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# Standing Committee on Official Languages

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Chair: Mr. René Arseneault





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• (1125)

[*Translation*]

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

Welcome to meeting number 45 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.

Pursuant to our routine motion, I wish to inform the committee that all witnesses completed the required login tests prior to the meeting.

Today, we begin a clause-by-clause review of Bill C-13.

I would like to begin by welcoming the officials from the Department of Canadian Heritage, the Department of Citizenship and Immigration and the Treasury Board Secretariat, who are here to support the committee and answer technical questions.

**Mr. Joël Godin (Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier, CPC):** Excuse me, Mr. Chair, but would it be possible to introduce them?

**The Chair:** You're ahead of me, Mr. Godin. That's exactly what I was going to do.

Before we begin the clause-by-clause consideration of the bill, I'll allow Ms. Boyer to introduce her team and tell us why they are here, before the committee.

**Ms. Julie Boyer (Assistant Deputy Minister, Official Languages, Heritage and Regions, Department of Canadian Heritage):** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

First, I'd like to offer my sincere condolences to the members of this committee on the passing of former minister Jim Carr. I had the opportunity to work closely with him when he was Minister of Natural Resources. I had a lot of respect for him. He was a man who demanded a lot from the public service, but who also gave a lot in return. So I offer my sincere condolences to you, dear parliamentarians, who worked closely with him. This is a great loss.

My name is Julie Boyer, assistant deputy minister of Official Languages, Heritage and Regions at the Department of Canadian Heritage.

The Official Languages Branch is responsible for the development of strategic policies for official languages, including project to

modernize the Official Languages Act and the development of the five-year action plan for official languages in Canada. We also manage the transfer payment agreements for the provinces and territories regarding the provision of services and education in official languages.

With me today are two of my colleagues from the Official Languages Branch. I'll let them introduce themselves.

I'd then ask Mr. Desruisseaux and Mr. Quell, from the Department of Citizenship and Immigration and the Treasury Board Secretariat, respectively, to introduce themselves.

**Ms. Sarah Boily (Director General, Official Languages, Department of Canadian Heritage):** Thank you, Ms. Boyer.

Good morning. My name is Sarah Boily, the director general of Official Languages. I'm pleased to be with you today.

**Mrs. Chantal Terrien (Manager, Modernization of the Official Languages Act, Department of Canadian Heritage):** Good morning. I'm Chantal Terrien, the manager of Modernization of the Official Languages Act at the Department of Canadian Heritage.

**Mr. Alain Desruisseaux (Director General, Francophone Immigration Policy and Official Languages Division, Department of Citizenship and Immigration):** Good afternoon. I'm Alain Desruisseaux, the director general of Francophone Immigration, at Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada. I'm responsible for all aspects of the department's strategic frameworks and broad policy frameworks for francophone immigration and for working in partnership with all our partners within the government, since this is a horizontal commitment that involves all departments.

We also have responsibilities that relate more specifically to francophone immigration settlement programs. As a result, the francophone integration pathway is also our responsibility.

Community engagement is at the heart of our activities and guides all of our thinking, whether in the development of policies or programs.

**Mr. Carsten Quell (Executive Director, Official Languages Centre of Excellence, People and Culture, Office of the Chief Human Resources Officer, Treasury Board Secretariat):** My name is Carsten Quell. I am the executive director of the Centre of Excellence for Official Languages. I represent the Treasury Board Secretariat.

The Treasury Board Secretariat's role in official languages includes ensuring communications and services in both languages, respect for language of work, and equitable participation of English and French speakers in the public service.

The role of our centre is primarily to support the 200 or so federal institutions in their responsibility to implement the Official Languages Act.

I am here today to support my colleagues at the Department of Canadian Heritage, who have primary responsibility for Bill C-13.

**The Chair:** Thank you for being here today, valued technical advisers and experts. Perhaps we will have to turn to you from time to time as the clause-by-clause consideration of the bill proceeds.

Before I begin, I would like to explain to members of the committee how committees conduct clause-by-clause consideration of a bill.

Mr. Godin, you seem to want to speak.

**Mr. Joël Godin:** Mr. Chair, before you launch into the explanation of the process, I would like to have the floor to speak to last Thursday's meeting.

**The Chair:** I yield the floor to you.

**Mr. Joël Godin:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I would just like to apologize for the tone I took last Thursday. I think the substance was fine, but the tone was perhaps not acceptable. I would especially like to apologize to the interpreters, who may have had a more difficult situation or period. So I apologize to the interpreters and to my colleagues.

• (1130)

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, Mr. Godin. Your comments are deeply appreciated.

I need to explain a little bit about the process of the clause-by-clause study that we are doing today.

As the name suggests, today's exercise is to consider, in order, all the clauses of a bill. I will call each clause, one at a time, and each clause may be debated before it is voted on.

If an amendment is moved to the clause in question, I will give the floor to the member moving it, who may explain it if he or she wishes. The amendment may then be debated and voted on when no other member wishes to speak. Amendments shall be considered in the order in which they appear in the bundle which the members of the committee have received from the clerk.

It is important to note that all amendments and subamendments must be submitted in writing to the committee clerk. Amendments must be legally correct, but they must also be procedurally correct. The chair may rule an amendment out of order if it impinges on the financial initiative of the Crown, contravenes the principle of the bill, or exceeds the scope of the bill, i.e., the principle and scope that were adopted by the House of Commons when it passed the bill at second reading.

If you want to remove a clause from the bill altogether, you should vote against the clause when it comes to a vote, rather than move an amendment to remove it. I repeat: if anyone around the ta-

ble wants to eliminate a clause from the bill completely, they should only vote against the clause when it comes to a vote, rather than move an amendment to delete it.

As this is a first experience for most of us, the chair will proceed slowly. This is my biggest challenge. This will allow everyone to follow the deliberations well.

Each amendment has a distinctive number. As you have already noted, it is in the top right hand corner of the page and indicates which party has submitted it. The proposer does not need anyone else's support to move the amendment. Once an amendment has been moved, unanimous consent of the committee is required to withdraw it.

During the debate on an amendment, members may propose subamendments. These do not need to be approved by the member who moved the amendment. Only one subamendment can be considered at a time and it cannot be changed. I don't want to dwell on this, but you will remember that this caused some problems. So the rule is strict: only one subamendment may be considered at a time and the subamendment may not be amended. When an amendment is the subject of a subamendment, as we all know, it is the subamendment that is voted on first. Another subamendment may then be moved, or the committee may revert to the main amendment and vote on it.

Once all the clauses have been voted on, at the very end, the committee shall hold a vote on the title and on the bill itself. The committee must also give an order to reprint the bill so that the House of Commons has an updated version at report stage. Finally, the committee must ask the chair to report the bill back to the House of Commons. This report shall contain only the text of the adopted amendments, if any, and an indication of the deleted clauses, if any.

I thank members for their attention. I wish the committee a productive clause-by-clause study of fine bill C-13.

Before I begin, I would like to return to the wise words of Ms. Boyer. I thank her for pointing out that we have lost a colleague in the House of Commons. I would like to use this public forum today to offer, on behalf of all members of the committee, our sincere condolences to the family, relatives and friends of Mr. Jim Carr.

With that said, we begin clause-by-clause consideration of Bill C-13.

• (1135)

Pursuant to Standing Order 75, consideration of clause 1, the short title, is postponed.

