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Chair

Mr. Gary Schellenberger

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• (0905)

[English]

The Chair (Mr. Gary Schellenberger (Perth—Wellington, CPC)): Good morning, everyone. I'm very pleased this morning to welcome everyone to our 46th meeting of the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage.

This morning, pursuant to Standing Order 108(2), our topic is a full investigation of the role of a public broadcaster in the 21st century.

This morning, for the first hour, we have as an individual Anthony Manera, and from the Public Policy Forum we have Mr. Bill Neville. Welcome, gentlemen.

I'll let whoever wants to go first with their presentation go ahead, and then the second person can follow, and then we'll open it to questions.

[Translation]

Mr. Anthony S. Manera (As an Individual): Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and members of the committee.

We would like to express our appreciation to the committee for giving us this opportunity to present our ideas concerning the important task that you have undertaken, a review of the mandate of the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation—Société Radio-Canada. This is an opportunity for your committee to promote changes. In our opinion, these changes are important and urgent.

Canadians need a public broadcaster. This conclusion has been supported by several stakeholders your committee has already heard from, by every review of the Canadian public broadcasting system carried out since its creation in 1936 and by the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage in its June 2003 report.

Therefore, the fundamental issue is not the necessity of having a public broadcaster, but rather what kinds of services CBC and Radio-Canada should offer their audience. With some limited but important exceptions, our focus will be on English television. This is not because the other services are without merit or problems, but because English television is the service with the most difficult challenges. For this reason, we are going to concentrate our comments on English television.

But as we acknowledge the problems facing English television, we should also point out that CBC as a whole remains a very powerful conveyer of our Canadian culture and cultural sovereignty. CBC's radio services remain second to none and, in survey after

survey, are cited by Canadians as being of great importance to their sense of nationhood.

Today, we are going to make 10 specific and bold recommendations; perhaps subject to controversy, but necessary, responsible and doable. The time has come to act and you, the members of this committee, have the power and the responsibility to bring about the renewal of the Société Radio-Canada and the CBC.

Mr. Chairman, I will now give the floor to my collaborator, Mr. Bill Neville.

• (0910)

[English]

Mr. Bill Neville (Senior Advisor to the President, Public Policy Forum): Thank you, Tony.

Mr. Chairman and members, thank you for the opportunity to be here today.

I'd like to speak briefly to two specific issues. First is how the CBC is financed. Second is a question that I know is of interest to many MPs, and that is the CBC's legislative mandate to serve the needs of Canada's regions.

In terms of finances, as members know, CBC Television and Radio-Canada depend on commercial revenues to meet up to 40% to 50% of their operating budgets. The result of this reality means that raising those revenues becomes de facto the number one priority facing the corporation. If you don't get the advertising revenue, the entire budget collapses.

The impact of that on its programming is inevitable. That's why we have such a heavy reliance on professional sports. That's why we have commercials inserted into virtually every program, even into flagship newscasts—an unusual practice for a public broadcaster, in my experience. That's why, protestations to the contrary, much of the CBC is taken up with ratings chasing, because that's what advertisers are interested in and that's what the CBC feels it has to deliver.

The result of all of that is to end up with what someone has called a “subsidized commercial network”. In fact, Mr. Rabinovitch himself, at a speech in Toronto, said, “How can you call yourself a public broadcaster when over 50% of your budget comes from competing with the private sector?”

Members, and indeed Canadians, in my view, should be under no illusion. As long as CBC Television and Radio-Canada have this kind of dependency on commercial revenue, you're going to have what you have now—a subsidized commercial broadcaster.

But if you want a more genuine public broadcaster, one that meets the kind of definition the CBC itself offered in its brief to this committee last week, there's no alternative but to lessen that commercial dependency. And again, there's no use kidding ourselves. While in our brief we've suggested some ways that the CBC could add non-commercial revenues, in the end you're talking about increased public financing. That's the reality.

In that respect, I refer you to the Nordicity study that shows that compared with virtually all other countries that are in public broadcasting, we in Canada have not been known for our overgenerosity in terms of support for public broadcasting.

In terms of regional programming, the corporation's mandate, as set forth in the Broadcasting Act, says that CBC programs should "reflect Canada and its regions to national and regional audiences, while serving the special needs of those regions". If you ask the corporation about its regional responsibilities, invariably the answer comes back with something about local newscasts.

Over the years the CBC has tried various formats for these—Tony and I have lived through a number of them—all of which, frankly, have been failures in almost every market in the country, and for good reason. I think I can predict, without too much cynicism, that the latest version, which was mentioned to you last week, will meet with about that much success as well—and for good reason. In my judgment, it's because the basic policy is misguided.

First, local privately owned stations dominate the supper hour news shows for a reason. It is for them, in most cases, about the only original programming they invest in. They make major investments in it. They do a good job. And they dominate their markets, with few exceptions. Just look at CJOH's position in Ottawa. That's just one example. I know there are some exceptions to that, but they are exceptions.

Second, I think it's worth pointing out that the CBC is already the local broadcaster in most of these markets. It just happens to be in radio. Its early-morning shows and its drive-home shows are the places where citizens go in most of these communities to learn about what's going on in their cities and to hear discussion about them. If you look at the corporation as a whole, it seems to me that whatever local mandate it has is being served, in fact, through its radio, which can—as the CBC mentioned—and should be expanded.

● (0915)

Third, even if the CBC's local TV news shows were more successful, they would not address the act's mandate to reflect the national and regional audiences—that's not what they're about—and neither by the way, does originating things like new shows from Halifax and Calgary with content that does not reflect those locations, but could just as easily have been written in Toronto.

