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## Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage

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**Chair**

**Mr. Gary Schellenberger**

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• (1950)

[English]

**The Chair (Mr. Gary Schellenberger (Perth—Wellington, CPC)):** I call this meeting to order.

It's a tremendous pleasure for us to be here. I apologize for being late, but when we got to Calgary, unfortunately our plane wasn't there. It wasn't flying today. We had to get a charter flight. I'll take part of the blame for being about an extra half hour late, because I got there before everyone else and went on to Edmonton. For a little while, everyone was looking around trying to find me. So between Air Canada and me...and I'll apologize for my part in it, but I won't apologize for Air Canada.

To start, I know that one gentleman has a brief to give this evening, so I will ask him to present it first. After that, as each person around the table wants to give their comments, I will take those comments. Then we'll go to some questions from members.

Mr. Shaw, would you like to go first with your brief, please?

**Mr. Curtis Shaw (General Manager, Northwestel Cable):** Mr. Chairman, how much time do I have?

**The Chair:** You have about five minutes.

**Mr. Curtis Shaw:** Thank you.

By way of introduction, my name is Curtis Shaw. I'm the general manager of Northwestel Cable in Yellowknife.

Northwestel Cable is a wholly owned subsidiary of Northwestel. We are the incumbent local exchange carrier operating across the Yukon, the Northwest Territories, Nunavut, and the top third of British Columbia. Northwestel's services include local telephone, long distance, high-speed data, video conferencing, and, through subsidiary operations, wireless and cable television services.

Northwestel Cable here in Yellowknife and our four other operations carry a number of CBC services. CBC North and CBC Montreal are on basic cable, and CBC Newsworld is also on cable. We carry CBC television feeds from Calgary, Toronto, Regina, and Halifax on our digital cable service, as well as various CBC southern and northern radio stations.

The purpose of my presentation is not to go over the comments this committee will likely hear from other cable companies and competitive television broadcasters in southern Canada. I was hoping to take this time today to talk a little bit about northern Canada and the important role CBC North plays in the north today.

If I can start with affordability, for many northerners CBC plays an integral role in bringing the rest of the world to a remote community. In fact in many communities across northern Canada, local CBC radio and television broadcasts are the only entertainment and information source available to residents. A number of communities across the north don't have a local cable television provider, while direct-to-home satellite services such as Star Choice and Bell ExpressVu may be cost-prohibitive.

I'll give you an example. In the mid-1990s, Northwestel built several cable systems across the north. In the Yukon, we built cable systems in Watson Lake, Haines Junction, and Old Crow. In the Northwest Territories, we built cable systems in Tuktoyaktuk, Aklavik, Fort Good Hope, Fort Resolution, and Tulita. In Nunavut, we built cable systems in Pangnirtung and Nanisivik.

By the year 2000, five years after we built these systems, all of them were losing money. The subscriber numbers declined dramatically due to competition from direct-to-home satellite. More importantly, customers in these communities simply could not afford to pay their cable television bills. In the years following, most of these systems were closed, and a few were transferred to the local community co-op.

• (1955)

In the north, direct-to-home satellite services are available to residents in communities without cable television providers. If you live in one of these communities or in the north, you can get Bell ExpressVu and you can get Star Choice. However, in some of the estimates we've done, up to 40% of customers in these remote communities are receiving television and radio programming exclusively from either CBC North or the Aboriginal Peoples Television Network, APTN. That figure is dramatically higher than what you would see in Toronto, in a southern Canadian city.

To talk a little bit about northern language and culture, one thing I will say is that CBC North provides a very pan-northern perspective for local news and culture. No private sector today delivers as much television and radio programming, especially in aboriginal languages. CBC provides a local news show across the north, Monday to Friday, and they also provide it to Nunavut and the Northwest Territories in Inuktitut.

The emergence of new media has provided consumers with more choice in how they receive news, entertainment, and cultural programming. The Internet allows customers to stream audio and radio stations from around the world straight into their homes. In fact the majority in northern communities today now have access to at least one high-speed Internet provider in their community. Satellite subscription radio is available in most areas in northern Canada.

CBC North is playing an important role in delivering regional news and broadcast services to northern residents using the Internet. On the CBC website, northern residents can listen to streaming audio feeds of CBC North radio from Inuvik, Iqaluit, Whitehorse, and Yellowknife, and streaming feeds of the CBC North's television programming, including *Northbeat* and *Iglaaq*.

In terms of operational costs, CBC North today operates in the same geographical region as Northwestel. The north spans over four million square kilometres, in four time zones. The majority of communities are served exclusively by satellite. Across these four million square kilometres are 100,000 residents.

Some of the operational costs that CBC North faces are the same as for our company. Delivering service and maintaining infrastructure, rising labour costs, transportation costs, technology costs, along with the unpredictability of our northern weather are daily factors that CBC would deal with in delivering broadcast services to northern audiences.

As a cable provider, we believe our residential customer base would be opposed to paying additional charges for CBC carried on cable television, especially given that here in Yellowknife, CBC is available to households on a free-to-air antenna. We currently pay a per-subscriber rate for CBC Newsworld, but we are opposed to paying a per-subscriber rate for CBC North.

Does the CBC compete with the private sector in northern Canada? As CBC radio is commercial-free and CBC television is the primary regional broadcaster, pretty much the only broadcaster focused on northern Canada, the answer is clearly no. Cuts to CBC funding in northern Canada will mean a reduction in radio and television news and cultural programming, a void unlikely to be filled by the private sector.

As broadcasting competition evolves in southern Canada and funding from traditional advertising sources declines, the funding mandate and governance of CBC must evolve. So I would close this presentation by asking the committee to consider the important essential service the CBC provides across the three northern territories, and request that the committee recognize the importance of the unique services delivered by CBC North today. Many northern residents would like to see the number of northern services expanded in the communities to include more aboriginal language and community programming.

In closing, the private sector will never provide northern Canadians with the entertainment, cultural, and news programming currently being delivered by CBC North. There is an important and continuing role for a public broadcaster, especially in the three northern territories.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Mr. Provencher, sir.

● (2000)

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Léo-Paul Provencher (Executive Director, Fédération Franco-TéNOise):** Mr. Chairman, my name is Léo-Paul Provencher, and I am Executive Director of the Fédération Franco-TéNOise. Pardon me, but my voice is hoarse as a result of the flu.

Mr. Chairman, madam, gentlemen members of the committee, first I would like to say a few words to put our remarks in context. Our comments take into consideration the Broadcasting Act of 1991 and the CBC/Radio-Canada's general mandate as the national public broadcaster. Paragraph 3(1)(m) of the Act states that general mandate as follows. In particular, we refer to subparagraphs (ii), (iii), (iv) and (vii).

Subparagraph 3(1)(m)(ii) provides as follows, and I quote:

(ii) reflect Canada and its regions to national and regional audiences, while serving the special needs of those regions,

Subparagraph 3(1)(m)(iii) reads as follows:

(iii) actively contribute to the flow and exchange of cultural expression,

Subparagraph 3(1)(m)(iv) reads as follows:

(iv) be in English and in French, reflecting the different needs and circumstances of each official language community, including the particular needs and circumstances of English and French linguistic minorities,

Subparagraph 3(1)(m)(vii) reads as follows:

(vii) be made available throughout Canada by the most appropriate and efficient means and as resources become available to the purpose,

● (2005)

We also take it for granted that the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation is subject to sections 41 and 42 of the Official Languages Act. Under Part VII of that Act, the Corporation is required to implement positive measures to enhance the vitality of Canada's francophone minorities and to support and assist their development.

We therefore recognize that the Crown corporation has an obligation of result in its efforts to foster the full recognition and use of English and French and to advance the equality of their status and use.

I would like to make a comment on the mandate. Our community supports the Act defining the mandate, but emphasizes the need to implement measures to enable the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation to perform its role fully across the country.

I'd like also like to make some preliminary comments. The Fédération Franco-TéNOise and the components of its network of associations appreciate this invitation to take part in the national investigation of the role of our public broadcaster. The federation wishes to point out to the committee the major challenges that the very brief notice of this hearing has forced on us. This has had considerable impact on our ability to conduct an analysis of this important issue, an analysis that we would have liked to conduct in depth. This has also limited our ability to illustrate the impact of limited services on our communities using actual, relevant examples.

● (2010)

Our comments are of course made in the very specific socio-economic-demographic context of the Northwest Territories. This is a young territory, dependent on the federal government, which is experiencing vigorous economic growth, whose population is very mobile and where the ratio between a diversity of aboriginal and non-aboriginal populations is reaching a balancing point.

These realities raise very specific challenges, in particular the challenge of keeping our francophones and francophiles in the territory and increasingly extending their length of stay. The same is true of support for the development of our youth in all respects, including their access to services in general and radio and television services in particular.

I would like to make a few general observations. Our communities of Fort Smith, Hay River and Inuvik do not receive the Radio-Canada signal. Our capital of Yellowknife receives the Radio-Canada radio and television signals from Montreal. Broadcasts very rarely concern us, our realities or our concerns. It is virtually never possible for us to express our values, opinions, or ideas or to develop the creative talents present in each of our communities.

Our francophone citizens and our communities never have the opportunity to be recognized by Radio-Canada's regional stations. They also have no access to local radio or television content in their language. Our francophone citizens enjoy no medium of exchange with their linguistic minority colleagues in the other Canadian provinces. Our francophone citizens do not have an opportunity to contribute to the broadcasting of cultural events that would add value to the vitality of both the Quebec and Canadian francophone community.

The minority francophones of the other Canadian provinces have little opportunity to be involved in a manner proportionate to the way in which Quebec, and particularly Montreal, is involved in program content, for virtually all programs.

Our francophone citizens tell us about dubious reception quality and the cost associated with that reception. They also note that they never hear the expression "Two hours earlier in the Northwest Territories" on the airwaves, similar to the expression "One hour later in the Maritimes".

● (2015)

As regards the public mandate of the CBC/Radio-Canada, the proliferation of predominantly American new media means that our Canadian media occupy less listening space. If our government service took positive steps to reflect the various realities of the country's linguistic minorities, if our people could see themselves and were recognized in representations of regional diversities, that would undoubtedly promote their sense of belonging and thus their attachment to our corner of the country. In other words, that would enable the Crown corporation to make a greater contribution to a shared national consciousness and identity.

We often get the feeling that radio and television programming is concentrated in Montreal, thus reducing the space of our region and our Canadian regions, which could provide enriching diversity for both the information and variety programming sectors.

