We need to get on with our clause-by-clause. The deadlines we are currently facing are getting shorter. We could have had a third meeting. The Minister of Immigration and the President of the Treasury Board could have been here this Thursday. I don't understand—

The Chair: I understand what you're saying, Mr. Serré, but I have to interrupt you because we are debating Mr. Beaulieu's third subamendment.

Mr. Beaulieu, you've also extended the debate a bit beyond your subamendment.

Mr. Joël Godin: I have a point of order, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Please go ahead, Mr. Godin.

Mr. Joël Godin: Earlier Ms. Ashton pointed out that we shouldn't say things that could be misleading.

Mr. Serré just said that the FCFA and the AFO are in favour of his motion.

The Chair: Okay, but that is not a point of order. We need to stop that right now.

Are there any comments on Mr. Beaulieu's third subamendment?

Mr. Joël Godin: Mr. Chair, I hadn't finished.

The Chair: No, but I am trying to cut you off politely, because it wasn't a point of order.

I'm going to be a little tougher on points of order, because we need to focus on the proposed amendments and subamendments.

Please go ahead, Mr. Godin, on Mr. Beaulieu's subamendment.

Mr. Joël Godin: I feel compelled, as a parliamentarian, to complete my thought regarding the fact that we want to do the right thing and say the right thing. What Mr. Serré said is not entirely true.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: I don't wish to open the discussion on that, since this is not a debate.

Seeing no further discussion on this, we'll go to the vote.

We'll have a recorded vote, Madam Clerk.

(Subamendment negatived: nays 6; yeas 5. [See *Minutes of Proceedings*])

The Chair: Mr. Beaulieu, we'll now look at your last subamendment, dealing with the fifth point of the amendments proposed by Mr. Godin.

Go ahead please, Mr. Beaulieu.

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: I propose adding:

5. During clause-by-clause consideration, amendments related to requests from the Government of Quebec and the francophone minority communities be debated without any time limit before being put to a vote

We say that we want to stand up for the French language and that the federal government has a duty to do just that. However, I find it somewhat deplorable that, for the Liberals, francophones are only those who live outside Quebec, as my colleague Mr. Serré said ear-

lier. It's as though Quebec doesn't even exist. It doesn't matter if Quebec doesn't agree with certain measures.

I have a great deal of respect for the FCFA and the francophone and Acadian communities that are fighting every day just to be able to speak French. These communities can function in French up to a certain point in certain regions, such as the Acadian peninsula, which is perhaps one of the last places where this is possible. I think it's really important to take the time to hear and debate any proposals related to these issues. That is why I'm proposing this fifth point.

The Chair: Mr. Godin, go ahead.

Mr. Joël Godin: Continuing in the same spirit as my colleague, I would add that we want to do the right thing for francophones in Quebec and across Canada.

You are Acadian, Mr. Chair, and there are people here on the committee who are Franco-Ontarians. There is also our francophone colleague from Manitoba, Ms. Ashton.

I think it's important to take the time to get it right.

What bothers the members of our political party is the fact that Mr. Serré's motion limits the time devoted to clause-by-clause consideration of the bill. This shows a lack of will, a lack of intention, a lack of listening and a lack of determination to do things right so that Bill C-13, which amends the Official Languages Act drafted in 1969, can pass and ensure that our country remains bilingual 50 years from now, specifically, with French and English as official languages. That's why I am very much in favour of that aspect of Mr. Beaulieu's subamendment, because we do not want to limit the debate.

As I mentioned earlier, we have not yet heard from witnesses on Part 2 of the act with respect to the use of French in federally regulated private businesses.

According to articles in the *Journal de Québec* and the *Journal de Montréal* this morning, businesses like CN and Air Canada are waiting for Bill C-13 to pass so they can get around French language requirements in Quebec, as Mr. Beaulieu said earlier.

I think this is a very important subamendment. Again, I am reaching out to my colleagues in the other parties, and I invite them to support my colleague's subamendment.

I must say that I'm planning to move a similar motion. You received a notice of motion in advance about this. With this motion, we want to ensure that we are not bullied and that there is no gag order here at the Standing Committee on Official Languages so that we can get this right.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Godin.

Mr. Vis, go ahead please.

Mr. Brad Vis: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I am a new member of the committee. We worked well together at the beginning, but there are lessons to be learned from this debate. When the leader of the government no longer respects the independence of the committee and Mr. Serré imposes such a gag order on the motion, this is what happens.

The Chair: I must stop you there, Mr. Vis. We've already talked about the need to focus on the amendments and subamendments.

Mr. Brad Vis: Yes.

We need more time to protect and promote bilingualism in British Columbia right now. We already know that there are a lot of problems in this regard, especially in my province. This motion does not give us enough time to study this bill to promote bilingualism in British Columbia.

Thank you very much.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Vis, for always making your comments in French. I commend you for that.

Are there any other questions or comments?

I am not seeing anyone who wishes to speak.

Madam Clerk, we shall now proceed to the vote on the fourth and final of the subamendments proposed by Mr. Beaulieu to Mr. Godin's amendment.

(Subamendment negatived: nays 6; yeas 5.)

The Chair: We'll go back to Mr. Godin's amendment and go around the table again.

Do you have any comments or remarks to add?

Mr. Godin, you seemed hesitant. I can start with Mr. Beaulieu, if you like.

Mr. Joël Godin: Mr. Chair, I wouldn't want to deny my colleague from the Bloc Québécois his right to speak. At present, the Conservative Party and the Bloc Québécois are doing an excellent job for francophones in Quebec and outside Quebec.

Are you giving me the floor, Mr. Chair?

The Chair: Yes, please go ahead, Mr. Godin.

Mr. Joël Godin: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

In response to my colleague Mr. Serré's motion, I have tabled an amendment to establish which ministers and which jurisdictions will appear before us so that we can better frame our work.

I am requesting that the Minister of Official Languages, the President of the Treasury Board, the Minister of Canadian Heritage and the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, as well as their senior officials, be invited to appear, for two hours per minister.

We've heard rumours that the President of the Treasury Board and the Minister of Official Languages would appear and testify before the committee for only half an hour and then turn things over to their officials. I think it's important for them to appear before us and to hear their testimony.

Once again, the motivation behind this amendment is to ensure that we can do our job properly. We want to know how the Depart-

ment of Canadian Heritage will adapt to the new Official Languages Act. It is indeed important to ask this of our public servants, but it's even more important to put this question to the Minister of Canadian Heritage.

Mr. Serré's motion doesn't even include the Minister of Canadian Heritage. However, the text of Bill C-13 clearly states in black and white that the minister has certain duties and obligations. It is the Minister of Canadian Heritage who, by order-in-council, forms a department — I may not be using the right terminology — or appoints a Minister of Official Languages. The Minister for Official Languages does not have a department. He or she reports to the Minister of Canadian Heritage, and the Minister of Canadian Heritage wouldn't come and testify? I find that absurd. That is the first point of my amendment.

The second point of my amendment is that the amendments to Bill C-13 be submitted to the clerk in both official languages. The dates have been adjusted, but again, it's my amendment so, unfortunately, I can't move a subamendment at this point. As I said earlier, logically, we shouldn't be working based on the calendar, but rather based on sessions. The fact is, when there are votes or when a meeting is postponed, cancelled or suspended, it is always the French language that suffers.

I think this is a good amendment. Having said that, I would prefer that my colleague withdraw his motion, that we establish clearer rules and have a clear timetable and a clear list of work to be done, so that we can move forward and then move on to clause-by-clause consideration of the bill.

Obviously, I will skip reading the text of the amendment, since you have already received it. I'm sure you have it in front of you. I would like to withdraw point 5 of the motion. It is important—

The Chair: Just a moment, Mr. Godin. You're saying you want to withdraw point 5, but it's been deleted.

Mr. Joël Godin: Yes, that's right. In fact, in my amendment, I withdraw point 5 of Mr. Serré's motion.

The Chair: Okay. You're not withdrawing the part that you had deleted.

Mr. Joël Godin: No, not at all. I can't change my amendment; I'm following the rules.

Call me to order if I'm wrong.

The Chair: I was getting to that.

Please continue.

Mr. Joël Godin: As you can appreciate, a motion brought forward by my colleague Mr. Serré is depriving us of our right to speak. We see it as a gag order, and we are asking that this part of the motion be withdrawn completely. This part proposes that clause-by-clause consideration have a time limit imposed on it, and that is not what we want. We want to get this right and we want to make sure that the act is sustainable.

As I said earlier, we want this legislation to stop the decline of French the day after it comes into effect, as well as protect and promote French for the next 50 years.

I want a bilingual Canada. I say this again because there are people in other parties who do not understand the concept of a bilingual country, a Canada where French and English are the two official languages.

Mr. Marc Serré: Mr. Chair, I have a point of order.

I just want to make sure I have this straight.

Does deleting point 5 of my motion mean that we can do clause-by-clause indefinitely, which would mean that the filibuster could go on for years?

I just want to clarify that with the clerk.

The Chair: Just a moment, Mr. Serré.

I think your question is legitimate in terms of procedure.

Mr. Joël Godin: I find this comment very accusatory. It accuses us of filibustering and acting in bad faith. We have been acting in good faith from the beginning of this debate. We have worked with you, Mr. Chair, and with all members of the committee.

It's important to mention that. In my view, his question was relevant, but his accusatory comment was not.

The Chair: Mr. Godin, I feel a bit like someone who has to choose between their right arm and their left arm. On the one hand, you accuse people here in the room of making derogatory comments, while on the other hand, you say that people are oppressing you.

As I said, let's be courteous, as we have always been in committee, and let's do the right thing. Let's focus on the amendments and subamendments. I have heard the same things from both sides of the table. Let's stop pointing fingers at one another and let's follow our parliamentary rules of procedure. We have proven that we can follow them, because usually the debate here goes very well.

Do you have a point of order, Mr. Beaulieu?

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: Yes, Mr. Chair.

