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Thursday, March 10, 2011

—
Co-Chairs

**The Honourable Percy Downe
Mr. Royal Galipeau**

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• (1205)

[Translation]

The Joint Chair (Mr. Royal Galipeau (Ottawa—Orléans, CPC)): I would now like to call the meeting to order. My joint chair had other commitments today and would like to apologize for not being here.

We are pleased to have with us today a Web programmer from the site openparliament.ca.

[English]

We're looking forward to hearing the presentation and the wisdom of Michael Mulley.

You have the floor, sir.

[Translation]

Mr. Michael Mulley (Web programmer, openparliament.ca, As an Individual): Thank you for inviting me to appear before the committee.

[English]

Wisdom is quite the introduction to live up to.

I'm Michael. I'm a software engineer, and I'm here because a little less than a year ago I launched a website called openparliament.ca. It was a volunteer, part-time, experimental project that republishes some information about Parliament, most notably Hansard. It tries a few different things, with the aim of making some of that information a little bit friendlier, a little bit more accessible, a little easier to use. For example, I try to de-emphasize thick documents in favour of the answers to simpler questions, like what has my MP said in the House lately, or what happened on the floor of the House today.

I'm happy to say that other people seem to find that this way of information is useful, and tens of thousands of Canadians do use the site every month and find it useful.

I should say right off the bat that I've never worked in, for, or even really with government—so far. So my perspective is very much that of an outsider. What I hope to be able to offer the committee today is some idea of how the future of parliamentary communications—the subject of the report you're working on—can benefit from outsiders like me.

I've noticed that my name has come up a few times in this committee in the past. A few months ago, one of the former members of the committee, the member for Halifax, actually asked

the parliamentary librarian about my site, and I will just quote briefly from his response. He said:

...it demonstrates that if Parliament...doesn't get its act together, other people will be putting out information about Parliament that may or may not be accurate and complete.

I think that's half right. To the degree that I can act as a spur toward the getting together of acts, I'm thrilled. At the same time, though, I think that other people putting out information about Parliament should in fact be a goal of parliamentary communications and of the Library of Parliament. I think that more people talking is very much the point.

Sometimes it's too easy within government to see the new or unexpected as a risk rather than an opportunity. I firmly believe that people like me—and there are many other people doing similar things in Canada and elsewhere—are an opportunity for Parliament, and that we have various structural advantages, various ways of doing different things that apply to us and not Parliament. One of those is that it's quite a bit easier for me to experiment. I can simply do things that Parliament can't.

On that topic, Richard Allan gave testimony quite recently, a couple of weeks ago. He talked about the power of beta, the really great power inherent in a digital context of being able to say that this is an experiment; we're trying something new here.

Indeed, when you look at a lot of the successful innovations, communications innovations, that come out of institutions, you find that a lot of them do start as pilot projects championed by an individual. I hope to see a lot more of that sort of thing coming out of Parliament, a lot of successful pilot projects, and, necessarily, a lot of unsuccessful pilot projects as well.

There are within an institution certain inherent restrictions on innovation, on experimentation. Those are restrictions I don't have. A year ago, before I launched this project, nobody interested in Parliament knew who I was. Now of course I'm a star and international sex symbol.

The point is that when I want to try something new, when I have a new idea of how to present something like this, I can try it. I can put a site out there. If no one finds it useful, then, well, no one uses it. For a nobody like me, failure is cheap. I'm in the almost joyful state of being able to throw things at the wall to see what sticks. That can be a really useful resource for Parliament. It's sort of the farm team model. Think of me as the Rimouski Canadiens of Parliament, or actually I think the affiliate of the Canadiens is the Hamilton Bulldogs—sort of somewhere in semi-obscurity where you can see which ideas catch on and later adopt the successful ones. Use it for ideas.

As a quick example, if you read through Hansard you'll find that the format in which votes divisions are laid out is somewhat arcane. It can be quite difficult for the uninitiated to find the answer to a relatively simple question, like "How did the Liberal party vote on the second reading of Bill C-14?"

So about five years ago a guy in Victoria named Cory Horner started a website on his own called "How'd They Vote?", which aimed to make that easier to answer. It caught on, got a lot of media and public attention, and that site still continues and is useful to this day. But a few years later the parliamentary website added on the ability to see things like what the votes were on a given bill. I don't know what the chain of inspiration was there, but it can be the case that new methods of communication make themselves evident from the outside and are later adopted from the inside.

Another point is that I can do things on my own that Parliament simply can't. One of the more popular areas of my site is a page for MPs. I have a page for those of you who are members of Parliament on which you can see what a given member has said recently in the House, and in the same place is legislation they've introduced, and if they've posted Twitter or had mentions in the news media. For an interested outsider, these things go together quite naturally, having the context that both mentions in the news media and more formal speeches in Parliament provide each other. At the same time, I think it's clear that this is something that would be fairly difficult for Parliament to do on its own website—unparliamentary things are said on Twitter, and news articles, as you may be aware, are not always flattering.

That's an example of how all sorts of things can be done from the outside that are really useful that can't necessarily be done from the inside.

Hopefully I've given you some examples of how third-party organizations in general can be useful, and there are all sorts of examples internationally of ways in which this is happening. Richard Allan a couple of weeks ago talked a little bit about MySociety, a British organization that I'm a great admirer of that has done all sorts of really interesting projects from the outside to supplement Parliament's work and general democratic engagement in Britain.

Here is one example that's particularly relevant to Parliament. They operate a website—it was launched initially with some degree of partnership with the BBC—that allows you to look through the transcripts of the Houses of Commons and Lords and go straight to video and a transcript of any given moment and share that and post it to friends or the public as necessary. This is a really great tool, when you see something that you care about, for getting other people to

care about it as well. The way they did this was partly by partnership with the BBC, partly using transcripts from the British Parliament, and partly—to line up the moments in video and transcripts—by getting the broad English public to play a computer game they developed to align moments in the video with moments in the transcript.

That's the sort of thing whereby external organizations can do really great things to support Parliament.

There are all sorts of examples in other countries. In the U.S. there are foundations like Sunlight Foundation, the Participatory Politics Foundation, MAPLight, Project Vote Smart. Several news organizations are doing very interesting things in this space: the *Guardian*, *The New York Times*. I could talk about Canada as well, but I fear that I'm rambling, so we'll keep this a little bit shorter.

If external organizations can do things that are quite helpful to Parliament, there are also many ways in which Parliament should aim to help out external efforts like these. There are three main ways I want to talk about, in terms of cultural ways, technical ways, and legal ways.

Culturally, that simply means being open to the idea of interacting more with people on the outside who are interested in what you're doing and want to, in some sense, collaborate. That means, for example, that if an organization like the Library of Parliament has concerns over accuracy of other sources of information, perhaps it's in the mission of the library to proactively engage people to improve the accuracy of parliamentary information.

On the technical side—

● (1210)

The Joint Chair (Mr. Royal Galipeau): Mr. Mulley, I don't want to be rude, but if you don't mind, you have another minute.

Mr. Michael Mulley: Oh, I thought my timer was malfunctioning, a technical malfunction.

On the technical side—I'll avoid jargon entirely—there are easy technical ways for organizations to make it easier for their information to be shared, repurposed, reused.

In the legal sense—when I talk about crown copyright, occasionally my jaw clenches and my eyes narrow—essentially, information like the proceedings of the House and the Senate should be available for other people to republish and reuse. This seems like a natural point to me. Right now they're under a variety of legal restrictions that should not exist.

