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## **Standing Committee on Official Languages**

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**EVIDENCE**

**Monday, June 6, 2016**

**Chair**

**The Honourable Denis Paradis**



## Standing Committee on Official Languages

Monday, June 6, 2016

• (1530)

[Translation]

**The Chair (Hon. Denis Paradis (Brome—Missisquoi, Lib.)):** Dear friends, this is the 17th meeting of the Standing Committee on Official Languages.

We planned to discuss routine proceedings, or the agenda for the next few days. We will try to proceed rather quickly. We don't have much time left before we adjourn for the summer.

On Wednesday, we will hear from the Commissioner of Official Languages, who will talk about issues such as the Air Canada matter, as we have been told.

We will have next week left. According to what I understand from our previous discussions, we will not begin a study on the roadmap or its equivalent until the House resumes in the fall. I am told that we should not get too far ahead when it comes to the week of June 20, as we still don't know what will happen.

This meeting will be held in the mindset of consultation, as we have decided not to strike a steering committee. I want everyone to participate in the discussions on our future business.

We will not look into the roadmap until the fall. On Wednesday, we will hear from the Commissioner of Official Languages. So we have two days left next week—June 13 and 15—to consider specific issues, if necessary and if you are interested. At some point, we made a grocery list of issues you suggested when we brainstormed. I will ask the clerk to highlight those issues. You could make suggestions after I'm done talking.

First, I asked the Mayor of Quebec City, Mr. Labeaume, to come explain his project to turn Quebec City into the capital of the Francophonie in America.

Second, RCMP officers have told me that they were interested in discussing the promotions of francophones and anglophones within their organization.

Third, we have the issue of bilingualism in the courts of justice, including the Superior Court and the Supreme Court of Canada.

Fourth, we have legal challenges, which we have discussed a bit here.

There are a number of points, and I don't think we will be able to cover them all.

Ms. Boucher, go ahead.

**Mrs. Sylvie Boucher (Beauport—Côte-de-Beaupré—Île d'Orléans—Charlevoix, CPC):** We decided to incorporate certain points into the study of the roadmap, including health and immigration. With Mr. Samson, we decided that those aspects were a natural part of the roadmap.

Is Mayor Labeaume available? I have no problem with him coming to the committee if he is willing. We will talk to him, and it will be a pleasure for me to see him.

**The Chair:** We said that this would be incorporated into the roadmap. Are you okay with that?

**Mr. Darrell Samson (Sackville—Preston—Chezzetcook, Lib.):** No, no, no.

**The Chair:** You're not?

Go ahead, Mr. Samson.

**Mr. Darrell Samson:** Someone did say they would like the subject of my motion to be integrated into the roadmap.

For me, it is essential for the committee to examine the whole issue of immigration in minority settings. I moved a motion to that effect. Today, I am ready to share the list of witnesses who could begin to appear on the issue. I am okay with us waiting until the first week of our return in September to begin the study on immigration. We could consider the roadmap afterwards. Whether we like it or not, immigration will be part of the roadmap. However, I understood that immigration was an important subject and that we had to start with that when we reconvene in September.

You mentioned two dates next week. I propose that, by June 13, we submit a list of individuals who could come testify on francophone immigration. We could discuss with them either here, or as part of a committee trip. I already have a list of eight individuals. I can submit it today, if you like. I believe that this list identifies most of the potential witnesses, but you can certainly add some.

**The Chair:** Mr. Samson, I understand from your comments that you are suggesting that we prioritize the study on immigration when we reconvene in September, that we begin making a list of witnesses and issues to cover in immigration and that we study the roadmap afterwards. Is that right?

**Mr. Darrell Samson:** Yes, and I believe that you have the support of my colleagues around the table.

**The Chair:** Ms. Boucher, go ahead.

**Mrs. Sylvie Boucher:** We have discussed immigration. We moved a common motion. We did discuss it, and we agreed to wait for the study on the roadmap. I personally think that we should also be given time to decide who we want to invite to appear before us. We need until Thursday to submit that information.