I'd like to know if we're going to proceed, as you suggested earlier, one item at a time, or if we are going to deal with them all at once.

The Chair: You raise a good point, Mr. Beaulieu. However, before I get into that, I want to address the matter concerning Mr. Serré.

I'll give you a brief answer.

Remember that we accepted Mr. Godin's motion as a package two weeks ago, so we will deal with it as a package. However, this is an exceptional situation. From now on, the committee will do it the way we did it with you, point by point. That way, we will not lose track of the amendment. We have accepted these five points as one amendment, so we will address it as such.

I will take a moment to check with the clerk regarding the pertinent question that I believe was asked by Mr. Serré.

Mr. Serré, to answer your question, it is indeed the committee that manages its clause-by-clause. There is nothing to prevent it from continuing a study *ad vitam aeternam*, in the extreme. Only

the House of Commons can impose limits on a committee. I hope that answers your question.

That being said, we will now go to Mr. Godin.

Mr. Godin, you may continue your remarks on your amendments.

Mr. Joël Godin: I'd like to make a comment in relation to what you just said, Mr. Chair.

I think it is important to inform the committee members of the following.

At any time, this committee can hold a vote to decide to stop clause-by-clause consideration. Unfortunately, because of their coalition, the Liberal Party and the NDP have a majority.

I'm sure you can appreciate, Mr. Chair, that I don't understand the concern—

The Chair: Mr. Godin—

Mr. Joël Godin: Once again, the government is on a witch hunt.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Mr. Godin, that's not a point of order. You just criticized your opponents for making derogatory references, but you just did that yourself.

Let's show some wisdom. We are all very wise and we know the rules that apply to us as parliamentarians. Let's follow our rules of procedure. Sometimes it can be annoying for both sides, but let's follow the rules of procedure that are imposed on us, and let's do so with total respect. By doing so, we will be fine. As I said, let's stop making derogatory comments on all sides of the table, because it doesn't advance the debate. As you tell us and often remind us, it is in the fundamental interest of our bilingual Canada.

That said, I have addressed Mr. Serré's concerns, which were valid.

We are looking at your amendments to Mr. Serré's motion.

Other than a point of order, are there any other comments on Mr. Godin's amendments?

I'll start with Mr. Beaulieu.

Mr. Joël Godin: I have a point of order, Mr. Chair. I want to go back to your reply to Mr. Serré.

I would like your opinion on my procedural comment. Is it true that the committee can decide at any time to end the clause-by-clause study?

I gave this as additional information.

The Chair: Just a moment, everyone.

I answered that question. I mentioned one extreme but not the other. At one extreme, the committee can continue a study *ad vitam aeternam*. At the other, of course, the committee is free to do whatever it wants through votes. You are absolutely right.

Mr. Joël Godin: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Now it's clear.

The Chair: Ultimately, only the House of Commons can impose a deadline on the committee. That is my understanding of our rules.

Mr. Joël Godin: It is also my understanding, Mr. Chair, that the House can impose that. However, I think we can decide that here at committee, as well.

The Chair: We can decide anything, in the context of our committee.

Mr. Joël Godin: That is why I wanted to make that clear, Mr. Chair. We have control, but unfortunately, if we do a quick count, we understand that the opposition parties, the Conservative Party and the Bloc Québécois, do not have a majority. So, there is no need to worry.

The Chair: That's called democracy, Mr. Godin.

Mr. Joël Godin: Absolutely, Mr. Chair. I'm not questioning that. I'm simply stating the facts.

The Chair: Mr. Beaulieu, go ahead please.

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: I have a point of order, Mr. Chair. Could we proceed clause by clause with the amendment if we had unanimous consent?

The Chair: You meant right now?

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: Yes.

The Chair: I'm not sure I understood your question correctly. You are asking whether the committee can decide unanimously to proceed with clause-by-clause consideration.

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: Yes.

The Chair: The answer is no, we couldn't do that right now. There is a minimum procedure to follow. The legislative clerk must be notified, documents must be produced so that they're on hand—

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: No, that's not what I meant.

When we dealt with my subamendment earlier, we did it point by point. Since Mr. Godin presented a set of proposals at another meeting, I wanted to know if we would proceed point by point with the unanimous consent of the committee.

The Chair: I'm sorry, I totally misunderstood what you said. I apologize.

Absolutely, Mr. Beaulieu. I'm sorry, I thought you were talking about doing clause-by-clause right away.

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: I would like to propose it and seek unanimous consent.

The Chair: We are currently dealing with Mr. Godin's amendment.

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: I would like to propose that we look at these points one by one.

The Chair: As we did with your subamendments.

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: Yes, if there is unanimous consent.

The Chair: If there is unanimous consent, then no problem.

I took the liberty of asking you to proceed in one block. I don't wish to repeat myself, but I let Mr. Godin present his amendment in one block. It was later suggested that we deal with the elements of his amendment one by one.

Is there unanimous consent to vote on one proposal at a time, as suggested by Mr. Beaulieu? In other words, are we going to vote on all five of Mr. Godin's amendments separately or as a whole?

Mr. Joël Godin: I give you my personal consent, Mr. Chair, and that of the Conservative Party of Canada, of course.

This allows us to have our say on each of the points.

The Chair: Does anyone oppose? I don't see anyone objecting, either on the screen or around the table.

We will proceed with a recorded vote on the first point proposed by Mr. Godin.

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: I would like to speak to the amendment.

The Chair: I'm sorry, a vote has been requested.

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: I didn't ask for a vote; I asked that we look at the points of the amendment one by one.

Mr. Joël Godin: No one asked for a vote, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: No, but that's what I did. You asked me and I said yes.

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: I asked if we could examine the points of the amendment one by one.

The Chair: No, we are about to vote.

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: I didn't ask to vote right away.

The Chair: In all seriousness, I understood that you were asking us to vote on Mr. Godin's amendments as we did with your subamendments, in other words, point by point.

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: I didn't say anything at all about voting.

The Chair: So, what is it you would like?

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: I would like us to study Mr. Godin's amendment point by point. Once everyone has made their remarks, we can vote on each of the points.

The Chair: I'm sorry, I really misunderstood you.

Would you like to add something, Mr. Beaulieu?

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: I think the first element is crucial. On the one hand, it's very important that the Minister of Official Languages be able to appear for two hours. The fact is, the Minister of Official Languages is the primary person involved in modernizing the Official Languages Act. She has said over and over again that her government recognizes the decline of French in Canada, including Quebec. She has said that this is the first time a government has recognized it, which is true, to my knowledge.

However, there is nothing in the bill that clearly states how the French language will be supported. It contains general intentions. It recognizes that francophones are a minority in Canada and in the Americas as a whole. Quebec's minister of the French language had asked the government to recognize that, of the two official languages, only one is a minority, only one is threatened, but this was not added. Anglophones in Quebec continue to be considered a minority, which seems to justify continuing to fund exclusively, under the Official Languages Act, anglophone institutes, anglophone lobby groups, and so on.

The throne speech was delivered in 2019. For example, in the public accounts from 2020 to 2022, nothing changed. I think last year the QCGN received a \$1.6 million grant. That organization constantly suggests that it's racist to defend French in Quebec. To me, this is a form of intimidation, which is really unacceptable.

There are no clear changes in Bill C-13. We asked Mélanie Joly, the former official languages minister, what the changes would be and how the bill would defend French. We got no answer. It's as though Quebec doesn't matter. I get the impression that not much attention is being paid to this, that the anglicization of Quebec through the Official Languages Act will continue and that it's being organized in such a way that it will go unnoticed. I sometimes wonder if the motion to shorten the debate was not tabled in order to fool Quebec.

We absolutely need the current Minister of Official Languages to appear for two full hours, so she can explain things clearly. In my view, one of the positive measures in Bill C-13 suggests that there could be funding for French, but it is very small and it is not at all clear. So I think it's important that the minister be able to answer these questions, which are fundamental.

The fact is, a large number of the organizations in Quebec funded by the federal government are anglophone lobby groups and are opposed to French being the common language. Finally, we must always keep in mind that it is the federal government that expresses itself through these organizations that it funds and that are constantly lobbying the Société civile des municipalités du gouvernement du Québec, and Quebec officials. I think this is a major cause of the decline of French in Quebec.

I've been working on this issue for a long time. We can hardly say anything to defend French without being called racist by all these organizations, which have a major impact, and by the federal government, which supports them. It sends an important symbolic message.

I think that all francophones in Canada should be involved in that regard. Indeed, if we weaken French in Quebec, we weaken the main market for artists from francophone and Acadian communities. I am thinking of the economic development of all francophone and Acadian communities. Quebec is home to a pool of teachers and expertise in French. By weakening French in Quebec, French everywhere is weakened.

It is essential to have the President of the Treasury Board appear as well, as we are talking about positive measures such as funding. We know that the FCFA is asking that the Treasury Board be the central agency. There is considerable debate on this. A few days

ago, former justice Bastarache and others said that it would be catastrophic for francophone and Acadian communities if the Treasury Board were the central agency. That would not be good for francophone Acadian communities. I do not agree on that point.

It is therefore important that the Minister of Canadian Heritage come explain this to the committee. We can see what is happening. The Official Languages Act has existed for 52 years and we still see a lieutenant governor general who does not speak French being appointed. French is often trampled, in all departments. It makes no sense. Even here, in Parliament, committee meetings are often in English and we constantly need to intervene.

Essentially, the FCFA is thinking that the Treasury Board controls the purse strings. It therefore has the real power to require departments and all of the federal government to respect French as an official language.

Even in Quebec, Bill 101 contains some provisions indicating that a company that does not obtain its francization certificate may no longer be able to access government subsidies or loan guarantees. Each time this leverage has been used, it has been extremely effective. Some large companies told off the Office québécois de la langue française for years. The day it was decided that their loan guarantees would not be renewed if they did not obtain their francization certificate, they were at the Office door within hours to get one.

This recommendation by the FCFA is far from being foolish. It is therefore important to hear from the President of Treasury Board on this issue and to be able to ask her questions, find out about the ins and outs. It would also be important to hear from the Minister of Canadian Heritage. The positive measures in Part VII itself fall under his department.