Very briefly, in my last 30 seconds, in terms of the recommendations of this committee, what I'd like to see in the short term is a recommendation like the one in the U.K. *Parliament 2020* report, that parliamentary institutions consider reuse, repurposing, and sharing of their work when putting it forward. In the medium term, I'd love to see innovation from Parliament and communications outside of the monolithic tree or redesign, and a third-party organizational ecosystem come up.

Of course, the long-term one I've talked about is only one small piece of the puzzle, but I'd love to see a Parliament that's more effective at communicating and engaging Canadians of all ages.

Thank you.

The Joint Chair (Mr. Royal Galipeau): Thank you very much, Mr. Mulley.

Now we will hear from the Forum for Young Canadians. Ms. McCready or Mr. Willard, you have the floor.

•(1215)

Ms. Cate McCready (Chair, Forum for Young Canadians): My name is Cate McCready.

[*Translation*]

Thank you for the opportunity to participate in this discussion.

[*English*]

It's an honour and a privilege to have the chance to bring the forum to your consultations here today.

I'm joined by a former alumnus, whom you'll hear from very shortly, but I'd also like to refer to the presence of our executive director, as well as our manager of programs, both of whom serve as full-time staff and without whom our organization simply would not exist.

I am a volunteer chair of the national organization. We are the national foundation, and our forum program, which so many of you are aware of and have been remarkably supportive of, is our premier program that we run with Canadian youth around the country.

The Foundation for the Study of Processes of Government in Canada was established in 1975 as a bilingual, non-partisan educational experience for Canadian high school and CEGEP students. The Forum for Young Canadians is our flagship program, as I mentioned, and we focus on engaging youth, bringing them into an environment where their opinions and their observations matter as they relate to the democratic process and the institutions that serve that process in Canada.

The forum's experiential learning program continues to be responsive to the needs of today's youth, with learning objectives, outcomes, and core competency development. But it's also something that we're learning from, in light of your study particularly. The rapidity of change and how youth are talking to each other—how they're framing their information, how they're framing their dialogue among themselves, their peers, and leaders within their community—is changing so exponentially quickly that we as an organization are finding ourselves on the cusp of adapting to that change almost on a regular monthly basis, as we learn as well about how youth are engaging each other.

The student participants have a chance to hone their leadership skills. We focus on attracting community leaders into the program—people who are already engaged in a certain dynamic within their school or community—so the kind of dialogue the forum offers these students from across the country is very much leadership motivated. We have an engaged youth voice within our program that I think makes our program unique.

In realizing the forum experience, the foundation works with partners: Exchanges Canada, who fund the travel for our students; we have sponsors who cover the overall operations of our organization; and parliamentarians and senators, who are, as I mentioned earlier, incredibly supportive of this program. We interact with more than 5,000 mayors across the country. We are involved also with the Canadian Association of Former Parliamentarians. We have an outreach and marketing program that engages 7,000 schools across the country.

When we look at how students are learning, and the messages and lessons they have taught us in how to engage with them, the physical presence of students coming together and spending time together is irreplaceable. We appreciate that, and that's really the forum legacy. It is a unique proposition. In fact, over recent years, we have amended that program dynamic into pre-forum or prior-to-forum arrival, into ongoing work at the forum, and post-forum activities, to maintain a certain level of engagement, and to transfer information from the student participants into our learning factor, in terms of what they're taking away and how we need to ameliorate our programming.

I'm going to very briefly offer some recommendations and then turn it over to Corey, because I think his expertise in youth thinking these days is pretty relevant.

I think for this committee's particular work...and I know you've heard this from other presenters, but there's never going to be one solution in how we extract engagement from the parliamentary and democratic process in this country. It's not a question of just website learning. It's a question of a full approach to youth, and finding them where they are, engaging them where they are, and using the technologies in as nimble, efficient, and timely a way as youth are adapting to them and adopting them.

I spent some time this week on the parliamentary library website. It was a pleasure to be there, but it took this for me to go back to that website, and I'm somebody who engages in the parliamentary process, both in my professional and personal life. But I thought a number of things in looking at that engagement in terms of the stories that are maybe not getting told there.

•(1220)

While the library has a physical presence here in Ottawa, it is in fact Canada's national library. Looking at its framework in terms of how it engages in communities, how it tells its story in a virtual and realistic way I think is something for this committee to think about. How could that programming be developed and exemplified over the long term using technologies, such as what we've heard about from openparliament.ca?

I think it's important as well that you not negate the opportunity to find venues for youth to come together around democratic processes and learning, not only in the context of Ottawa but also back in their own communities. Look at how the library can help facilitate some of that.

On that note, I'm going to turn it over to my colleague, Corey.

Mr. Corey Willard (Volunteer and Alumni, Forum for Young Canadians): Thank you, Cate.

Thanks for having me here. My name is Corey Willard. I am a student here at the University of Ottawa, and I am also a Forum alumni.

[*Translation*]

I will be wearing a number of hats today, given that I was a student and I do a lot of volunteer work through the program. When I was in high school, I was very interested in politics, without really understanding how it all worked. We did not really talk about it much at my high school in Alexandria. It was more important for us to play hockey and to get good grades. I can tell you anything you want to know about that.

I also do a lot of work for non-profit organizations, such as AJEFO. Its approach is somewhat different. That organization tries to visit schools. That is also the case with members of the bar. Every year, a law student does a series of school visits in Ottawa. As Cate said, face-to-face interaction is very important. That is what students want. It is important to keep in mind that they spend many hours a day sitting at a desk waiting for someone to teach them the subject matter. Giving them an opportunity to get involved every now and then, as the Forum for Young Canadians does, is key.

My experience with the forum opened my eyes. As I already told you, I did not really know how the political system worked. Put yourself in my shoes: sitting at home, watching CBC or CTV in the evening, and when I came across question period, all I saw were people on opposing sides confronting one another. If I had behaved that way in class, I would not be here today.

But when I visited Parliament, I saw how much different the reality was. Politics is a culture unto itself, with its own members. People really do talk to one another, as we are doing now, and they work together. And I had no idea how all that worked before I got involved with the forum. I went back to my community and told my friends how interesting it all was. Since they were into hockey, I told them that one committee was talking about subsidizing a team. They found that pretty interesting.

In my view, the Library of Parliament could also impress upon young Canadians that, regardless of whether or not you want to become involved in politics, it still affects us all. That is a crucial message. You can be non-partisan and still see that one party favours one solution while another party has a completely different approach. You can ask yourself why they think the way they do and how you, as an individual, can make a decision that is not forced on you.

I spend several hours every week at the forum. I see students, who, like me, are from a rural community. It is a shock when they come here for the first time. Multiculturalism in cities is very

important. In my class, for instance, only one or two students belonged to a minority group. Furthermore, as Michael mentioned, it is easier to engage young people in politics today thanks to technology.

Before I got involved with the forum, in Grade 11, I had a basic idea of what the charter was but no idea how it worked. One of my law professors at the University of Ottawa helped me with that. We chose a case involving PETA, one you may remember. It had to do with an aboriginal band up north, near Iqaluit, that was hunting seals in 1989. I presented the facts to the students. Aboriginal students often participate in the forum. I explained to them that the federal government had passed a law stipulating that no aircraft could fly over the area to take pictures at an altitude of less than 2,000 feet. Some of them were on PETA's side, while others argued that it was a cultural issue.

I think that is the kind of discussion we need to encourage among young people. I think the Library of Parliament can help groups like the Forum for Young Canadians but can also help school boards obtain accurate information.

I apologize for going a few minutes long. Thank you very much.

● (1225)

The Joint Chair (Mr. Royal Galipeau): Thank you very much, Mr. Willard.

[*English*]

Thank you very much, Mr. Mulley and Ms. McCready.

Just for your benefit, everybody at this table is a member of Parliament. Whether we're a member of the Senate or a member of the House of Commons, both houses are part of Parliament.