(Clause 2)

**The Chair:** I now call clause 2 for debate.

We have amendment CPC-1.

Mr. Godin, you may move your amendment.

**Mr. Joël Godin:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. We hope to follow the set procedures. I think you know I have tremendous respect for the institution. If I make any mistakes, I'm sure that my colleagues and yourself will be able to set me straight.

I think this first amendment is important, in light of Quebec's special status.

Because the amendment is short, I will read it out loud. The amendment proposes that Bill C-13, in Clause 2, be amended by replacing line 18 on page 1 to line 16 on page 2 with the following:

ted to respecting Quebec's language planning choices, as set out in the *Charter of the French language*;

You have to understand that Quebec is home to a small group of francophones who are surrounded by a sea of North American anglophones. I think that this amendment should be made to the bill.

That is all I have to say right now.

**The Chair:** Are there any questions about the amendment?

Mr. Garneau, you have the floor.

**Hon. Marc Garneau (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Westmount, Lib.):** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Thank you for inviting me to be here with you today to give my view on amendment CPC-1, which Mr. Godin has just moved.

I will speak slowly.

I will begin by saying that Bill C-13 deals with a federal act that concerns the official languages of Canada, obviously. In my opinion, it is not appropriate to refer to Quebec's Charter of the French language in Bill C-13, which falls under federal jurisdiction and deals with official languages in Canada.

By making this reference, we are de facto incorporating the Charter of the French language of Quebec in a federal statute.

Let me remind you that Quebec's Charter of the French language is not just simply Bill 101, which we have lived with for a very long time. It is now an amended charter by virtue of Bill 96. Yes, Bill 96 seeks to protect French in Quebec, which is a good thing, but it also discriminates against the anglophone minority.

What's more, Bill 96 also invokes the notwithstanding clause as a preventative measure, which creates many problems. It's as if we are saying that we will not entertain any argument or claim that calls into question, for whatever reason, the Charter of the French language or Bill 96.

I hope that we all recognize, as federal MPs sitting on a federal committee and considering a federal act, that it would be a huge error to give Quebec free rein to do what it wants in linguistic matters in Quebec.

As federal MPs, we have a duty towards linguistic minorities in Canada, including Quebec's anglophones.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Garneau.

I now give the floor to Ms. Lattanzio.

[English]

**Ms. Patricia Lattanzio (Saint-Léonard—Saint-Michel, Lib.):** Thank you for giving me the floor, Mr. Chair.

I, too, would like to make the following comments. I'm an anglophone, as you know, from Quebec, and there's a certain reality in Quebec for the linguist minority community there. I can tell you first and foremost that the law seeks to promote and protect French in Quebec and across Canada. I think that we are all unanimous on that. There's no hesitation. There's no reconsideration. We're all speaking the same language.

However, I do also want to echo some of the comments that have been made. I will express them in English. Bill 96, of course, was enacted last summer in 2022. It has become the new charter of the French language and replaces the old Bill 101. The issue with Bill 96... The anglophone linguistic community in Quebec is very anxious and fearful of this law. It has become the new charter. Why the use of the pre-emptive clause, the notwithstanding clause, is of great concern for the anglophones is that this linguistic minority community in Quebec has rights. It has guaranteed rights by virtue of the Quebec charter of the French language as well as the Canadian Constitution. Therefore, this law, Bill 96, is shielded from any contestation that any linguistic minority community, such as the anglophone community in Quebec, would have. It poses a grave problem. Any reference to it in a federal law, you can understand, is of considerable worry for this community.

What I would like to do is walk through... The amendment speaks about deleting, specifically, lines of what we have in Bill C-13. I would like to walk the committee through and read the lines that my colleague is suggesting we delete. Then I would like to make some comments on that.

In subclause 2(2), we start with "And whereas the Government of Canada". We keep that. The amendment is proposing to delete the following:

is committed to enhancing the vitality and supporting the development of English and French linguistic minority communities—taking into account their uniqueness, diversity and historical and cultural contributions to Canadian society—as an integral part of the two official language communities of Canada, and to fostering full recognition and use of English and French in Canadian society;

And whereas the Government of Canada is committed to protecting and promoting the French language, recognizing that French is in a minority situation in Canada and North America due to the predominant use of English;

And whereas the Government of Canada is committed to cooperating with provincial and territorial governments and their institutions to support the development of English and French linguistic minority communities, to provide services in both English and French, to respect the constitutional guarantees of minority language educational rights and to enhance opportunities for all to learn both English and French;

Mr. Chair, this is what we're proposing to do away with.

I would like to remind the committee that Canada's character is founded on the principle that we have two official languages. We have two official linguistic minority communities. There has been, during the course of the study, one colleague in particular who has almost put in doubt that there's a linguistic anglophone community in Quebec. However, I can guarantee you that it exists. It is a healthy community. It is made up of 1.3 million anglophones in Quebec. Therefore, I think that what we're proposing here is deviating from all the linguistic regimes that we find in this beautiful country of ours. I would say that the law is there to be able to ensure symmetry.

I can tell you, first and foremost, that I will be voting against this amendment for obvious reasons. I would almost say to members around this committee that we're putting in doubt the bedrock of this country, founded on these two official languages, by interposing one and only one linguistic regime.

• (1140)

These are my comments.

**The Chair:** Thanks, Madam Lattanzio.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Godin, over to you.

**Mr. Joël Godin:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I heard my two Liberal colleagues saying that there was no need to include the charter in Bill C-13.

I simply want to remind them that Quebec enjoys a unique status, that it is surrounded by a sea of anglophones and that the aim of the amendment is to protect a linguistic minority in Canada.

I'm not doing this because I am opposed to the other official language. I have tremendous respect for both official languages. However, given Quebec's minority status, I think that we should seek to reinforce protective measures to avoid French being wiped out in Quebec.

• (1145)

**The Chair:** Mr. Godin, I do not do this often, but allow me to intervene quickly here. From what I have heard, I think that the comment was aimed at the issue of exclusion, and not the actual content.

That said, Mr. Beaulieu, you have the floor.

**Mr. Mario Beaulieu (La Pointe-de-l'Île, BQ):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I would like to state that, contrary to what some of the previous speakers have said, the Official Languages Act has, for the past 52 years, been one of the main factors contributing to the decline of French in Quebec. The act is based on principles that go completely against the Quebec linguistic policy model, which leans more towards the principle of collective rights and territoriality and aims to make French the lingua franca within the territory of Quebec.

In every corner of the world where there are systems that are based on an institutional non-territorial linguistic approach to bilingualism, such as the one imposed by the Official Languages Act on Quebec, we are witness to the assimilation of minority language

groups. It is not a linguistic planning model that allows us to protect minority language speakers, and this is what we have been seeing for the past 52 years: census after census shows that more and more francophones are being assimilated outside of Quebec.

In Quebec, this imposed model has had the effect of speeding up the decline of French, on top of which Quebec francophones are using English more and more in the home. An increasing number of francophones are switching to English.

Outside of Quebec, almost 100% of allophones and newcomers switch to English, whereas in Quebec, we are barely managing to stem the tide thanks to supports such as the Canada-Quebec accord relating to Immigration or Bill 101, which was quickly weakened by the federal government, and all the mechanisms contained in the Official Languages Act.

We can't continue to lose ground. The very survival of French in Quebec is at stake. The very survival of French in Canada and in North America is at stake. Quebec is the only majority francophone state in North America and is the only state that could successfully integrate newcomers and ensure social cohesion. That's why it is extremely important that the federal government recognize this.