In my view, the corporation needs to rethink its whole approach to regional programming and to go back and look at what the mandate in the act is—to reflect the regions to the country and to the regions themselves. I'm not a programmer and I don't pretend to be one, but I think there are opportunities here for more imaginative approaches. In news and public affairs, for example, what about a series of regional weekly public affairs programs that give more attention than you get in a 90-second news spot to things that are of interest in a

region; and if you had a series of five regional programs, you could take the best-produced in one region and show it to Canadians in the other regions. That's how you reflect one region to the other. It might have helped all of us understand the events of Monday night, for example, if in advance of that we'd had a good background on what was happening with the ADQ in Quebec.

Similarly, I'd like to know more about why the pine beetle infestation is in British Columbia. I read a bit about what P.E.I. is doing in wind power research. There are lots of opportunities there, but nobody is really taking the time in this current system to do this. The CBC can do it, and it would be reflecting the regions within them and it would give you an opportunity to reflect regions back to other regions.

In another area, in cultural programming, I think most people believe Canada has undergone a cultural explosion in recent years in terms of the development of regional performing arts groups. When I was doing my paper for the Public Policy Forum, I spoke to one senior arts executive who said to me that he hears evidence of this explosion on CBC Radio, but he doesn't see much of it on CBC Television.

I would suggest the corporation can be and should be a television showcase for these major regional groups, both within the region and to the country, and frankly they're doing very little of that at this point. Other people may have better ideas for programs than I have, but the point and my plea is this: I think it's time to move beyond this one-dimensional view of regional broadcasting as involving local newscasts or being focused on local newscasts. Look at what the act says and try to develop an approach and philosophy that's more in keeping with it.

Thank you.

The Chair: Yes, Mr. Manera.

Mr. Anthony S. Manera: Mr. Chair, I promised at the beginning that we would make some very specific recommendations. We don't want to beat around the bush with platitudes. We want to see action.

So here's the very first one. It has to do with governance. Governance is not a very sexy subject, but it's important.

I have served, over my life, on over 25 different boards of directors in the private sector, in the public sector, in Canada, and in the U.S. Not a single one of those boards did not have the authority to hire and fire the president and chief executive officer. How can you hold a board accountable for the effectiveness of their corporation, the CBC, when the board has no say in the hiring, the evaluation, the compensation, and the firing of the CEO? It just doesn't make any sense from a governance point of view. Yet that's the reality. Not only that, if the office of chair of the board is empty, guess who gets to fill it? The president. I did that for nine months when Patrick Watson resigned. I didn't want to do it. I was very uncomfortable doing it. It wasn't my job, yet I had to do it because the legislation says you have to do it.

If you do nothing else on this committee, the one thing you can do is recommend that the government change the legislation, give the board the power to hire, compensate, evaluate, and terminate, if necessary, the CEO, and I think that will go a long way in terms of giving the board the tools it needs to really manage a corporation. Right now, the one most significant tool that a board needs to be effective, it doesn't have.

No one should interpret my remarks as a criticism of the current management or of the current board. They're locked into this model, and it's not their choice necessarily. I don't intend any criticism. I'm simply saying it's a systemic flaw.

So that's the first thing.

The second thing—and I strongly advocate this—is something that, if you had asked me 10 years ago, I would have been dead set against, but now I'm all for it. Why? Because I've learned from experience. Have two employees, elected by their own members, sit on the board. It's not to represent the interests of their members. No, that's the union's job. In fact, it would be illegal for them to try to represent the interests of their members. It's to provide the unique perspective that they have. In any large organization, if you really want to know what's going on, don't always talk to the top people; talk to the people right on the floor who do the work day in and day out. They know what's going on. They have a unique perspective. They understand what's going on. They have a realistic knowledge of what needs to be done. I think the role of the board would be strongly enhanced if it had the benefit of that perspective.

I know this requires a change in legislation, but if this committee supports it, and if the government supports it, it is quite possible to implement some of these ideas gradually without changing the legislation. One way would be through the government's commitment, when the time comes to appoint the next president, to do so from a list submitted by the board of directors. I see that as an interim step towards changing the legislation that could be taken right now.

As far as the employee representatives are concerned, again, ideally that requires a change in legislation, but that may take some time. In the interim—again if there is a consensus on that—the board itself could create the process of election of two employees, who could sit as observers, and allow them to participate but not give them the vote. I think the mere participation and involvement of those employees would add great value, even if they didn't have the vote immediately.

I learned this long ago, because I served on two boards—those of Algonquin College here in Ottawa, on which I was the chairman, and now the Ottawa Hospital. Both of those boards have employee representatives on them. I have to tell you, that's what changed my mind on this topic. If you had asked me 10 years ago, I would have said, “No, that's a bad idea”, but now I say it's a good idea, because I've experienced the tremendous value added by those people.

So this is a very specific recommendation, and we really feel the committee should act.

• (0920)

The second recommendation has to do with pro sports—hockey—and it looks as though we've been overtaken by events on that score.

I have argued passionately in the past that pro hockey belongs in the CBC, and I still feel there's nothing wrong. The problem, however, is that it takes up so much of the resources of the corporation. Over 40% of the audience share in English television is from sports, which is a total distortion of what a public broadcaster should be.

Before this hockey deal was signed, we were saying either get out of it or maybe reuse your exposure in collaboration with the private sector so this dependence on pro sports...and not only for the audience share. If 40% of the audience is from sports, it's a distortion of the mandate. It also makes the CBC vulnerable. A couple of years ago when you had the lock-out of the NHL, look what happened. All of a sudden the CBC was left with several hours of programming it had to fill, plus it wasn't getting a lot of revenue. So it put in a lot of American shows, as if we didn't have enough of those already elsewhere. So that's the problem.

Now a deal has been signed. We don't know the details and we're unable to comment. But as a long-term strategy, we think the CBC should still seriously consider reusing its heavy reliance on pro sports. That goes along with Bill's point on the heavy dependence on commercial advertising that steers the corporation in a certain direction.