Mr. Malhi.

Hon. Gurbax Malhi (Bramalea—Gore—Malton, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

My question is to Michael. It appears to me that this website, openparliament.ca, is more user-friendly than the official parliamentary website. Do you agree with this?

Voices: Oh, oh!

Hon. Gurbax Malhi: And if so—

Mr. Michael Mulley: I think that's what we in the industry call a softball.

My goal in creating this site was certainly to provide a more accessible spin on certain information. Of course, I'm operating without all sorts of constraints that the official Parliament site has. I provide much less information with far fewer restrictions, but yes, absolutely, my attempt was to make a few questions easier to answer.

Hon. Gurbax Malhi: How can we make the official parliamentary website more user friendly?

Mr. Michael Mulley: I think the question at some point comes down to organizational structures and cultural changes, which I'm quite unqualified to talk about. But I will say that one aspect that I think could be worked on to make things like the official site more user friendly is simply in looking at what innovations are happening externally, whether that be international or on sites like mine, and trying to encourage a culture of experimentation of little changes, of pilot projects, of things that are tried out in beta, trying to listen to stakeholders and to engage stakeholders more proactively.

In some cases, frankly, you could make it easier for other sites to operate, whether that's through making information shareable through licensing restrictions, through encouraging an ecosystem of non-profit organizations, perhaps free of funding. Frankly, as long as the information is available and there is an authoritative Parliament site, it's not necessarily a bad thing for other people to be providing information in their own ways.

Hon. Gurbax Malhi: Do I have time?

The Joint Chair (Mr. Royal Galipeau): You still have three minutes.

Hon. Gurbax Malhi: Thank you.

Essentially, the websites like openparliament.ca or howdtheyvote.ca are privately owned websites. How do private websites that work in the sphere of parliamentary politics and respond to questions of mandate—that is, whom do they present when they post the information on the website?

Mr. Michael Mulley: Privately owned, in this case, incidentally means me. So there's no one else behind that.

There's a variety of different motivations to post information online. For me, it's because I can, and as a public service, frankly. In many other cases around the world, it's news media that have taken it upon themselves to further a journalistic mission by making information about what's in parliament more accessible. And of course that's sometimes a for-profit mission, and that is not necessarily a problem.

In many cases, foundations have taken it upon themselves to work to make a lot of this information more accessible with fairly public-oriented missions. Some of those names that I mentioned are MySociety in the U.K., Sunlight, and the Participatory Politics Foundation in the U.S. They both work from public mandates to try to make that more available.

If the question is accuracy and responsibility for data, that's a big question with the Internet, since the Internet is in many ways a great decentralizer. And that's why Parliament, of course, has an absolutely core role as the authoritative source of all of this information. But a multitude of voices can bring exactly that.

• (1230)

Hon. Gurbax Malhi: Thank you.

The Joint Chair (Mr. Royal Galipeau): Thank you very much.

Mr. Bruinooge.

Mr. Rod Bruinooge (Winnipeg South, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair. I appreciate all the testimony today.

I want to acknowledge Mr. Willard's presentation. It's very appreciated. I know many young Forum alumni go on to great careers. Some of them even become MPs. Maybe someday we'll see you around here.

In my local constituency we set up a scholarship for local students to be able to come to the Forum. We see it as a really great vehicle, so thanks for your testimony, and thanks to the Forum for continuing great work here on the Hill.

My question is for Mr. Mulley. I want to home in on what you were saying in relation to being able to repurpose certain content from existing sources that the parliamentary website uses. You mentioned there are some barriers to doing that, probably technical barriers, I imagine. Could you extrapolate a bit on what you think this committee could do to make recommendations to our IT department to make that data easier for you to repurpose and essentially populate your website with?

Mr. Michael Mulley: Absolutely. Thanks for the question.

As I mentioned during the “talking very quickly” phase of my remarks earlier, I think there are three barriers toward repurposing: cultural, technical, and legal.

From a technical standpoint, frankly, I don't think technical detail is necessarily warranted here. I'll just say the technical effort required to make that parliamentary information shareable is non-zero, but usually not extensive, and certainly IT departments will know what it means to make information shareable to third parties.

In terms of recommendations, one of the items in the U.K. *Parliament 2020* report essentially recognizes that information should be able to follow people where they are on the web and be usable by different sources, and simply that Parliament should take that into account when making information available. It's also important to recognize legal barriers, since, by default, all information put online is covered under crown copyright, so it cannot legally be repurposed. For example, to republish verbatim transcripts of goings-on in the Senate is not currently legal. Similarly, to republish official photos of members of Parliament of the House and of the Senate is also not currently permitted. I think this is silly. These are legal restrictions that serve only to stifle innovation, and these sorts of licensing restrictions should absolutely be kept in mind when making parliamentary information available.

Mr. Rod Bruinooge: Is it a question of the way you're viewing your entity relative to, for instance, media entities that are repurposing everything that is created and presented online by the parliamentary website? I think from a natural justice point of view, everything we do, especially in the House and the Senate, is public. So journalists are taking that information and using it to the full extent. I guess if you were to view your entity as a media entity, then in theory you wouldn't necessarily have that legal barrier you're suggesting. Would you agree with that?

Mr. Michael Mulley: Without delving too deeply into legal topics, which I'm entirely unqualified to speak on, while fair use allows journalistic reporting, default copyright on documents doesn't allow the whole document to be reproduced without an explicit licence being given under crown copyright. So in the House of Commons, the Speaker has provided permission that allows for repurposing of transcripts of the House. To the best of my knowledge, no such permission has been given in the Senate or, as I mentioned, for photographs of members.

In terms of the role of the media, whether what I'm doing is journalism or not is an interesting question, and it's something I hope to see: that journalistic organizations will expand from a story model into more generally providing tools to get at information more broadly, as many international media organizations are doing, though I haven't seen much in Canada at the moment.

• (1235)

Mr. Rod Bruinooge: Okay. Thanks.

[*Translation*]

The Joint Chair (Mr. Royal Galipeau): Ms. Hugues, it is now your turn.

Mrs. Carol Hughes (Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapusksing, NDP): Thank you very much.

Thank you for making the time to come and speak with us today.

I think the Forum for Young Canadians is certainly an excellent program. I had an opportunity to attend a few of your dinners. There was one just last week. You get to see how much people appreciate that you are taking time to speak with them, to explain things to them and to answer their questions.

Ms. McCready, you mentioned how important it was for the library to examine how it can engage Canadians. You also said we should find events that would encourage young people to become more involved. I am taking part in a career day tomorrow. So I will be bringing brochures such as this one and information on the page program, but I was wondering whether you had anything else to suggest. If not, perhaps you could give us your assessment of what currently exists and tell us how we, as parliamentarians, could do more.

Ms. Cate McCready: Just before I left my office to come here today, I thought about how much people use online chat rooms.

[*English*]

The chat room dynamic, this kind of third schism of community discussion, is pretty prevalent, and there may be an opportunity for Parliament to look at working with students, schools, schools boards, professors, and teachers to frame chat room dynamic around topical public discourse that's taking place in the parliamentary dynamic. It may be an opportunity to make politics interactive, both in the context of parliamentarians, but also among classrooms around the country. Technology allows us that kind of immediacy in a way that I think needs to be explored.

I respect that it has to be managed well and carefully. I'm not recommending just "blogaramas" or anything, but I think that dynamic of where youth in Canada are playing, participating, and talking to each other needs to be brought into that parliamentary

library website. So I could see a program that could be serviced as well by the leadership of parliamentarians and senators in the context of nominating schools to participate throughout the year; reminding folks that even though Parliament may not be sitting, constituencies are alive and well; talking with students about what goes on during constituency weeks; framing their ideas around what they think parliamentarians should be doing during constituency weeks or how they feel about particular committee work.