I looked at the public accounts for a long time and there are still many questions to be answered. The public accounts give organizations' names, but do not indicate what the funding is used for. We reached out to the Department of Canadian Heritage numerous times. We were unable to reach anybody or get any answers. Representatives appeared before us once, but it was not the minister. They were officials. Their hands are tied. They will not say anything against their employer.

However, if the minister appears before us, we can ask him questions and get to the bottom of things. We managed to get answers from the official languages minister's representative, who got information from the Department of Canadian Heritage, I believe. We thank this person, because we got answers to a number of our questions.

Why is it that the Department of Canadian Heritage is not answering our questions? This is quite worrisome. It is very important to have the minister of Canadian Heritage, Mr. Rodriguez, appear before the committee; he has often been very aggressive in his statements towards Quebec, francophones and the Bloc Québécois. I believe he apologized for it.

Two years ago, we tabled a bill, which we have tabled a number of times, in fact, to make knowledge of French mandatory in Quebec. He said we were trying to divide people based on their culture, their colour, etc. He tried not to say the word, but later apologized.

This has to stop. Accusing us of being racist just because we want to survive in our language and live in French in Quebec is unacceptable. That, in my opinion, is a form of discrimination or intolerance, and it has to stop.

The federal government provides funding to organizations that, through the Department of Canadian Heritage, are constantly making such references. We saw it here. When she appeared before the committee, Ms. Marlene Jennings referred to African-Americans, saying her organization did not want anglophones to be relegated to the back of the bus. I told her that, at this point, it's francophones who are at the back of the bus. Such statements are unacceptable, and we hear them constantly. It's unacceptable. In Acadie, the intimidation is even worse than in Quebec. The situation right now is far from being rosy. They tried to appoint an anti-francophone. It's therefore essential that the Minister of Canadian Heritage appear.

In the case of the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, we would need more than two hours, in my opinion. What is happening really is incomprehensible. It was indirectly admitted that there is a form of racism at the immigration department. There is discrimination against francophone students from Africa applying to study in francophone CEGEPs and universities in Quebec and elsewhere. Their refusal rate is 80%. We have gotten no answers on this. The committee heard from officials, but did not get any answers. Why is it difficult to do things in French, even in Quebec? It's the case at the immigration department, at the Immigration and Refugee Board and at the Canada Border Services Agency.

Mr. Stéphane Handfield, a lawyer, appeared before the committee on this topic. He had to complain and take steps with civil society just to have the right to present a case in French. It was allowed in the end, but there were to be no documents in French. He wanted to present the case in French at his client's request. He told us that this happens on a regular basis. He doesn't let himself get pushed around and he speaks up. They are careful around him now but he says that, in most other cases, they impose English as well and that nothing is changing. This is serious! This is happening in Canada, in Quebec. It goes against the Charter of the French Language and the Official Languages Act. It's as if we aren't being heard. Nothing is being done, and we aren't being heard.

This isn't only happening in Quebec; we also see this often in Acadie, one of the last places, outside Quebec, where French might have a chance to survive. We absolutely need major changes to be made. We heard from a representative of the Société de l'Acadie du Nouveau-Brunswick. There is also the Société nationale de l'Acadie, which is a different thing. He told us he feels confident. Bill C-13 has many flaws, but he is convinced they can be mitigated through regulation. I find him very confident on this in light of what has been happening for a long time and continues to happen.

For a long time, Acadie was the land of real resistance. It was where francophones' language transfers towards English was the lowest outside Quebec, but it is on the rise. Whether we like it or

not, there is a decline. We see this even in Quebec; francophones are increasingly being assimilated. It is very important to be able to clarify these points with the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship.

Furthermore, why have francophone immigration targets not being met for the past 25 years? They are not being met outside Quebec, assimilation is increasing and things are getting worse. In Quebec, we accepted a lot of students from anglophone countries, what Mr. Charles Castonguay called "Anglotropic." The federal government really seems to favour anglophone immigration. It has somewhat circumvented the rules. There was the Cullen-Couture agreement and the Canada-Quebec agreement so that we could select immigrant workers.

However, this is being circumvented because permanent residency is being promised to an increasing number of students. That is how they attract students. There were even scandals and trusteeship because institutions were using this scheme in a way that was almost fraudulent. I don't have all the details.

Thousands of students therefore came here. Once it's done, it's hard to go back. It does, however, increase Anglicization.

According to Frédéric Lacroix, one of the main factors that strengthened French in Quebec was the Cullen-Couture agreement, the fact that there was recruitment. Bill 101 has been weakened and can no longer really close the gap. Hopefully, what is being done in Quebec right now will have a positive impact.

One of the key factors—confirmed by studies—is that more francophone immigrants were selected. However, the trend has been reversing since 2015 or 2017. Increasing numbers of "Anglotropic" immigrants are being accepted into Quebec because temporary student permits are being used to circumvent the Cullen-Couture agreement.

This is quite serious. We have important questions to ask him. We agree with increasing francophone immigration to Quebec and elsewhere, but some studies show that francophone immigrants, and even francophone Canadians or Quebecers, settling elsewhere have assimilation rates as high as for the rest of the residents welcoming them. It's like trying to fill a bucket with a hole in it. Even if you keep pouring water in, it will simply keep pouring out.

It seems that our message isn't getting through. We keep trying to get our message through, but we are met with indifference and sometimes contempt. What is more, Quebecers and Acadians who defend French are mocked. I think francophones outside Quebec have had many more hardships than those in Quebec and their courage is truly admirable. They continue to want to live and work in French. What is happening here, in committee, to try to curtail the debate at all costs, will do nothing to reverse the trend.

Bill C-13, in its current form, will not reverse this trend in any way. There will be complacency. People will congratulate themselves and tell us they put forward a bill and look, there will be regulations!

It is therefore crucial that we speak with these ministers and have time to ask them questions. If they appear before the committee to speak with us for two hours, I think they would definitely come prepared. We would be able to find out more and really move the conversation forward.

As a side note, I will point out that the Bloc Québécois believes in territorial bilingualism. It's a different thing. Institutional bilingualism is for those who want it outside Quebec; Belgium and Switzerland have territorial bilingualism, where in some territories, there is a common language. I think that it has been said and interpreted...

The Chair: Mr. Beaulieu, please stick to the first point.

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: All right.

I think we could ask all these stakeholders about the principle of territoriality. I think that what could give Acadie a hand, at least within federal institutions, in very francophone regions such as the Acadian Peninsula, is that French really be made the main language at federal institutions.

That being said, I don't want to speak for Acadians.

It's up to them to fight their battles.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Beaulieu.

Ms. Ashton, you have the floor on the first point of Mr. Godin's amendment.

Ms. Niki Ashton: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

I want to repeat my concerns regarding the fact that we need this bill to move forward as quickly as possible.

I want to talk about a situation currently happening in New Brunswick. The media are talking about 21 francophone Acadian organizations that are standing up to the intolerance of their government, which has asked a progressive conservative MLA, Kris Austin, to be a member of the official languages committee. Mr. Austin has spoken out against bilingualism and the rights of Acadians and francophones. As members of the Standing Committee on Official Languages, we could all show solidarity with the Acadian and francophone communities that are standing up to Mr. Austin and what his government is doing.

In addition, I want to again stress that we have to move the bill forward as quickly as possible. We have to make sure that francophone communities across the country, which are working hard, have the support they need when they are faced with intolerance, such as what we are seeing in New Brunswick right now. French is declining in our communities across the country. It isn't just in theory. People are standing up right now, today, this morning.

I'm afraid that we are losing our time here, talking about all kinds of things. Yes, these are important topics, but we shouldn't forget that we need to move this bill forward, as stakeholders are asking. We have to give Acadian and francophone communities across the country the tools they need to stand up and protect their rights in the face of the crisis of intolerance in our country.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Ashton.

We will continue with Mr. Godin and then with Mr. Beaulieu.

Mr. Joël Godin: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I will respond to what my colleague Ms. Ashton said.

If she can, I would like her to show me which are the measures currently in Bill C-13 that will allow for the problem she just mentioned to be fought against and solved. I encourage her to send me the clauses on this, as I do not see them.

I want to do some math.

The Chair: Mr. Godin, I remind you that we are discussing Mr. Serré's motion.

Mr. Joël Godin: Yes, Mr. Chair, you'll see that I will be linking it to the first point in Mr. Serré's motion.

My amendment for point 1 is the following. I suggest that the four ministers be invited to appear for two hours each, no later than November 24.

I'll do some math here. It is November 15. I'll read you Mr. Serré's motion:

1. the Minister of Official Languages, the President of the Treasury Board and the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship be invited to appear no later than Thursday, November 17, 2022;

We have one meeting left to hear from these three ministers. It doesn't make any sense. This is not a serious effort.

Mr. Marc Serré: I have a point of order, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: There is a point of order.

You have the floor, Mr. Serré.

Mr. Marc Serré: I completely agree with Mr. Godin and we are willing to accept the first point of his amendment.

I move that we vote on this amendment right away.

Mr. Joël Godin: Mr. Chair, I appreciate the comment—

The Chair: One moment. There is a procedure that applies.

Mr. Marc Serré: It's points 1, 2, 3 and 4 of the main motion.

The Chair: You talked about point 1.

I'd like the attention of committee members, please. These are procedural issues. I want to make sure that I go slowly enough to avoid causing any misunderstanding.

Mr. Serré, you are ready to withdraw point 1 from the main motion and to accept Mr. Godin's amendment for that same point. The first point of your motion would be replaced by Mr. Godin's amendment.

Mr. Joël Godin: We can proceed to the vote.

The Chair: Just a moment, Mr. Godin.

Mr. Serré, is that correct?

Mr. Marc Serré: Yes.

The Chair: Since you are the author of the main motion, the only way we can do this is by unanimous consent. I'm advising you of the procedure in this case.