It is no doubt unavoidable that, if government authorities give free rein to the commercial imperatives related to the profitability of broadcasters, the reality of the regions will not often be on the agenda, since our minorities will never carry enough weight to boost ratings. Regional representation will be increasingly reduced if our government service has to compete in the free market.

In a way, the programming business consigns smaller interests to oblivion. Developments at RDI should no doubt be assessed in comparison to other live news networks in order to appreciate the impact on regional programs over time. These facts influence and accentuate the problems that Canadians have in grasping the realities of minority francophones, and deprive our fellow citizens of any potential sense of greater solidarity within the Canadian francophone community.

● (2020)

French Canada is not limited to Quebec. Subparagraph 3(1)(m)(vi) of the Broadcasting Act states that it is part of the national public broadcaster's general mandate to, and I quote:

(vi) contribute to shared national consciousness and identity,

Our fellow citizens are expressing their disappointment at not having a specific network so that they can hear news from their region more often. A small community like Hay River is forced to pay the cost of receiving the service. We can only observe that this measure is not equivalent to the situation of the linguistic majority and infringes subparagraph 3(1)(m)(vii), which states, and I quote:

(vii) be made available throughout Canada by the most appropriate and efficient means...

Let's talk about the services the CBC/Radio-Canada offers on our regional station. We emphasize how important we consider the link that we would like to have with local news in French. Radio-Canada is the only broadcaster that can play a key role and broadcast local radio content in French. We moreover support the demand made by the Alliance des radios communautaires du Canada that a Canadian community radio fund be established to maintain the viability of our community radio stations.

These institutions rely on intensive volunteer work to maintain the only French-language radio service offering part of its local programming in French. An analysis of the content of programs like *Le Téléjournal*, *Le Point*, *Enjeux* and others could show the lack of space allocated to current affairs in the francophone communities and to francophone personalities working in the cultural, social and political spheres in a rural or minority context.

Too few francophone productions are done outside Quebec. Looking to the future, the importance of new communication technologies, which are particularly within the grasp of our youth, leads us to propose that our government broadcaster put in place a supply of services tailored to the virtual meeting places of our young people.

The flexibility of the media thus used and a range of dynamic products can promote greater participation by our youth in a diversity of interactive fora.

To sum up, it is our view that Radio-Canada must constantly work to reflect the reality of Canadians, both those in the majority and those in the minority, must draw on the wealth of our diversity and, as the Act states, must be offered across Canada in the most adequate and effective manner possible. Radio-Canada has a responsibility to reflect our regional diversity and the regional diversities of Canada's official language minorities. Our minorities have the ability and the desire to contribute to the country's cultural vitality.

As a result of the issues associated with free trade in this area of public communication, as a result of the too small numbers in most francophone communities outside Quebec, as a result of the great interests in reflecting regional diversity in the country and the obligation to do so, we ask Parliament to grant adequate funding to make it possible to carry out this public mandate.

As a result of ratings in the regions, which are always low, and as a result of the services offered by our community radio stations, their vitality and their vast potential, we request that a Canadian community radio fund be established to support and develop local radio services in French.

We invite our Crown corporation to invest in and work toward increasing ratings among young people through modern interactive technologies.

Lastly, in our view, it is urgent that commercial logic be replaced by the political will to protect our Canadian cultural sovereignty.

● (2025)

[English]

**The Chair:** Mr. Foisy.

**Mr. Batiste Foisy (As an Individual):** My name is Batiste Foisy. I had first planned to present in my language, but I see how hard it is for your organization, so I'll speak in English. However, I would appreciate it if you could acknowledge that this is my second language; I might make some slips.

I am a citizen of the Northwest Territories. I am speaking in my own name tonight. I also work as a news reporter in this town, but tonight I just want to speak from my heart.

First, I'd like to thank you for giving me this opportunity to express myself on a topic that I care about—namely, access to information and to public broadcasting. More precisely, I'd like to talk about francophone citizens' lack of access to such services in the Northwest Territories. And when I say lack of access, I mean that in the NWT and in Nunavut in 2007, there are no services offered by the Société Radio-Canada, the French-language broadcaster.

The mandate of this corporation states, and it's pretty clear, that French-language broadcasting has to be available throughout the country. It is not. I'd like to suggest that committee members visit the public broadcaster's website—at [www.radio-canada.ca/radio/frequences.html](http://www.radio-canada.ca/radio/frequences.html)—to see an image that speaks for itself, a map of Canada that shows Yukon Territory and all of the ten provinces in shades of grey, and the Northwest Territories and Nunavut in plain white. Below the map is an explanation, in French and English, of what the white means: “*Aucune fréquence n'est disponible pour cette région*”, or “No frequency is available in this area”.

● (2030)

In the communities of Fort Smith, of Hay River, of Inuvik, where both Canadian Heritage and the Government of Northwest Territories acknowledge that there are significant francophone communities, they don't get the signal of *La première chaîne*—that's the French equivalent of CBC Radio One—nor do they get *Espace musique*, the French cultural channel.

The citizens of the Northwest Territories outside of the capital, Yellowknife, do not have access to French radio. Here in the capital, it's a little different. We don't have the French cultural channel *Espace musique*; however, we do get the signal of CBF, *La première chaîne* from Montreal.

Well, one could think that it is because Radio-Canada acknowledges that we francophones do exist in the Northwest Territories, but that would just be too nice. Indeed, the Association franco-culturelle, the French cultural association, holds the licence for the rebroadcasting of CBF—at their own expense, of course. The French people in Yellowknife are so desperate to get the CBC public service that we're ready to pay twice for it. We pay it with our taxes and then we pay it with our membership in the francophone association. I'm a member of that association, by the way.

I'd like to point out that it's the same for the television signal in the communities and in Yellowknife. But I don't really care about that; I don't have a TV.

I would now like to speak to the point that I'm more interested in raising, and that has to do with the lack of access to information. There is no Radio-Canada reporter in the Northwest Territories. There is no reporter in Nunavut, either. It has never happened that a francophone citizen in the north has heard a local newscast in their language. We had such a newscast at the French community radio, CIVR, but now we don't have the funding to have reporters at the French community radio.

Radio-Canada has correspondents in Paris, they have them in London, they have them in Washington and Tel Aviv, but there is no correspondent in Yellowknife or Iqaluit. If I mention this, it's because in the very rare times when we get news from the NWT on *Le Téléjournal*, we feel it's presented as though it were foreign news. It's always a reporter based in Montreal who, after a few days spent in, say, Yellowknife—or, more often, relying only on press releases—explains to Canadians how things are going in the Great North, where we live. But their vision is always false, totally wrong.

Today is a special day, actually; we got news from the Northwest Territories in French. It doesn't happen often, but today it did. The people from the pipeline, the Mackenzie gas project, released the new costs and all that, so it made the national news. I read the news, and it says that the construction of the pipeline will only begin in 2014.

Now, I'm a news reporter in the north, and I know that what happened today is that the proponents of the project said the pipeline would only be in production—not construction—by 2014. That's what happens when you make reports without reporters.

• (2035)

I acknowledge that Société Radio-Canada has an obvious lack of interest in the Northwest Territories, which in part has to do with access to the signal—they actually acknowledge that we don't get it—and in telling other Canadians what's going on up here. In that spirit, I would make the suggestion to the standing committee that Radio-Canada create a fund for regional information in French. The money from that fund could serve to help us get daily information of quality here in our community, which in turn could help other communities in our situation get such information where the public broadcaster is incapable of filling its mandate.

[Translation]

Ladies and gentlemen members of the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage, Mr. Chairman, I wish you a pleasant stay in our community.

• (2040)

[English]

**The Chair:** We'll now go to Mr. O'Brien.

**Mr. Christopher O'Brien (As an Individual):** I'm afraid I didn't have a chance to do anything formal, so I've just written down some fairly random notes here. I didn't hear about this terribly long ago.

Anyway, I'll move right along and say thanks for being here. It's very important that you've come here.

First of all, I'd like to say that I can't imagine Canada or the north without CBC. Mr. Shaw gave us all the reasons why CBC is so extremely important to the north, so I won't go into that. It's important in many ways, for many people in the north.

To me, the CBC is an important part of the glue that holds this country together. That's why I can't imagine Canada or the north without it. The CBC is a very important part of our face to the world, rather like the BBC is for the U.K. One thing I couldn't imagine is CTV as our face to the world. I think it would be a wholly different face. And if I ever catch that guy who says "C-T-V", I think I'll have a word with him.

If the CBC didn't exist, we'd have to invent it, wouldn't we. Without the CBC or something like it, we would be on the slide to becoming another part of the U.S.A. Those forces lurk all around us. I think the CBC is an important part of helping us remain Canadian.

As I said, these are random notes, so there's not necessarily a rational flow here.

• (2045)

I've heard tell that some folks—obviously the radical ones—say that the CBC should be done away with, that we should let the private sector do it. Well, I'll fight that tooth and nail forever. Sure we should make the CBC as efficient as it possibly can be. That's something we have to be vigilant about with any form of public organization, whether it be government or anything else. But in terms of cuts to the CBC, we have to be extremely careful, because cuts can lead to a downward slide as well.

We all remember the self-fulfilling prophesy of the railways; I think it was the Conservatives who started it. You cut the railways, the services weren't as good, so people didn't use the services. Then

the government said, "See? People aren't using the railways like they used to." They cut them further, and it became a downhill slide.

We have to be very careful about that perhaps happening to the CBC. You can destroy morale very easily inside an organization by making cuts in certain sneaky ways.

I think the mix of programming on radio and TV on CBC is fine as it is. There are bound to be some adjustments. The CBC has to be careful about avoiding the latest trendy thing. We are all aware of some rather embarrassing examples, such as the reality show that died after the first two minutes, things like that. Bring in the new stuff, including the new media, but do it carefully, with the country's future in mind, basically.

I don't think the private sector can do this kind of thing, because you end up with the profit motive entering into it. A race to the bottom is something we want to avoid for the CBC, and at all costs. Yes, there is a profit motive in broadcasting. We know what happens there, and we know the influence of people who own the broadcasting organizations.

Basically, especially on the news side of things, in the documentaries, in informing Canadians about what's going on in the world, you end up with a self-censoring kind of thing. You have to be totally above and beyond all that. Keep it away from political influence. Defend the CBC against political influence. And get rid of these patronage appointments. I don't know a lot about them, but it seems to me there have been some recent disasters. Get some professional folks in there. Obviously there has to be some general guide in terms of keeping an eye on the CBC from the political realm, but political influence on the CBC is very dodgy in any shape or form.

I've mentioned the influence of big advertisers or big commercial interests. We all know how irritating advertising is. We don't have it on the radio, and that's something. Why it's still on the TV, I don't know. It's obviously a cost thing. Again, there has to be some influence from advertisers. CBC relies on advertisers for some of its funding, so there inevitably will be a subtle influence there.