The other thing Bill talked about is this business about local television news. There's nothing in the act that gives the CBC a mandate to provide local services. It talks about regional service. The private sector in most cases—not all—is doing a reasonably good job of providing local television news, so why should the CBC try to do that? It can do that on radio. A dollar spent on radio goes five times further than a dollar spent on television, because radio is a less costly medium. It is also a better medium for local coverage.

There are savings the CBC could realize by getting out of local television news, with certain exceptions. There are markets in which it should still stay because there is insufficient or inadequate private sector coverage. We recognize that and acknowledge it would be an asymmetrical arrangement. But heck, asymmetry is part of Canada. We're not a symmetrical nation, so we'd better buy into asymmetry, because that's the reality. You can go a lot further in radio and do a much better job. There's a strong audience loyalty to radio. This is a redirection of funds within the corporation, and we think it makes a lot of sense.

• (0925)

The Chair: Mr. Manera, could you come to a conclusion? I think there are a lot of questions around here, and we'll only have half an hour after that.

Mr. Anthony S. Manera: Absolutely.

I think the legislation needs to be amended to acknowledge the importance of new media. The CBC has to be a player. It is a player and is showing tremendous leadership. This should be acknowledged in the legislation so it can pursue this aggressively. There's a big future in digital. The future is Internet-based, and the CBC has to continue on that track.

Some of these things require more money, and that has to come from increased parliamentary appropriation. But we also feel there is an opportunity here to redirect money from the Canadian Television Fund to the CBC. It now only gets 37% of that fund indirectly through independent producers. A dollar from the Canadian Television Fund goes a lot further with the CBC than with private broadcasters, because the CBC gives those programs shelf space in prime time, when there is the largest audience. So we're recommending the 37% be jacked up substantially.

The cable companies like you to believe it's their money they're contributing to this fund. It's not their money; it's money they've collected from subscribers as a condition of licence, so it's taxpayers' money no matter how you look at it.

This is very precise and specific. I'm sorry, Mr. Chair, if I went on too long, but I think we've covered pretty well everything we wanted to cover. We're open to your questions.

Thank you very much.

The Chair: Thank you. It was very interesting. We only have an hour, so I have to do this because I know there are questions.

Mr. Scott has the first one.

Hon. Andy Scott (Fredericton, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you very much. You are always informative and animated, and it's much appreciated.

I'm going to the brief. Let me just say that in terms of funding, in addition to the argumentation that offers comparisons to other jurisdictions, the point has to be made—and I'm sure you're aware of this, but I think it needs to be made on the record—that it is very expensive to offer broadcasting in a country as big and as sparsely populated as this one, so even those comparisons are generous to Canada. I think it's important for that point to be made.

Other than *Hockey Night in Canada*, when it says that some programming should be other than professional sports, is there anything else you were thinking about, other than maybe vacating some local news in some markets? It says “for instance”, and I'm just curious as to what other things you were thinking about when you said “for instance”.

Mr. Anthony S. Manera: No, those are the only two areas that we identified. There could be other areas, but those are the two that came to mind.

Hon. Andy Scott: I'm just thinking out loud here, but what about the possibility of using some of the very popular programs—I'll use *Hockey Night in Canada* as an example—to self-promote? One of the problems with this multi-channel universe is simply getting attention to what's available on the CBC. If you have a very popular program like *Hockey Night in Canada*, it seems to me to be a wonderful vehicle—perhaps not for commercial advertising, if that's what you're trying to avoid—to promote the CBC itself to an audience that is probably harder to get to. The people who are going to be watching CBC drama probably know where to find it, but it's not a big audience, and therefore this becomes an access issue. For what's it's worth, I've always thought that was part of the lost opportunity that's available to the CBC when they have a popular program like that.

I'm curious about governance. It is critically important, because I think we have to significantly increase public support, and concurrent with that public support come increases of confidence in the governance model. How do we go about the process of choosing the board for the CBC? I know you say that we would have some authority in this committee, but those of us who are members of the committee would, I think, appreciate and recognize that all committees have many more assignments and responsibilities than they really ever get to deal with thoroughly and fully. In theory, I suspect, people looking from the outside in would say that the heritage committee could look at those appointments. They would have a mental image of the thoroughness of that oversight exercise, but we know on the committee that we are four years behind on most things we're trying to do most of the time.

How could you style that process so that we could have some—I don't know what it would be—panel of experts? When we make judicial appointments, we have the Canadian Bar; we have other outside experts who could do this. Is there some way that you could propose, in addition to the oversight that we would offer? I think our oversight is critical, but I don't think it's enough to elevate the thinking about that board to the point that it is the kind of board I think you have in mind when you make that proposal.

● (0930)

Mr. Bill Neville: Having been involved in politics over the years myself, I think it's unrealistic to suggest that governments of the day are going to give up their ultimate right to make order in council appointments.

Hon. Andy Scott: Agreed.

Mr. Bill Neville: The question is whether we can get better quality than we sometimes do from within that system. I think we can. First of all, we need to have a process by which boards tell their government what their needs are and describe the kind of person they need, whether that's a regional need or a linguistic need or a gender need or a speciality need, so that the government gets a better profile. Then it would be to have some kind of vetting process for appointments, whether through these committees or whatever. I know the present government has looked at various models to it.

I can only speak for my own experience on the CBC board over more than eight years, but I think the quality of people on board overall was pretty good. Once in a while, as we all know, somebody's campaign manager slips in—not that campaign managers aren't qualified to be directors of the CBC, but—

Hon. Andy Scott: Present company included.

Mr. Bill Neville: Yes, exactly—if that's their only reason to be there. That's the issue. But I think we need a bigger role by boards to try to identify their needs. I think that is happening gradually. Then at least the government has some guidance, and at least then government appointments could be tested against that.