The circumstances surrounding the Laurendeau-Dunton Commission were similar to what is happening now. There was a historic opportunity to give Quebecers collective rights and honour the French language in Quebec. The Liberal government at the time did not seize the opportunity and did not follow up on any of the recommendations made by André Laurendeau. We know what happened afterwards.

I think it is inconceivable that the Official Languages Act and all the grant mechanisms that are contained therein only serve to reinforce English as an official language in Quebec. This is what we have seen. The speaker before me said that there are approximately 1.3 million anglophones in Quebec, but that's not quite true. In order to be able to say that, she included approximately 33% of immigrants in Quebec who are from anglophone countries and are commonly termed anglotropes. Quebec must integrate these immigrants and needs a 90% linguistic transfer rate of allophones towards French in order to simply maintain its demographic weight.

We are witnessing a Canadian government that seeks to almost openly reduce the number of francophones by using the first spoken official language as a gauge, which is how Ms. Lattanzio arrived at the total of 1.3 million. The federal government itself, by giving grants to all these groups by virtue of the Official Languages Act, has up until now sought to anglicize newcomers in all sorts of ways.

This amendment, which was also requested by the Quebec government, simply seeks to ensure that the Canadian government abides by the right of peoples to self-determination, in this case the Quebec people. It is the right to guarantee the future existence of its language and to make French the lingua franca. This would ensure social cohesion for all, including Quebec anglophones.

• (1150)

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Beaulieu.

Mr. Serré, you have the floor.

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

I would like to thank you for your amendment, Mr. Godin.

I disagree with the amendment and would like to make things right. The amendment does not make any additions. To the contrary, it brings an exclusion. This amendment eliminates all reference to minorities.

We do understand that French is in decline in Quebec and everywhere else in the country. However, the amendment excludes linguistic minorities. As a Franco-Ontarian, I find the amendment unacceptable.

It is important to take into account the various linguistic realities of all the provinces in the country. This amendment is proposing an asymmetrical framework for official languages.

Overall, I cannot accept the amendment. It is really important to take into account what is happening to minority official language communities everywhere in the country, as well as Quebec. We have to ensure their rights are being upheld.

In my view, this amendment is unacceptable.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Serré.

The next speaker is Ms. Lattanzio, who will be followed by Ms. Ashton.

[*English*]

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

Again, just to make it clear to my colleague who is proposing this, it is an exclusion that he's proposing. We want to take out the parts that I read before to be able to infer the amendment that he is proposing.

If I could address the officials, Mr. Chair, I would like to know what the ramifications are of replacing the paragraphs I have read out with the proposed amendment.

**Ms. Julie Boyer:** Thank you for your question.

If I may, I'll continue in French, because my notes are here in French.

[*Translation*]

As you explained so eloquently a while ago, this is about eliminating references to the well-being of minority official language communities, the importance of collaboration with the provinces and territories as well as protecting French.

The impact of the amendment would be as follows.

The amendment would make a federal law subordinate to a provincial one. The problem is that this paves the way for other provinces who might seek to do the same thing.

[*English*]

**Ms. Patricia Lattanzio:** I have a subsequent question.

May I, Mr. Chair?

**The Chair:** Is related exactly to what you're in right now?

**Ms. Patricia Lattanzio:** Yes.

**The Chair:** Okay. Go ahead.

**Ms. Patricia Lattanzio:** Just to pursue that line of thought, what would you say with regard to the ramifications for recognizing French as a minority situation in the rest of Canada? Does this amendment take that into account or does it not?

**Ms. Julie Boyer:** I believe that with the provision being removed, it does not. It introduces this idea of an asymmetrical approach where French is the language in the charter. The legislation that needs to be respected is the charter, in this case.

**Ms. Patricia Lattanzio:** In essence, then, it puts into question the symmetry of English and French in Canada. At the same time, it does not recognize that French is in a minority situation across the land and recognizes one linguistic regime over all others across the country.

**Ms. Julie Boyer:** That's correct. It does do that.

• (1155)

**Ms. Patricia Lattanzio:** Thank you very much.

**The Chair:** Madam Ashton, you're next.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Beaulieu, I did see you. You will get the chance to speak a little later.

Over to you, Ms. Ashton.

**Ms. Niki Ashton (Churchill—Keewatinook Aski, NDP):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I wanted to explain our position in the hope of making progress on other issues, because we have here a historic opportunity to amend and improve Bill C-13.

The NDP, even if it agrees with the spirit of the amendment, is opposed to the withdrawal of certain elements. We wish to state that we are in favour of recognizing the Charter of the French language in Bill C-13, but we don't want to withdraw the recognition of francophone minorities in other provinces.

I just wanted to let you know our position.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Ms. Ashton.

The speakers are as follows: Mr. Drouin, Mr. Beaulieu, and Mr. Vis, in that order.

**Mr. Francis Drouin (Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, Lib.):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I would like to carry on where my colleague, Mr. Serré, left off.

I don't want to take away my other colleague's right to defend his language in his province. I respect that utterly. However, upholding that same right cannot be to the detriment of my Franco-Ontarian community, the Acadian communities and other communities elsewhere in Canada.

Therefore, I cannot agree that the following passage be completely withdrawn:

recognizing that French is in a minority situation in Canada and North America due to the predominant use of English, is committed to protecting and promoting the French language;

I can't agree with this principle and I can't support what is being proposed.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Mr. Beaulieu now has the floor.

**Mr. Mario Beaulieu:** First, I want to make it clear that this is in no way intended to weaken the rights of francophone and Acadian communities, on the contrary. What is being removed, particularly in the first paragraph, establishes a symmetry between the francophone and Acadian communities, on the one hand, and anglophones in Quebec, on the other, when they are not at all in the same situation. Several francophone groups outside Quebec said they agreed that there should be a differentiated approach.

We believe that this proposal must be considered in relation to all the amendments submitted. A little further on, we say that we recognize that “English and 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”.

This principle has always been denounced in Quebec, because in 1969, when the Official Languages Act came into force, anglophones in Quebec were part of the English-Canadian elite, a situation that has continued for a long time. They had universities, schools and hospitals that reflected a majority rather than a minority position. To some extent, the Official Languages Act has helped to maintain these inequities.

We do want the rights of francophone and Acadian communities to be enhanced. Furthermore, I think that Quebec is the province where the rights of the linguistic minority, in this case the historic English-speaking community, are best respected. In fact, they are so well respected that newcomers have come to be anglicized.

It is more in that spirit that we are proposing this. It's in no way intended to weaken francophones outside Quebec. This is reflected in all the amendments that have been put forward, both by the Government of Quebec and the Bloc Québécois. We will see this later on.

What we want to change is this symmetry that is decried just about everywhere. It creates an opposition between Quebeckers and the francophone and Acadian communities, in Quebec at least. By putting anglophones in Quebec and francophone Acadian communities on the same footing, every time they are given a right, the French language in Quebec is weakened, since English in Quebec is strengthened.

This symmetry must be broken down, precisely to create cohesion. I think that francophones outside Quebec and Quebeckers have everything to gain by working together and stopping dividing themselves in this way.

• (1200)

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Beaulieu.

I'll now give the floor to Mr. Vis.

[*English*]

Mr. Vis, it's yours.