When you look at the BBC, it may or may not be totally above all influences—I don't think it's that pure—but there is that feeling of integrity there. I would like to see that with the CBC as well.

Funding for the CBC must be sufficient. We can't expect the CBC to pay for itself. Again, that is all part of the slippery slope of funding cuts and worrying about income, and it can lead to a downward spiral.

I would say, then, keep CBC pretty well as it is while still allowing for changes coming in the future. The CBC is just too important to Canada to start playing around with it and taking shots at it, trying to water it down, trying to change it into something it shouldn't be and can't be, all the while trying to have it be what it is. Keep it pretty well as it is, but make it even better and make it more secure so that people don't have to go to work every day wondering if their station is going to be closed down or whatever. All of these things have happened in the past, with dire results.

Mr. Chair, many things have been said already, and many things will be said, so why don't I just leave it there and let others speak.

Thanks very much for the time.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. O'Brien.

I've just been informed that as we tape these presentations this evening, your names cannot be dubbed for the record. We don't have the dubbing ability here. So please state your name before you give your presentation.

Ms. Morin.

**Ms. Jennifer Morin (As an Individual):** Thank you.

My name is Jennifer Morin. As a citizen of Canada, I am representing the public interest.

First of all, I'd like to thank the committee for coming to Yellowknife. Thank you for chartering the plane. Welcome, and I hope you have a good few hours here before you're off to another session.

I also want to thank the staff for helping out and making this happen tonight.

I'm also speaking on behalf of my son, Archer, whom I've brought with me. It's his witching hour, the time he usually goes to bed, but I wanted to make sure he was counted in your review.

First of all, I'd like to say that we're really lucky to have very talented reporters and management up here. I see the CBC up here as the heart, the living entity—Chris O'Brien says it's glue, but I think it's more than glue—that connects all the communities and all of the local issues. As Chris said, one cannot see Yellowknife, the Northwest Territories, the north, without a heart pumping life, a heart taking away waste and giving life. It is really vital, especially for a small population in a large geographic area.

I listen to CBC radio, and I also watch the CBC broadcasts fairly regularly. I think they're both very important. I especially enjoy weekend CBC national radio. Lately I've been part of the CBC Radio 3 podcasts. I really think CBC Radio 3 speaks to an innovative component of the CBC by promoting local Canadian independent music that you can't get anywhere else. It's reaching beyond older, upper-crust generations. It's a living, vibrant organization that is connecting with many Canadians.

Another area that I find important and would like to put forward to the committee is environmental reporting. The private sector cannot report on environmental issues in its current capacity. They can report very well on business and some social issues, but the environment is always glossed over. There are no reporters dedicated to the environment, and we need strong investigative reporting to get to the critical core of some environmental issues facing Canadians. I find that to be a critical part of the CBC, and I appreciate having that local coverage.

Again, many of the issues I was going to speak to—how important the CBC is, how core it is—have already been mentioned. The one message I'd like the committee to take away is this: please keep the CBC, it is vital for Canada.

Thank you.

• (2050)

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Ms. Pellerin.

**Ms. Catherine Pellerin (As an Individual):** Hello, my name is Catherine Pellerin, and I'm a citizen of the Northwest Territories. I wasn't planning on presenting, but hearing everybody else got me thinking about the CBC.

The Northwest Territories has a great tradition of storytelling, so I'll start with a really brief story. The CBC brought the Northwest Territories to the rest of Canada. The NWT stopped being just a colour on the map during the Berger inquiry. That was a vital time. That was when many of us became aware of the Northwest Territories.

Many years after that—21 years ago—I was living in Edmonton. Circumstances in my life changed, and I found myself moving to Frobisher Bay. At that point in time I left my career, and I was at home with a toddler, with another one on the way. It seemed to me that the most important question had to do with the CBC; did the eastern Arctic have the CBC?

In those days, the GNWT had a representative, down in Edmonton and I think also perhaps in Ottawa, providing information and selling the NWT to people moving there. My important phone call was on whether they had the CBC in Frobisher Bay, and, more importantly, whether they got *Morningside*. When she did some research and told me, yes, they did, I said okay, I can move to Frobisher Bay.

CBC was the only channel in Frobisher Bay when I moved there, and for the most part it was excellent. It brought us *Hockey Night in Canada*, although sometimes a day late. It also brought us midget wrestling on Friday nights—

**Voices:** Oh, oh!

**Ms. Catherine Pellerin:** —and that was not one of the high points.

CBC radio and television let those of us who were living in remote locations feel that we were living in Canada. In the spring, when Gzowski would get on the line with Victoria and talk to them about the buds bursting there—in February or March, I think—and we knew that we would be sitting around the barbecue on Canada Day in the snow, we felt a little more remote. All the same, CBC helped us feel that we were part of Canada.

• (2055)

A number of years later, while still in what was then Iqaluit, I was lucky enough to host Peter Gzowski for a number of days. He came up during our Toonik Tyme festival. He was absolutely amazed at the number of Inuit elders who came up and shook his hand because they recognized him from his brief foray into television. I think it was called "Gzowski Presents" or something; I can't remember. At any rate, people were so happy he'd come north.

We sit here in the NWT and listen to our politicians talk about devolution, but it seems they go unheeded by the rest of Canada until the CBC down south picks up our northern feeds and broadcasts them to the south. Suddenly we're on the national stage; we seem to receive some validation because of that, and issues that are important to us are heard by the rest of the nation.



Just this past Sunday I was listening to CBC morning, and they ran Dave Miller's story, originally broadcast on CBC North, about the wolverine, about the legend and significance of it to our first nations people here in the NWT. CBC North and CBC national do help give remote people a voice they would not otherwise have.

When most of us from here in Yellowknife go south, people who ask us where we're from will say, geez, I'd love to visit "the Yukon". The Yukon has a profile that the NWT still does not have. Perhaps that's because one of your most famous broadcasters, Pierre Berton, came from there. His tales of the Yukon and the magic of the gold rush really excited people down south.

The NWT hasn't hooked into that same kind of pipeline. The people of the NWT need CBC North to help us get our message out, and you should need us; the NWT is unique for its land and its people. We have at least eleven language groups, and that's before we even factor in our new Canadians. We have consensus government. That's unique and special.

Canada would not be the same without the north or the CBC. And the CBC is not just *our* radio and television network, it is *the* radio and television network.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Perhaps we can put some questions to the first presenters. Then we can bring in the next people, and hopefully at the end we can have an open forum.

There's one thing I'd like to say. Along with thanking the committee for coming here, a couple of you have mentioned the short notice. I've always been an honest person, so I'm going to tell you that when we set out to do the study on the CBC, on our public broadcaster, it was supposed to start in January. Then we had a little problem with the Canadian Television Fund, which took a few meetings; that held us up in terms of going forward with our public broadcaster meetings.

Again, being very honest, I'll tell you that we had Vancouver, Winnipeg, Toronto, Montreal, and St. John's, Newfoundland, but we didn't have anyone in the north. We picked Yellowknife because we felt it was very important to come to Yellowknife. It was brought up in our meetings, and we discussed it; that's how we put things together.

So it was short notice for you folks, but it was also short notice for us. It also maybe shows why we were late today; we had some problems.

When we're sitting around our table in Ottawa discussing the CBC, we never forget the north. We also never forget the francophones outside of Quebec. It's brought up, at just about every meeting when we talk about CBC/Radio-Canada, that this involves all francophones in Canada.

Mr. Bagnell.

• (2100)

**Hon. Larry Bagnell (Yukon, Lib.):** Thank you.

I'm the member of Parliament for Yukon.

To Catherine, just because people say "Yellowknife, Yukon", it doesn't mean that people have more knowledge of Yukon. We get "Whitehorse, Northwest Territories", too, all the time.

**Voices:** Oh, oh!

**Hon. Larry Bagnell:** Thank you to all for your presentations. They were very clear.

I don't have a lot of questions, because I do want to hear the next presenters. However, I want to get a little bit of information from l'association francophone.

[*Translation*]

How many members does the francophone association have and how many people in the Northwest Territories have French as their mother tongue?

**Mr. Léo-Paul Provencher:** The Northwest Territories have 1,200 francophones and 3,700 persons who speak French. I represent a federation that represents 12 associations.

**Hon. Larry Bagnell:** How many people have French as their mother tongue?

**Mr. Léo-Paul Provencher:** One thousand two hundred persons have French as their mother tongue.

[*English*]

**Hon. Larry Bagnell:** Curtis talked about aboriginal languages. Do any of the presenters know roughly how many people in the Northwest Territories have an aboriginal language as their maternal language?

**Mr. Curtis Shaw:** I don't know if I could give you a specific number. The population is approximately 50% aboriginal, and there are 11 languages across the Northwest Territories. As to how many people speak them as their native tongue, I don't know off the top of my head.

**Mr. Batiste Foisy:** I don't have the specific numbers, but the language commissioner's office would probably have more valid statistics. I can tell you for sure that the most spoken aboriginal language in the Northwest Territories is the Tli Cho language, Dogrib, and next to it would be Chipewyan, and Slavey as well.

• (2105)

**Hon. Larry Bagnell:** In the Yukon we have a part-time Radio-Canada reporter. Actually, the CBC, the English station, also carries French language programming and aboriginal language programming. I'm wondering if that occurs in the Northwest Territories.

**Mr. Batiste Foisy:** No, it doesn't. There are no reporters...well, there are reporters who do speak French, but they work for the CBC, they don't work for Radio-Canada. So there's there's no reporter. And with regard to programming, there's no French programming on CBC North. We do have community radio, but it's apart from CBC. The community built it all together.

**Hon. Larry Bagnell:** But it's on the CBC broadband?

**Mr. Batiste Foisy:** No, we have our own frequency.

**Hon. Larry Bagnell:** And aboriginal language is broadcast on the CBC?

**Mr. Batiste Foisy:** Yes. There's also a community radio that offers broadcasting in aboriginal languages.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Ms. Bourgeois, do you have any questions?

[Translation]

**Ms. Diane Bourgeois (Terrebonne—Blainville, BQ):** Mr. Chairman, I am very pleased that we've chosen to come to Yellowknife. People, particularly francophones, have come to tell us that they find it hard to access information and to have their own local network in French.

First, I want to congratulate all the francophones here present. Among you there are Pellerins, Morins, Foisy and Provenchers. Those are all francophone family names. In fact, Mr. Provencher spoke in French, but I think Mr. Foisy spoke in English more out of nervousness.