Hon. Andy Scott: On the question of local news, it will come as no surprise that in Fredericton and the entire Atlantic area, the reality is that there isn't a robust news industry in our part of the country.

As I said the other day before different witnesses, I would agree it has to be resourced, and that is in fact what we're talking about. But if the CBC didn't provide local news, I'd have to say there really wouldn't be much local news in Fredericton. We get both Global and ATV out of Halifax. I love my Nova Scotian neighbours, but I'm not that interested. My friends and I need to know what's going on in New Brunswick, and we wouldn't get it any other way.

I think our next witnesses will have something to say about it too.

Thanks.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Kotto.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Maka Kotto (Saint-Lambert, BQ): Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Thank you for your testimony, gentlemen. I have several questions to ask you; I will therefore do so quickly.

From your perspective, do you consider that the CBC is fulfilling its mandate?

• (0935)

Mr. Anthony S. Manera: Yes, but only partially. As my colleague Bill Neville emphasized, the regional aspect must be improved. We have a very interesting culture in all the regions of Canada. There is a certain creativity that exists outside of the major urban centres. Many of our Canadian stars launched their careers in the smaller cities across Canada.

Quebec, for example, has a cultural vitality that exists not only in Montreal but also outside of that city. Newfoundland and Labrador has a very particular culture. On the anglophone side, that province exhibits great creativity, with very interesting comedy. The creativity exists everywhere in Canada.

The opportunities that are available on CBC, in the regions, are not sufficient. What we are recommending today, when you talk about reducing local coverage, is a shift in direction in order to put more emphasis on the cultural contribution of all the regions of Canada.

In that sense, the answer to your question is “no”. I do not want to criticize CBC management, but the reality is that for all kinds of reasons, it is not currently meeting the regional challenge satisfactorily.

Mr. Maka Kotto: Should Radio-Canada/CBC not be brought back to the status of a basic broadcaster as some are demanding, that is to say limited to playing a complementary role instead of competing with the private sector, so that it can stay within its current budgetary envelope?

Mr. Anthony S. Manera: Ideally, there would be a very clear distinction made between the public and private sectors. But in practice, there is a grey zone. There will always be some overlap, because creativity cannot be demarcated so clearly.

Broadly speaking, a public broadcaster definitely must play a distinctive role. We are recommending a renewal that would ensure that CBC/Radio-Canada would distinguish itself from the private

sector to such a degree that people would be able to recognize that distinction.

We are making some very specific recommendations so that the changes we are talking about can be made.

Mr. Maka Kotto: We have been asked several times to work on increasing the CBC's budget. In our opinion, it is an issue of transparency and of accountability details.

Do you have any comments on the subject, since you have worked on it?

Mr. Anthony S. Manera: Yes, and I believe that Bill Neville has something to add.

The CBC is subject to an annual audit by the Auditor General of Canada. The books are therefore audited, but it would be possible to improve transparency. In fact, the Auditor General recently pointed out in her report that certain improvements could be made in terms of transparency at the CBC. I agree with her recommendations.

One must also accept, when we are talking about certain aspects where CBC/Radio-Canada is in competition with the private sector, that there are limits to the information that can be made public. In a competitive environment, you have to be careful. I believe however that the transparency and accountability of the corporation could be improved upon, as the Auditor General has recommended.

• (0940)

Mr. Maka Kotto: The transparency cannot go beyond the current sensitive area, but could the information not be made available to parliamentarians, for example?

Mr. Anthony S. Manera: Yes, Parliament can ask all kinds of questions. It has always recognized that—and I think that you can prove—

Mr. Maka Kotto: I was talking about the details of accountability.

Mr. Anthony S. Manera: There are some details that even Parliament has thought it best not to sort out because the philosophy underlying the creation of the CBC/Radio-Canada is its independence with regard to the government. We must find a balance, at the risk of having some kind of political interference. We must not go too far. I believe that we currently have greater leeway. We can do it.

[*English*]

The Chair: Mr. Neville.

Mr. Bill Neville: If I could add a quick comment, I think there's an important issue here in terms of accountability. It's slightly different from what Tony has been emphasizing.

It seems to me there's a real gap in the accountability line for the CBC. You have a mandate spelled out in the act, which by necessity is struck in fairly broad language. It's a question of how that broad language is defined and practised as a programming philosophy.

In my experience there's nothing between the act and what comes next. It tends to be a series of annual corporate plans, which is one of Ottawa's great charades, frankly. Every year the corporation produces a plan. It tables it with the minister, and nothing is ever heard about it again. When I was on the board, nobody ever got any feedback from the government about the plan. There was never any attempt to call the corporation when that year was up and say, "Okay, here's what you said you were going to do. Did you do it, and if not, why?"

It seems to me that somebody has to play two roles here. One is to take the general language of the act and apply it, whether that's this committee.... Given the kind of media world we live in today, maybe it's the board of directors, whose role I think is too minimal at the moment. There has to be some way to check performance against promise. I don't see that in the present system.

The Chair: Before I go to Mr. Angus, I must say that this committee produced a couple of reports that went to the ministry. An election came along and the ministry didn't have to respond to the committee. We reintroduced those reports to make sure we got a report back. I think if you're mandated to make a report, there should at least be a response to that report.

I just wanted to inject that. I'm sorry for that. The chair shouldn't do that, but I did.

Mr. Angus.

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Thank you. This is a very interesting discussion this morning.

I am going to begin with a few general comments, because I only have five minutes.

On the issue of accountability in the governance structure, I think you've nailed it. I'm really hoping that our committee will take that seriously as a recommendation. If we're going to improve performance standards, we have to have that level of accountability in the governance structure.

In terms of your points about moving out of local news programming and how to better deal with television, I can look in my region, where CTV does an excellent job of doing the regional news. That's what they do, except on the francophone side, where Radio-Canada is the only voice for television regionally.