I think there's a terribly sad lapse, to Corey's point, around the appreciation for the work that does go on in the parliamentary process, particularly within committees. I think there's a sad lack of real engagement of Canadians of all types and ages in terms of understanding and appreciating it. When I look back at my learning, I wasn't taught that when I went to school. I came to learn later on how intrinsic the parliamentary committee process is.

So that may be just one simple opportunity to set up dialogues, online chats, with schools throughout the week, throughout the year, to draw people into the parliamentary process from their own living rooms and classrooms.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Carol Hughes: Corey, you also mentioned getting high school students involved. I think that applies not just to them, but also to students in elementary school. It is really important to start from a young age.

When I get an invitation or when I have time, I always call the school to say I am available. I ask school officials whether they would like me to come and speak to students. I think that is a really important step. If we do not approach them in elementary school, they know very little about the political system by the time they get to high school, unless they happen to have political aspirations.

Mr. Corey Willard: You are absolutely right. I will give you an example. I did some volunteer work in the United States through the presidential classroom program. It is similar to the Forum for Young Canadians, but in Washington. That program focuses a lot more on how the American electoral system works and targets students in the fifth and sixth grades. In Canada, we cover that same material in Grade 10, in a course called "Civics". It is not all that complicated. As you said, by the time you get to Grade 10, you are already thinking about what you want to do with your life, and you have already given some thought to where you stand ideologically.

I am not sure whether you have ever come across any teachers or anyone who used such big words that you had absolutely no idea what they were talking about. Well I have, and I think that was the problem, at least mine. I was afraid to participate in the forum, afraid of being around people who were very smart and of not understanding anything. But when you get there, you realize it is not what you expected.

When approaching students, members of Parliament and senators have to make sure to speak their language. And the same goes for the Library of Parliament Web site.

• (1240)

[*English*]

Mrs. Carol Hughes: Do I have more time?

[Translation]

The Joint Chair (Mr. Royal Galipeau): Unfortunately, the witness used up all your time.

[English]

Mrs. Carol Hughes: Thank you.

[Translation]

The Joint Chair (Mr. Royal Galipeau): When they were younger, our witnesses may very well have been afraid of big words. Our interpreters, however, are afraid of witnesses who speak too quickly.

For the benefit of our interpreters and those listening to you in the other official language, I would ask you to speak more slowly. Was that slow enough?

It is now Mr. Bélanger's turn.

Hon. Mauril Bélanger (Ottawa—Vanier, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

[English]

Senator Terry Stratton (Manitoba (Red River), CPC): Mr. Chair, regarding the list of those people who are going to ask questions, I put my hand up about 10 minutes ago.

The Joint Chair (Mr. Royal Galipeau): We have Dr. Lunney, Senator Stratton, Dr. Bennett, Dr. Young, and Ms. Hughes is back on. After everybody has been heard, we'll—

Senator Terry Stratton: *Merci.*

[Translation]

Hon. Mauril Bélanger: Thank you all for being here today.

Mr. Mulley, most of my questions are for you.

If, for example, a newspaper said something about a member that was not accurate, how would you handle that? How do you address that problem? Do you follow a set of principles or rules that govern your site?

Mr. Michael Mulley: I need some clarification first. Are you asking whether I would post an article on my site if it contained mistakes?

Hon. Mauril Bélanger: Yes.

Mr. Michael Mulley: The answer is yes. My job is not to decide which media are—

Hon. Mauril Bélanger: So anything goes?

Mr. Michael Mulley: To be honest, yes.

Well, maybe not anything.

Hon. Mauril Bélanger: There is one magazine that I would call—and I am not going to mince words here—repulsive, and that is *Frank Magazine*. If it were an article from *Frank Magazine*, would you post it on your site?

Mr. Michael Mulley: My site serves as a search tool. I do not go out and look for articles to post myself. I use Google so it is easier to [Editor's Note: *Inaudible*].

Hon. Mauril Bélanger: So you do not have a filter? Everything is acceptable.

Mr. Michael Mulley: The way I filter the information is by using traditional media sources. I do not think *Frank Magazine* qualifies, but that does include small daily newspapers.

Hon. Mauril Bélanger: There is absolutely no filter. What I want to know is whether there are any principles that govern your site?

Mr. Michael Mulley: Ha, ha!

Hon. Mauril Bélanger: I do not see what is so funny.

Mr. Michael Mulley: No, of course not. Information from the media is only a small part of what appears on my site—

Hon. Mauril Bélanger: Does your site adhere to a set of principles? Is it guided by certain principles?

Mr. Michael Mulley: The site must make it easier to find information on parliamentary events and activities. Information that comes from the media is supplementary content. The focus is on Hansard and information of that nature.

Hon. Mauril Bélanger: Do you make any money from it?

Mr. Michael Mulley: No.

Hon. Mauril Bélanger: Do you spend a lot of time working on it?

Mr. Michael Mulley: Yes and no. Not a huge amount of time, since I do it part time.

Hon. Mauril Bélanger: Every day?

Mr. Michael Mulley: No, it uses an automated system.

Hon. Mauril Bélanger: It is all automated. So any mistakes show up automatically as well.

Mr. Michael Mulley: Ha, ha! I hope there aren't any mistakes. What do you mean by mistakes?

In the case of Hansard, I take the information from Parliament. So there may be some technical errors, but I hope I find and correct those. There may also be minor errors such as instances where an article gets posted because it mentions someone with a similar name to a member of Parliament, and I fix that when I see it. I hope there aren't any major errors. I do not think there is a big risk there.

● (1245)

Hon. Mauril Bélanger: But you do not look at them—

Is the site bilingual?

Mr. Michael Mulley: No. I really wish it were, but right now, I do not have the funds for that. I am looking for funding or a French-speaking volunteer.

The Joint Chair (Mr. Royal Galipeau): That is why the site is in French only?

Mr. Michael Mulley: The site is in English only. I would really like to change that, but for the time being, it is just in English.

Hon. Mauril Bélanger: But you are looking for funding?

Mr. Michael Mulley: Funding or a French-speaking volunteer to help me.

Hon. Mauril Bélanger: Where are you looking for funding?

Mr. Michael Mulley: Looking may be stretching it. I would really like funding from a non-profit organization, the government or the media. I am not sure.

Hon. Mauril Bélanger: Have you applied for any such funding?

Mr. Michael Mulley: Here and there, yes, but not across the board.

Hon. Mauril Bélanger: Did you ask the Library of Parliament?

Mr. Michael Mulley: I spoke to a few people. I am not aware of any formal program through which I could ask for funding, but I would be delighted if the Library of Parliament could provide some assistance.

Hon. Mauril Bélanger: Who did you speak with?

Mr. Michael Mulley: I recently spoke with—and I do not know his name—the person in charge of their Web site. But I never formally applied to the Library of Parliament for funding to build a French site.

Hon. Mauril Bélanger: I am the official languages critic for my party, and I must say I find it a bit troubling, to put it mildly, that this type of site is not available in both of Canada's official languages. And that is why I do not use it.

Mr. Michael Mulley: Understood.

Hon. Mauril Bélanger: I heard the timer go off, but perhaps you could give me back the time Mr. Stratton used earlier.

You said you rely on media sources. Do you mean all traditional media, French-language media?

Mr. Michael Mulley: I use *Google News* in English, since my site is in English. As far as I know, most French-language media sources are not included. For the time being, it is strictly an English site.

Hon. Mauril Bélanger: So French-speaking members are likely to get second-class treatment on your site.