That is what Mr. Serré just proposed.

Mr. Marc Serré: Mr. Chair, I want to clarify some things.

The Chair: Go ahead, Mr. Serré.

Mr. Marc Serré: As we said, we are studying Mr. Godin's amendment one point at a time.

We are ready to vote in favour of the first four points of Mr. Godin's amendment. However, we are going to vote against the fifth point of his amendment.

As Mr. Godin was saying, we need more time. So, we could add one week to point 5 of my motion.

Furthermore, Ms. Ashton mentioned several times to the committee that if we had additional resources, we could add a 6th point to hear from other witnesses.

That's what I'm proposing.

I think it clearly demonstrates willingness to work together, as we were saying earlier.

The Chair: We will suspend the meeting for a few moments.

• (34845) _____ (Pause) _____

• (34850)

The Chair: We are back in session.

I did indeed correctly summarize what Mr. Serré just said.

Mr. Joël Godin: Mr. Chair, I want to raise a point of order.

The Chair: Yes, but...

Mr. Joël Godin: It is important that I do it now.

The Chair: Let me finish, please, Mr. Godin.

You are the next speaker on my list.

Mr. Serré, did I correctly summarize what you said about Mr. Godin's amendments?

All right, that's perfect.

That means I was not mistaken in what I understood and what I said before the committee before suspending the meeting.

Now, before I give the floor to Mr. Godin for his point of order, I want to make sure of one thing, Mr. Serré. You said the Liberals are ready to vote in favour of the first four points of Mr. Godin's amendment. Your fifth point would remain, but there would be an additional week of time to hear from more witnesses, like in the sixth point.

There's nothing official about it. That is what Mr. Serré just said.

Mr. Godin, over to you. You have a point of order to make.

Mr. Joël Godin: Mr. Chair, what is official is that my colleague made a point of order while I had the floor to talk about my amendment, and I was on the first point. It was therefore not a point of order.

The Chair: It was not a point of order; It was a suggestion.

Mr. Joël Godin: May I continue, then?

The Chair: Go ahead.

Mr. Joël Godin: Thank you.

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: I also asked...

The Chair: Mr. Beaulieu, you can have the floor after Mr. Godin.

Mr. Joël Godin: Then, Mr. Chair...

Mr. Marc Serré: Aren't we voting, Mr. Chair?

The Chair: We cannot call for a vote.

You haven't raised a point of order; you've expressed your position regarding...

Mr. Joël Godin: Exactly. It was not a point of order.

The Chair: It was not a point of order.

Mr. Joël Godin: Mr. Chair, we were on the first point of my amendment.

The Chair: Wait a moment.

Mr. Godin, that being said, since this proposal is on the table, if there is unanimous consent, we can do it. That is what I wanted to say.

Mr. Joël Godin: I understand, Mr. Chair, but I want to finish my comment, because it is highly relevant.

The Chair: Go ahead.

Mr. Joël Godin: Actually, Mr. Chair, what I wanted to tell you is that in my amendment, I am talking about four important ministers, including the Minister of Canadian Heritage. From now to November 17 at 1 p.m., there are 2 sitting hours left.

The Chair: That's November 24, if we pass your amendment.

Mr. Joël Godin: Yes, November 24.

It's unrealistic. What I mean, Mr. Chair, is that I feel we are trivializing ministers' testimony. We're batting it around, and acting as though it were not important. For us, it is very...

The Chair: Mr. Godin, I understand, but Mr. Serré's intent was not to raise a point of order. It was to tell you that he agreed with changing the date from November 17 to November 24. It's as though we...

Mr. Joël Godin: Yes, but I still want to use my time, Mr. Chair, to emphasize how important ministers' testimony is to us. It's very important to us, because it will help us be even better when drafting the bill. We should have heard from them before, but unfortunately, the fact is that they did not agree to come before.

Furthermore, what is very important in my amendment, Mr. Chair, is hearing from the Minister of Canadian Heritage.

This is what the summary of Bill C-13 says:

(h) provide for certain measures that the Minister of Canadian Heritage may take to advance the equality of status and use of English and French in Canadian society;

It concerns the minister. Why are my colleagues not including him in their motion? We'd be receptive if they were to do so, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Mr. Godin, that is what I am telling you: the opposite is what's happening right now. It seems that neither side of the table is listening. You have before you people who are telling you that they are ready to accept the first amendment. I don't know if you understood the same thing I did, but that's what is on the table.

It therefore seems normal to me that the next step is for me to ask if there is unanimous consent...

Mr. Joël Godin: In your normalcy...

The Chair: ...for us to accept your amendment.

Mr. Beaulieu, I did not forget you.

Mr. Joël Godin: It will be important, Mr. Chair, to properly word...

The Chair: If you would let me finish, this is about asking if there is unanimous consent for us to accept your amendment as written; in other words, with the four ministers you mentioned. So, it's exactly what you're saying.

Mr. Joël Godin: No. Mr. Chair, that is not the problem. I understand that he has conceded to adding the Minister of Canadian Heritage to the list.

The Chair: No. That is not what he said. He accepted your first amendment exactly as you drafted it.

Mr. Joël Godin: That's exactly it, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: In other words, they agree with you.

Mr. Joël Godin: I agree with you, but I was just telling you that my colleagues on the other side are agreeing to add the Minister of Canadian Heritage...

The Chair: They also agreed to changing the date.

Mr. Joël Godin: They agree to add the minister and change the date.

The Chair: Exactly.

Mr. Joël Godin: So, that's what I was saying a few seconds ago. The party on the other side needs to add a thank you and accept it.

The problem now, Mr. Chair, remains the schedule.

When I tabled this amendment, it was November 1. Will the ministers all be able to meet with us before November 24? I thank my colleagues, but I remain skeptical.

The Chair: Yes, but that's not...

Mr. Joël Godin: That's not within my scope, you're right.

The Chair: There are resources outside of this committee that can deal with it. Nonetheless, I will still give the floor to Mr. Beaulieu regarding the first point of Mr. Godin's amendment.

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: Thank you very much.

Regarding the first point of Mr. Godin's amendment, and in response to Ms. Ashton, I believe that in Bill C-13, there are indeed no tools to counter Acadians' current struggle against assimilation. In fact, the bill will not prevent the appointment of any anti-franco-phone ministers or counsellors in New Brunswick. There's no power to do that.

I call on my colleague.

Right now, in my opinion, pushing this closure through at full speed is a slap in the face for Quebecers. Does she think that...

The Chair: Mr. Beaulieu, we are on the first point of Mr. Godin's amendment. You have no reason to call on a member of a political party.

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: That's fine. All right.

I think that this insult to Quebecers will not help Acadians to...

The Chair: Mr. Beaulieu...

Mr. Marc Serré: I have a point of order, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Just a moment...

Mr. Marc Serré: We're not doing the Chair's job.

The Chair: Mr. Serré, I was just going to say that.

Let's stick to the first point of Mr. Godin's amendment 1.

Mr. Beaulieu, you argued in favour of this amendment earlier, as written by Mr. Godin. There seems to be consensus to pass it as is.

Does everyone agree on that?

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: In my view, the first point is a good thing.

I don't know about the schedule either, when it comes to how we're going to manage to give each minister two hours. It's rather important. If it's not realistic, it's easy to accept it, but...

The Chair: Mr. Beaulieu, we heard you and you agreed with it. We started with your subamendment, which was negated, and after that, you argued in favour of Mr. Godin's first point. We have heard you.

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: Why did he say that it raised opposition?

On the one hand, it was brought forward in the usual manner, like a point of order. On the other hand, there's the issue of dropping the last point, which is the essential one that we want to get to.

As it is 1 p.m., I move to adjourn the meeting.

The Chair: We will not adjourn the meeting; we will suspend it.

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: You don't want to adjourn it.

The Chair: If you want unanimous consent to adjourn, we can ask for it.

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: No, suspend the meeting.

The Chair: The meeting is therefore suspended, taking note that...

[English]

Mr. Brad Vis: Why don't you just remove the motion and put forward a whole new one, saying, "House leader, I don't care what you said—"

[Translation]

The Chair: I suspend the meeting.

[The meeting was suspended at 3 p.m. on Tuesday, November 15.]

[The meeting resumed at 11 a.m. on Thursday, November 17.]

The Chair: We now resume meeting No. 38 of the Standing Committee on Official Languages, which we suspended on November 15.

Today's meeting is taking place in a hybrid format, pursuant to the House order of Thursday, June 23, 2022. Members may attend in person or by using the Zoom application.

To provide some context, I remind everyone that when we suspended the meeting last Tuesday, the committee was discussing Mr. Serré's suggestion to pass the first four points of Mr. Godin's amendment, avoid deleting the fifth point and add a sixth point.

If there is unanimous consent to proceed this way, we can do so. Otherwise, we will have to resume debate and proceed one point at a time, as we had agreed.

When we suspended the meeting, Mr. Godin had the floor.

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: Mr. Chair, Mr. Serré's last proposal, which you just mentioned, does not seem very clear.

Could he send it to us in writing?

The Chair: Can you send it in writing, Mr. Serré?

Mr. Marc Serré: Mr. Chair, we were discussing the four points of Mr. Godin's amendment. I did not move a subamendment. I just said that we're ready to accept the first four points of Mr. Godin's amendment, while keeping the fifth point of my motion, the purpose of which is to add a week to the deadline. We can hold more meetings, as Ms. Ashton was saying.

It was a simple suggestion to move the debate forward. We can deal with Mr. Godin's amendment one point at a time, if you want, then move to a vote.

The Chair: I'd like to clarify some things on a procedural level so that we can all agree on the terminology.

Mr. Godin tabled an amendment to Mr. Serré's main motion. Mr. Serré just told us that he is ready to accept the first four points of Mr. Godin's amendment as written. The fifth point, intended to push the deadline back, which Mr. Godin moved to delete, still stands. Then, we were going to bring forward an amendment and add a sixth point. That said, it was only mentioned unofficially. No one moved an amendment or a subamendment to that effect. That was the state of things when we suspended the meeting, and Mr. Godin had the floor.