• (1535)

**The Chair:** Okay.

Mr. Choquette, do you have anything to add?

**Mr. François Choquette (Drummond, NDP):** No, I'm good.

**The Chair:** Ms. Lapointe, go ahead.

**Ms. Linda Lapointe (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, Lib.):** This is about something else.

**The Chair:** Okay, just a moment.

First, I would like us to come to an agreement about immigration.

Mr. Samson, the floor is yours.

**Mr. Darrell Samson:** That's fine, but could the clerk read the motion to us? I just want to check how much time we will have for that testimony. To my mind, it should be about six meetings. However, others may have different subjects to propose.

I just wanted to check whether that is already stated in the motion before I say anything about it.

**The Chair:** The clerk is looking at his documents.

**Mr. Darrell Samson:** I'm not quite sure; that's why I want to check. I believe it was six two-hour meetings, but we will see, once we have the list of witnesses, how many meetings we will have to set aside. If the list is fairly long, we could figure out together which witnesses we want to prioritize.

In principle, this should be well planned, so that I can sleep properly during the summer and go door to door with the colleagues from my riding.

If you care about my sleep, you will approve my proposal.

Isn't that right, Ms. Lapointe?

**Ms. Linda Lapointe:** Your sleep is being disturbed by the fact that you are becoming a grandfather; I assume it's a bit like becoming a father.

**The Chair:** I personally have no objections, if others don't have any. In six meetings, we could take the time we need to discuss the immigration issue. Those will be the first meetings when we reconvene in September.

**Mr. Darrell Samson:** In addition, the priorities in terms of the witnesses will be established before we leave.

**The Chair:** Speaking of that, I would like to receive by next Monday the list of witnesses and the priorities to be established for those six weeks. We could then discuss them.

**Mr. Darrell Samson:** Could you give me two minutes? I would like to say who the eight witnesses I have in mind for now are. I could also distribute the list afterwards.

First, I think we should invite senior officials, so that they can tell us about immigration and answer our questions.

The RDEE, the Réseau de développement économique et d'employabilité, is also very important.

I would add the Assemblée de la francophonie de l'Ontario.

I would also like to invite a representative of the New Brunswick government, in order to learn about that province's strategy in terms of linguistic duality.

Of course, I would like to invite the Fédération des communautés francophones et acadienne, the FCFA.

In addition, I would like to invite the Ontario francophone immigration support network, which receives funding from the federal department. A tremendous amount of work has been done, and many immigrants live in that province.

I would also like to invite a representative of Immigration francophone Nouvelle-Écosse.

I would close with a very important group, since we're still talking about education. I'd like to hear from the Fédération nationale des conseils scolaires francophones, which is made up of school boards outside Quebec. Those people could accurately describe the needs and challenges of francophone and Acadian communities across the country compared with those of French schools in Quebec. Of course, the same goes for anglophones in Quebec, but I leave it to you to add them.

Those are the witnesses I am proposing for now. If they were on your list, you can remove them. However, if you have any other names to propose, we are more than willing to hear you out.

**The Chair:** Very well.

Mr. Généreux, the floor is yours.

**Mr. Bernard Généreux (Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, CPC):** I believe you have noticed that we have been collaborating pretty well since the committee started working. We will have other business in the fall. I appreciate the fact that Mr. Samson has shared his list of witnesses, but I would like to get a written copy of it, if possible, through the clerk. For our committee to be as effective as possible, I thought that we would benefit from working together, especially when it comes to witnesses. The goal is not to hear from witnesses who will necessarily contradict each other, even though that can happen.

As we know, immigration is an extremely important issue, given the number of immigrants who settle in Canada. We have to come up with policies that will ensure that, once they arrive in the communities, those people are integrated as soon as possible.

We will of course also submit a list of witnesses. I don't remember how this is usually done. Is there a maximum number of witnesses?

• (1540)

**The Chair:** It's up to us to decide that.

**Mr. Bernard Généreux:** Indeed.

Should we also invite the minister, so that he can tell us what the department's intentions are? We could invite him at the end, after we've heard from all the other witnesses. That way, we could share with him the other witnesses' comments. That's not at all a tactic to try to corner him. I think that, before we meet with the minister, we should meet with the other witnesses. That will enable us to convey to him the witnesses' questions or comments.