Mr. Michael Mulley: Ha, ha! I don't think I wield that much influence. I use English-language media because the site is in English, but I would very much like to change that.

Hon. Mauril Bélanger: Thank you, Mr. Mulley.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

[*English*]

The Joint Chair (Mr. Royal Galipeau): Dr. Lunney.

Mr. James Lunney (Nanaimo—Alberni, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I just want to thank our guests for being here today, for this dialogue, and for their important contributions.

I will just make a remark first about the Forum. I appreciate the presentation from the Forum today. Our challenge today is just this. You understand that what we're trying to do here is engage citizens in the parliamentary process. I know when I grew up there just wasn't much available there. I didn't get much growing up, regrettably.

I commend the Forum for finding a way to bring young people here to Ottawa, for changing their perspective. And if Mr. Willard is an example of the graduates of your program, it's very commendable to see the impact your program has had. I know there are many.

I thank you for a very effective presentation today and for what you've done. Our challenge here evolves around this word "change". When I came here we were using cellphones. Then we were

introduced to these things. In fact, I just pulled up openparliament.ca on here and it timed out. These tools are new to us.

Now, around the table we think we're young, and of course we have young men. We scared some of the youth off. You have a backer like Mr. Clarke, who is a very young person, who was at the table here with us. We all think we're young here. The challenge is that things are changing so quickly. Around here we have a little phrase that I think most of us relate to: everybody is in favour of progress; it's change they don't like.

We're faced with communications that are changing so quickly. Some of us are struggling to keep up here. You just added on openparliament.ca My Twitter, and I'm just learning to tweet. We've been on that for a few months here now. At the insistence of one of my interns I needed to do this, and I'm actually enjoying it. But it's a whole new realm of communication.

Madam Hughes mentioned elementary schools. You mentioned engaging on chat rooms. I've never been in a chat room; that's a strange place to me. I haven't been there.

When you talk about engaging at elementary schools, to some of us around here that may be a new concept because we're thinking about university and high school.

Actually, if you look at technology today, you have a lot of grandparents who are looking for the eight-year-old to come and connect the electronic devices in the home and teach them how to communicate online. So I very much appreciate what you're doing here in both realms. We need to engage people because our world is still personal. People have to communicate, and all good things actually happen from people working together. But the tools are changing; the tools do change the way you work—they really do.

I applaud what you've done with openparliament.ca, recognizing that you're not trying to solve all the world's problems. There may be challenges in doing it *en français*. I think that would be very commendable.

For example, I just learned something today. As I opened that page I saw on the front page a little remark about "favourite word". It's causing us to think a little bit differently about what we do. I just found out my favourite word apparently is health, which wouldn't surprise our former minister of state for public health.

These tools are necessary for us. I commend you for what you're doing, and I think in forming our discussion around the table here we're very well advised.

My question, Mr. Mulley, is this. Did you present a written presentation to this committee? If you haven't, I think we would be very open to receiving one.

• (1250)

The Joint Chair (Mr. Royal Galipeau): Dr. Lunney is so excited about hearing what you have to say that he's left you a minute and a half in which to say it.

Voices: Oh, oh!

Mr. Michael Mulley: I think the word "no" takes significantly less time.

No, I have not provided a written presentation. However, if members of the committee have any areas on which they'd like me to elaborate in writing, I'd be more than happy to help.

Mr. James Lunney: You very quickly made reference to some things that are on our minds, inasmuch as we're stretching our minds in this area. You mentioned experimentation, pilot projects, and data programs. You're much more current on what we're trying to accomplish than most of us are. We're struggling to catch up to where you are.

So for whatever you have, for your vision on how we might improve these communications, if you could take the time to put a page or two together and submit that to us, I think the committee would be very open to receiving it and it would be very instructive toward where we're trying to go with this.

In the same way, it has been a very informative discussion here. I thank you for your contributions. I think some of us are a little surprised by these discussions. We weren't sure where we were going with this, but it has actually been quite interesting. We do have to find better ways. I applaud some of you for being there ahead of us. We're struggling to catch up, but please engage us.

I would also compliment all of our witnesses

[*Translation*]

who all spoke in both official languages

[*English*]

in a very efficient manner. Thank you very much.

[*Translation*]

I was very impressed.

[*English*]

Hon. Mauril Bélanger: On a point of order, Mr. Chairman, Mr. Lunney said that all of us want progress but none of us want change. Some of us do want change, one in particular.

The Joint Chair (Mr. Royal Galipeau): I'm not sure that was a point of order. You can put your name down to be heard again.

Voices: Oh, oh!

The Joint Chair (Mr. Royal Galipeau): Now it's Dr. Bennett's turn to be heard.

Hon. Carolyn Bennett (St. Paul's, Lib.): What happened to Senator Stratton?

Senator Terry Stratton: He's being democratic here.

Hon. Carolyn Bennett: Oh. Democracy is breaking out all over.

Thank you very much.

Firstly, perhaps Mr. Mulley wants to finish whatever he wanted to say with regard to the three areas that he wanted....

Have you finished what you had there that got cut off? Because the one other thing that I guess I would like your help on is in terms of what you would see—all three of the witnesses—as really the low-hanging fruit of things that Parliament could get on with very quickly. It comes to mind that committees would be webcast and that each committee would have a website with a little profile of each of

the members and an easy way to find the previous reports and all the testimony.

One of the things that we had hoped to do at the privacy, information, and ethics committee was an e-consultation to ask Canadians what would be the most valuable things for government to do; you can't talk about being user friendly without talking to users. I wondered whether you thought this committee should be doing an e-consultation with regard to how we open Parliament. Mr. Nanos did a sampling of what was important to Canadians, but to have an open process, I think an e-consultation would certainly make me happy.

Unfortunately, on the ethics committee request, the Liaison Committee decided to decline the budget for it, but seeing that the Senate is so rich, it might be easier for us to get the money at this joint committee than it was trying to get it for a House of Commons committee.

Just let us know what you think.

● (1255)

Mr. Michael Mulley: I'll avoid talking too much about matters of procedure since I'm a little bit outside my area of knowledge there, but in terms of low-hanging fruit for Parliament, there are two areas there. First of all, in the three hurdles I talked about, in the technical and legal departments there is a lot that can be done there. The fruit is often almost touching the ground in some respects, just in terms of making it easier for others to repurpose the information and in terms of removing legal restrictions on reusing the information. Those are very low-hanging fruits.

Beyond that, I think it is quite easy to come up with wish lists of what these websites should do. The difficulty, frankly, is in getting it done. That's in the area of cultural change, which I don't feel entirely qualified to comment upon, but I think it is clearly necessary to encourage a culture that's a little more fast moving and a little readier for experimentation and, when possible, to take advantage of and encourage the growth of third-party ecosystems of people on the outside, who are building their own things and supporting government's efforts, whether that's just via better communication, via funding, or via several other mechanisms.

Mr. Corey Willard: I think it comes down to a marketing question. The chair of the Presidential Classroom was the founder of GEICO. I don't know if any of you have ever seen the GEICO commercials, but if I were in the United States, GEICO insurance would be my insurance company simply because of the commercials. They target the public. That's what the Library of Parliament should do. It should adopt funny, cool ways to get to the youth.

I talk to my little brother who's in high school, and they have so many opportunities. Why would I spend time on a computer to look at issues that I don't really understand? First of all, you have to get their attention and then I think they will become interested. For example, the students who come out to the Forum are a small percentage of youth who are more engaged in their community, more active in leadership. There is that other 80% who are extremely interested but just don't take the time to look into it. I think the Library of Parliament's role is to get to those people and find a way to make politics cool.