So, this is what I propose. I will write down the names of those who want to speak as the clerk communicates them to me, or as I see them on the screen. Mr. Godin had the floor the last time we suspended the meeting.

That said, I recall that, hypothetically speaking, even though there seemed to be a consensus to pass Mr. Serré's proposal, it had to pass unanimously. Otherwise, we must study Mr. Godin's amendment point by point, as we had agreed.

Is that clear for everyone? If it is, I will now give the floor to Mr. Godin.

Mr. Godin, you have the floor.

Mr. Joël Godin: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

In fact, what Mr. Serré tried to do was hoodwink us. That's my own interpretation. It involves no one else, and I'm sharing it with you.

During our last meeting, held on Tuesday earlier this week, you told me that I had to vote in favour of this amendment because it was mine. It's important to put it back into context.

The Chair: Mr. Godin, I must call you to order. I never told anyone to vote for or against an amendment. Are you talking about me, or Mr. Serré?

Mr. Joël Godin: I'm talking about you, Mr. Chair.

I seem you have heard "Mr. Godin, it's your amendment," but maybe that was my own interpretation.

I just wanted to share it with my colleagues, Mr. Chair. I didn't want to cast any aspersions on you. I have too much respect for you to do so. You know that I appreciate you as a person. As a member of the party in power, that's another story.

Coming back to what I was saying, when my amendment was tabled at the beginning of November, it was relevant. The party in power, through Mr. Serré's suggestion, recognized the importance of having the Minister of Canadian Heritage testify, because he is involved. We, the Bloc Québécois and the Conservative Party of Canada, won that. I'm just clarifying the situation for everyone.

My amendment proposed November 24 as a date, and now it is November 17. It seems to me that my amendment was relevant on November 1, but we're not going to start hearing from ministers today, obviously, as we have already started this two-hour meeting. We know that ministers are very busy, and they are not always available. Managing all that means that it is almost impossible to implement the first point of my amendment, which I moved on November 1.

I thought it was important to clarify that. I'd like to hear my colleagues' opinion on it, those from the party in power and those from the NDP, the Bloc Québécois and the Conservative Party.

I repeat that we must take the time to do things right. I don't understand why we're putting on so much pressure to rush the study of this bill.

I'll stop there for the moment and invite my colleagues to take the floor. I'll come back to this before we move to a vote if there are no other comments.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Godin.

Mr. Beaulieu, you have the floor.

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: My comment is somewhat similar to Mr. Godin's. The goal of the amendment, to have all four ministers appear before us for two hours each by November 24, is becoming unworkable, I think.

Mr. Marc Serré: Mr. Chair, I raise a point of order.

I believe we are in camera. Can you check to see if that is the case?

The Clerk: We are having technical difficulties at the moment. The meeting is listed as in camera, but it is public. The team is working right now to resolve it.

The Chair: Madam Clerk, is the meeting listed as in camera?

That's not what I see here.

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: The meeting is listed as in camera, but in fact, it is public.

The Clerk: I've just received confirmation that the problem is solved, and we are live on ParlVu.

The Chair: All right.

However, I'd like to confirm that the meeting was public from the beginning. Otherwise, I think we will have to restart from the top.

The Clerk: The first few minutes of the meeting were in camera, but that will be corrected after the meeting. The missing part will be downloadable on the site.

The Chair: Very well.

Mr. Beaulieu, I have not forgotten you, but Mr. Godin raised his hand to talk about this very issue.

Mr. Godin, you have the floor.

Mr. Joël Godin: Indeed, Mr. Chair, it's important.

I understand that the technical team does everything in its power to make the deliberations available. That said, if it's important for the government to accelerate study of the bill, it is also important for the public to be able to access the entirety of the committee's deliberations in real time.

I therefore raise a point of order asking you to let me repeat my previous statements in real time, hoping that I clearly remember everything I said.

That is my right, as a parliamentarian.

The Chair: Madam Clerk, if I understood correctly, for the general public, the entire meeting will be available, but a minute or two are missing from the live stream.

Is that right?

The Clerk: Yes. The start of the meeting was not live, but if we go on ParlVu right now or after the meeting, we can see that the adjustments added in the missing part back in.

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

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: We have people who want to watch the start of the meeting, but that's not yet possible.

The Clerk: You can check on your side, but on my end, I have confirmation that everything is working.

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: All right. It seems that everything is working, but my understanding of Mr. Godin's comment is that he would prefer to repeat live what he said earlier, rather than have it delayed.

The Chair: Madam Clerk, what do you suggest?

Should we just restart the meeting from the beginning?

The Clerk: The decision is yours.

The Chair: Is there unanimous consent to restart the meeting from the beginning?

Actually, I'll flip the question the other way. Is there anyone opposed to us restarting the meeting so that it is live from the beginning to now?

No one around the table is against it. We will therefore resume the meeting from the beginning.

For the public, who can probably hear us now, we are going back a little bit because the first two or three minutes of the meeting are missing.

I therefore call this meeting to order. Welcome. We are resuming meeting No. 38 of the Standing Committee on Official Languages, suspended on November 15.

Today's meeting is taking place in hybrid format, pursuant to the House order of Thursday, June 23, 2022. Members may attend in person or through the Zoom application.

To provide some context, I remind everyone that on Tuesday, before it suspended, the committee was discussing Mr. Serré's suggestion to pass the first four points of Mr. Godin's amendment, reject the fifth point and add a sixth. That's a summary. We can now refer to last Tuesday's meeting.

As I said, we can proceed this way if there is unanimous consent. Otherwise, we will have to come back to the debate in progress when I suspended the meeting last Tuesday. When I suspended it, Mr. Godin had the floor.

Mr. Godin, I give you the floor one more time, so that we can repeat the missing part of the meeting's live stream.

Mr. Joël Godin: Thank you, Mr. Chair, for giving me the opportunity to restart my comments on what you just said.

I want to come back to the fact that when I spoke last week, there were discussions. I won't repeat exactly what I said when there was a technical problem, but I have to say my understanding was that it's unusual for us in the Conservative Party of Canada to resist supporting a proposal from my colleague, Mr. Serré, for whom I have a great deal of respect as an individual.

After that comment, I felt that I was inconsistent. It's important for me to clarify my state of mind.

Now, I think I'm being consistent. When I presented my amendment to Mr. Serré's motion, point 1 asked for the Minister of Official Languages, the President of the Treasury Board, the Minister of Canadian Heritage and the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship to appear before the committee, for two hours per minister, by November 24, 2022, at the latest.

It was consistent, considering the timing when I tabled that amendment. However, it's November 17 today. The situation has changed. We only have two meetings left after this one. Obviously, the current meeting will not allow us to hear from ministers, because we are discussing procedure.

I remind you, Mr. Chair, that all the uproar, the discussions, the waste of time happened because of a motion tabled by one of my colleagues from the party in power, the Liberal Party of Canada.

So, Mr. Chair, it was quite relevant for me to be uncomfortable with giving quick support to Mr. Serré's motion last Tuesday. As I said before, I felt insulted. My impression is we're being hoodwinked. Mathematically, it is impossible to support the motion. As I said earlier, and I just demonstrated, forget about today's meeting. We're going to talk about meetings, not time. I consider that to be the problem in this process. So, let's talk about meetings.

As of November 24, there are two meetings left. We're being asked to accept point 1, which includes the appearance of four ministers. I must highlight that I appreciate the current government's openness; it agreed to adding the Minister of Canadian Heritage. In any case, it is now impossible to invite each of the four ministers for two-hour meetings, because there are only two left: November 22 and 24. We would need eight hours for meetings. We are therefore missing two meetings.

At this stage, Mr. Chair, could we hold four meetings by November 24?

My question is for the clerk.

The Chair: Before I give the floor to the clerk, we must consider the context. Point 6, which Mr. Serré wanted to add to his motion last Tuesday, provided for the opportunity to add additional meetings to the schedule in order to achieve this objective. That is what I remember.

Madam Clerk, to answer Mr. Godin's question, what options do we have?

The Clerk: I'm sorry, I'm still resolving technical problems. I missed half of your question.

You want to know if it's possible for us to hold four meetings before November 24. Was that your question?

Mr. Joël Godin: It was, indeed, Madam Clerk.

Before you answer that, you said you were still resolving technical problems. Can you tell us if the entirety of our deliberations were broadcast publicly from the point at which we restarted?

The Clerk: Yes, we are...

Mr. Joël Godin: Are there other technical problems that could infringe on our parliamentary rights?

The Clerk: Currently, your connection is unstable. That means the interpreters are struggling to translate what you are saying. That is what we are trying to resolve.

As for your question, off the top of my head, I have no answer, because it is a matter of resources. You would have to ask the party whips.

Mr. Joël Godin: Mr. Chair, I will continue.

First, you said that point 6, moved by Mr. Serré, could influence our thinking. Can Mr. Serré send us this sixth point?

For the moment, this proposal is limited to your interpretation and to what I heard on Tuesday, two days ago. May we have point 6, as moved by Mr. Serré, so that it is clear?

The Chair: I will let Mr. Serré have the floor, but this is not an amendment. We are currently seized with your amendment, and Mr. Beaulieu is next to speak. Because it lends itself to it, I will allow Mr. Serré to explain what he was suggesting last Tuesday regarding point 6.

Mr. Serré, you have the floor.

Mr. Marc Serré: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

It was clear and it wasn't an amendment. We accepted points 1 to 4 in Mr. Godin's amendment...

Mr. Joël Godin: I have a point of order, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Marc Serré: You asked me to explain it. Do you want me to do that, or do you want to filibuster?

The Chair: Wait a moment.

Mr. Godin, you called out Mr. Serré and as Chair, I gave him permission to explain his proposal.

We will come back to you after, Mr. Serré.

Mr. Joël Godin: Mr. Chair, I'm grateful that you gave Mr. Serré the floor, but he doesn't have to filibuster by ascribing motives to us. My question is clear: what is he proposing in point 6?