**Mr. Brad Vis (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon, CPC):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

It's no surprise to this committee that I've had issues with the application of provincial law in a federal statute, based on my previous comments, but I was intrigued by Madam Boyer's comments just a minute ago when she talked about an asymmetrical approach to federalism.

I'm wondering about this. If it's the case here that it would be significant to make reference to a provincial statute, then why did the Government of Canada include that same statute in the second part of the bill?

[*Translation*]

**The Chair:** Ms. Boyer, the floor is yours.

[*English*]

**Ms. Julie Boyer:** Thank you for your question, Mr. Vis.

I think the difference here is that the charter would become the legislation that we have to respect, whereas the reference later in the preamble is to describe the linguistic regime of the different provinces. Here, we're implying that this would apply over the Official Languages Act in Quebec. It would, if I can explain it in a non-technical term, overrule the federal Official Languages Act in Quebec.

**Mr. Brad Vis:** That's what I understood the first time.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

[*Translation*]

**The Chair:** I'll now give the floor to Mr. Godin, who will be followed by Mr. Beaulieu.

**Mr. Joël Godin:** I've done the math, and I fully understand that the Liberals and the NDP will vote against my amendment and, as Ms. Ashton mentioned earlier, we're going to speed up the processing of this bill.

I can see where this is going, so I'm asking for unanimous consent for this amendment.

**The Chair:** That's a perfectly legitimate procedure.

Is there unanimous consent to withdraw the amendment?

I'm going to do it the other way around. Is there anyone opposed to unanimous consent? I'm looking at the screen and around the table.

Mr. Beaulieu, are you opposed? So there is no unanimous consent.

Mr. Beaulieu, you have the floor.

**Mr. Mario Beaulieu:** I didn't ask for the floor. I would ask that we vote on the amendment, please.

**The Chair:** To withdraw the amendment?

**Mr. Mario Beaulieu:** Yes.

**Mr. Joël Godin:** Mr. Chair, could you ask Mr. Beaulieu again whether or not he agrees to unanimous consent? I'm not sure if he actually heard the procedure because of the technical problems.

**The Chair:** Okay.



I'll start the procedure again, Mr. Beaulieu.

Mr. Godin was asking if there was unanimous consent to withdraw his amendment, which is allowed. That is the question that was asked. Is there unanimous consent?

**Mr. Mario Beaulieu:** No.

**The Chair:** Okay. Thank you.

We'll continue the discussion on the amendment.

Mr. Beaulieu, you were next.

• (1205)

**Mr. Mario Beaulieu:** I ask that we vote on this amendment.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, Mr. Beaulieu.

We're proceeding according to the rules.

Go ahead, Madam Clerk.

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

**The Chair:** We'll move on to the next clause.

Mr. Vis, would you like to say something?

[*English*]

**Mr. Brad Vis:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

On page 2 at line 31 in English, Bill C-13 states:

And whereas the Government of Canada recognizes that the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation contributes through its activities to enhancing the vitality of the English and French linguistic minority communities and to the protection and promotion of both official languages;

I have a problem with this paragraph, partly because I see Radio-Canada and the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation as two separate entities.

The second point I'd also like to raise is that I don't actually believe that the CBC in English does much to promote English anymore. I would kindly ask that we rewrite the—

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Marc Serré:** A point of order, Mr. Chair.

I don't understand. We're supposed to debate the amendments. We're not going to start justifying the content.

Could you please clarify that?

**The Chair:** Amendments can be proposed in this way, on the spot. It's possible. Mr. Vis had indicated that he would do so.

However, it will have to be communicated in writing. We can consult with the legislative clerks, if anyone would like.

First, I want to understand what Mr. Vis wants to do.

Mr. Vis, the floor is yours.

[*English*]

**Mr. Brad Vis:** This morning I was just reading this. I hadn't looked at this clause very closely before, but CBC and Radio-Canada are administered separately, so it doesn't make sense to have one referenced in English and one in French.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Joël Godin:** Excuse me, Mr. Chair.

**The Chair:** Wait a moment.

I have to suspend the meeting.

**Mr. Joël Godin:** It's not in the order of the clauses.

**The Chair:** There are a lot of technical aspects here.

**Mr. Joël Godin:** We need to move on to BQ-1 before we go to his comment.

**The Chair:** Yes, there are a lot of technical aspects to deal with.

**Mr. Joël Godin:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** We are suspending the meeting briefly.

• (1205)

(Pause)

• (1205)

**The Chair:** We are resuming the meeting.

Mr. Vis, I did indeed make a mistake. I misunderstood what you were explaining to me. The amendment you proposed concerns the lines following those affected by BQ-1. It may include what you're saying.

We can discuss it, but in English, BQ-1 starts at line 19. In French, it starts at line 17.

That takes precedence over what you wanted to do. I apologize for the confusion.

We're now moving on to BQ-1.

Go ahead, Mr. Beaulieu.

**Mr. Mario Beaulieu:** Thank you.

I want you to know that I sent a new proposed amendment to the clerk. I don't know if she was able to get it to you.

**The Chair:** Yes, Mr. Beaulieu, I confirm that we received it.

**Mr. Mario Beaulieu:** All right. Basically, the new amendment incorporates Mr. Godin's amendments, from the Conservative Party, regarding knowledge of both official languages. It also incorporates some of the Liberal and NDP amendments on francophone immigration.

The first part of the amendment proposes that Bill C-13, in clause 2, be replaced, at line 20 on page 2, with "the duty to provide opportunities for everyone".

Line 20 of the bill states that it recognizes the importance of providing every person in Canada the opportunity to learn a second official language. As we know, all students in Quebec have an obligation to learn English as a second language. So it only seems reasonable to me that the reverse would apply and that in the rest of Canada students would have an obligation to learn a second official language as a second language.

That's the first part. I don't know if you want us to proceed part by part or study the entire proposed amendment.

• (1210)

**The Chair:** We will deal with the entire proposed amendment, Mr. Beaulieu, but when it concerns that of a political party or a colleague, please tell us which one it is on our list.

**Mr. Mario Beaulieu:** Okay.

Basically, the first part incorporates part (a) of the amendment—

**The Chair:** It's CPC-2, Mr. Beaulieu.

**Mr. Mario Beaulieu:** That's what's proposed for the first part.

Next, we propose deleting lines 25 to 35 on page 2.

In these lines, we recognize the importance of supporting sectors that are essential to enhancing the vitality of francophone and anglophone minorities and of protecting and promoting the presence of strong institutions serving those communities.

We fully agree on supporting the sectors essential to enhancing the vitality of francophone minorities and respecting the rights of the anglophone community in Quebec. However, we don't believe they should not be put on an equal footing. The same thing comes up in the following paragraphs, so those paragraphs are deleted.

However, we're also proposing that the bill be amended by replacing lines 37 to 41. So we're back to Ms. Kayabaga's amendment, LIB-1, which is roughly the same as Mr. Serré's amendment, LIB-2 and Ms. Ashton's amendment, NDP-1. These proposals are designed to recognize the importance of correcting the decline in the demographic weight of francophone minorities, in particular by ensuring the restoration and increase of their demographic weight, and the importance of francophone immigration in enhancing the vitality of francophone minorities, and by ensuring the restoration and increase of their demographic weight.

We didn't include Quebec. In our opinion, if Quebec's linguistic regime and the Quebec immigration agreements are respected, Quebec should be able to do the same. We certainly expect the federal government to contribute as well, because francophone immigration is crucial for Quebec as well.