**The Chair:** The clerk is pointing out that we should nevertheless vote on a budget to bring the witnesses to Ottawa once the list is complete.

**Mr. Bernard Généreux:** Okay.

This is indeed a study, like the one we did on the translation bureau. Is the committee expected to submit an independent report on the roadmap?

**The Chair:** We could certainly do that.

**Mr. Darrell Samson:** Yes, that's definitely what I would want, as well.

**Mr. Bernard Généreux:** We want to have six meetings to hear testimony, but the study will extend beyond that timeframe, since we will produce a report.

**The Chair:** We will have three weeks for testimony and one additional week for the report.

**Mr. Bernard Généreux:** We will need another week to analyze the report and whatnot. We have to keep that in mind when talking about timeframes.

**The Chair:** Mr. Lefebvre, the floor is yours. It will then be Mr. Vandal's turn.

**Mr. Paul Lefebvre (Sudbury, Lib.):** Immigration is part of the roadmap. I understand wanting to carry out an independent study, and I don't see any issue with that. However, we don't want to duplicate the work; we don't want to redo the study on immigration while carrying out the study on the roadmap.

**The Chair:** No.

**Mr. Paul Lefebvre:** So we will do this study on immigration and incorporate it into the roadmap. Do we agree on that?

**Some hon. members:** Yes.

**The Chair:** Mr. Choquette, go ahead, and then Mr. Vandal.

**Mr. François Choquette:** I want to make sure that I understand. We will not produce a report on immigration, but we will continue the study of the roadmap and integrate the immigration issue into it.

Is that what you are trying to say?

**The Chair:** I don't think that's what Mr. Samson was trying to say.

**Mr. Darrell Samson:** No. I want a separate report, which will no doubt inform the study on the roadmap.

**The Chair:** Go ahead, Mr. Vandal.

**Mr. Dan Vandal (Saint Boniface—Saint Vital, Lib.):** I will definitely suggest witnesses. Immigration is a very important issue for Manitoba and Alberta, in western Canada.

What is the deadline for proposing witnesses?

**The Chair:** I suggested June 13, but it could also be June 15. Let's set June 15 as the deadline. Agreed?

**Mr. Dan Vandal:** It's not urgent to submit names.

**The Chair:** I give you until Wednesday, June 15; so a week and a few days.

Ms. Boucher, go ahead.

**Mrs. Sylvie Boucher:** Last year, a study on immigration was done. The government considered the issue for nearly a year, and a report was submitted. The last meeting was held on May 26, 2015. It may be important to find out what is in the report, so that we don't duplicate the work.

Isn't that right, Mr. Vandal?

**The Chair:** Can we ask the clerk to distribute the report Ms. Boucher is talking about?

**Mrs. Sylvie Boucher:** At the last meeting, we produced a report on immigration. The last meeting was held on May 26, 2015. It would be good to know what's in the report, so that the committee does not duplicate the work. What do you think?

**The Chair:** We will ask the clerk to distribute the report to us.

**Mr. Darrell Samson:** Absolutely.

**Mr. Paul Lefebvre:** Mr. Choquette, were you not there?

**Mr. François Choquette:** No.

**The Chair:** Mr. Vandal, the floor is yours.

**Mr. Dan Vandal:** I think this report was already distributed somewhere. It was probably here.

**The Chair:** Yes, but the clerk will distribute it again.

**Mrs. Sylvie Boucher:** That way, we will make sure that we are not duplicating the work.

**Mr. Dan Vandal:** Very well.

**Mr. Paul Lefebvre:** Mr. Chair, I would like to say something.

**The Chair:** Go ahead.

**Mr. Paul Lefebvre:** June 15 was your deadline for submitting names of witnesses, but if we want everyone to have the names earlier and discuss them, perhaps the deadline should be June 14. Then, we could see whether any names are missing and discuss it on June 15.