The Chair: Mr. Serré, what is point 6?

Mr. Marc Serré: It provides for additional meetings if required. Other members also proposed it. That means we'd be sure to have the minister and proceed with clause-by-clause study as quickly as possible. The goal of point 6 is therefore to hold additional meetings.

It's not complicated. I don't understand Mr. Godin's question.

The Chair: I ask all members, whether they are participating in person or virtually, to address the chair when making their arguments.

So, that was a suggestion and not an amendment.

I'll come back to Mr. Godin, and then Mr. Beaulieu will be able to speak on the points of the amendment.

Mr. Joël Godin: Actually, Mr. Chair, what my colleague just said doesn't hold water. A few seconds before her answer, the clerk said that it was probably impossible to hold four meetings by November 24. We must take this process seriously. That's why what I'm saying is relevant. We are out of time. We can't vote on something that is impossible to do. We must be serious.

I will end my comments there for now, because I think I expressed my intent.

I don't want to filibuster for no reason, but I do want us to work in a serious way to protect official languages, especially French.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Godin.

Mr. Beaulieu, you have the floor.

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: I won't ask again for Mr. Serré to present his proposal in writing, which is not an amendment. However, based on what he just said, if I remember correctly, point 6 provided for additional meetings by asking the whips to confirm if the required resources were available to do so. However, it is very uncertain, especially since the motion to extend the House's sitting hours passed the day before yesterday. Indeed, that's likely to lead to many evening debates lasting until midnight. That often takes resources away from committees. The clerk could give us more information on that.

Moreover, the dates do not, in fact, work in the amendment Mr. Godin moved two weeks ago. Do I have the right to propose a subamendment to change the dates and make the motion more feasible?

The Chair: No. Based on my understanding of the rules, Mr. Beaulieu, we must proceed in reverse order. We dealt with your subamendment, which was negatived, and now we're dealing with Mr. Godin's amendment on Mr. Serré's motion.

Since it appears obvious to me that there is no unanimous consent for Mr. Serré's suggestions—I'm talking here about suggestions and not a subamendment—we are still dealing with Mr. Godin's amendment. Last Tuesday, we unanimously agreed to deal with it one point at a time.

The debate is therefore still open on the first point of Mr. Godin's amendment. That's where we are right now.

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: I have a point of order. My understanding was that I had the right, in this case, to propose an amendment to Mr. Godin's amendment to make it more feasible.

The Clerk: May I interject to offer some clarification?

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: Perhaps I misunderstood.

The Clerk: No, excuse me. We're still having technical difficulties. It seems that the meeting is broadcasting correctly on ParlVu, but it's still listed as being in camera on the House of Commons website.

I probably misunderstood your question, Mr. Beaulieu, because I'm trying to do 15 things at once.

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: Very well.

Mr. Marc Serré: Can we suspend the meeting?

The Clerk: Yes.

The Chair: Madam Clerk, I will suspend the meeting until you tell me that the problem is solved.

The Chair: It seems that the technical problem is broader and affecting more than just our committee. It is now resolved. However, I want to inform Mr. Godin and the other members of the committee of the following: part of Mr. Godin's first intervention could not be translated because of his microphone's bad sound quality.

Mr. Godin, you have the floor. I'm told that, when the meeting resumed, the first part was not clear enough. That was the part where you were saying how you felt when the meeting was suspended, last Tuesday.

Afterwards, we will come back to amendments suggested by Mr. Beaulieu.

You have the floor, Mr. Godin.

Mr. Joël Godin: Mr. Chair, I don't want to go on endlessly or show bad faith. Our committee deals with both official languages. I repeat, that means French and English. For that reason, I want to know if my colleagues are comfortable with me not repeating my earlier comments. I would like to know what people around the table think of that.

The Chair: Mr. Godin, I don't know if you can hear me clearly, but on our side, we are hearing you very badly. Interpretation cannot continue if you use that microphone.

Mr. Joël Godin: Mr. Chair, can you hear me better now?

The Chair: I can hear you. What you are saying is audible, but I don't think it will be enough for interpretation. That's what I'm being told.

Mr. Joël Godin: Mr. Chair, we were given the opportunity to participate in meetings virtually. Furthermore, the devices I'm using are those from the House of Commons and I received support from the House's technical team to be able to participate in meetings remotely, somewhat like you. I don't favour participating virtually, but in specific circumstances, we were granted that right.

I don't know how to react to this situation. That's another way of explaining how I feel right now.

The Chair: Yes, but the message remains the same. The interpreters [*technical difficulties*].

On our side, we're not hearing you clearly. The sound is muffled.

The technical team has informed me that it is not your equipment that is the problem, but your internet connection.

Mr. Joël Godin: Mr. Chair, I ask the committee's unanimous consent to turn off my camera. That might mitigate the connection problem. From what I understand, all members of the committee must consent for me to be able to do so.

The Chair: Are any committee members opposed?

Mr. Marc Serré: Mr. Chair, I think it would be good to turn off the camera. I am nonetheless of the opinion that it is up to all members who connect virtually to make sure they have a good internet connection.

For today, however, I think the camera can be turned off.

The Chair: Thank you.

Turn off your camera, Mr. Godin, to see if that mitigates the problem. Let's test it.

Mr. Joël Godin: Mr. Chair, are you hearing me better when I speak in virtual format?

I want to check with the clerk if it's considered satisfactory by the interpreters.

The Chair: I'm told that is not the case.

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: Perhaps Mr. Godin could use a wired connection.

Mr. Joël Godin: Mr. Chair, Mr. Beaulieu's suggestion is a good one, but could I use my telephone instead?

If you agree to my participation with voice only, could I use my telephone and join with that mode of communication, meaning just audio?

The Chair: I will check to see if we can proceed that way in hybrid mode.

I'll ask the clerk to advise me on what to do.

Mr. Marc Dalton: Mr. Chair..

The Chair: Just a moment, Mr. Dalton.

Mr. Godin, it is not possible to use a telephone, because your audio can't be heard in the interpreter's booth. We are therefore at an impasse.

Is there no other way for you to connect directly, Mr. Godin?

Mr. Joël Godin: Not right now, Mr. Chair.

Can you give me 5 minutes to find a cable in the room and do everything I can to solve the problem? I don't want to delay the committee [*technical difficulties*].

The Chair: We just lost you completely.

Mr. Serré, you have the floor.

Mr. Marc Serré: Other members of the Conservative Party can speak. It is not a technical problem in the meeting room, it's an individual problem. So, I'm of the opinion that we should give the floor to other members who are participating in person or virtually.

The Chair: You're right, Mr. Serré, but that creates a problem, because Mr. Godin was debating his amendment, and Mr. Beaulieu was supposed to speak after him. I interrupted him, unfortunately, because I thought he was talking about the previous amendments that we had rejected already. However, he wanted to move subamendments to Mr. Godin's main motion, which he can do. I therefore cannot move on, as we are currently seized with Mr. Godin's amendment to Mr. Serré's main motion. We are on the first paragraph. Currently, Mr. Godin doesn't have the floor, and Mr. Beaulieu wanted to move an amendment.

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: I suggest that Mr. Godin change locations, without going too far. Sometimes, that can help. Perhaps the walls are thick. In any case, I recommend that he remain in place to keep his right to vote, at least.

Mr. Joël Godin: Mr. Chair, Mr. Beaulieu's suggestion is a good one. Give me five minutes. I will withdraw and you can move on to something else. In the meantime, if you wish. Indeed, my Conservative Party colleagues can pick up the slack. However, you are correct in saying that it's important for me to be there for the debate on my amendment, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Agreed. Go ahead, Mr. Godin.

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: I believe we're hearing him better already.

The Chair: Mr. Beaulieu, I will give you the floor to talk about your new subamendments. If there are several, present them one at a time, please.

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: Very well.

Indeed, as Mr. Godin said earlier, since time has passed, the dates don't work anymore. If we proceed point by point, I propose a subamendment to point 1. At the end of point 1 of Mr. Godin's amendment, I will replace the words "no later than Thursday, November 24, 2022" with the words "for four meetings, and plan for four additional meetings to hear from the final witnesses."

I can send it to you in writing, if you want.

The Chair: Yes, send your subamendment in writing to the clerk, please.

In the meantime, Mr. Beaulieu, I want you to tell me if I understood correctly. You want to add "for four meetings" and include a fifth meeting for other witnesses. Is that right?

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: In fact, we want to hear from the four ministers individually, in four separate sessions. We want to question each minister for two hours. I think that is very important.

I can repeat my argument from our previous encounter. You must remember it. I think it is important that they answer our questions. There should be four more meetings to accommodate the last witnesses. Mr. Godin's motion included hearing other witnesses. We would no longer be discussing dates, but rather the number of meetings. I am not claiming authorship of this, because it was already in the motion tabled by Mr. Godin. That sums up what I wanted to say.

On the one hand, I consider it important to be able to question the ministers to obtain answers. On the other hand, we should ensure that the scheduled witnesses are called. I have not named any particular witnesses so that the parties can propose witnesses according to the proportion that each party is entitled to. For the Bloc, it was agreed that we could invite 8% or 9% of the witnesses. That means eight meetings in total to hear from the ministers and the scheduled witnesses. That is important.

The debate is ongoing. There are more and more interventions in civil society. People are intervening and raising points that can feed our thinking and make Bill C-13 evolve.

We want to respond to Quebec's requests. We have not looked at any of the requests from the Quebec government. For a very long time, there have been additional requests from groups defending French in Quebec that have not been heard. This morning, an open letter was published by various co-signatory groups, including *Impératif français*, which we know well here, and the *Mouvement national des Québécoises et des Québécois*, a network that includes 17 national groups—

The Chair: Mr. Beaulieu, forgive me for interrupting you.

Have you sent your suggestion in writing?

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: I did send it in writing, yes. The clerk indicated that she received it.

The Chair: Okay.

I understood two different things. I understood it to be four meetings, then a fifth. Now you are talking about eight meetings. Send your subamendment in writing so that we can read it.