• (2110)

**Mr. Batiste Foisy:** I didn't want to slow down the process.

**Ms. Diane Bourgeois:** It doesn't slow down the process. In Quebec, when francophones come to speak before a committee, they don't slow down the process at all, since we have interpreters.

Ms. Morin and Mr. O'Brien came to tell us that what the CBC was offering completely coincided with what they needed here in the High North. On the other hand, Mr. Foisy and Mr. Provencher told us that there was a lack of services in French at the CBC.

We received a number of briefs from people that we will unfortunately be unable to meet. You can see Canada's duality in them. The anglophones say that the CBC completely corresponds to what they need. The francophones say that they're not getting enough, that they aren't represented.

Have I clearly understood your message?

**Mr. Léo-Paul Provencher:** In response to your question, Ms. Bourgeois, the presentation I made was validated by the network of franco-ténois associations, thus by all the francophone associations of the Northwest Territories, including representatives in Inuvik, Fort Smith, Hay River and Yellowknife. The position of the francophone community of the Northwest Territories is the one I read to you. I entirely respect the remarks of Ms. Morin and Ms. Pellerin. However, they told us their opinion on the services they receive from the CBC, the English-language network. I didn't hear any comments on the French-language network.

**Ms. Diane Bourgeois:** That's true.

I'd like to ask Mr. Foisy and perhaps even Mr. Provencher a question. Mr. Foisy proposed some solutions. He suggested that there be a local network that could operate on its own, in order to provide an adequate response to francophones' needs and that funds be invested in it, and so on. I find that very promising. I was wondering whether I correctly understood what you were asking.

**Mr. Batiste Foisy:** As I told you, I'm speaking as an individual. I can't speak on behalf of francophones, as Mr. Provencher is doing; I'm one citizen among so many others.

**Ms. Diane Bourgeois:** You're a journalist.

**Mr. Batiste Foisy:** Absolutely, I am a journalist here in the Northwest Territories.

For a number of years, francophones have been asking for the signal, but Radio-Canada has never offered it. On the contrary, it has allowed them to obtain a rebroadcasting licence at their own expense, as I explained earlier. That shows that Radio-Canada is not interested in offering us the feed or even in us having our local station, which would be ideal for local news. We'd like to have local news. I'm thinking of the people of Hay River, Inuvik and Fort Smith, who don't even have radio in French.

Observing this lack of interest, I'm saying that we have the necessary people and infrastructures. We have a local community radio station, and we are interested in having a news program in French. I'm suggesting that Radio-Canada, if it doesn't want to pay for a journalist in Yellowknife, at least set money aside for a fund enabling the communities—perhaps others in Canada are in our situation—to use that fund to pay journalists at their community stations. We could eventually make those community stations accessible to communities such as Hay River, Fort Smith and Inuvik, which have no radio. That would be much higher quality news than when a journalist is parachuted in here from Montreal to tell us how to think. That would be news that comes from here.

**Ms. Diane Bourgeois:** My last question is for Léo-Paul Provencher. Mr. Provencher, in your brief, you refer to the Act and to Radio-Canada's mandate. If I understood correctly, Radio-Canada is not carrying out its mandate with respect to francophones outside Quebec. Did I understand correctly?

• (2115)

**Mr. Léo-Paul Provencher:** The comments by the francophone community of the Northwest Territories show that Radio-Canada is facing major challenges. I would have liked to respond a little to your previous question, which is perhaps related to the one you've just asked me. I think the government radio network has a responsibility. We often hear the expression "accountable" used wrongly. In fact, it is definitely responsible for enabling this region to enable all of Canada to enjoy the information and regional contribution that our community can make to Canada's cultural diversity. We have the ability to contribute to that.

I would add that the francophone community of the Northwest Territories will never have the necessary population percentages to achieve high ratings. The government radio network must therefore adopt exceptional measures, or else we will be automatically eliminated, since we don't have the weight. Not only are the percentages low, there also aren't many of us.

Our main demand is that the government radio broadcaster invest the necessary funds. Parliament must authorize specific funding.

**Ms. Diane Bourgeois:** You're asking that they respect you.

[English]

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Mr. Bevington.

• (2120)

**Mr. Dennis Bevington (Western Arctic, NDP):** Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I'm very pleased you've chosen to come to the Northwest Territories, and to Yellowknife. We have a huge affection for CBC in the north, which is evident here. I think it's great.

As the member of Parliament for the Western Arctic, I can understand the confusion about names sometimes. Certainly we're not really western, and in some ways we're not the Arctic, because of course most of us live well within the treeline. So the name of this riding is a bit off. This riding really does represent a jurisdictional entity that is a province in waiting. It's a very interesting and important part of the country, and part of the future of the country.

The CBC has to be here, of course, as it does in the other two territories; they're part of the future of Canada. The public broadcaster has a very special role in this unique and developing political jurisdiction that we have in the Northwest Territories, in the Yukon, in Nunavut.

These are real issues around the presence of CBC here. You've heard people allude to them. CBC, of course, in the beginning in the north was always known as a very community-oriented service that linked not only communities but persons and families in a very special way. That sort of flavour we don't have quite as much of as we used to, perhaps.

I have some questions for you, Mr. Shaw, about the cable service. With the different forms of communication that we may have in the future, do you see ways in which we can create those linkages that we need in the north—the personal linkages, the things that make us a unique area? We have great connections and families and friends throughout the north. How do you see this building out of the service you're providing? Do you see opportunities in the future for better video conferencing, something we've called for in the north for years? You talk about streaming video and presentations on the Internet. How do you see this moving forward with the services you're providing?

**Mr. Curtis Shaw:** I think things will evolve over time. This week I may not consume local or regional CBC personally, but I'll listen to CBC Radio 3 in my car, Sirius Radio. I may check the CBC North website for local news. Across the north, new technology definitely has a role to play as people have different preferences. They're consuming less television. They may be streaming radio on the Internet. They may be going to different sources such as podcasts for their information.

So it is playing a role. It is evolving whether we like it or not. I think the CBC, especially in the north, is already fulfilling some of that by enabling these new technologies. Things are changing today, and it will continue over the next several years.

**Mr. Dennis Bevington:** Do you see this change happening with the CBC taking on some of these services? I'm still not sure they're completely open to all of the technologies that may be there. They have a certain high quality of television broadcasting; I don't see their using lower-quality television connections to interlink different parts of the north. There might be potential for us there, but you say they are moving forward.

**Mr. Curtis Shaw:** As an example, today, if you're looking for local news about the north, where are you going to go? You're probably going to go to the CBC North website. If you're interested in a news story from Iqaluit, you may stream the Iqaluit radio station,

or you could watch a taped video broadcast. Those technologies are there today, and they will continue to evolve over the next several years.

• (2125)

**Mr. Dennis Bevington:** Yes, but you don't see the development of the YouTube type of communication seen in the south. You don't see a more organized fashion of using it in the public broadcasting realm to provide even greater access between communities.

**Mr. Curtis Shaw:** That is part of the conundrum. People are consuming less television, and the CBC is seeing fewer advertising dollars. That's happening right across Canada in the broadcasting industry. People are going to the Internet for their news, for their content, whether it is for streaming radio or video or for static news pages or updated news pages.

I think that's at the heart of the problem today; new media and traditional media are getting blurred together. And you can't really compartmentalize them in certain blocks. You can't say that this is television, this is radio, this is the web. The lines have totally blurred in terms of consumer preference and consumer behaviour.

**Mr. Dennis Bevington:** Mr. Provencher, one of statistics we heard today was that 40% of northern homes have CBC radio and television. You mentioned the quality of reception. Coming from a small community, I know of the problems with the existing reception and service from CBC in terms of its broadcasting range in the small communities.

Perhaps you could speak to that. You mentioned it as an issue in your report. I see it as an issue as well in most small communities, where there are very weak signals for television and radio.

[Translation]

**Mr. Léo-Paul Provencher:** Mr. Bevington, are you talking about reception in English?

**Mr. Dennis Bevington:** Yes.

**Mr. Léo-Paul Provencher:** Unfortunately, I don't have any analysis on that subject.

[English]

**Mr. Dennis Bevington:** Of course the service *en français est impossible*.

[Translation]

**Mr. Léo-Paul Provencher:** I hope isn't impossible, but it isn't there.

[English]

**The Chair:** To the young lady who's just arrived, could you give your name, please? And could you perhaps answer that question?

[Translation]

**Ms. Carmen Moral-Suarez (General Manager, Association franco-culturelle de Yellowknife):** My name is Carmen Moral-Suarez, and I am Executive Director of the Association franco-culturelle de Yellowknife. I had a presentation to make, but I jumped at and wanted to respond to Mr. Bevington immediately.

It's very possible that there are identical signal problems for the English and French channels; I don't know. Moreover, there's a major difference, and the purpose of my presentation was to explain the exact situation regarding Radio-Canada's radio and television broadcasting in Yellowknife. If the English channel breaks down, an association doesn't have to pay to repair it. However, if the signal breaks down, as occurred in Hay River a few days ago, our association has to pay with the money it receives from Canadian Heritage for community development.

**Ms. Diane Bourgeois:** That's scandalous; it's shameful.

[*English*]

**The Chair:** Thank you, Ms. Moral-Suarez. You're going to be making the rest of your presentation shortly.

I have one question. I think I know the answer, but I want to ask the question so that I can get the answer on the record.

In general, do you feel that Canada's north is well served by the CBC? And are there any improvements that could be made?

Go ahead, Mr. Foisy.

**Mr. Batiste Foisy:** In general, I'd say the north is totally well served by the CBC but totally disserved by Radio-Canada.

**The Chair:** Is that a general consensus?

**Mr. Christopher O'Brien:** There's always the possibility that there's room for improvement, but there's not an awful lot to complain about.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Thank you for your presentations, and for your answers.

We'll take a short break before we call our next witnesses.

• (2130)

(Pause)

• (2135)

**The Chair:** Order. I suggest we get started if we want to finish before midnight.

Ms. Saunders, you're on first.

**Ms. Barbara Saunders (As an Individual):** But I'm not even finished making my notes yet...

That's okay. Thank you, sir.

My name is Barbara Saunders. I'm a resident of Yellowknife. I've come out tonight because I am a lifer with CBC. My son was raised on CBC. I'm familiar with Don Herron, Peter Gzowski, Shelagh Rogers, etc.

I have witnessed and often protested the erosion in Canadian society of our peacekeeper reputation, of our universal health care system, of our transportation, of particularly the Canada-wide railways. I have seen the erosion of the political will for a society that values gender equity.