**Mr. Darrell Samson:** The list would be more up to date.

**Mr. Paul Lefebvre:** Mr. Généreux suggested that we be more efficient. If we suggest names on June 14, everyone will have seen the list of witnesses before the meeting on June 15, and the meeting will be more productive. Do you agree?

**Mrs. Sylvie Boucher:** Yes, I agree.

**Mr. Paul Lefebvre:** So, we'll have until June 14 to submit names.

**The Chair:** Is that okay?

Mr. Samson, go ahead.

**Mr. Darrell Samson:** Could the budget for the witnesses be approved before we break for the summer? That way, as soon as we return, the process would be under way and we could get right to work.

• (1545)

**The Chair:** We first need the list of witnesses. If a witness comes from Hawkesbury, it's not that bad. However, if a witness comes from Nova Scotia, it will cost more.

**Mr. Darrell Samson:** The list will be established at the meeting on June 13. For the moment, there's nothing specific on the agenda for the meeting. We should thus be able to go over the list together, identify our priorities, and prepare the budget.

**The Chair:** That's when we'll vote on the budget.

**Mr. Darrell Samson:** That way, we could submit the budget for approval before we break for the summer.

**The Chair:** No, we're the ones who approve it.

**Mr. Darrell Samson:** That makes things even easier. We could start the study when we return, on Monday.

**The Chair:** That wouldn't be a problem.

When we have the names, we'll look at where they come from and how much it will cost, then approve the budget.

Mr. Généreux, go ahead.

**Mr. Bernard Généreux:** The list Mr. Samson mentioned earlier does not include any individuals. I don't know whether the government plans to invite people who have just arrived in Canada and who have difficulty in either English or French, or who have trouble finding a job because of the language barrier. I don't know whether it will be possible.

It's good to bring in organization representatives, but it would be worthwhile to hear about what the average person is going through. I don't know where to find these people. Perhaps the department could give us names or contact these people. I don't know. We also want to hear from people who are dealing with these problems every day, as opposed to only bringing in organization representatives who share information with us.

**The Chair:** That's fine.

Ms. Lapointe, go ahead.

**Ms. Linda Lapointe:** That's a good idea. If language is causing integration problems, interpreters may be required. If people are actually experiencing these problems, it may be something to consider.

**Mr. Bernard Généreux:** It should be looked into.

**Ms. Linda Lapointe:** I know the Tekeyan Armenian Cultural Association in Montreal has assisted a number of people from Syria. I can try to find people.

**Mr. Bernard Généreux:** I suggest that we don't bring in only organization representatives. I want the average person dealing with these problems as we speak to share what they have experienced since their arrival. In the last year, 50,000 refugees have arrived, after all. We should certainly be able to find two or three.

**Ms. Linda Lapointe:** I want to confirm the date. June 13, 14, and 15 were all mentioned earlier.

**The Chair:** We agreed on June 14.

**Ms. Linda Lapointe:** I want to confirm the date. Earlier Mr. Samson referred to June 13, but it's June 14. I want to be sure that everyone is talking about the same date.

**Mr. Darrell Samson:** Which day of the week is June 14?

**Ms. Linda Lapointe:** It's a Tuesday. On Wednesday, we'll discuss the list again to make sure we all agree.

**Mr. Darrell Samson:** I think it should be Monday, June 13.

**Ms. Linda Lapointe:** The reason is we agreed on June 14.

**The Chair:** We'll distribute the list of names on June 14. Please suggest names no later than June 14. That way, the clerk can distribute the list of names.

**Mr. Darrell Samson:** Why not June 13? We have a meeting that day. What do we have planned for June 13?

**Mrs. Sylvie Boucher:** We are probably meeting with Mr. Labeaume.

**Mr. Darrell Samson:** On June 13? That's not confirmed.

**The Chair:** The reason is I wanted to give you more time. If we make it June 14, you'll have one more day to find more names. I don't object to that.

**Mr. Darrell Samson:** I can live with that. However, I want to point out one thing. My understanding is that funding is already set aside, so we can start the process of inviting witnesses without having the full budget approved.