Hon. Carolyn Bennett: Maybe Cate would like to tell us, if there were more funding, would there be an appetite to get more students to the Hill year-round?

Ms. Cate McCready: That's one of the challenges we were looking at in terms of the volume of opportunities students have right now, in terms of diversity of programming and making sure we remain relevant and interact with them. It's a huge challenge for us and it costs us a lot of money, despite the technological advances that communications and IT are lending to public dialogue. I think that would be one of the things I'd have a look at in your work, as a recommendation for committee, in terms of encouraging the Library of Parliament to dedicate a certain amount of its budget towards technological adoption, so that it's built into its framework.

The Joint Chair (Mr. Royal Galipeau): Senator Stratton, we're all anxious to hear from you.

Just so the committee knows, the next person to be heard will be Senator Banks.

Senator Terry Stratton: Talking about change, the Senate right now is trying to go through a process of restructuring committees. If you think that's easy, I've got another thing to tell you. At any rate, change is very difficult in Parliament, extremely difficult. We try to do it for the most part incrementally. It seems to work best that way.

In listening to all this, who better to go to? I look at the Library of Parliament, and yes, there are young people there. But why not hold a competition or give a contract to a group or someone such as yourself, Michael, and others like you, to put in a bid to actually come in and help us put something together? We could use your mind and your youth to help us put those ideas out there. Unless we do that, we're going to still be held back and loath to move beyond, perhaps because of legal technicalities. We need to think outside the box, which you do, and have you or someone like you come in and actually do that. That's the only way we're really going to get change. I think it's a challenge to us to do that.

How would you respond? Not how much you want to get paid, but do you think that's a realistic solution to go with?

• (1300)

Mr. Michael Mulley: One million dollars.

Voices: Oh, oh!

Mr. Michael Mulley: The point I hope to make is that third-party outsiders do have a role to play when it comes to either creating new ideas on their own or spurring change a bit more within Parliament. There's a variety of models with which to work with third parties. One we're seeing with mixed success on the municipal level is what are called app contests. The City of Ottawa recently had one. The

city released a bunch of computer data on municipal things and challenged people to build tools for others to use based on that. Prizes were awarded to the winners. That produced a bunch of useful things, for example, more efficient ways to find out when the next bus would arrive. That's one model among many.

The one-time contest is probably not the best model for Parliament, but there are a variety of models already in use internationally, through which parliaments and outside organizations have collaborated, some more successfully than others, in order to spur change.

Richard Allan spoke here two weeks ago. He's involved in mySociety in the U.K. It's an organization that I respect a great deal. It does some really interesting things around democratic engagement in general. It's supported partly by government funding, private funding, and volunteer efforts. It has done a lot to spur Parliament forward there.

Senator Terry Stratton: Corey or Cate.

Mr. Corey Willard: I think it just goes back to communicating. If we're targeting youth, someone might present the website. Even today, when Forumers come to the Forum this year... I'm 22 now; I'm not that old, but there's a four-year gap. A four-year gap in a mindset is huge. They'll come up to us and say...we have these evaluation forms, and there are always comments. The staff will take and implement them, and it's evolving.

So I think consultation, as Ms. Bennett said, is important to do with anything you undertake with the Library of Parliament.

Ms. Cate McCready: My only comment on your recommendation in terms of carving out an opportunity for an RFP or some sort of a process is to challenge folks to work quickly through that process as well. To the nature of how change works as well, if there's money available, if there's a public commitment, set timeframes, because in this dynamic, as we heard earlier from Dr. Lunney, there's new tech landing every three and six months. So in order to embark on that and realize your benefit out of it, it's got to have a timeframe that's realistic as well in terms of both delivery and monitoring outcomes.

The Joint Chair (Mr. Royal Galipeau): Thank you.

You have half a minute.

Senator Terry Stratton: You look at our website, the Senate website, and we're dealing with legislation. It's more interesting to watch grass grow in a lot of cases. So you need to have a young mind that isn't tied in with our way of thinking, because we have to think that way, a mind that can create ideas and put them out there to challenge kids to get involved. It would be interesting to see what you can do.

That's really a comment rather than a question.

Thank you.

The Joint Chair (Mr. Royal Galipeau): Senator Banks is next, and he will be followed by Dr. Wong.

Senator Tommy Banks (Alberta, Lib.): Thank you, Chair, and thank you, witnesses.

Mr. Willard said the magic word, and it's "marketing". If the object is to get people interested and involved, the principles of marketing have to be applied. We are notoriously inept at that. That's not our business.

As Senator Stratton was obliquely referring to, the Senate is involved at the moment in an effort to do exactly that, and has made some strides in it.

Carolyn, the Senate Standing Committee on Energy, the Environment and Natural Resources has its own website, which is getting a lot of hits and doing very well.

Mr. Bélanger referred to a huge problem with respect to this kind of media. This is a new medium that is not in any way susceptible or subject to regulation of any kind. We're used to being able to say you have to give equal time, you can't say that, you have to publish the whole thing, don't edit, you took that out of context. None of that applies in this enormously powerful new medium. So the taste that exists on Mr. Mulley's website is Mr. Mulley's taste, period. *Frank* could do this tomorrow afternoon, if they wanted to. So we have to deal with that. It's a fact, because it's not regulatable.

But I'm surprised to hear you say that there's a legal impediment to your reproducing something that goes on in Parliament. Everything is legal unless some place says it isn't. Do you know where it says that it isn't legal for you? Is this a common concept of copyright of which I am unaware? Somebody else asked you the question: newspapers publish verbatim transcripts from sections of Hansard all the time, so why can't you?

● (1305)

Mr. Michael Mulley: It is quite a daunting position to be in, having a legal discussion with a senator.

Senator Tommy Banks: I'm not a lawyer.

Mr. Michael Mulley: Okay. To the best of my understanding, and it's something I'm more generally involved in—you might have heard the term "open data", and I hope you will in the near future, if it hasn't come up—the products of the federal government are covered by default by crown copyright, which means they are essentially subject to the same copyright restrictions as a creative work made in the public sector. Journalists are able to reproduce parts of something like Hansard, with the purpose of reporting a story, but the default position is that you cannot simply reproduce the whole document without permission. Now that permission does exist in the House of Commons. The Speaker has generally given permission to republish Hansard, but the default position, to the best of my knowledge, for products of the Canadian government is that they cannot be reproduced.

This is something that I hope members of Parliament are aware of and work to change. It's something that a bunch of other Westminster countries have started to work on. In the U.K. and Australia there's been an effort to adopt a different government licence that would be the default licence, and I hope Canada follows in their footsteps.

Senator Tommy Banks: The permission comes from the site of the House of Commons, from the Speaker of the Commons.

Mr. Michael Mulley: That's right. On the site you'll find it labelled "Speaker's permission". The Speaker made a ruling that allows the proceedings to be republished.

Senator Tommy Banks: You answered in the negative when you were asked whether you derive any income from your website, but could you? Could I place an ad on your website?

Mr. Michael Mulley: Certainly not.

Senator Tommy Banks: Why?

Mr. Michael Mulley: There's no impediment. If I decided to accept an ad, I could place an ad. It's not my intention at the moment.

The Joint Chair (Mr. Royal Galipeau): Once again we benefit from Mr. Mulley's taste.

Mr. Michael Mulley: Absolutely.

The Joint Chair (Mr. Royal Galipeau): Dr. Wong is next, followed by Senator Meredith.

Mrs. Alice Wong (Richmond, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thanks to all of you for attending this meeting.

Not very long ago I met quite a few young Canadians through the Forum for Young Canadians program. Someone actually came from my own riding. The two Richmond MPs were able to meet some of the B.C. young people from both Delta and Richmond. I think it's a meaningful program, and we were able to hear from them. They were very excited and they learned a lot.