I see that CBC has managed to keep clear, for the most part, on these entities that make us a country. However, I will say that I have been hearing on CBC more experts from the United States, invited by the CBC to testify on various issues, than I have heard in the past. I question that, and I worry about that. I see that as further

integration into the United States' ideologies and politics. That scares me.

In the north I see CBC as a very important entity. I'm very disappointed not to see CBC television cameras here tonight. I question why they're not here.

• (2140)

I also question any thought of lack of CBC services. Particularly in the north, CBC is considered a lifeline. It is considered a lifeline for all of our cultures. When you listen to CBC in the morning, you understand that the Gwich'in in Inuvik or in Tuktoyaktuk or the Sahtu peoples of Deline are listening, because they call in on the contest shows and some will speak their language.

We are fortunate to have the ability to hear the languages. Even though I do not speak or understand any of them, I enjoy listening to them—especially when my name pops up amongst it all.

Anyway, I respect it very much. I respect the fact that CBC is the main entity that keeps Canadian society and culture alive. What would we do without *Canada Reads*? What would we do without the stories that CBC brings to us, Canadian stories that bind us together, that we can rely on, that people across the country listen to and share?

When we talk about technologies, I would consider myself in many ways a Luddite. I do not have the technical ability to understand all of it. However, I am part of a major population: I am a baby boomer. You will understand that many baby boomers listen to CBC and watch CBC and respect CBC. Should you erase or change or erode any aspect of CBC radio or TV, we will be out in full force—and we are many.

I respect the technical knowledge of our youth and their iPods and everything else they have. When you talk about Sirius CBC, which Mr. Shaw was talking about, and about our going often to the Internet for the news, I will challenge that. I believe the majority of Canadians rely on radio and television for their news, not the Internet. I believe we are still a majority there.

I can't give you scientific facts, but I can tell you that we have to understand the different means of listening, of learning, across our country. Not all of us have the ability to understand the technology before us. And not only that, we must understand that the spoken word is far more powerful than any other technologies that I've seen to date for stories, for information sharing—or for “knowledge transfer”, as I believe the government likes to refer to it.

If anything, CBC must remain a public domain. It must be *fully* costed. We cannot afford to lose any of that. Any thought of selling even a share of it will erode what I see as the last entity of Canadian people speaking together.

Thank you. That's all I have to say.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Ms. Little.

**Ms. Lois Little (As an Individual):** Hello. My name is Lois Little. I live here in Yellowknife, and I'm here as a citizen.

I'm really glad that you came here, that you have your ears open to northerners. I'm sure you're getting the impression now that we're all pretty passionate about public broadcasting.

I'm one of those people who are very passionate about public broadcasting. I listen to CBC radio all day long, including the aboriginal languages. Listening to aboriginal languages on CBC radio reminds me of where I live, reminds me of the cultures around me. I think it helps me understand and be connected to the people around me.

For me, public broadcasting is the ultimate expression of democracy. It's citizens' voices, it's our ideas, it's our values, it's our perspective. It's all of those things. It's men's voices, it's women's voices, it's the diversity of cultures and ideas. That's what democracy is all about.

For me, CBC is the essence of democracy in Canada in a very large way. In the 21st century, when democracy is under threat around the world, I think it's incumbent on CBC to keep our democracy strong in Canada. Certainly our democracy is strong in the north. As we have global multinationals moving into the north and starting to shape public opinion and starting to influence our very small governments, just by their sheer size, it's so important for CBC to be that connection that allows citizens to speak and be heard.

• (2145)

I love public broadcasting. I love the fact that there is no commercial or market or political bias driving our CBC. I urge this committee to make it part of the mandate taking us into the 21st century that market and political bias will stay far away from our public broadcaster.

I guess it's because I am so passionate about public broadcasting that I have very high expectations of my public broadcaster. The CBC people around the room probably cringe when they turn on the talk-back machine, because there's going to be the voice of Lois Little, making a comment about something. But that's part of my responsibility as a citizen. We have a responsibility in a democracy to have our voices heard and to be heard.

I don't intend to lower my expectations of my government and I don't intend to lower my expectations of my public broadcaster, because those entities are me. I expect my public broadcaster to be airing all of the diverse views and values and perspectives in this territory. I expect to be hearing English and French and all of the aboriginal languages on my public broadcaster. And I expect my public broadcaster to be very creative in the way in which it uses its resources and balances all of the different views and cultures out there. I expect my public broadcaster to be very professional and very committed to the mandate of CBC.

With those high expectations in mind, in January of this year I wrote out my New Year's resolutions for my public broadcaster. My New Year's resolutions focused very much on regional programming, which is very important to me. I value both the regional and the national mandates of the CBC, but the mandate that I feel I can influence is the regional mandate. So I put together this list of nine resolutions for my regional public broadcaster, encouraging them to be more creative and more professional and more committed to the mandate of CBC.

Unlike some of the other speakers, I don't believe the CBC is good enough the way it is now. I don't think it is a matter of leaving it alone and letting it be. I think it's a matter of trying harder and better reflecting all of the voices in the north.

Speaking more from a regional perspective, it's a matter of making sure that we're hearing all of the voices, that we're not cluttering up regional programming with mindless, commercial-like goop. That does not serve the public interest and it does not serve democracy.

I would like to see this committee have more exacting standards for CBC to uphold nationally and regionally, because I have very high expectations of my public broadcaster.

I'll leave it at that. Thank you.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Mr. McDonald.

**Mr. Ben McDonald (As an Individual):** Thank you.

I couldn't get my printer to work, which is why I'm reading from the screen here. You'll have to forgive me.

My name is Ben McDonald. The committee asked me earlier this evening, when I was registering to speak, whether or not I was here representing a group. I'd like to say that if more time had been available to me, I probably would be representing a group; I'm involved in social justice coalitions and organizations to promote the greater use of information and communications technology in the Northwest Territories. However, I wasn't able to produce something in time for anybody to endorse, so these are personal comments.

That said, those organizations do provide the framework for what I'm going to talk about, including commitment to equality, commitment to democracy, and commitment to better communication and free speech.

As a starting point, when I was preparing my thoughts for what I would say tonight, I went to the Internet, to the site of Friends of Canadian Broadcasting. I'm sure that's an organization you folks are all familiar with. I generally endorse the positions that group presents in the various briefs and positions it puts to committees and agencies of the government—for example, on issues involving the appointment and composition of the CBC board of directors.

Friends of Canadian Broadcasting raises the point, for instance, that we have reason for concern because the board is not necessarily an independent operation, working completely independently, free of political influence. I think the method through which the president of the corporation is appointed—namely, by the Governor in Council or the Prime Minister, either directly or semi-indirectly—is fraught with danger, and it should be examined. It's better to have the president of the corporation appointed by the board to which he or she is responsible.

• (2150)

There are some other things on the Friends of Canadian Broadcasting site—about the different forms of information technology, about the means by which the CBC could raise money—but I'll just direct you there rather than take the time here. That said, one thing on the site does surprise me quite a bit, and that's where statistics, which I think were generated by a research body on behalf of the government, show that CBC's level of support puts it at number 20, out of 25 OECD countries, as a portion of gross domestic product.

I was quite surprised by that statistic. Considering the ten or more years of cuts we've had, other public broadcasters are funded at much greater proportions of the gross domestic product than is the CBC. The Friends' position is that it would be better to go to the average of the OECD. Considering the cuts that have happened over the last years and the importance of the CBC to the national fabric, I'm not sure even that is acceptable. Countries like Finland, Germany, and England contribute almost twice as much to their public broadcasters as the Canadian system does.

Much of what I'm going to say will be a repeat of what other speakers have said. The public broadcaster is needed, especially in the north, because it really is the only game in town when it comes to a northern or pan-territorial perspective. No agency in the north has the resources that the public broadcaster has to do the research and the analysis and the storytelling.

I agree with both sides: I'm a fervent supporter of the CBC, but I'm not so great a supporter of the CBC that I don't think there's room for improvement. As to how that is to come about, I'm not an expert. I do believe there are issues in the north that are not adequately addressed. Sometimes I hear—with all due respect to the previous speakers—that there's no ideological slant to the CBC. Well, quite often, I'd say 99.9% of the time, I can't tell any ideological difference between the newscasts and analysis and stories that come out on the CBC and what I see in the private sector. There's just not that much difference.

What is very critical, though, is that at least the CBC has the mandate and the flexibility and the independence that it could take a different position, if it were necessary. Private broadcasters, beholden to their boards of directors, are going to toe the line with the board of directors. If we have a well-appointed, well-constituted board, then the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, if there is good reason for an alternative viewpoint to be put out there, at least is going to have the flexibility, and I hope the integrity, to allow them to do that.

The CBC is needed to provide an alternative voice—this is probably expanding on what was said before—in both the public and private dichotomy, but also in the ever more deregulated and concentrated corporate world. I think the experience of the American media, especially newspaper, is that as corporations take over family businesses, their expectations for the rate of return increase dramatically. The way those rates of return are achieved is by attacking the softest parts of the organization, and the softest parts usually are news coverage and analysis, the things that we listen to the CBC for.

I think we have to keep it in mind that going to a private sector operation is not going to mean that we'll have anything comparable to the CBC, because it requires public funding for us to have the type of CBC we all want.

As a final point, I'm not 100% sure how the board is now constituted, but I do believe there is a need for regional voices on the board of the CBC. I realize it would be a really difficult political challenge to determine what regions deserve representation and how many there would be. I don't think the regional voices should come at the expense of good business leadership, journalistic knowledge, cultural commitment, and all those other things, but it does appear to me that for the CBC to get out of Toronto, to get out of Montreal—I guess that's the SRC, which I don't listen to—part of the way to do it is to bring other voices in. One of the ways to do that would be to specify regional voices, and potentially cultural voices, considering the size of the aboriginal population in Canada. In the north especially, it may well be that we need aboriginal voices on the board as well.

I have one final point. This is unsubstantiated rumour, but if it's true, I think it's emblematic of the problems the CBC has had in the last while. I've heard that in the recent decision to go from a half hour of regional news broadcast to a full hour of regional news broadcast, no change in resources was allocated to the program. The doubling of the programming is going to be absorbed somehow through the CBC, in this circumstance CBC North specifically—all in the face of ten years of cuts.

Again, that's unsubstantiated rumour, but I'd ask you to look into that to see whether this is the case or has been the case. If it is, then it's going to be very difficult for the CBC to meet its mandate in the north—namely, to reflect northern voices to northerners and to the rest of Canada.

With that, I thank you.

• (2155)

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Ms. Moral-Suarez.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Carmen Moral-Suarez:** Good evening again.