**The Chair:** Yes. We're the ones who approve the budget for witnesses, so there's no problem.

The clerk says that funding is voted on for each study. When we change studies, we need to vote on new funding. Regardless, I don't think it's a problem.

**Mr. Darrell Samson:** I could provide a cash advance and you could reimburse me.

**Some hon. members:** Oh, oh!

**The Chair:** Is that all?

**Ms. Linda Lapointe:** Yes.

**The Chair:** Okay, that's fine.

I think Mr. Arseneault wants to talk.

**Mr. René Arseneault (Madawaska—Restigouche, Lib.):** No, it's fine.

**The Chair:** Okay.

Ms. Lapointe, go ahead.

**Ms. Linda Lapointe:** As I said earlier, I may have something else to propose.

**The Chair:** Go on.

**Ms. Linda Lapointe:** You know that I'm also on the Standing Committee on International Trade. The other day we heard from representatives...

I don't speak when people aren't listening.

**The Chair:** We're waiting.

**Mr. Bernard Généreux:** I'm sorry, it's Mr. Choquette's fault.

**Mr. François Choquette:** It's my fault.

**Ms. Linda Lapointe:** Hasn't anybody ever told you to not blame others for your mistakes?

**Mr. Bernard Généreux:** I've always been told that, but it's true. He was the one talking.

**Some hon. members:** Oh, oh!

**Mr. François Choquette:** It's true. It's my fault.

**Ms. Linda Lapointe:** The Standing Committee on International Trade is currently studying the Trans-Pacific Partnership agreement. We are also examining the medical aspect. We heard from a representative of the Canadian Nurses Association. It wasn't really about international trade, but she raised the issue that currently, in Canada, the French version of the exam nurses must pass to obtain their licence is a translation. It's a translation of the American exam, which is used in Canada. It's a poor-quality translation, which has caused significant problems for the nurses who took the exam in French. It's very unfortunate. Since the exam is not the same as before, she said that 30% fewer francophone nurses were passing the exam.

She's willing to meet with us. It could be part of our roadmap study.

• (1550)

**Mrs. Sylvie Boucher:** It's certainly applicable.

**Ms. Linda Lapointe:** We could keep it in mind and add it to our study when the time is right.

It's sad to think the success rate is lower because the exam is not in the students' language. It may be something to add to our study.

**The Chair:** Ms. Boucher, I think you have something to add.

**Mrs. Sylvie Boucher:** I was saying it would be beneficial.

**Ms. Linda Lapointe:** I just wanted to bring it up. We already have the woman's contact information. She's interested in appearing.

**Mrs. Sylvie Boucher:** Excellent.

**The Chair:** I agree.

So, the two hours of next Wednesday's meeting are set aside for the Commissioner of Official Languages.

For Monday, June 13, do you have ideas for topics, perhaps from the list that we mentioned?

Mr. Lefebvre, go ahead.

**Mr. Paul Lefebvre:** Mr. Chair, we'll be hearing from the commissioner Wednesday, and I think his presentation will raise issues. I also think that tomorrow he'll be submitting a report on Air Canada and that it may raise further issues.

As a result, I think we should keep the June 13 meeting open and make adjustments accordingly, to be on the same wavelength as the commissioner. Since we're in Ottawa, it may be easier to find someone in the region who is ready to speak to us about an aspect of the commissioner's report or about his report on Air Canada being released tomorrow.

**Mr. François Choquette:** I want to second Mr. Lefebvre's proposal. I suggest we ask Air Canada representatives to meet with us on Monday. A report on Air Canada will indeed be released to the public. There have been recurring problems with complaints against

Air Canada. I think it would be good to meet with Air Canada representatives to hear what they have to say and their response to the commissioner's report.

That's what I suggest, if you agree.

**Mr. Paul Lefebvre:** That's what I suggested.

**The Chair:** Mr. Lefebvre suggested the same thing.

So on Monday, June 13, we want to meet with Air Canada representatives.

Correct?