I give compliments to all of you, especially the Forum for Young Canadians, for helping to get young Canadians excited.

My question is from more of a global perspective. I understand that in 2000 the Forum had an international element, with involvement from 11 countries. Is that element still in your program?

● (1310)

Ms. Cate McCready: We ran international programming previously. There was a Canada-Germany Forum that ran for a couple of years as a result of partnership funding from the EU. There was also a Canada-U.S. program that we developed in collaboration with the University of Ottawa, and it ran for a couple of years.

We did not have the resources to continue to develop both of those programs, particularly on the Canada-U.S. front, oddly enough. In the context of Canada-Germany, the funding that had been offered to us was for a limited time, and we were aware of that when we undertook it.

As an organization that strives to find ongoing support funding and general involvement within the organizational leadership, we focused our time over the last couple of years specifically on the Forum program, to allow Canadian students from all provinces and territories to come to Ottawa.

One of the things we did under our budgeting process was realign some dollars to allow for students who would not otherwise be able to afford to attend. That was our counterpoint, if you will, in terms of the programming decisions we had to make.

Mrs. Alice Wong: Because of technology right now, have you included any international chat rooms? Are young people from overseas interested in getting to know about Parliament? Of course, they can get it through a library, but young people talking to young people is probably the most efficient way, because you share the same ideas and have your own language. Sometimes it's difficult for us to understand you, and it's difficult for you to understand us too.

Is that an area you might want to explore?

Ms. Cate McCready: It is one we've started to explore. We match it against resources and capacity within our organization. We're very well served by a terrific team of three full-time staffers who do remarkable work.

One of the phases of development we've asked them to focus on is outreach to the youth communities that are online, regardless of boundaries. Those places all exist in a very open marketplace, when we're on LinkedIn, Facebook, and all of those places.

While our audience primarily right now is through bringing Canadian students to Ottawa for this program, there's an opportunity for broader dialogue. Should we be successful over the long term, we can frame some of that.

Our alumni are now international. They're here in the House of Commons. They're in board rooms, and they're in television and media outlets around Canada and throughout the world. Our alumni are that international link, to a large degree as well.

You're right, that's a take-away for us in how we want to frame that relationship-building.

Mrs. Alice Wong: The reason I asked was that the last time I met the young people at your dinner, and also when they toured around, I found different things. Truly, the whole world comes to Canada. We have this rich mosaic. That's why I asked this question.

In some cultures, politics is something you never touch. Adults don't even want to talk about it, let alone young people. They say, "Don't touch it", or young people have more interesting things to do.

How would you help us encourage young people from different cultural backgrounds to really feel interested?

Ms. Cate McCready: I'll be very honest with you. As parliamentarians, you play a pivotal role in that opportunity, because you know your communities best. We operate from a base here in Ottawa. Our outreach to mayors and schools around the country is one set of tentacles we've established quite strongly. But I really have benefited from your leadership as members of Parliament and from all of your colleagues in that outreach to folks. It makes a huge difference to us when you're out there promoting and recruiting for us.

[Translation]

The Joint Chair (Mr. Royal Galipeau): I am about to hand the floor over to one last parliamentarian, and that will conclude our first round. We will then begin our second round, unless there are any other members who have not had a chance to speak.

[English]

Now it's Senator Meredith's turn.

Senator Don Meredith (Ontario, CPC): Thank you, Chair. I apologize for my delay.

It was quite refreshing, although I didn't get to hear all your presentations, to see some young faces join me and others in the room today. It's quite refreshing. I'm passionate about youth.

On your comments with respect to engaging young people, I believe our Parliament has to be open. The process and the laws we are legislating need that young Canadian voice or opinion as we formulate our laws in this country. And I'm one to promote. In fact, last week I met with some young Canadians, and I'll be promoting the program in Ontario in terms of some other young people I want to see engaged with the Senate and also with Parliament. So I've taken on that opportunity to do that.

My question for you, Ms. McCready, is with respect to the chat and the openness. You talked about committee work and engaging the schools. Can you provide to us some sort of framework around how you see us being able to open our committee work to engagement at the high school level or the elementary level? In colleges and universities they're more apt to go online and research things. I particularly think of the elementary students and the high school students being able to engage with us. I always look at youth not only as our future but as our present. Engaging them now and getting their opinions is vital.

We have some bright minds. We see two young men at this table. I can't believe that you're 22. You look like you are 16 or 15.

• (1315)

Mr. Corey Willard: That's a compliment.

Senator Don Meredith: It's refreshing to hear your opinions on this.

It is critical that we, as a committee, be able to engage. We've heard from the Parliament in Australia about their outreach efforts to engage the school system. I'm curious as to what kind of framework you would recommend we proceed with.

That also ties in with Mr. Mulley's comments with respect to your work on your website.

Ms. Cate McCready: I'm not going to pretend to be an expert. The dynamic of the initial thought on this was that there's a certain level of interpretation, appreciation, and understanding of what a committee process is. So there has to be some level of effort put into this opportunity, if you will, for that to happen in a context of chat or other kinds of online televising opportunities or engagement.

I could see in fact the parliamentary library being the key depository for that dialogue. There could be interface with classrooms and community organizations around the country prior to a committee hearing on the kinds of questions they have about a committee process. Engage them in watching a committee process. Then work with some of the expertise within the parliamentary library to work with those folks after the committee hearing to address the questions they had prior to the committee hearing being televised and after the committee being televised.

There are opportunities there for integrated learning and for making it real as well for young people. It's one thing to talk at them; it's another to have a program that hears them. That would have to be intrinsic to anything folks look at bringing forth. That has certainly been one of the primary things we've learned as an organization, particularly over the last couple of years as we looked at reframing our relationships. Let's hear what they're telling us as opposed to what we think we should be telling them.

Mr. Corey Willard: I would add that I have actually approached L'Association des juristes d'expression française, who work with high schools here in Ottawa, and I proposed that we bring them to a committee meeting. We started developing the idea, and we realized that it's extremely hard to plan because there could be an election one day. There could be a change—

[Translation]

The Joint Chair (Mr. Royal Galipeau): There will not be [Editor's Note: Inaudible].

[English]

Mr. Corey Willard: I'm not going down that road, but I'm saying there could be changes. The agenda is always changing, so it's extremely hard for school boards and teachers to follow.

A lot of the teachers don't understand how it works, so they need a source like the Library of Parliament to help them. There are a million ways you can do it. They don't have to actually come to Ottawa, but the—

Senator Don Meredith: To that point, with respect to some of the young Canadians I've met with, there are only a few who are selected for this program. What about the other thousands who never get that opportunity? How can we bring—

The Joint Chair (Mr. Royal Galipeau): Hold that thought. We're running out of time.

It's Mr. Asselin's turn.

[Translation]

Mr. Gérard Asselin (Manicouagan, BQ): Thank you, Mr. Chair. Earlier, we were discussing certain difficulties when it comes to translating information or sites from English into French. What about asking translation schools, where students are learning to become translators, to help with that? It would be much cheaper for the government to pay for the services of a translation school, where students could translate certain texts while learning about Parliament. It would spark their interest and allow them to make a real contribution by helping to develop communication tools.

Obviously, if you went with a private translation firm, you would have more qualified and more experienced translators, but as everyone knows, translation students are supervised by competent and experienced professors. I am certain we could save more money by using the services of a translation school rather than a private translation firm. In the private sector, which is more important: a high-quality product or the bottom line? It's not hard to figure out.