Like everyone else, I'm pleased that you're here. Those aren't empty words; we've been waiting for you for a very long time, and we're pleased to see you and to be able to talk to you.

I'm going to supplement the presentation made by my colleague the Executive Director of the Fédération Franco-TéNOise. I'm not going to go back over a lot of points that he talked about, since, as he said, his presentation reflected the concerns of the network of francophone associations. However, I am going to focus a little more on the specific situation of Yellowknife, since that's the one I know. I direct the local francophone cultural association.

First, Mr. Chairman, you explained a little why, but I nevertheless want to emphasize one thing. Given the needs that exist in the North, we are a bit surprised to hear you say that you're only going to Yellowknife. I can understand why, but I point it out all the same.

• (2200)

The situations of Nunavut and Whitehorse are quite different. Even here, in the Northwest Territories, you see that the situations of Yellowknife, Hay River, Fort Smith and Inuvik are very different from one another. So you can imagine what happens when you go outside the region.

Since there have been presentations before mine, I've inserted some brief remarks in my text. So I'm going to make our interpreter suffer a little.

The question was asked by Ms. Bourgeois. With regard to Radio-Canada's mandate, as it was presented to us in the notice of meeting, Mr. Provencher emphasized that we agreed on that mandate, but that we had the impression it was not necessarily being carried out.

I would like us to examine that mandate, and we'll see that there is no statement explaining how the corporation will equip itself to discharge its obligations. When you read the statement of the mandate, you see that it lacks the portion on the equipment for carrying out its mandate.

The arrival of the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage has been an opportunity for our association to look into the corporate memory to see what happened to our Radio-Canada signal. As Mr. Provencher said, we suffer from staff turnover, which is a consequence of citizen turnover. Consequently, briefs get lost, and records are moved around. I thank you once again because this was a very salutary exercise.

It is important to know that the francophone community in Yellowknife, and subsequently the Northwest Territories, was formed around the need for broadcasting in French. The need to receive the signal was at the origin of the formation of what was the Association culturelle franco-ténoise at the time.

• (2205)

At that time, we were told that broadcasting the signal in the Northwest Territories was not in the Corporation's plans. The matter came to an end in 1991. The fight was a long one, but, in 1991, we finally were able to receive Radio-Canada's French-language radio and television from Montreal.

The fight was a long one, but can we say that it was won? What comes out of our searching today is what has disappeared from the briefs. Since everyone receives Radio-Canada in French, we've forgotten that Radio-Canada doesn't broadcast its programs in the Northwest Territories. Who broadcasts the Radio-Canada signal in Yellowknife? It's the Association culturelle de Yellowknife.

When I was preparing this presentation, I couldn't exactly determine the cost that that represents. It should also be said that that's been somewhat lost in the association's records, in its memory. We have an annual invoice for \$6,400 for the rent of the space where we can broadcast. That should be qualified, however, since we still have to determine exactly what is attributable to our community

radio station, on the one hand, and what is attributable to the Radio-Canada broadcast, on the other.

Whatever the amount billed, our community nevertheless pays, out of the funds that are allocated to it by the Department of Canadian Heritage for community development, for a service that other communities obtain through taxes paid by all citizens. As Batiste Foisy said earlier, we're paying for this service twice.

• (2210)

To answer Mr. Bevington, I'll say that, in the event of a breakdown, we are the ones who must bear the cost of repairs, since we own the equipment. Of course, we wonder how the citizens of Ontario or Quebec would react if Radio-Canada suddenly announced that they had to form an association in order to be able to receive *Le Téléjournal* in French and to pay for repairs to broadcasting facilities, which were broken. We'd like the committee to consider the question and to tell us how many official language minority communities in the country are in the same situation.

• (2215)

As I listened to the presentations preceding mine, I admit that I felt a little jealousy or envy. I know what people feel when they talk about their attachment to the CBC. I experienced the same thing in Quebec with Radio-Canada's French-language programming. I know what it means to have a good-quality radio station that reflects who we are. It is true that, in Quebec, Télé-Québec is a strong competitor for Radio-Canada. However, no competitor is Radio-Canada's equal in radio.

I understand, and I agree with what people here are saying, but, ultimately, when I listen to Radio-Canada radio here, I see that it doesn't kindle a sense of belonging among Northern people. It gives me the impression of being an exile and constantly reminds me that I'm not part of the class.

Radio-Canada has a major role to play with regard to the sense of belonging that Canada wants to create across the country, but it's failing in its duty.

In conclusion, we hope that today's hearings will produce tangible results. I would like to recall that we have maintained the service for 16 years and that we have funded Radio-Canada out of very limited budgets. I believe that AFCY has proven the constant interest of the francophone community in receiving Radio-Canada's French-language programs.

I would like to emphasize that no one knew that it was AFCY that was offering those programs to the public. Even we didn't know it, until recently. Approximately one year ago, when I was told that that was what the amount of the invoice was for, I said it was impossible and that it had to be costs of the community radio station. But no. Thanks to your coming here, we have realized the facts. However, when you watch TV, there isn't any small logo at the bottom of the screen stating that the program is made possible by the Association culturelle de Yellowknife. People who tune in to Radio-Canada think that it's providing the broadcast.

I think it's time that Radio-Canada took effective steps to lighten the burden on the local cultural association, which has other issues to manage.

Thank you for your attention.

[English]

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Ms. Brockman.

**Ms. Aggie Brockman (As an Individual):** My name is Aggie Brockman, and I'm speaking as a private citizen of Canada.

Other people have talked about how important the CBC is, and certainly it's very important to me. Probably a number of people here have been in small communities in the north and have been interviewed on the local radio station. The way it works is that the local radio station in Fort McPherson or Behchoko or Paulatuk will cut out of CBC for an hour or two a day and have local programming. Then they'll cut back in. Woe the person who forgets to flick that switch back to CBC; the phone starts ringing right away. People want the local programming, and it is an opportunity for that, but they also want to be switched back to CBC.

As other people have said, it's a very critical service here. If the principal in Fort Good Hope wants people to know that the school is closed today, that's how it happens.

• (2220)

I feel very strongly about the aboriginal language programming on CBC. We get three hours and fifteen minutes Monday to Friday and one hour on Saturday. I think it's very important. I was looking at the CBC mandate, and I noted that aboriginal language programming wasn't there explicitly. But perhaps it should be, and that might be something this committee could consider for areas of the country in which we have large populations of aboriginal peoples. It's critical, as Lois said, to knowing where we live. It's also a critical element in language maintenance, which I think is a significant issue here.

What I'd like to say is that there are some things that shouldn't be privatized. Really, CBC is the only game in town that can provide a certain type of and level of service in the north.

Is CBC serving us well, and does CBC get enough money to fulfill its mandate? Obviously it doesn't for the francophone community, regretfully, and I hope your committee will make some recommendations around that. I suppose it doesn't meet people's expectations in some other ways. I speak a bit from experience because I worked at CBC, although quite a long time ago. Currently CBC news is often unable to cover events if the events happen on a weekend, or after 5 p.m., due to overtime costs or whatever other barrier. I don't think that's serving us well. A lot of things happen after hours—this hearing, for instance.

I don't think there's an ability for news people to travel the way they were able to in my day. It's important that there be that ability to travel, and not just when there's a specific major event like the winter games in Whitehorse. You need to be able to travel to small communities to build relationships, to tell the stories that may not be earth-shattering but that are important to people. Those stories don't get covered if people are never in those small communities. Instead, people rely on Yellowknife-based stories, like the courts, which our newspaper would actually cover. So a lot of good stories don't get covered because of travel limitations.

I think there's an emphasis on sports programming, certainly on a national level. I'm not sure if that's because it generates money while other things, such as arts and culture, do not. We see the purchase of American and British sitcoms on television, instead of original programming. On radio and TV we see repeated programs, not always new programs.

We see people doing the easy interviews. Even regional programmers do interviews around national stories, without a northern slant, because those are easy. They're interviews that would be set up by southern producers, so not focusing on the northern stories.

We see no increase in northern-based television production on CBC, even though television has been here in the north for more than 25 years.

Those are some things for which I think we need more money, not less, to make sure that we're better served.

Thank you very much for the opportunity to be heard.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Any comments, Mr. Bagnell?

**Hon. Larry Bagnell:** Yes. I'll be very quick, because I know we have another round of presenters.

It has been mentioned a couple times that CBC television cameras are not here. In deference to the CBC, I think they're making a great effort to have an objective and unbiased hearing. It's sort of an evaluation of them, and I think they're just trying to be fair by not being here and covering something that's in their interest. I commend them for that.

Now, I'm not here to give input, because we've come here in order to hear you, but I do want to say on the record that it's been great for us in Parliament since José Bellemare has been covering Parliament in Ottawa. We get a lot of northern stories that we didn't get before, and that's been great coverage for us.

I have two quick questions. One person said that this is the only game in town. Are there any other radio stations in the Northwest Territories, and could anyone describe them?

**Ms. Aggie Brockman:** I could. There's a private radio station, CJCG, that started probably 26 or 27 years ago. There's also another radio station, CKLB, operated by the Native Communications Society of the Western Arctic. It does provide some aboriginal language programming, but certainly I think people do depend on the CBC.

• (2225)

They have technical challenges, as does the CBC, in terms of broadcasting all across the Northwest Territories consistently. I think their challenges are even greater because they're non-profit, very financially challenged. In terms of original programming, they don't really do any original news coverage.



So those are the other radio stations—

**A voice:** But CJCG broadcasts only in Yellowknife and Hay River.

**Ms. Aggie Brockman:** That's right, and only in English.

**A voice:** Yes. Pan-territorial are CBC and CKLB, Native Communications Society.

**Hon. Larry Bagnell:** Okay.

I don't know if you now live or have lived in a community outside Yellowknife, but do you have any comment on the coverage of CBC from the vantage point of a person who lives outside Yellowknife? Do the small towns get well covered in the programs? There was a comment about a school being closed in a small town, which suggests that they do.

I just wonder if anyone can comment on CBC coverage of all the other communities in the Northwest Territories.

**Ms. Barbara Saunders:** I not sure what you mean by "coverage". What I had talked about and tried to express was the popularity of CBC in the small communities, by virtue of the response to some of the Saturday morning game shows they have, the phone-in type of thing, or the early morning show. We hear people calling in from all of the little communities.

For instance, when I was doing a lot of press in my former position, and I would visit the small communities, people would say, "Oh, you're Barbara Saunders; we heard you on the radio on CBC."

So yes, it is their link to what's going on in other communities as well as the capital.

**Ms. Lois Little:** In some respects, people in small communities see Yellowknife in the same way as Canadians see Toronto. There's the Toronto-centric view of things and the Yellowknife-centric view of things.