**Mr. Paul Lefebvre:** Perfect, thank you.

**The Chair:** It's settled then, for June 13.

On June 15, we'll look at the list of names for our immigration study. We'll look at the six-week work plan for immigration.

Mr. Généreux, go ahead.

**Mr. Bernard Généreux:** Concerning Air Canada, I don't know whether some of you are familiar with Michel Thibodeau, who won his court case against the company. He is continuing his fight. I'll be completely honest with you. I know only the basics of the case.

It would not necessarily be part of a study, but we want to meet with Air Canada representatives. I think everyone agreed to this.

**The Chair:** Indeed.

**Mr. Bernard Généreux:** So, the Auditor General could submit a request.

Could we invite a person who has won a case against Air Canada and who is continuing to fight the company?

**The Chair:** I understand that Mr. Choquette agrees.

**Mr. François Choquette:** Yes, I agree with the proposal.

**Mr. Bernard Généreux:** That's if he's available next week. I don't know where he works.

**The Chair:** What do the Liberals think?

**Mr. Paul Lefebvre:** We could set aside the first hour for Air Canada representatives and the second hour for Michel Thibodeau.

Where does he live? In Montreal?

**Mr. Bernard Généreux:** He's in Ottawa. He works for the federal government.

**The Chair:** Is that okay?

**Mr. Darrell Samson:** That's fine.

**The Chair:** So we will set aside the first hour for Air Canada representatives and the second hour for Mr. Thibodeau. We'll also have the chance to hear from another witness.

**Mr. Paul Lefebvre:** I think after the report's release tomorrow and the commissioner's appearance on Wednesday, we can decide if we need to invite another witness.

**Mr. Bernard Généreux:** I have an idea. Let's invite Yvon Godin.

**Some hon. members:** Oh, oh!

**Mrs. Sylvie Boucher:** Yes, but he may not be available.

**The Chair:** Mr. Samson, go ahead.

**Mr. Darrell Samson:** There's also the issue of Air Canada and the decision made. I no longer recall the details very well. I think the matter involved Air Canada's use of official languages on international flights. Mr. Dion raised the issue a few years ago. Air Canada was not following the rules abroad. I don't know whether that would be relevant. It may be worthwhile to review the issue.

• (1555)

**The Chair:** Ms. Boucher, go ahead.

**Mrs. Sylvie Boucher:** I'll give you an example. We travelled to Vancouver from Quebec City, and not a word of French was spoken the entire journey. However, when we returned from Vancouver to Quebec City, we were served in French.

So the problem is not just abroad. It's also within Canada.

**The Chair:** Okay. I think that's it.

So, on June 8, we'll be bringing in the Commissioner of Official Languages. On June 13, we would like to bring in Air Canada representatives and Mr. Thibodeau. On June 15, we'll prepare the list of witnesses and the work plan for the immigration study, which we'll start when we return.

**Mr. Paul Lefebvre:** So in September.

**Mrs. Sylvie Boucher:** What about next week?

**The Chair:** Given what I've heard, I'm reluctant to commit to next week.

**Mr. René Arseneault:** What have you heard?

**Mrs. Sylvie Boucher:** We'll know next week.

**The Chair:** Everything is up in the air.

**Mrs. Sylvie Boucher:** We'll see where things stand next week.

**The Chair:** Yes, we'll see next week, if that's okay.

**Mrs. Sylvie Boucher:** Yes.

**The Chair:** That's okay?

**Mr. Paul Lefebvre:** It's not a problem.

**Mr. Dan Vandal:** When do we normally finish?

**Mrs. Sylvie Boucher:** It varies depending on the government.

**Mr. Dan Vandal:** It depends on the situation?

**Mrs. Sylvie Boucher:** Yes, it depends on the situation.

**The Chair:** In theory, we'll finish on June 23, unless the parties agree otherwise.

Regardless, we'll need to return the week after for the "three amigos" summit.

**Mrs. Sylvie Boucher:** Yes, on June 29.

**The Chair:** Does anyone have anything else to add? Otherwise, we'll end the meeting there.

Thank you very much.

The meeting is adjourned.

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