On the issue of how we use our television dollars, we're trying to go head to head with the U.S. on drama, the issue of sports, and these are big issues. I find your suggestion about how we look at telling regional stories to the rest of the country very provocative, because I do believe people will listen. The problem that I see—you would know this probably much more than I do—is this. When I was in television, I was working with a production company to basically do that—regional documentaries, our own stories. We wanted to tell the great stories that haven't been told and do it in a fun way. We had some great plans. But it costs a lot of money, and whether you're going up against CBC or private broadcasters, it's a lot easier to put on a cooking show or a talk show, because you just have the camera, you have the light, and there you are. To get out and do good regional programming that can tell the kinds of stories that radio does very well is expensive.

So my question to you is, if we were going to take that step in television, how would we do it, if we're not looking at reliance on advertising revenues?

● (0945)

Mr. Bill Neville: As I said in my comments, there is only one alternative, frankly, and that is in some form of public financing.

I think that if you believe we need a public broadcaster, then implicit in that is the commitment that it's not going to be simply a commercial broadcaster as dependent on advertising as this one happens to be at the moment. If you think the CBC should be as heavily in commercials as it is, maybe it doesn't need the subsidy. Maybe we don't need a public broadcaster. That's a point of view one could argue, but you can't play it both ways, I don't think.

Thirty dollars a head, given Andy's point about the sheer physical coverage involved.... As you know, this is one of the most extensive broadcasting operations physically in the world in terms of language: four networks, two languages, Northern Services in several, etc., and for \$30 a head versus \$120-something in the British system in a much more compact, physical, one-language situation.... At some point you either believe in it and you're willing to support it or you're not. I don't think you can beat around the bush on it.

Mr. Charlie Angus: I'd like to ask your experience from being on CBC, because I look at where CBC Radio is extremely successful: certainly local programming, so taking local aside, comedy...comedy out of CBC, I think, is second to none. We have some correlation in terms of that in television as well. Music: new music breaks on CBC often long before it breaks on private radio. People listen to CBC because they are hearing new things. I'm not hearing that same new music kind of programming on television. Drama: well, on television, of course, it's the argument of whether we're challenged or not. Documentary: we're second to none. You put radio documentaries from CBC up against any public broadcaster in the world, and they would hold their own.

In your experience, why is it that CBC hasn't looked at the success of radio and where they're strong, and why haven't they applied that to the television model?

Mr. Bill Neville: I think, first of all, you have—and I'm sure you do understand—two quite different media in this respect. Radio people set their dial and stay there. You have a station you listen to. In television, you pick your loyalties one hour at a time. You sit there with your clicker, and you flip around. So there's a quite different phenomenon at work in terms of audience building.

But more fundamentally, and I think very importantly, I think CBC Radio accepts the fact that it's not there competing with the private sector, that it has a niche that it's established for itself that it's happy in and that it's building on. Interestingly, its audiences are going up in both languages for both Radio One and Radio Two. It's not out there trying to draw away the top-50 crowd.

In television, if you look at the working level in the CBC in Toronto, I'm telling you their number one concern is competing with CTV. That's what they think they're there for. It's partly a reflection of this commercial reality and partly, I think, a historical thing from back in the 1960s and 1970s when they were king of the hill, and they'd like to think they could stay there.

I think that's essentially it. There's quite a different philosophy here. CBC Radio has a public broadcasting view. I'm not sure the same thing applies in television. In fact, I've often thought a great experiment would be to bring somebody from the U.K. or somewhere else with a public broadcaster, and hand them a radio and a TV set and say, find me the public broadcaster. I think they'd find you the CBC on radio in 10 seconds, and it would be a fluke if they found the CBC on television in the first hour.

• (0950)

Mr. Anthony S. Manera: Mr. Chair, I would just add something very briefly. I think Bill has obviously hit the nail on the head.

There's no advertising on CBC Radio, except in very rare circumstances, whereas on CBC Television, over half their budget comes from advertising. So that has a big impact on that.

But having said that, I think we also have to acknowledge that CBC has made tremendous progress in the last number of years in terms of breaking down a lot of the old silos that existed. There's much more collaboration within the corporation between radio and television. You've got people like "Sir" Rex Murphy. He's on television, he does radio, he writes a column in *The Globe and Mail*. So a lot of the barriers are breaking down, and that's a positive that we need to acknowledge. More needs to be done—there's no question about it—but we should not neglect to acknowledge the positive things that have been happening.

The other thing too is that with the Internet, which is the future essentially, you have a blurring of the lines. You have a medium now that is not strictly video, it's not strictly audio, and it's not strictly print; it's all of them pulled together. So as time goes on, this convergence of media is going to accelerate. You're going to have all of these platforms. You already have them. There will be tremendous opportunities here, and I'm delighted. I think the CBC should be commended for the leadership it's taking in terms of new media.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you for that.

Mr. Fast.

Mr. Ed Fast (Abbotsford, CPC): Mr. Chair, that's a perfect segue into my questions: the whole issue of new media.

I sense from your comments that what you're talking about, if you boil it down, is a clear delineation between the roles of the public broadcaster and the private broadcasters.

You've just talked about new media. In your recommendations you addressed the challenges of new media and said that the new media are challenging some of the traditional business models that have been applied in the past. I want to quote from your recommendations. You say, "In light of this reality"—being the new media—"the appropriateness and relevance of various tax subsidies and credits as well as Canadian content requirements for private broadcasters should be reviewed".

Mr. Manera, a few months ago you also wrote an article in the *Ottawa Citizen*. You were much more blunt, and I'd like to quote from that as well. You state that "The federal government should cancel all tax subsidies and credits now going to private broadcasters.... It makes no sense for taxpayers to subsidize for-profit broadcasters." You go on to say that this would require a relaxation of Canadian content requirements for private broadcasters, "who should be free to offer whatever mix of programming best suits their commercial objectives".