As I think Aggie mentioned, if the travel is not there, the relationships aren't there. CBC North is a place where young journalists come and get their feet wet. They come and go pretty fast, and they don't necessarily go out there and build the relationships with communities that are needed.

That's another piece of why aboriginal broadcasters are such an essential part of CBC North. They have relationships, and they're not going anywhere. Work could be done around that.

**The Chair:** Thank you for that.

Ms. Bourgeois, please try to keep it short. We have four more presenters.

**Ms. Diane Bourgeois:** It's very difficult for me to keep things short, Mr. Chair.

[Translation]

Mesdames, all four of you talked about the importance of keeping the CBC; Mr. McDonald emphasized that as well. I don't think the committee has a mandate to strike the CBC from the map for good. We know that, in some communities, it offers very good, even excellent services, given the lack of money at its disposal and the many cuts it has undergone over the years.

Some of you talked about your attachment to Radio-Canada. You must understand that, in Quebec, many Quebecers are attached to it as well. Moreover, the ratings clearly show that, at certain times, CBC radio serves the community very well.

However, Canadian culture could, compared to Quebec culture, could be in danger of disappearing. Allow me to explain. With the arrival of cable companies, which bring in large numbers of American programs, you can expect to have enormous problems keeping your English Canadian programs.

As a Quebecer, I feel somewhat uncomfortable this evening defending your culture, whereas some of our members will have to defend francophone culture in their area.

Of course, Ms. Moral-Suarez, one of the first topics we'll be discussing in committee will be the situation concerning your station. I don't know exactly how to state the matter, but I know that it is unacceptable that your association should have to bear the obligation to maintain a station in the region.

I know that the Radio-Canada people are here this evening. I imagine they're going to check what is going on tomorrow. It is unacceptable for you not to be granted any funding because you are maintaining a station in your region. Furthermore, if Radio-Canada is able to take over the matter, perhaps it could do so.

• (2230)

**Ms. Carmen Moral-Suarez:** I'd like to clarify one point. As I said earlier, we get very good service and very good support from the CBC. Mr. McNaughton, who is the regional director here, worked very hard so that I could update this file in a few days. It was a very brief period of time. We started working on this issue in the middle of last week. I believe I'm going to be given some clarification on what we're paying.

That said, I heard that there was a broadcasting problem in Hay River as well. Those people are in a similar situation to ours. The problem doesn't just concern Yellowknife. When they wanted to receive television programs, they got some money from the Department of Canadian Heritage. Now they have to rent the location and broadcast facility every year. At least it's that kind of situation.

**Ms. Diane Bourgeois:** How do you get the money?

• (2235)

[English]

**Ms. Carmen Moral-Suarez:** On your question

[Translation]

concerning the way we're going to pay for that,

[English]

well, it comes from one hand and goes into another. Heritage Canada finances us.

[Translation]

The funds we receive aren't intended to pay the costs incurred to receive Radio-Canada, which is a public service. This situation is deplorable. Those funds should be allocated to setting up other programs, as is the case in the other communities.

**Ms. Diane Bourgeois:** Those funds aren't limited to service development, but you deduct \$7,000 to pay for the broadcast of those television programs. That makes no sense.

**Ms. Carmen Moral-Suarez:** Exactly, and it isn't just our members who are served, but the population as a whole.

**Ms. Diane Bourgeois:** Watch out and don't talk about it; otherwise they might take away that \$7,000.

[English]

**The Chair:** Before we end the questioning, Mr. Bevington has a short one.

**Mr. Dennis Bevington:** Thank you.

Certainly I appreciate the comments of my colleague from the Bloc. I'm reminded that last month, at the request of francophones, I was in Quebec intervening at an environmental assessment on liquefied natural gas. So parliamentarians speak to our strengths wherever we are. I certainly appreciate hearing about the issues that go on in the Northwest Territories.

That said, I'm very interested in your comments, Barbara, on culture, and CBC being our culture. If CBC is such a reflection of our culture, do you think the centralization of decision-making about how regions play out could really affect this culture here?

• (2240)

**Ms. Barbara Saunders:** Are you talking about the northern culture?

**Mr. Dennis Bevington:** Yes.

**Ms. Barbara Saunders:** I think I was speaking more of a national culture, that CBC is known internationally. What people hear over CBC around the world is our culture. They understand us through the programming of CBC. What goes on with CBC is reflective of our culture and our sharing of stories, etc.

I hope that answers your question. That's where I was coming from.

**Mr. Dennis Bevington:** I recognize how important CBC is to our culture in the north. As most of the presenters here have talked about, it truly does try to put together the north in such a fashion that we can comprehend it as well, and the relationships.

Now, what would you say about the relationship between CBC North and Toronto, say, in terms of how we're conducting business here? I've seen the change on the regional program, and it is a change that mixes national with local news. We have this different kind of culture appearing now on an hour-long show.

I don't know if any of you want to speak to that. If CBC is so important to our culture here, how do we ensure that CBC is not playing a larger role in our culture than it should? How do we ensure that we see the development of our culture as a...if this is a national organization that has such a strong influence on our local culture?

**Ms. Barbara Saunders:** I'll speak to that question.

Regionally, I watch *Northbeat* every night at 6 o'clock quite faithfully. I was a little confused when my beloved Ian Hanomansing didn't show—I love seeing his face—at 6:30; I thought he was sick or something. I liked the combination of the regional news from our own staff at CBC North and the half hour of the national news.

That combination works very well, because then you get both. We're still part of Canada. Even though the southern CBC still doesn't give northern weather—we're off the map for the most part—that could be corrected.

I think what you're saying, Dennis, is that when you think of the northern culture, our work here and our business here, we rely on CBC. It is territorial, and it does have a significant role in our aboriginal peoples having a channel to hear their language and to dialogue in their language.

So it is very important. I don't think it's vital, but I do think it's very important.

**The Chair:** Thank you. I think we have to hold the questions right there.

During this round, it was mentioned that we came to the north but only to Yellowknife. We're holding hearings in Ottawa also. We are bringing people in from all over the country. We wanted to come to Yellowknife to have an on-site visit. Tomorrow we intend to visit the CBC facilities here in Yellowknife.

So we wanted to see a bit of what's going on here. There will be other people, whether it be from Yukon or Inuvik, to get their points across as well. This is our break week we're travelling in. With a minority government, you don't get very far away from Ottawa when the House is sitting. And that's usually when committees travel, during that time.

This week we're taking time out of our constituency week, the week during which we try to do our business at home, to come and make sure that we do get some input from Yellowknife. We had hearings in Vancouver on Wednesday. We're trying to do all that and still get home and look after our constituents.

I hope you'll take this as a bit of a reason why we aren't doing a whole trip. And I'd love to do a whole trip—as long as we didn't have to charter a plane every time we went to take off.

Thank you very much for your presentations and for your answers. We really appreciate it.

We'll take a short break and then call on Terry Wolfe, David Prichard, and Gérald Lavigne.

• (2245)

\_\_\_\_\_ (Pause) \_\_\_\_\_

• (2250)

**The Chair:** Order.

It looks as though we have only one more presenter left. David Prichard has a few things he'd like to say.

Welcome, David. Please go ahead, sir.

**Mr. David Prichard (As an Individual):** Good evening, ladies and gentlemen.

I was informed that this would be a drop-in thing, so I didn't actually prepare a formal presentation; my apologies. I have also been informed, by the young lady who invited me, that I'm to keep this brief.

I was reading today that Intel is about to release a new chip. It should come out in about two years. It will be more powerful than ten thousand 486s of about 1994.

I started my career in media shooting 35 mm colour film for Budge Crawley, on his old Mitchell camera. That's how quickly media has changed, and that's why your discussion that I hear is largely obsolete already.

By way of example, I've been asked to teach a photography class in one of the communities. I'm going to go there physically, but they can't afford to have me in every weekend, much as I'd love to go there. Because of cost and distance, it's all going to be done over the Internet.

I don't read a newspaper any more. And contrary to previous opinion, most people now gather their news from the Internet rather than the newspaper.

The CBC didn't actually come to Yellowknife until, I believe, 1964. Prior to that, it was done by the Royal Canadian signals regiment. There's a picture on the web someplace of a signalman broadcasting to Yellowknife, with a Vargas pin-up girl on the wall and a beer in one hand. It wouldn't be permitted in modern media—not during on-duty hours, anyway.

So that's how much it has changed. I'm not an enemy of the CBC, but it has become irrelevant to me. I heard the concerns of the francophones here earlier today. They spoke for the best part of two hours. I have no complaint about that, but the francophone population is 5% of the Northwest Territories. The aboriginal population is about 60%. Have you heard from any of the aboriginal people? I didn't see any.

For that reason alone, it's almost irrelevant. You can't plan a northern service without the input of the aboriginal population on what they want.

In terms of what new technology is going to mean, it's not a coincidence that Bill Gates, late in 1996, was saying that the Internet was just a fad. Bill Gates is now investing more heavily in communications companies and communications transmission companies than he is in computer software and computer companies, because that's where the future lies.

I listen to a Toronto radio station because an acquaintance of mine broadcasts on it. My wife listens to another Toronto radio station because a friend of hers broadcasts on it. I follow everything, from Al Jazeera to BBC to the *New York Times*, and it's a changing world.

I won't say I hate the CBC, but you have betrayed your mandate. At one time, in conjunction with the National Film Board, we led the world, particularly in documentary productions. I don't think it's an outrageous statement to make that if we pulled out of Hollywood

everyone who was either Canadian-trained or trained by a Canadian, Hollywood would collapse tomorrow. It's that simple.

You know, I don't see my life on CBC. I don't see it on Global TV, and I don't see it on CTV. I don't see the life of my friends, I don't see the life of my acquaintances, I don't see the life of my professional acquaintances. So why am I going to watch it?

I don't read the *Toronto Star* on the net any more, although I did at one time. All it's telling me about are the murders in Toronto. It happened; why do I want to know about it?

Blogging: is this going to be the future? Some of you may know Donald Crowdis. I believe he was the first presenter on *The Nature of Things*. He now has a blog on the Internet that probably generates him a greater audience share than he had when he was a professional broadcaster.

One thing you might look into, Mr. Bevington, if you like, is why the quality of broadband in the north is so poor. Every time I phone my provider here—I wish the gentleman from Northwestel was still here—they tell me it's downstream, so blame Telus. And maybe that's what it is, that nobody cares about us up in the north. On the other hand, Bell Communications launched an Internet satellite capable of broadband satellite for the entire country and for the north. That's the future. The computing power is coming.