We therefore propose that lines 34 and 35 be deleted, for the reasons I've just given. This puts francophone and anglophone minorities in each province on an equal footing, even though they have very different needs.

Then, by replacing line 5 on page 3 of the bill, where it says "Quebec's *Charter of the French Language* provides that French is the official language of Quebec", we specify that it is the official "and common" language of Quebec. Our goal is to make French the common language, the language of integration for newcomers or the language used when people from other cultures want to communicate, as is the case for English everywhere else in Canada.

In the last part of BQ-1, we propose 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.

This seems obvious to me and difficult to deny. Anglophones in Quebec aren't at all in the same situation as francophones outside

Quebec and francophone Acadian communities, who have difficulty getting a minimum of services in French. They are faced with that famous provision that certain services in French will be provided where the number of people justifies it. As a result, a large proportion of francophones outside Quebec don't have access to services in French because the Official Languages Act classifies them as not being in a territory where the number of francophones justifies it. This provision does not exist in Quebec. Anglophones receive services in English virtually everywhere in Quebec.

In this last part of BQ-1, we're adding:

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;

• (1215)

Indeed, if the federal government truly wants to achieve equality in official languages, it must ensure the future of French in Quebec. I think that's critical.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Beaulieu.

Before I go any further, I must inform committee members that if the new BQ-1 is adopted, amendments CPC-2, on page 3; LIB-1, on page 4; LIB-2, on page 5; NDP-1, on page 6; CPC-3, on page 7; LIB-3, on page 9; and LIB-4, on page 10, can no longer be proposed due to a line conflict.

That said, does anyone want to comment on BQ-1?

Mr. Housefather, you have the floor.

**Mr. Anthony Housefather (Mount Royal, Lib.):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I thank my friends on the committee for the warm welcome today. I'm not a member of the committee, but I follow its work closely.

Naturally, I'd like to speak to the spirit of the Official Languages Act and BQ-1.

For over 50 years, there have been two official languages in Canada; there are two official language minority communities, anglophones in Quebec and francophones outside Quebec. We maintain that these two communities must be treated equally, that is, that English and French should be equal in Canada. Since I was born, my vision of Canada has been that there are two official languages in this country. The principle of equality of languages must be respected.

[English]

When Monsieur Beaulieu mentioned that in Quebec you can get services in English where numbers don't warrant it, that's actually not true.

The Quebec National Assembly just passed Bill 96. Bill 96 says that in order to obtain services in English from the Quebec government, you need to have had access to English schools in Quebec. That means you have to have a parent or grandparent who was educated in English in Canada, because as you all know, in Quebec, mother tongue does not grant you access to minority language schooling. Quebec never opted into section 59 of the Constitution Act, so the only people who have a right to English services today in Quebec are those people who are able to claim or show that they have access to English schools.

Basically more than half of the English-speaking population of Quebec, or close to it—because in Canada we count the official language minority communities by first official language spoken; that is the official way we count—don't have access to English schools, so now they won't get services.

My friend married an Australian who has moved to Quebec. Her whole family speaks both English and French. They have access to English schools. They can get served in English, but she can't, even though she's come from Australia, since she's been there more than six months and she doesn't have access to English schools.

I'm not saying this to suggest the English-speaking community is so hard done by. That's a provincial law, but the federal government should be recognizing both communities equally and protecting both minorities equally. We should not be picking and choosing one minority community over another. That is not the philosophy of the Official Languages Act, and that has never been how I think Canada has viewed minorities.

We're here to protect all minorities. By agreeing to amendments that start saying that Quebec's language regime, which 96% of English-speaking Quebecers do not agree with... Ninety-six per cent of English-speaking Quebecers opposed Bill 96, which makes use of the notwithstanding clause pre-emptively to take away rights without the person even having the opportunity to have a court strike down the right that's taken away, a law that says that people can't get government services unless they have access to English schools. This is not the philosophy that this committee should be bowing to and saying should now be in the Canadian Official Languages Act.

• (1220)

[Translation]

Looking at Mr. Beaulieu's amendment and a few other proposed amendments, all members will understand that the spirit behind them goes against not only the history of the Liberal Party, but also of the Conservative Party and the NDP. The Liberal Party of Canada has always respected minorities in this country and their rights.

[English]

I can only say as an English-speaking Quebecer—and I plead with you—that I represent a riding in Quebec that is mostly English-speaking, and I've never had my community be so dispirited, be so unhappy and be so scared.

Bill 96 has made English-speaking Quebecers feel like they don't know who stands for them anymore. They watched the Na-

tional Assembly adopt a law that their community was barely consulted on and nobody agrees with. They don't know if they have a future in their own province anymore.

I have a brother. He moved to Toronto long ago. I have four first cousins. Each of them left Quebec long ago. Most of the kids I went to school with left Quebec. They left not because they don't love Quebec, they don't love Montreal or they're not bilingual.

[Translation]

We, the young anglophones of Quebec, are all bilingual.

[English]

They left because they doubted that they had a future in a place where they didn't know if they were part of society. We need to change that philosophy. By the federal government, the federal Parliament, bowing to the idea that we're no longer equal to francophones outside Quebec and we should be treated differently.... This is just an awful thing.

I plead with the members of this committee not only when you look at BQ-1 but when you look at all the amendments, please, in the federal Official Languages Act, English and French should be equal. English and French minority language communities should be equal legally. Obviously, the courts have talked about “substantive equality”. Substantive equality means that you could have legal symmetry but be treated differently based on your needs—but there should be legal symmetry.

I thank the members of the committee for giving me this chance.

[Translation]

Thank you, everyone.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Housefather.

[English]

Mr. Garneau, the floor is yours.

[Translation]

**Hon. Marc Garneau:** Thank you very much.

Mr. Chair, colleagues, one aspect of Mr. Beaulieu's amendment BQ-1 concerns me. It has to do with indigenous languages. The amendment talks about removing certain lines, a proposal that I find very worrisome.

Here are the lines that are currently in the bill, but would be removed:

AND WHEREAS the Government of Canada recognizes the importance of maintaining and enhancing the use of languages other than English and French and reclaiming, revitalizing and strengthening Indigenous languages while strengthening the status and use of the official languages.

I currently chair the Standing Committee on Indigenous and Northern Affairs. Coincidentally, we are currently studying the Indigenous Languages Act. I would like to tell you that the idea of removing these lines is a concern.

Thank you.

• (1225)

**Mr. Joël Godin:** A point of order, Mr. Chair.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Garneau.

Go ahead, Mr. Godin.

**Mr. Joël Godin:** Mr. Garneau, I'm trying to find in the bill what you just quoted. Can you tell us where it is?

**Hon. Marc Garneau:** As I understand it, they're on lines 16 to 20 that would be removed.

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

Thank you, Mr. Godin.

Have you finished your intervention, Mr. Garneau?

I'll now give the floor to Mr. Généreux.

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

Mr. Housefather, the part that seems to irritate you the most is the one that says "have different needs". If I understand you correctly, that implies that francophones and anglophones are not on the same footing.

The amendment was moved by a Bloc Québécois member for whom I have a great deal of respect. Like me, he is a proud Quebecer, but he lives in Montreal while I live in the regions. He may be in a better position than I to see the current decline of French in Canada, and particularly in Quebec.