You're quite blunt there. You're saying to get rid of the subsidies, get rid of the Canadian content requirements for the private broadcasters, and focus more on CBC's mandate, make sure it's funded properly, and move forward from there.

Am I characterizing that correctly?

Mr. Anthony S. Manera: No, I plead guilty to being blunt. And Bill, having worked with me for about 10 years at the CBC, knows that I can be quite blunt, and stubborn at times.

You've quoted me absolutely correctly. I haven't really departed fundamentally from the position that you have just quoted me on, from the opinion article that appeared in the *Ottawa Citizen*. I have modified it somewhat as a result of further reflection.

But the point I want to make here is that in Canada the private for-profit broadcasters do receive substantial assistance in the form of tax breaks, subsidies from the Canadian Television Fund, and provisions of the Income Tax Act that are worth hundreds of millions of dollars. So it's not just the CBC that receives financial support from the government; private broadcasters do too. And that's a direct consequence of the economics of television production in Canada, because we're a relatively small market.

Now, the private broadcasters have been given certain obligations for Canadian content. They're obviously not as onerous as the obligations of the CBC, and quite rightly so. But I'm saying I believe in the free enterprise system. I happen to fundamentally believe that is the system that generates the greatest wealth, prosperity, and also it's the system that's most compatible with freedom, which I also happen to believe in.

So I say let the privates do what the privates do best, which is to make money. And I'm not convinced that we should eliminate all Canadian content requirements, but I think they could be looked at a little bit more realistically. I think if the CRTC were to do that, private broadcasters would still do some Canadian content—maybe less than now, but they will do it whenever it meets their commercial objectives, and they should be free to do that.

But in exchange for that, fund the CBC properly, because it's the CBC's mandate to provide Canadian content. So don't ask the private broadcasters to do things that go against their commercial objectives, but at the same time don't put the CBC in a position where it's doing what the private broadcasters do best, which is to make money. They're two different things.

That's my point.

● (0955)

Mr. Ed Fast: That leads me to the next question, and I gave you a bit of a heads-up on this question.

As you know, the CTF was established really around a quid pro quo. The private BDUs wanted to be able to charge more in subscriber fees. In return, the federal government agreed and said, listen, you're going to contribute to the CTF.

Do you believe there is a role for the private broadcasters to play in helping fund public broadcasting?

Mr. Anthony S. Manera: I think the funding for the public broadcaster should be primarily from parliamentary appropriations. It's Parliament that created the CBC, and having created the CBC, it's Parliament's responsibility to ensure that it is properly funded. The rest is details. We've come up with a few ideas here as to how funding can be redirected. As Bill has indicated, if you don't like our ideas, fine, come up with some new ones. We don't care.

When Parliament passes laws saying they are going to create a public broadcaster, then concomitant with that decision there is a responsibility to fund it properly. There is not much point in our having a piece of legislation that says, do all these great things, and then we let the CBC try to sort it out for itself. That's where the responsibility lies.

If Parliament decides that somehow or other the private broadcasters should help do that, that's fine. We have no position on that. We're simply saying, the current model isn't working. It's broken. You need to fix it, because if you don't fix it, what's going to happen is that the CBC is going to become more and more of a commercial broadcaster.

If that's what Parliament wants, then all it has to do is declare that the CBC is going to be privatized, and I can tell you, to privatize the CBC would make money, lots of money. It would go into the market and start competing aggressively to buy U.S. shows like CTV and Global do. It would raise up the price, put more American shows on television, and CBC would make a tonne of money. If that's what Canada needs, then go for it and privatize the CBC.

I personally don't think Canada needs another private commercial broadcaster to put on more American shows that we can easily get by watching the American channels in the first place. And right now the private broadcasters are being subsidized, with the simulcasting

rules, for hundreds of millions of dollars. Under provisions of the Income Tax Act, it's hundreds of millions of dollars. Through the CTF, hundreds of millions of dollars are coming out of taxpayers' money.

What I'm saying is, if we're going to put taxpayers' money into Canadian content, let's put it into the one organization that was designed specifically by Parliament over 70 years ago to do precisely that. That's the kind of choice that Parliament has to make.

The Chair: Thank you.

I see that our time has come to an end.

Mr. Anthony S. Manera: We have a lot more time.

The Chair: I know that, but I will offer you this little bit of time at another time. The CBC is a big issue. We found your comments and your forthrightness this morning to be very interesting.

We hope to be able to call back various witnesses. As for whether or not we can get a full report done in a short time, I don't think so. When we do an interim report or a report at a later time, we hope to have you back, as well as various other witnesses. It will perhaps be in a different format, through a round table, where various sides can come together.

We'll take a short recess.

Thank you very much for this morning.

● (1000)

Mr. Anthony S. Manera: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I appreciated the opportunity.

The Chair: Thank you.

● (1000)

_____ (Pause) _____

● (1005)

The Chair: Welcome back, everyone, and welcome to our new witnesses here this morning from the Fédération des communautés francophones et acadienne du Canada.

Ms. Beaulieu, are you going to be the spokesperson first? Welcome to both of you here this morning. I'll let you go forward with your presentation, and then we'll have some questions.

Thank you.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Marielle Beaulieu (Executive Director, Fédération des communautés francophones et acadienne du Canada): Thank you, and good morning Mr. Chairman. Good morning also to the members. I am pleased to find myself here once again and to be addressing the extremely important subject of Radio-Canada and its future. With me today is Mr. Serge Quilty, who is the Director of Communications for the FCFA du Canada and who will assist me in answering some of your questions this morning.