I don't need a reporter. I got a bit cranked when this young gentleman earlier was talking about reporters. On the Internet, I read the pathology report from the Bernardo-Homolka...but we won't go into that. That's just to show you how much power is coming onto the Internet.

Where media had a chance to challenge our justice system, it declined to, and our justice system is poorer for it today. There is a murderer walking around who shouldn't be, in my opinion. I lay that sort of thing.... To me, the media has now become ideology; I don't care who it is. I groan every time my wife brings the *National Post* into the house, but at least it starts a good fire.

If the CBC wants to be relevant, do what you did 50 years ago with a different technology: get your bright young people, who are too stupid to know they don't know enough, and give them a free hand. Get them establishing websites. One of the best websites I ever saw, and this was early on the Internet, was an Ojibway website, brilliantly designed.

There's no reason the CBC can't offer the tools and fulfill its original mandate to train people in the north and across the country. In our lifetime, we've already seen the dramatic shift. CBC can either get with it or become irrelevant.

In the north now, Global television has just pulled out its local representative. We came up here to follow my wife's position, and I decided to go back to my original training, which is in photography. I was told by CP, by the *Sun* newspaper chain, by a number of different newspaper chains that they were screaming for news people in the north. They didn't have any. But anything I've sent down south, nobody has picked up on. Anything anybody I know has sent down south hasn't been picked up on.

There's a reason that people are ignorant of the north. I must admit that when my wife and I came up here, it certainly was not what we expected. I don't think the media in the north...

You may recall seeing a CBC show several years ago about the Folk on the Rocks festival. Our friends were all writing us from down south by e-mail, saying, "Is this what goes on in Yellowknife? It must be a great place to live."

It's technology, and CBC has pioneered and championed technology for a long time. If it is going to remain relevant to the new generation, then it has to pioneer now.

Thank you.

• (2255)

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Mr. Bagnell.

**Hon. Larry Bagnell:** Thank you.

Your opening comment was fascinating, because I was going to say the exact same thing, that although 50% of the population is aboriginal, we didn't get to hear from more of them. I'm disappointed, but I'm not blaming anyone for it. It's just unfortunate; they speak very well.

In defence of the Government of Canada, we do invest heavily in.... First of all, as you've said already today, CBC does a lot in aboriginal language that's well listened to by aboriginal people. But we also invest heavily in both radio and television for APTN. In fact, perhaps that should be more in the Broadcasting Act, more heard of. There was the shameful issue that they didn't get their funding until August, and I don't know how you can run something when people don't their paycheques.

At any rate, we'll leave that aside. I really liked your presentation. Our study is a three-part study—on the services, the mandate, the technology—and you're one of the few presenters who really talked about the technology.

Speaking personally, all the way over here I read newspapers. Those are relevant. Most of my radio time is spent listening to CBC. I don't get my news from the Internet. And just because it comes from the Internet it doesn't mean reporters are irrelevant, because it's reporters who made the news to go on the Internet.

Try to convince me, then, that new technology has made the CBC irrelevant. What should be the role of new technology? How should CBC change?

**Mr. David Prichard:** No, what I would say is that if the CBC doesn't adapt to and present new technology, it will become irrelevant. It's a subtle difference, I suspect.

Most anybody now can put together a web page. If we suddenly get this increased processing power and the bandwidth to go with it, we can have Iqaluit broadcasting their own Internet television. That's foreseeable within the next three to five years.

What I'm saying about reporters is that I don't see my life or the life of my friends in the media. You don't see it up here so much, but look at how talk radio has taken over in the south. That's because people are fed up with being fed information, in my opinion, and

they want to put something in. Plus, all these people calling in for free means that the radio presenters have free programming. That may be clever, but talk radio didn't have an audience 20 to 30 years ago. Think of how the movie put it: I'm real fed up, and I'm not going to take it any more.

What I'm saying is that what somebody in Wekweti is doing is probably more important to a hunter in Gameti than what Ian Hanomansing has to say about Vancouver.

Do you follow what I'm saying?

**Hon. Larry Bagnell:** But how will the new technology help that? You still need a reporter in Gameti or Wekweti to cover those things so they can be reported in the new technology format.

**Mr. David Prichard:** I think journalists have done themselves a great disservice. I get a bit upset with them, but I won't completely impinge their reputations; a large part of it has to be the organizations they write for.

We just had the Supreme Court justice come out and say that litigation is far too expensive in Canada. But when it gets to the point that media with deep pockets are afraid to challenge the government, then we're in deep trouble, aren't we. The best thing that happened in the Homolka case was the fact that it was put on the Internet and people got outraged by it; otherwise she would have gotten off scott-free...or maybe not scott-free, but she certainly wouldn't have gotten the sentence she did.

Only a fool would sit here and say this is what it's going to be, but if you look at the blogs, you see a great many articulate people out there. The use of digital cameras—and I hate them, but I have adjusted to the new technology—means that anybody in Wekweti can show, okay, we're going out on a moose hunt, this is how we live. You can read in the *Toronto Star* about the conditions up in northern Ontario on the reserves, but if they had access to the Internet, we could see the way they live. It would be far more immediate than the *Globe and Mail* going up once every ten years.

• (2300)

**Hon. Larry Bagnell:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** Ms. Bourgeois.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Diane Bourgeois:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Prichard, if you hadn't asked to testify, that would have been a great loss. I found your presentation really very interesting. You raised two points that I think are very important. First of all, it is true that no aboriginal person has testified here this evening. I'd like to know what that can be attributed to.

[*English*]

**Mr. David Prichard:** They may not have been notified. They might not even be interested.

[Translation]

**Ms. Diane Bourgeois:** Furthermore, Radio-Canada representatives came to meet with us to cooperate in developing our committee's mandate, that of restoring Radio-Canada and the services it should provide.

The Radio-Canada people know that the Corporation must take a different direction and adapt so that it doesn't miss the boat. You seem to be saying that it should take into account the fact that now there's the Internet and high-definition. However, here in the North, not everyone has those services.

How long would it take for people to get properly equipped so that Radio-Canada, if it takes that direction, can serve them adequately?

• (2305)

[English]

**Mr. David Prichard:** They are currently expanding broadband capabilities into the communities. As for why Bell Canada has yet to release the potential of its Internet satellite, which as I mentioned was released several years ago, is something that you'd have to ask Bell.

I look at it from this point of view: Would it be cheaper for CBC to set up, in terms of infrastructure, Radio-Canada in the Northwest Territories, or would it be cheaper for them to configure it to be on the Internet once broadband came about? I just can't see...because of demand in the south. People are getting degrees on the Internet now. It may come here later, but it has to come here.

If the CBC and government are both leaning toward this, saying yes, we want broadband so that we can reach more people, then it's going to happen—or I hope it is.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Mr. Bevington.

**Mr. Dennis Bevington:** Thanks, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Prichard, I got onto this topic a little earlier with the fellow from Northwestel. I do think what you're saying has some validity in it. I do think this is why CBC's mandate is being reviewed. It does need to move ahead. We started with a love-in for CBC. Gradually, as the witnesses have presented to us, we've picked away a little bit more at where we think the work is needed.

You mentioned the opportunities on the Internet for a major communicator like CBC. I regularly visit the CBC northern site, because of course I'm in Ottawa quite a bit of the time, and that's one of my access points to northern media. I don't find it to be all that user-friendly. I don't find it to have the kind of linkages you need for northern stories.

Having reported in the north for 50 years, CBC certainly has incredible historic linkage within their own service that could well be part of a website they carry. They have that information. I mean, the Internet is only as good as the information going onto it. CBC does have information, it does have content. It has the capacity for a great amount of information, but I don't see it on the website.

Is that what you're talking about here?

**Mr. David Prichard:** You're going to raise an old scar in me. Far too many technologists, just because they have a degree from the University of Waterloo in computer engineering or software engineering, happen to believe they're designers as well. They're programmers. They don't know the first thing about design. But that's a battle we'll leave outside.

The thing of it is.... The best analogy I can think of is that I have a friend who works for the CBC in Toronto. Because this is on the public record, we'll keep this individual's name secret. But this person marvels that the first time they walked into the Front Street building, the coffee room on every floor looked like Timothy's, with 16 different blends.

We're not going to change that. It's the corporate structure now. If you go anywhere else, you see it's the same thing. The changes are not going to come from Toronto, Front Street. The changes are not going to come from Ottawa. They're going to come from these young kids who have access to the technology.

I just think of the people I know who came back after the war, people like Budge Crawley. He took his Mitchell, trundled out into the Arctic, flew on Beavers, and got these great shots. Everybody thought he was nuts, but he was at the forefront of his time. The National Film Board did the same thing.

Do you recall the name of that gentleman who had the exhibition up here, who did the gold mines? Was that Hunter...?

At any rate, a photographer came up here under the auspices of the National Film Board, and did the most stunning work I've seen taken in the Northwest Territories—just because he was crazy enough to come up to someplace really cold and foreign.

So this is where the changes are going to come from, not only for the CBC but for any other organization. We have a unique opportunity in Canada as opposed to, say, Britain, which is much smaller, or the States, which is much more regimented, in that the younger people will come up here to get their chance. They're the ones who are going to make the differences, the changes, and implement the new technology. It's a matter of getting the tools to them.

Those tools are coming very rapidly. If I had told you in 1994 that I would have a chip for you 12 years down the line that was ten thousand times more powerful than the 486, you would have taken me down to the Queen Street mental hospital in Toronto.

We just don't know what's coming. The important thing for the CBC is to get the tools out of the cities to young and talented people who don't know enough to know that it can't be done. Let them get on with it, because that's where the changes are going to come from.

• (2310)

**The Chair:** Thank you very much.

I must say, this has been a very informative night. I thank everyone from this area who came out to our forum this evening. I also thank our staff, who worked to get all of this stuff together today.

Yes, Mr. Bagnell.

**Hon. Larry Bagnell:** There was a lady—I don't know if she's still here—who wanted to give input, but not as an intervener.

**The Chair:** She is not here now.

**Hon. Larry Bagnell:** You might ask if there's anyone in the room who would like to add something.

**The Chair:** Does anyone in the room have anything else to say?

Yes, sir.

**A voice:** I just want to say that I heard they were planning to include more jazz music on the schedule, and I can't stand jazz music.

**Voices:** Oh, oh!

**The Chair:** We'll get that through to them.

Just to let you know, I am the chair of the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage, and we as a group form the heritage committee. We are not the CBC, we are simply studying the public broadcaster.

I thank everyone for their great ideas and for being open and forthright here this evening. It might be cold up here, but I can tell you that the hospitality is sure warm.

Again, thank you very much.

Meeting adjourned.

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