Mr. Housefather, if we repeat what has been done under the Official Languages Act for the past 50 years, will the result be different for the next 50 years?

I will now turn to our colleagues in the civil service. I would like to know what they think of what Mr. Housefather said earlier, that all minorities should be treated equally. Personally, I fully agree with that. However, my colleague claims that the amendment proposed by Mr. Beaulieu will potentially reduce the services or elements to which the anglophone community in Quebec has access. In your opinion, is that really the case, yes or no?

**The Chair:** Mr. Housefather, Mr. Généreux is asking you for clarification. Since you have already spoken on this subject, I will let you answer the question.

**Mr. Anthony Housefather:** Mr. Généreux, thank you for your question; I have great respect for you.

What I said was that the Canadian courts have already recognized that there are not only inequalities but also differences between francophone communities outside Quebec and anglophones in Quebec.

An anglophone living in Montreal is not in the same situation as an anglophone living in Gaspésie or Quebec City. Similarly, the sit-

uation of francophones outside Quebec is very different depending on whether they live in northern New Brunswick, where the committee chair comes from and where French is the majority language, in northern Ontario, where Mr. Serré lives, or in British Columbia, where Mr. Dalton and Mr. Vis come from.

However, according to the courts, substantive equality is possible. We are talking about legal asymmetry, where the differences necessary to achieve equality under the act could be applied.

This is not the only element of Mr. Beaulieu's amendment that I object to. This amendment seeks to remove a lot of text. For example, it talks about supporting the vitality and development of the two official language minorities. We want to support both minorities, as well as enhancing their vitality and supporting their development. This would be the first time that federal legislation recognizes that French is the common language of Quebec. It is the official language, but there is no legal definition of the common language.

So I have several other objections. However, since the courts have already interpreted the Official Languages Act, this could advance the fate of the two official languages. This does not mean that we should not encourage francophone immigration. We have no other choice. However, it should not mean taking away privileges or rights and letting a minority believe that the provincial government has the power to decide everything.

That was my point of view, and I thank you for the opportunity to clarify it.

• (1230)

**The Chair:** Mr. Généreux, it seems to me that you also asked Ms. Boyer a question.

Ms. Boyer, you have the floor.

**Ms. Julie Boyer:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Généreux, could you repeat the question that was addressed to the officials, please?

**Mr. Bernard Généreux:** In fact, it's about Mr. Housefather's claim regarding the modification that the amendment proposes to make to this clause.

He referred to Bill 96, which was adopted by Quebec. However, we are not here to talk about Bill 96. Inevitably, there would have been a potential link to be made if, for example, we had adopted the first clause, but that was not done. At present, this clause does not specifically talk about Bill 96, but it does refer to it indirectly, as Mr. Housefather has done.

In your opinion, does this clause really raise a concern? In other words, does it cause the Official Languages Act to create inequality between francophones and anglophones in terms of the services they receive?

**Ms. Julie Boyer:** Thank you very much.

The amendment would have a number of consequences, but for this point, I will turn to my colleague Sarah Boily, who can answer your question.

**Ms. Sarah Boily:** Thank you. I'm going to reread the second paragraph of point (c) of the amendment and present its implications to you:

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;

One of the implications of this wording is that it would move away from the objective of the Official Languages Act, which is the equality of status of the two official languages and the rights that this confers.

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

**The Chair:** You have the floor, Mr. Godin.

**Mr. Joël Godin:** Ms. Boily, I think you have the wrong amendment.

**The Chair:** We are studying the new Bloc Québécois amendment.

**Mr. Joël Godin:** Ms. Boily does not have the new amendment.

**Ms. Sarah Boily:** Just a moment, I received it by e-mail. It begins as follows:

AND WHEREAS the Government of Canada recognizes that the existence of a majority-French society in—

**Mr. Joël Godin:** It's not the right one. The amendment does not mention Quebec.

To make sure that everyone has the right version of the amendment, I will read it out, Mr. Chair.

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

**Mr. Joël Godin:** The amendment reads as follows:

the importance of remedying the decline in the demographic weight of French linguistic minority communities, including by fostering the reestablishment and growth of their demographic weight;

Do you have that version, Ms. Boily?

**Ms. Sarah Boily:** Yes, I have it, but I understood that we were talking about the other amendment.

Could we clarify the question?

**The Chair:** Okay.

Since it's Mr. Gagné's question, I'll give him the floor again.

**Mr. Bernard Gagné:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Inevitably, the two paragraphs refer to this. In their definition, they are interrelated, and Mr. Beaulieu can talk about that later.

Ms. Boily, Mr. Housefather claims that these provisions would put anglophones at a disadvantage compared to francophones in terms of the equality of services offered to both communities under the Official Languages Act. Is that true?

**Ms. Sarah Boily:** I'll go back to what I said earlier.

If the basic premise of the wording is to ensure the future of French, we are moving away from the objective of the Official Languages Act, which is the equality of status and rights of the two official languages.

**Mr. Bernard Gagné:** So removing certain parts of clause 2 of the bill would reinforce what Mr. Housefather is saying.

**The Chair:** Since people are shaking their heads, the answer is yes.

Does that suit you, Mr. Gagné?

**Mr. Bernard Gagné:** Yes.

**Le président:** Mr. Godin, earlier, I did not understand whether you wanted to have the floor after Mr. Gagné. Otherwise, Ms. Ashton and others are waiting.

**Mr. Joël Godin:** I wanted the floor, Mr. Chair.

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

**Mr. Joël Godin:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I would like to come back to the comment made by my colleague Mr. Housefather. He makes fine speeches on behalf of the group he represents, and that is perfectly legitimate. As parliamentarians, we have a duty to work towards this goal. I am grateful to him for that.

Fifty-two years ago, a law was written. There is a big difference between the reality of Canadian society 52 years ago and today. If there is one unanimous observation made by the witnesses who appeared before the committee, it is that French is in decline. Bill C-13 deals with the modernization of the Official Languages Act, but we agree that the only language that is vulnerable today is French.

You must understand that the philosophy behind my colleague Mr. Beaulieu's speech is to have mechanisms to recognize the situation of French in Quebec. We agree that the anglophone minority in Quebec is not as vulnerable as francophone minorities outside Quebec, hence the importance of recognizing the specific situation in Quebec. That is what I had in mind for the first amendment.

It is important to keep this in mind so that the day after Bill C-13 receives royal assent, we act immediately to stop the decline of the two official languages. We will agree that French is the most vulnerable. I wanted to remind the committee members of this. This does not make Quebec a spoiled child, since the reality is obvious and the data confirm it. This also exists elsewhere in Canada for francophone minorities, but not for the anglophone minority.

• (1235)

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Godin.

Ms. Ashton, you have the floor.

**Ms. Niki Ashton:** I think Mr. Beaulieu raised his hand before me.

**Mr. Mario Beaulieu:** I think it's the case, and Mr. Housefather has spoken twice already.

**The Chair:** Okay. I'm sorry.

Mr. Beaulieu, you have the floor.

**Mr. Mario Beaulieu:** Firstly, I would like to set the record straight. What Mr. Housefather said is wrong. I said that anglophones in Quebec were entitled to services in English almost everywhere. What Mr. Housefather would like is for this right to be extended to a large proportion of newcomers, allophones or immigrants who are close to English. But Quebec cannot do that, because it would lead to a constant minorization of French. What we want is to integrate newcomers.