I would like to hear any ideas the three of you have to help us, as parliamentarians. I have been in Parliament for 18 years, but I also spent 14 years as a city councillor. We know that voter turnout in a municipal election is very low. And yet they are all taxpayers, people who want direct services. Voter turnout is even lower in school board

elections. The same goes for provincial and federal elections. There are nevertheless 308 elected members in Canada.

I would like to know how we can educate and encourage the public to take an interest in elections. What can we do to engage voters and young people so that they are eager to vote? They might be anxious for the next election to get rid of the Conservatives!

An hon. member: Ha, ha!

• (1320)

Mr. Corey Willard: This is something we hear often, from young people and adults alike. They say they no longer have time to vote. People are too busy. They're always saying that there are too many things that need doing, and they cannot set aside 30 minutes for voting. This begs the question: do people vote just so they can say they voted or do they do it because they follow politics. I often ask my friends this question; I ask them why they do not vote. They tell me that they don't understand anything about politics and that they don't know who to vote for. They also don't bother getting informed. This brings us to the question Ms. Hugues asked. I think this issue with voting has to do with people not getting the right education in elementary school, in high school, at university, or later on. I think that this has to do with personal culture. People have to start with the basics and then build onto that knowledge.

Mr. Gérard Asselin: This reminds me a bit of youth leaving rural areas. Young people leave the regions to go to attend college, university, or a vocational centre. Nowadays, families are smaller. So, parents follow their children once they retire, which is happening at an increasingly young age. They move to large centres in order to have better health care or be closer to their children. People are leaving the regions in droves. The low participation rate at elections is comparable to the youth migration.

I have nothing further, Mr. Chair. My NDP colleague has an excellent question to ask.

The Joint Chair (Mr. Royal Galipeau): How nice and generous of you.

We still have three MPs remaining, and each will get two minutes.

Ms. Hughes, go ahead.

Mrs. Carol Hughes: Thank you.

New elements have been added to the discussion, but I will begin by asking my question.

[English]

If you were to rate the current government website as being able to capture the interest of young Canadians, how would you rate that?

Mr. Corey Willard: I'll take a job at it. I'm actually doing research with school, and I'm looking into bills that have been passed. I can't believe the amount of time I've taken just to understand how it works. It's not accessible. It goes back to youth wanting it fast. I don't have time to read through the whole debate. There should be a way. If you look at libraries today, they are very accessible. If you want to research something, you'll get it. But it seems they haven't done that with the Hansard site. So I think that might be one way....

• (1325)

Mrs. Carol Hughes: So what's your rating, on a scale of one to ten?

Mr. Corey Willard: My rating? Well, five.

Mrs. Carol Hughes: That's not bad. That's being generous.

What about you, Michael?

Mr. Michael Mulley: Youth, of course, have a wide variety of interests, and government has an incalculable number of websites. But for parliamentary stuff in particular, there are some wonderful resources out there, the Library of Parliament in particular. Legisinfo is a vast resource for information on legislation. There's some great stuff being done there. As a rule, it's not available quickly enough and it's not quickly searchable enough, in plain language. Those are the main shortcomings, so five seems like a solid number.

Mrs. Carol Hughes: Thank you.

I have just a couple of things I'm wondering about. Do you think what's been going on in Parliament in the past probably six years or so, I would say—the decorum, the atmosphere, people being disenchanted with Parliament, the fact that there was a scandal with the Liberals and there's currently a scandal—

The Joint Chair (Mr. Royal Galipeau): I told you to talk slowly before. You should have talked faster this time. It's now Dr. Lunney's turn.

Mrs. Carol Hughes: I was just wondering if that plays a role there.

The Joint Chair (Mr. Royal Galipeau): You've finished. It's now Dr. Lunney's turn. The two minutes are up.

Mr. James Lunney: *Merci, monsieur le président.*

I'd just like to say to Monsieur Bélanger that my remark about progress and change was not directed to members around here. It's a societal thing in general. One of the challenges we have is that one of the fixed principles of leadership is flexibility. We're all being stretched that way. In the military they use this term, “RTC”, resistance to change. That was my point.

Mr. Mulley, you talked about experimentation, pilot projects, beta programs. You talked about innovation. But you used a term there that I wanted to capture. It was to do with creating an atmosphere where we might attract more participation from outside interest—third parties, if you will—and I think you used the word “ecology”. Was it ecology of innovation or ecology of competition? You used a term that engaged ecology. Can you remember what that was?

Mr. Michael Mulley: I think I mentioned something like a third-party ecosystem.

Mr. James Lunney: Could you expand on that?

Mr. Michael Mulley: I would love to see an environment where Parliament and other institutions look to collaborate more with third-party groups, those third-party groups being a variety of non-profits or occasionally for-profit organizations seeking to further their own ends and public ends. Examples of that are a variety of foundations working to supplement political information and watchdog the government in the United States—those for the most part don't exist in Canada—or something like mysociety.org in the U.K., which works occasionally in loose partnership with government to encourage political engagement on the federal level. And they're doing a lot of really interesting things on the local level in the U.K. as well. That's the sort of ecosystem I'd love to see in Canada.

Mr. James Lunney: Thank you.

Do I have 30 seconds?

[*Translation*]

The Joint Chair (Mr. Royal Galipeau): No, it is now Mr. Bélanger's turn.

[*English*]

Hon. Mauril Bélanger: There are three things. I would be remiss not to mention that the Forum for Young Canadians was born of an institution currently residing in Ottawa—Vanier: Ashbury College. Kudos to Ashbury.

Number two, Mr. Chairman, I thought we were going to see a card for our librarian. I have not, but I hope and I take it that our good wishes were sent to him anyhow.

The Joint Chair (Mr. Royal Galipeau): The card was circulated.

Hon. Mauril Bélanger: The last one is the one I really wanted to have some.... The question is to the library. I wish we would put it to the library, writ large.

Is it prepared to do a national apps contest along the lines of what we were talking about today, with prizes, and what would it take for it to do that? I think we need to go down that route quickly.

[*Translation*]

The Joint Chair (Mr. Royal Galipeau): Ms. Hughes, since we have another minute left, I will give Mr. Mulley an opportunity to answer your question.

Mr. Michael Mulley: I am sorry, but I have forgotten what the question was.

[*English*]

Mrs. Carol Hughes: Because of the decorum, because of the way Parliament has been working, and the scandals, how much does this play into trying to attract youth?

Mr. Michael Mulley: It's difficult to ask young people about things that happened more than six years ago. That's ancient history.

Mrs. Carol Hughes: It's happening now.

• (1330)

Mr. Michael Mulley: I'm joking. Certainly there has been a lot of discussion about decorum in Parliament, and the marginalization of Parliament to a certain degree.

Mrs. Carol Hughes: We don't have a—

[*Translation*]

The Joint Chair (Mr. Royal Galipeau): Mr. Bélanger, we are in a meeting, and the floor has been given to Mr. Mulley.

[*English*]

Mr. Michael Mulley: I'm speaking from no particular position other than my own. A lot of the goings on in the House don't necessarily come off as especially flattering, and of course it sometimes turns off youth, as it does adults.

I think there is a wide desire among parliamentarians to see an improvement in bits of the public image of Parliament. There are proposals going around to improve that. I don't have anything in particular to contribute on how to go there, but I think many of us would like to see a more inspiring Parliament on occasion.

The Joint Chair (Mr. Royal Galipeau): I want to thank all three witnesses. Thank you very much for the illumination you have provided here. Not only did we get wisdom today, but we got illumination on progress and change.

You might have noticed that I've introduced a change of my own today. Instead of recognizing the parliamentarians in the order they had signified their intention to speak, I introduced another element, which is to alternate between parties. Otherwise, I did respect the order in which they gave their names.

The meeting is adjourned.

[*Translation*]

Thank you.

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