I would first of all like to thank you for having invited us here this morning to share our thoughts on the mandate of the public broadcaster in Canada in the 21st century. As you have read in the brief we submitted to you and as you certainly heard in the presentations of other groups, Radio-Canada has a special importance for all of the francophone and Acadian communities in Canada. As you can imagine, these communities often have very limited access to local television and radio content in their language. The SRC therefore plays a critical role for us, in the cohesion of communities, it goes without saying; the SRC also to a large extent supports their ability to live in French.

That is why in this submission, we have concentrated on three particular components of the CBC's mandate. First of all, there is the obligation to report on the regional diversity of the country, both at the national and regional levels, while serving the special needs of those regions. Next, the service must be offered 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. Finally, it must be made available throughout Canada by the most appropriate and efficient means.

Let me say at the outset that for the FCFA, these three parts of the CBC's mandate are always relevant. In fact, they are more and more so. We absolutely want to have a public broadcaster in which francophones, regardless of where they live in the country, can see themselves; a public broadcaster that creates connections, encourages dialogue and, through this, contributes to building a stronger country. We want a public broadcaster that is an ambassador and an international showcase of diversity and linguistic duality as fundamental values reflecting the reality of Canada.

This vision of Radio-Canada/CBC, reflected by its mandate, is therefore still relevant. The problem lies in the crown corporation's ability to fulfil its mandate. My first observation is that the budget cutbacks of the 1990s compromised this ability. Even though the situation has been restored from several perspectives since that time, budgetary restraints have caused Radio-Canada to operate in a market-logic context, in a competitive market and, for us as is the case for many others—this is what we heard earlier on—this is not good news.

In the logic of commercialization and the profitability of productions, the francophone and Acadian communities always come out on the losing end, since they cannot produce impressive ratings figures. It is therefore clear to us that steps must be taken to ensure that Radio-Canada no longer be obliged to operate in a market-logic context. It is moreover this need to be able to operate independently of the logic of commercialization that justifies the public financing of the major public broadcasters like the BBC or Radio France.

Removing the corporation from the logic of commercialization however is not the same thing as the corporation no longer seeking to make greater inroads with its audience. On that point, I must mention the excellent work done by several regional Radio-Canada stations. In several provinces, particularly out west, francophones take a very positive view of regional radio services and the care taken to reflect the reality and concerns of the community. However, there are difficulties that remain, two in particular.

First of all, let us talk about the lack of resources. In our opinion, this is definitely what is compromising the capacity of our public broadcaster. In Prince Edward Island, for example, we were told that despite efforts by hosts to offer francophone content relevant to the community, the team appears to be so under-equipped that the audience has to listen to English radio for the news that affects their day-to-day lives. I think you mentioned that earlier.

• (1010)

Secondly, data from the BBM showed that Radio-Canada's ratings remained quite low in many regions, particularly in Ontario and the Atlantic. In a number of these regions, community radio stations play a key role as sources of local radio content in French.

From this reality we draw two conclusions: first of all, in order to balance the Canadian broadcasting system, it is essential that we better support community radio stations which are playing, we have seen, a central role in the vitality of the francophone and Acadian communities.

Next, it is very important to reinforce the capacity of Radio-Canada's regional stations so that they can really connect with their communities, to ensure the relevance of Radio-Canada in every region of the country because the issue, once again, is our public broadcaster.

It seems particularly critical to us to reach out to youth who represent not only the next generation of Radio-Canada's audiences, but also the next generation of francophones in the communities. That is why it will be increasingly important for regional stations to develop strategies in the short and medium terms for offering an increasingly dynamic and interactive product focused on both the concerns and feedback of the community served. In this regard, new technologies represent promising potential for making Radio-Canada a flexible medium focused on the francophone communities of each region of Canada.

I would like to express a few thoughts concerning Radio-Canada's television service, and above all, the crown corporation's national network. Generally speaking, the francophone and Acadian communities feel that Radio-Canada's national content is too focused on Montreal. Furthermore, many of us refer to it as Radio-Canada-Montréal, for both news and variety programs. In this regard, the crown corporation must meet the challenge to ensure that it is truly reflecting the regional diversity and realities of Canada, and stimulating a dialogue between Quebec society and the francophone and Acadian communities. This appears to us to be an extremely important component. If we want francophones across the country to talk to each other, to know each other, we need to do that kind of work.

These challenges are among others to ensure more coverage of community current affairs on national news programs, to ensure a greater presence of community personalities on variety programs; and to ensure a greater presence on the screen of French-language dramas produced outside Quebec.

There has been progress made in this regard by the crown corporation. I'm thinking particularly about the national broadcasting of the series *Belle Baie*, produced in Acadia. I am also thinking of the new coverage formula for news at RDI, which we are following with great interest.

And finally, I have in mind the communication and collaboration we have established between the SRC, the communities and the FCFA.

But the crown corporation can go further in taking positive steps to promote the development of minority francophone communities in Canada and support their progress.

In our brief we recommended the development of an accountability framework, and in this regard, once again, we agree with the statements that were made during the first half of this morning's meeting. This issue has a direct link with a component identified by the crown corporation itself in its results-based action plan for 2006-2007 for the implementation of section 41 of the Official Languages Act.

It refers among other things to a better coordination and harmonization of performance indicators for all of the services offered by Radio-Canada. It is in this sense that we talk about an accountability framework, that can set clear qualitative and quantitative objectives as well as performance measures to achieve a greater reflection of the regions, and above all, of the official language minorities on the national network.

This mechanism would also allow the crown corporation to better report on the results of its strategies, and obviously, on those of its regional francophone stations, to ensure a better connection between the communities and the SRC and an increase in ratings. Above all, such an accountability framework would take into account the new part VII of the Official Languages Act and the need to take proactive steps.