Secondly, when Mr. Housefather says that the Official Languages Act leads to equality, that is not true at all in Quebec. One of the experts even seemed to say that ensuring the future of French in Quebec was not the same as ensuring equality of status and use. According to the Official Languages Act, equality means equal access to services in French and English where numbers warrant, and even this aspect is not assured. We must remember that the so-called positive measures in the Official Languages Act are not at all equitable when it comes to Quebec. They do not aim at equality at all, since 100% of these measures aim to strengthen English in Quebec.

If we want to talk about justice, I would say that Quebecers have been suffering injustices constantly for almost as long as we can remember. Even today, English-language universities receive between 35% and 40% of federal funding, while there are about 9% of anglophones in Quebec. So the Official Languages Act does not ensure equality for French Quebec at all. It is quite the opposite.

It's the same thing in many areas, but if we stay in the area of official languages, 100% of the funding, or about \$68 million a year for the last 52 years, has gone exclusively to strengthen the anglophone education system, which was already overfunded. Francophones get nothing. Bill 101 always provided for English-language institutions for anglophones, especially in its first version, but the idea was to prevent this from serving to anglicize newcomers. We can see that English-language CEGEPs in Montreal, Quebec, are overfunded. Their funding is almost double the demographic weight of anglophones. We could cite many similar cases.

On the other hand, to say that all young anglophones are bilingual is also false. There has been progress. Young anglophones in Montreal are currently more bilingual than young francophones, but outside Quebec, this is not at all the case. Francophones outside Quebec are almost all bilingual, while about 9% or 10% of anglophones are.

There really is a double standard, and Mr. Housefather's talk of victimization is harmful. It's a discourse held by groups like the Quebec Community Groups Network, formerly Alliance Quebec, of which Mr. Housefather was president. These groups present everything as a matter of justice and injustice. In my opinion, it's the francophones in Quebec who suffered from injustice for a long time.

We cannot continue like this if we want there to be two official languages in Canada. This whole structure promotes the anglicization of Quebec, and if we continue to let French decline and it becomes too weak in Quebec, there will no longer be two official languages in Canada. This will weaken French everywhere in Canada.

However, Mr. Garneau raised an interesting point that I had not thought of. I would like to modify the amendment to strictly delete lines 16 to 20. We have always been in favour of the right of first nations to keep their languages. Bill 101 recognized that from the beginning and put mechanisms in place to this end. So I'm open to removing that part. Someone else could also propose it.

• (1240)

**The Chair:** At this point, Mr. Beaulieu, you know you can't amend your own amendment.

**Mr. Mario Beaulieu:** I know, which is why I'm inviting someone to do so on my behalf.

**The Chair:** The only thing you can do is ask for unanimous consent to withdraw your amendment completely. You can't amend it.

**Mr. Mario Beaulieu:** I don't want to do that. However, I do want to emphasize that we support the right of first nations to ensure the future of their languages, and we believe that mechanisms must be put in place in that regard.

**The Chair:** Your point is duly noted. However, someone else around the table will have to move a subamendment, if necessary.

Had you finished, Mr. Beaulieu?

**Mr. Mario Beaulieu:** Yes, thank you.

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

**Ms. Niki Ashton:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I wanted to share our position with the committee. We agree with some of the points in the amendment, but we oppose some, too, particularly those that delete certain provisions of the bill. Having said that, I'm grateful for the openness that has just been shown to first nations in relation to indigenous languages. I think that's essential.

However, we do have a problem with the idea of removing certain provisions from the bill. I understand the spirit of this amendment, but we wanted to let you know where we stand on the deletions it proposes.

I also wanted to thank Mr. Généreux. I think he made an important point about Mr. Housefather's comment.

For our part, we hope to see progress on this bill. It's already 12:44 p.m., and we haven't even voted on two amendments. I think communities across the country, including francophones in Quebec, want us to move forward, even though this bill requires some debate. I'm concerned that the debate is hardly moving forward, given that we still have dozens of amendments to consider in the next few weeks.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Ms. Ashton.

Ms. Lattanzio, go ahead.

• (1245)

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

[English]

My next question is, again, for the government officials.

We know that the scope, from the get-go, is to promote and protect the French language across the country. Our views are in Quebec. The anglophones were quite in agreement with that premise, so long as it's not to the detriment of the linguistic minority community and, in Quebec, obviously, the anglophones.

I want to have your opinion on the amendment that's being proposed.

In doing away with lines 19 to 44 on page two.... I will take the time to read them and ask you if this would meet that objective. That is, would we, in fact, by deleting all of these paragraphs, be promoting and protecting the French language, and not to the detriment of the anglophone linguistic communities in Quebec?

And whereas the Government of Canada recognizes the importance of providing opportunities for everyone in Canada to learn a second official language and the contribution of everyone in Canada who speaks both official languages to a mutual appreciation between the two official language communities of Canada;

And whereas the Government of Canada recognizes the importance of supporting sectors that are essential to enhancing the vitality of English and French linguistic minority communities and protecting and promoting the presence of strong institutions serving those communities;

And whereas the Government of Canada recognizes that the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation contributes through its activities to enhancing the vitality of the English and French linguistic minority communities and to the protection and promotion of both official languages;

And whereas the Government of Canada recognizes the importance of the contribution of francophone immigration to enhancing the vitality of French linguistic minority communities and that immigration is one of the factors that contributes to maintaining or increasing the demographic weight of those communities;

And whereas the Government of Canada recognizes the presence of English or French linguistic minority communities in each province and territory;

**Ms. Julie Boyer:** Thank you very much for your question. I will refrain from giving my opinion, but I will explain what this amendment intends to do.

The first part, part (a) of the amendment, says, “the Government of Canada recognizes the importance”, but it would be modified to say “the duty” to provide opportunities for everyone to learn a second language. Here, I want to note this creates an obligation on the federal government in the education sector, which is an entirely provincial jurisdiction, so we're just imposing that on provinces.

The second part of this amendment would suppress or delete that government “recognizes the importance of supporting sectors that are essential to enhancing the vitality of English and French linguistic minority communities”. The intention was to reflect what was added in part 7 of the legislation to support institutions in official language minority communities that are important to the vitality of these communities. That would be removed.

We would also remove that the Government of Canada recognizes the contribution of the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation—in French, la Société Radio-Canada—and that the creation of news supports the vitality of official language minority communities.

Then, if I continue, part (c) of the Bloc's amendment would recognize the importance of the contribution of francophone immigration to enhance the vitality of French linguistic minority communities and that immigration is one of the factors that contribute to maintaining or increasing the demographic weight of those communities. That would be maintained to say, “and increasing the demographic weight” and this also creates an obligation.

I don't have the paper, because I can't work my Zoom.

**Ms. Sarah Boily:** It's basically changing the word to “restoring”.

● (1250)

[Translation]

The French uses the verb “assurer”, so there's the nuance.

[English]

We're still talking about “rétablissement et l'accroissement”—it's hard to do this in both languages—but we changed the word to “restore”.

[Translation]

**Ms. Julie Boyer:** I'm going to continue in French.

Thus, the phrase “to ensure the vitality of francophone minorities” creates another obligation for the federal government, but we're talking about a jurisdiction shared with the provinces. The federal government does not have all the necessary levers to ensure that immigration contributes to increasing the demographic weight of francophones.

I'm going to turn it over to my colleague, Mr. Desruisseaux, from the Department of Citizenship and Immigration.