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: I did send it in writing. Maybe the clerk can distribute it to everyone.

The Clerk: There was a small error in the text, so I was waiting for the second version of the text before sending it around.

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: Fine.

The Chair: I think we are about to witness Mr. Godin's "resurrection."

Even though we are re-establishing communication with Mr. Godin, we are going to finish with your subamendment, Mr. Beaulieu. We'll have to wait for the written version.

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: All right.

The Chair: I received it. Has everyone else received it?

Let's focus on paragraph 1 of Mr. Beaulieu's subamendment, which amends Mr. Godin's amendment.

Mr. Joël Godin: Can you hear me well, Mr. Chair?

The Chair: I can hear you just fine.

Mr. Joël Godin: All right.

So—

The Chair: Say a few words so the clerk can confirm that it's working well on your end. Just talk a bit.

Mr. Joël Godin: Madam Clerk, can you hear me well?

I'm really sorry that technology is failing us. It is not sabotage or ill will. Unfortunately, we've all experienced it in the last two or three years.

Can the clerk confirm that everything is going well in terms of interpretation?

The Clerk: It may be better. We'll try it like this.

Mr. Joël Godin: Thank you, Madam Clerk.

The Clerk: All right.

You may continue, Mr. Godin.

Mr. Joël Godin: Mr. Chair, I think that before we go any further—

The Chair: Just a minute, Mr. Godin. I spoke to you without realizing my microphone was on mute.

Turn your camera off, because I'm told the quality seems poor.

Before we come back to you, we will finish the debate on Mr. Beaulieu's first subamendment. After Mr. Beaulieu finishes, then I will come back to you.

Mr. Joël Godin: I would like to check something, Mr. Chair.

If I raise my hand, will you still see it during the meeting?

The Chair: Yes.

However, Mr. Beaulieu has a series of subamendments. We will go through them one by one, and as agreed, after his first one, I will come back to you where we left off because of technical problems.

Mr. Joël Godin: In fact, Mr. Chair, we may be working for nothing. I have something to suggest to you.

I would like to see whether the committee—

The Chair: Mr. Godin, I'm just asking you for a few moments.

Mr. Joël Godin: In fact, if I withdraw my amendment, Mr. Beaulieu's subamendment will no longer be relevant, nor necessary.

The Chair: In that case, I think we need unanimous consent.

Mr. Joël Godin: Yes.

Shall I make my request, Mr. Chair?

The Chair: Wait a moment. There are several procedures involved. There is a subamendment to your amendment, and, now, you want to withdraw your amendment.

The Chair: Forgive me for wanting to err on the side of caution rather than omission, but, indeed, Mr. Beaulieu, if the subamendment you are proposing to Mr. Godin's amendment is maintained, and Mr. Godin then withdraws that amendment, your subamendment becomes, so to speak, obsolete or unnecessary.

If I may, Mr. Beaulieu, I will go back to Mr. Godin, and see if—

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: Mr. Chair, I would like to speak.

The Chair: Go ahead, Mr. Beaulieu.

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: There's one thing I wanted to know.

When Mr. Serré withdraws his amendment, can he—

The Chair: No, Mr. Beaulieu, it is Mr. Godin.

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: Yes, it is Mr. Godin. I'm sorry. I didn't mean to add to your confusion. We're at sixes and sevens here.

I think that Mr. Godin wants to do this because he wants to amend his amendment himself. In that case, could he submit a new amendment?

The Chair: Mr. Godin cannot amend his own amendment except by unanimous consent. We cannot guess what Mr. Godin wants to do. Based on one comment we heard, Mr. Godin simply wanted to withdraw his amendment. There is a request for unanimous consent to withdraw his amendment. That is where we are at.

So, I'm going to give the floor to Mr. Godin.

We are listening, Mr. Godin.

Mr. Marc Serré: Mr. Chair—

The Chair: Yes, Mr. Serré.

Mr. Marc Serré: Mr. Chair, we did not obtain unanimous consent.

The Chair: No. I asked Mr. Godin to explain exactly what he wanted to do. We'll proceed from there.

Mr. Godin, you have the floor.

Mr. Joël Godin: Mr. Chair, to demonstrate our goodwill in moving the bill forward, I would ask for unanimous consent to withdraw my amendment to Mr. Serré's motion, as it is no longer required.

To make sure that all members understand the situation and why I am doing this, I will add that since the beginning of this debate, my objective has been to make sure that we base it on the number of hearings rather than on dates. I have been saying this since last June—

The Chair: Wait a moment, Mr. Godin. We're going to lose our minds.

We agreed to go step by step, so paragraph by paragraph. We were talking about Mr. Beaulieu's subamendment, but I asked him to come back to it later, which he kindly agreed to do, so that we could be as efficient as possible. So I ask you to speak to the first point of your amendment, not the others, for the time being.

Mr. Joël Godin: All right.

I ask for unanimous consent to withdraw the first point of my amendment to Mr. Serré's motion.

The Chair: Is there unanimous consent to withdraw the first point of Mr. Godin's amendment?

Mr. Serré, you have the floor.

Mr. Marc Serré: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

We don't have unanimous consent. We are in favour of all four points in Mr. Godin's amendment and we want to vote on it as quickly as possible. Otherwise, there will be an infinite number of subamendments. We already have the four elements of Mr. Godin's amendment, so let us vote on that, please.

The Chair: No unanimous consent.

So I'll return to Mr. Beaulieu.

Mr. Beaulieu, you have the floor.

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: It's a pity, because basically, the aim was to go faster. As Mr. Godin is the mover of this amendment, he was perhaps best placed to make it workable, which is the purpose of my subamendment. I will therefore continue to move it.

My subamendment seeks to have the President of Treasury Board, the Minister of Canadian Heritage, the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship and the Minister of Official Languages come to testify in four meetings so we can ask them questions for two hours each. This will allow us to know where we are going, because Bill C-13 is very vague and poorly delineated.

Witnesses have told us that this does not suit them. For example, the representative of the Société de l'Acadie du Nouveau-Brunswick said that there were elements that they did not like, but that he was hopeful that changes would be made through regulation. This is why it is crucial to get clarification from the people who are most concerned, including the Minister of Official Languages, the President of Treasury Board and the Minister of Canadian Heritage.

In addition, there is the whole question of the central agency. Some are asking that it be Treasury Board. This is a key demand of the FCFA, the Fédération des communautés francophones et acadienne. It is only partially included in the bill. We had all kinds of discussions with people who said that if Treasury Board were the central agency and the government changed, everything could fall apart overnight. In that sense, I don't see what difference it makes whether it's Treasury Board or the Department of Canadian Heritage. That said, normally the President of Treasury Board and the Minister of Canadian Heritage are in the best position to give us answers on this and explain the ins and outs, so that we have a more in-depth understanding of what we are going to vote on.

I've said it before, so I won't go on at length, but as far as Quebec is concerned, none of the civil society organizations see anything concrete that will improve the situation in Quebec and really counter the decline of French. We'll see—

The Chair: Mr. Beaulieu, for the greater listening pleasure of your audience that has not had the opportunity of reading your first subamendment, could you read it out while you have the floor? That would give everyone a sense of context.

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: Just a minute.

The Chair: I can do that for you. I have the subamendment in front of me.

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: All right.

The Chair: What I heard is a bit confusing. I will give you the floor again afterwards.

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: All right.

The Chair: I will read your subamendment verbatim:

That [...] the Minister of Official Languages, the President of Treasury Board, the Minister of Canadian Heritage, and the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, as well as their department officials be invited to appear for two hours per minister, in separate meetings, and that the committee plan for four additional meetings to hear from final witnesses.

That is what your subamendment says.

You have the floor again, Mr. Beaulieu.

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: Perfect. I think I've pretty well covered why it's important to hear from the three ministers and the President of Treasury Board. They will be able to give us some clarification, and I think that will help us afterwards to do our job properly. The objective—I hope it is the same for all members of the committee—is to modernize and amend the Official Languages Act so that we can really change the trend and counter the decline of French.

The situation is serious. Canada has always claimed that linguistic duality is a fundamental characteristic. It has often presented itself as a champion of linguistic coexistence. But in fact, with each census, there has been an increasing assimilation of francophones outside Quebec. Now we are also seeing increasing assimilation of francophones in Quebec. This assimilation does not reach proportions that are as great in Quebec as in the rest of Canada, far from it, but it is still significant and very worrisome.

The work of Charles Castonguay, for example, has shown that the assimilation and anglicization of francophones in Quebec lessens the impact of the increase in language transfers to French among allophones. We are talking here about newcomers who come more from “francotropical” countries.

We've reached a plateau that is due in part to all immigration strategies. In particular, permanent resident status is granted to temporary students who, in many cases, are not francophones. This has contributed to a significant dilution of Quebec's immigration choices. Moreover, it will likely cause the increase in transfers observed among “francotrops” to taper off.

This is already insufficient. The percentage of language transfers to French among allophones was about 56%, but this figure does not take into account all transfers to English among people who subsequently left Quebec. This 56% rate is therefore inflated. In fact, when there are language transfers among newcomers, who choose English, and they leave Quebec, we may have the impression that language transfers to French are increasing, but this is an artificial effect. I think it is very important to be able to ask the ministers about this.

We cannot continue to have this double talk and pretend that the assimilation of francophones is not happening when the situation is increasingly serious. Even Charles Castonguay recently published a column in which he addresses these issues. Specialists who study linguistic situations in minority settings—and we are currently seeing them in the rest of Canada—have established that a point of no return is eventually reached. If, for example, people spread themselves too thinly over the territory and there are too many transfers to English, the situation becomes irreversible. According to Charles Castonguay, this point of no return has been reached outside Quebec, except perhaps in New Brunswick. We hope he is wrong. In my opinion, by applying very strong measures, we can always reverse the trend, but it will not be easy.