**Mr. Alain Desruisseaux:** It is indeed a nuance. The French term “assurer”, or “ensure” in English, implies that the Government of Canada would have an obligation to ensure certain results in an area of shared jurisdiction.

The provinces play a fundamental role here, never mind the fact that the success of francophone immigration depends on a multitude of factors. These include attracting and retaining immigrants, as well as the labour market, which remains fundamental. Of course, delivering essential services, including health care and education, in the communities or different regions also means that the provinces, territories and municipalities have an essential role to play.

**Ms. Julie Boyer:** Thank you very much.

If I may continue, amendment BQ-1 seeks to delete lines 36 and 37 on page 2 of the French version of Bill C-13, recognizing “the diversity of the provincial and territorial language regimes....” Part (e) of amendment BQ-1 simply recognizes the Charter of the French Language and “that French is the official and common language of Quebec”.

If amendment BQ-1 passes, we would lose the qualifiers regarding provincial and territorial language regimes. We would also lose the idea of recognizing the importance of maintaining and enhancing the use of other languages; the idea of reclaiming, revitalizing and strengthening indigenous languages; and the reminder that all legal obligations related to official languages apply at all times, including during emergencies, such as a pandemic. Amendment BQ-1 therefore deletes quite a few elements.

**Ms. Patricia Lattanzio:** Ms. Boyer, your reading of this amendment is similar to mine, so it is also my understanding that several important elements would be lost, particularly to the detriment of minority language communities, without achieving the objective of promoting and protecting French.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Ms. Lattanzio.

Mr. Dalton, go ahead.

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

I realize that committee business is not progressing very quickly, since we are only on the second amendment. However, this is a very important and worthwhile discussion. I very much appreciated the comments made by my colleagues Mr. Housefather and Mr. Godin, along with everyone else.

Everyone here agrees that the French language is in decline, and this affects us all. My colleague Mr. Vis and I see this in British Columbia, like everywhere else, and we want to better protect the French language. This is important to me.

I also lived in Quebec a long time ago. I did my first three years of high school in English in Chibougamau, so I'm sensitive to the situation of anglophones in Quebec.

I'm really torn about all this, because I know that being surrounded by a sea of anglophones makes francophones in Quebec more vulnerable.

All of these things will influence my vote. It's important to look at both sides of the situation, and I just wanted to say that I'm grateful for this discussion.

• (1255)

**The Chair:** Your comments are very much appreciated, Mr. Dalton.

Mr. Vis, go ahead.

[*English*]

**Mr. Brad Vis:** Madam Lattanzio has covered some of the points I wanted to raise.

Potentially, Madam Boyer can explain this to us. This is the preamble of the act, and you said that this would impact X, Y and Z significantly. My understanding of legislation is that a preamble is not something the courts would generally interpret or would assume the Government of Canada would be obliged to follow. Even if I agreed with some of the statements you made, I would challenge your interpretation of the impact the preamble will have on the applicability of the legislation.

Could you comment on that, please?

**Ms. Julie Boyer:** My understanding, but perhaps I'll turn to the legislative clerk, would be that the entirety of the law is taken into consideration when it's interpreted by the courts.

[*Translation*]

**The Chair:** I would remind committee members that the role of legislative clerks is strictly to provide procedural interpretation, certainly not to provide legal advice.

[*English*]

Your question is excellent, Mr. Vis, but you need legal advice for that.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Boyer, go ahead.

**Ms. Julie Boyer:** I can confirm that what I just said is correct. I would also point out that the preamble essentially summarizes everything in the bill. If certain parts of the bill are changed, the preamble may very well also need to be amended, at the very end.

[*English*]

**The Chair:** Yes, Mr. Vis, the floor is yours on that.

**Mr. Brad Vis:** Thank you.

In that context of “reclaiming, revitalizing and strengthening Indigenous languages”, what other sections of this law actually do that?

I represent one of the most diverse ridings in Canada. I have six different first nations with their own unique languages. Is there anything in this law, other than this paragraph here in the preamble, that gives money or assurances that indigenous languages will be enhanced or protected?

[*Translation*]

**The Chair:** Ms. Boily, would you like to add anything?

[*English*]

**Ms. Sarah Boily:** I'm looking for the exact clause, but yes, there is a reference to the importance of maintaining and protecting the revitalization of the indigenous languages. It's proposed section 83 in Bill C-13.

I can read it out loud. It's about rights relating to other languages. It states:

Nothing in this Act abrogates or derogates from any legal or customary right acquired or enjoyed either before or after the coming into force of this Act with respect to any language other than English or French, including any Indigenous language.

That's the reference.

**Mr. Brad Vis:** I was asking this question because I believe that, two Parliaments ago, there was an indigenous languages bill passed. The applicability of this law with respect to other obligations of Parliament is important to recognize, when new language regarding indigenous languages is included in this bill.

Thank you.

[*Translation*]

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Vis.

Mr. Serré, go ahead.

**Mr. Marc Serré:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

First of all, I agree with Ms. Ashton that we need to be pushing this ahead faster. As Mr. Dalton mentioned, the conversations we are having today should enrich our discussions in future sessions. We don't need to have the same conversation we had today, although it is a good discussion.



Second, I would strongly encourage Mr. Beaulieu to read his own amendments, because it is clear that amendment BQ-1 results in some exclusions, which I oppose. As Mr. Garneau mentioned earlier, this amendment removes a portion of the bill that deals with indigenous languages. It also removes the provision that compels the government to provide services in French at all times, even in emergency situations.

Third, as I mentioned earlier regarding Mr. Godin's amendment, this amendment removes the notion of recognizing the different linguistic dynamics that exist in each province.

The amendment deletes a number of elements. I don't understand why we should even consider this amendment. I agree with my two colleagues on this side of the table, and I will be voting against this amendment. We need to move on as quickly as possible to the next amendment.

• (1300)

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Serré.

Mr. Beaulieu, go ahead.

**Mr. Mario Beaulieu:** In response to Mr. Serré, I would say that that is precisely why we wanted to have enough time to get it right. We are being rushed, and we had to fight against a closure motion. Debate is being limited, and this is being rushed through. It's important to be able to remain adaptable and flexible in our discussions.

I also want to say that it's not true that we do not recognize the diversity of language regimes. When we say that francophone minorities in each province and territory must be recognized, we are

really recognizing that we need to adapt to the needs of minorities in each province and territory. It would be harmful to impose the same measures on everyone. We believe that freedom to choose always favours the strongest.

What we want is for federal language legislation to be adapted to the needs of francophone and Acadian communities, which are different from those of other communities in Canada.

**The Chair:** Mr. Beaulieu, I didn't want to interrupt, but the meeting is coming to an end. I'm told that we still have a bit of time left, but members must give their consent if they want to continue the meeting.

Is everyone in agreement with continuing the meeting for a few minutes?

**Voices:** No.

**The Chair:** I see that people from all parties have other obligations, since other committee meetings are about to begin.

Mr. Beaulieu, I'm sorry, but there's no unanimous consent. We'll pick this up again at the next meeting, which is scheduled for December 15, to continue the clause-by-clause of Bill C-13.

I'd like to inform the members of the committee that I appeared before the Subcommittee on Committee Budgets of the Liaison Committee last Friday on behalf of the Standing Committee on Official Languages. Our committee's travel request was approved, but it still needs to be authorized by the House of Commons. So far, so good.

The meeting is adjourned.

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