Partly because of the Official Languages Act, English-language institutions in Quebec benefit from overfunding. Anglophone lobbyists have unfortunately adopted a strategy of making Quebecers feel guilty and portraying them as racists simply because they want to ensure the future of their language. This is a fundamental right. It is the right to self-determination of peoples.

I am familiar with all the groups that defend French in Quebec, including those who signed the open letter presented today. They are very open people who want to integrate newcomers into Quebec society. If we don't succeed in doing that, we will be heading for extinction. So, it's certain that we won't be able to accept going backwards indefinitely, as is currently happening.

If, by some miracle, a change of strategy were to secure the future of French and reverse the trend, it would be good for everyone, and even for the federalists, in the end. This could be good for them. They could adapt the strategy. As for the independentists, if we could just stop having to fight to survive, we could talk more about freedom and the positive aspects of Quebec independence. If we continue like this, we will only demonstrate that there is no other choice than assimilation or Quebec independence for all francophones, who could benefit from a freer Quebec. The latter could do more to support our brothers and sisters in the francophone and Acadian communities.

For all these reasons, I think this is very important, and that's what we are trying to do. People see us doing it at the moment. We don't want to be prevented from democratic debate and prevented from debating the crucial amendments to ensure the future of French, because nobody wins. Unfortunately, from what I understand from the comments that have been made and from this desire to limit debate, I think that this is where we are heading.

I know that it is far from obvious to our colleagues and to people in the francophone and Acadian communities, and Quebecers must understand this. When you're in a true minority situation, there are many more forces that you have to constantly fight against in order to move forward, and it's much more difficult. We are somewhat at the mercy of others.

What is happening in Acadia is quite worrying. Mr. Higgs is trying to appoint a person known to be anti-French to a committee that is more or less the counterpart of the Office québécois de la langue française. Mr. Trudeau intervened somewhat to oppose the appointment of a clearly anti-French person, even though he himself appointed a lieutenant-governor in New Brunswick who does not speak French. That case was brought before the courts. Now he is appealing the decision to ensure that his government and future governments will always have the latitude to appoint lieutenant-governors or governors general who do not speak French.

A major change in the Official Languages Act is absolutely necessary. I mentioned Charles Castonguay earlier, for example. According to him, the only solution is territorial bilingualism, a bit like what we find in Switzerland and Belgium. It is a matter of ensuring that, in certain territories, French is the only common official language. This does not mean that the rights of the English-speaking minority cannot be respected. Bill 101 has always upheld the right of English-speaking Quebecers to have their own institutions.

The deplorable thing about the Official Languages Act is that it allows the funding of radical groups in Quebec, which reminds me of the whole anti-French movement in Acadia. The equivalent exists in Quebec. These groups are not trying to ensure a minimum of services in English for anglophones. They already have a lot of services from the institutions, and they are going beyond what is necessary to ensure services in English to English-speakers.

Another objective, and it is also stated by the federal government, is to be able to anglicize about a third of immigrants. If you go and look at the Statistics Canada documents, they say that the first official language spoken in Quebec includes more than 33% of immigrants. That's quite incredible. I'm not making this up.

So it's clear. It's a known fact and it's been stated. All the specialists say so, and even the people from the Quebec government have said so. At least 90% of the linguistic mobility of allophones must move to French. For the overall rates, if we take into account all the linguistic transfers, francophones to English, anglophones to French, and so forth, if we don't have 90%, we will gradually lose some of the allophones and we will lose our demographic weight.

I know I'm wearing out the patience of my colleagues on the other side of the table, but I think this is crucial. If we want to move forward and achieve respect for all linguistic communities, for the people of Quebec and for the Acadian people as well, that is the direction we must take. In my opinion, this is part of a long struggle that began a long time ago and will continue. However, I hope that we will get somewhere.

We have an historic opportunity. Some have said that the federal government has made a commitment for the first time in 52 years, but it may be the first time in a very long time. The federal government is saying that it not only has a responsibility to defend English in Quebec, but that it also has a responsibility to defend French. We know that. English is not threatened in Quebec.

We want this to be reflected in Bill C-13, but it is not. Rather, we see the opposite effect. We are going to pass a law that, rather than really promoting and defending French, will allow companies like Air Canada and CN, for example, to choose between the two language regimes. We know that. It's a bit like a child. If you don't force them to do their homework, they will always choose the easy way out. This is not the case for all children and I don't want to cast aspersions on anyone.

This is what we have seen. The Quebec government has given companies under federal jurisdiction until December 1 to adhere to the Charter of the French Language. But Air Canada and CN have already announced that they do not intend to do so. They are waiting for Bill C-13 to be passed. We saw, in the first draft of the proposed amendment, that the deadline was also December 1. I do not know whether this is related. I hope that this is not the case because these companies really must not be allowed to do this. They're not necessarily acting in bad faith, but they're taking advantage of every opportunity. We've seen that Air Canada...

Ms. Niki Ashton: On a point of order, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: You have the floor, Ms. Ashton.

Ms. Niki Ashton: It seems to me that we are moving away from the discussion on the proposed amendment. We are getting into oth-

er issues. I am very concerned that we had a lot of technical problems during the meeting. I fully understand the problem of unreliable Internet access. We have had many other technical problems. We've talked about adding meetings to finish studying the bill, but on the other hand, time is being wasted talking and we are being prevented from moving forward with our work on the bill.

I wonder what exactly we are doing and I am very concerned about the delay this is causing.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Ashton.

Indeed. It is a point of order about the relevance of the debate to the first point of the amendment.

Mr. Beaulieu, I said earlier—

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: I will focus on the details.

The Chair: I am listening.

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: We also talked of four additional meetings for the last witnesses. I'm not allowed to question my colleagues, but I would like to remind you, Mr. Chair, that if it weren't for this change in strategy to limit the debate at the clause-by-clause stage, when obviously there is no real responsiveness to Quebec's requests, we would be much further along already.

The Chair: Mr. Beaulieu, could you address your subamendment, please?

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: The last part of my subamendment is that there should be four more meetings to hear the last witnesses. It is not true that we heard witnesses who had nothing to say. The witnesses we heard had very important points of view. If we schedule only four meetings to hear the last witnesses, we will deprive ourselves of hearing a number of very interesting witnesses we are supposed to hear.

We can continue our informal discussion to arrive at solutions. We are always very willing to do that. I am reaching out to my colleagues. However, these must be solutions that ensure the survival of French in Quebec and the rest of Canada.

I think we should now suspend the meeting, since it is 1 o'clock.

The Chair: Yes, indeed. If we have unanimous consent, however, we could continue for another 15 minutes.

Unless I am mistaken, Madam Clerk, I believe the technical team is available for another 15 minutes. You're signalling they are not. I had misunderstood.

So we will suspend the meeting until next Tuesday.

The meeting is suspended.

[*Meeting suspends at 1 o'clock on Thursday, November 17.*]

[*Meeting resumes at 11:06 Tuesday, November 22.*]

The Chair: We are resuming meeting number 38 of the Standing Committee on Official Languages, which suspended November 17.

Today's meeting is taking place in a hybrid format, pursuant to the House order of Thursday, June 23, 2022. Members are attending in person in the room and remotely using the Zoom application.

Today we are resuming debate on Mr. Serré's motion, regarding Mr. Godin's amendment and Mr. Beaulieu's subamendment. May I remind you that the committee must proceed in reverse. First, it must vote on Mr. Beaulieu's subamendment. Then we will move on to Mr. Godin's amendment. Finally, we will discuss the main motion, from Mr. Serré.

To avoid confusion, I'll do a recap: we had agreed to deal with each point of Mr. Beaulieu's proposed subamendment separately. We were at the first point, and I think we were coming to the end of the comments on that. I may be wrong, but in any case Mr. Beaulieu had the floor.

Before I give the floor to Mr. Beaulieu, I would like to inform the public that, for technical reasons, we will adjourn meeting 38 today, whatever happens. When we reconvene next Thursday, we will resume the debate exactly where we left off at the end of today's meeting. I promise you that. However, for technical reasons that make things rather complicated, we will have to adjourn the meeting today, come what may.

Mr. Beaulieu, you have the floor.

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

To summarize the first point of my subamendment, we are asking that four meetings be added to meet with the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, the Minister of Canadian Heritage, the President of Treasury Board, and the Minister of Official Languages, as well as four sessions to hear from the remaining witnesses.

Some people say we are filibustering, but that is not our goal. Our goal is to ensure that Bill C-13 will result in changes that will ensure the future of French in Canada and Quebec.

This morning, we learned of an open letter written by Messrs. François Larocque, Mark Power and Darius Bossé. They say that

Bill C-13 “[...] is one of the ten longest government bills ever drafted”, and that “The last revision of the Official Languages Act was conducted in 1988”, when the Mulroney Conservatives were in power. You may recall that this revision did not call into question or modify the principles of the Official Languages Act, which continued to defend and promote English in Quebec...

Mr. Joël Godin: I have a point of order, Mr. Chair.

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

Mr. Joël Godin: The meeting appears to be in camera.

The Chair: We have just sent a message asking that the problem be fixed. This is part of the technical problems I told you about at the beginning of the session. The repeated suspension and resumption of the meeting is causing these problems. We are going to sort it out after the meeting, because we are going to adjourn it to start a new hearing next Thursday, resuming the debate. I want to reassure you in that regard.

Mr. Beaulieu, you have the floor.

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: We could wait until the meeting is no longer posted as in camera.

The Chair: Last week's meeting was posted as closed when it was not. This was confusing.

We'll wait a few moments.

● (51510)

(Pause)

● (51510)

The Chair: We will adjourn the meeting immediately and start a new one in 15 minutes. We will then resume debate on the motion.

Mr. Joël Godin: Excuse me, Mr. Chair.

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

Mr. Joël Godin: For your protection, Mr. Chair, I would ask for unanimous consent to adjourn the meeting.

The Chair: That's a good idea, Vice-Chair.

Do we have the unanimous consent of the committee to adjourn immediately and reconvene in 15 minutes?

I don't see any objections.

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: The meeting is adjourned.

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