• (1015)

As I said earlier, Radio-Canada has taken a certain number of steps in this regard. However, we can and must go much further because the francophone and Acadian communities need Radio-Canada to ensure their future vitality and because a strong Canada is made stronger by a public broadcaster that reflects the diversity and realities of our country.

It is in this regard that the FCFA and the communities it represents are determined to increase the constructive collaborative ties they have with Radio-Canada in order to build a public broadcaster we can all be proud of and whose mandate remains as relevant as ever in the 21st century.

Thank you, members of the committee and thank you, Mr. Chairman.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you very much.

First question, Ms. Keeper, please.

Ms. Tina Keeper (Churchill, Lib.): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

I'd like to go back to the issue around the cuts made in the mid-1990s that you speak about and the impact they have had for the francophone community throughout Canada, and in particular the west and the north.

We recently had a hearing in Yellowknife, and I represent a region in Manitoba that includes all of northern Manitoba. Certainly the statement has been made very clearly throughout the north—and in particular, I'm sure, in the west as well—that there is no local French input, that the programming is based in Montreal, and people feel, as you mentioned, that their local issues are not being represented. Could you speak a bit more on how those cuts have affected that local voice and perhaps what kind of recommendations you have specifically for that?

• (1020)

Mr. Serge Quinty (Director of Communications, Fédération des communautés francophones et acadienne du Canada): Thank you for your question.

In preparation for the position paper we put forth, we looked back 10 or 15 years at the reactions the FCFA had put out on the various cuts that happened, and what happened at that point in 1995-96 is that some stations on TV were melded into one for the entire west. A few years later some money was put back into the regional stations in the west, especially in regional radio, and that allowed a certain strengthening of local coverage. However, what we heard from our members is that there are still not a lot of means and resources, and as you pointed out, in some regions in the north the communities do not have access to a local service of Radio-Canada.

I'll take the example of Alberta. What the community in Alberta deplores is that Alberta generates a lot of national news these days, for obvious reasons, and a lot of the resources of the local station, instead of being dedicated to coverage of news from the French community, are dedicated to coverage of national news. That's one example of how there is a need to reinforce the resources for local coverage.

Ms. Tina Keeper: As you're speaking, my mind is reeling, because this is a CBC mandate review, and you know the challenges are.... One of the things I pointed out, as our previous presenters mentioned, is that the financial contribution to CBC has dropped significantly over the last decade and decade plus, and the costs of programming has gone up, so you see the challenges for CBC are significant.

However, as we move forward, what do we make priorities and how is it that we serve the mandate, as you are saying? How do we ensure Canadians have distinct programming from the public broadcaster? How do you think the CBC can serve the official languages in terms of its broadcasting through radio, new media, and television? Could we have some specific recommendations?

[Translation]

Ms. Marielle Beaulieu: I will answer you in French.

In our brief, we obviously talked about the problem of resources. I think this is a basic problem. I believe that all members of the committee have understood very well that if we wish to have a public broadcaster in a position to fulfil its mandate, you will of course have to study the overall issue of resources. That is an important component.

We also mentioned in our brief—and this was briefly discussed earlier on—the need to tie the resources granted to the SRC to an accountability framework. In a way, the SRC must be like any other government agency, that is to say it must be accountable. With this end in view, I think there is substantive work to be done.

The issue of local and national service concerns us because, in the end, there is very little done nationally, with the exception of the major newscasts, that goes without saying. So we are not talking about one or two small steps. I think there are several corrective actions that could be taken if we want a broadcaster that properly represents who we are and highlights the major issues of Canadian society.

As far as we are concerned, over the last year, we took on the responsibility of becoming active partners, on a national basis as well as locally and regionally. We strengthened our dialogue with the people from Radio-Canada. In fact, as you may know, RDI has modified the programming that concerns us, and we are following these changes attentively.

We now have a dialogue that I would describe as being active, as a group that is of significance to Canada. I believe that it is often thanks to this kind of dialogue that we are able to make ourselves heard. This also allows us to put measures into place by which we can facilitate, in some measure, an adapted content, to ensure that Radio-Canada represents us appropriately.

In my opinion, once again, it is not an issue of taking one or two steps. It truly is an issue of dealing with things comprehensively and of deciding what it is we expect of Radio-Canada, as a country. I think that is at the root of our discussions this morning.

• (1025)

[English]

The Chair: Thank you very much for that.

Ms. Bourgeois.

[Translation]

Ms. Diane Bourgeois (Terrebonne—Blainville, BQ): Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Ladies, gentlemen, good morning.

I would like to make a brief comment before asking my questions.

First of all, you said earlier on in your presentation that the francophone communities needed Radio-Canada. I think that depends on how one interprets these words. In fact, people from anglophone and francophone communities pay their taxes to Canada and they have the right to have access to CBC-Radio-Canada's services. This is not only a need, it is an undeniable and historic right that was given to us under the Canadian Constitution.

Having said that, we travelled to Vancouver and to Yellowknife, where there are francophones outside Quebec who came to talk to us about the relationship they have with the Société Radio-Canada.

First of all, do you feel that Radio-Canada is really fulfilling its mandate as far as these francophone communities are concerned?

Ms. Marielle Beaulieu: That is a very good question.

I think vast improvements must be made. There is room for a great deal of improvement.

As we indicated in our brief, it is obvious that the cutbacks permanently affected the capacity of the radio service of this public broadcaster. In that regard, it is obvious that on this point, we hope to have a public broadcaster that is much more robust and in a better position to appropriately respond to its mandate.

Ms. Diane Bourgeois: Young people from the regions came and told us that there was a shortage of young francophone journalists. Does your federation try to encourage young francophone journalists who can cover the local news for francophone communities?

• (1030)

Ms. Marielle Beaulieu: We are not the ones who hire them.

Ms. Diane Bourgeois: No, but do you talk about that?

Ms. Marielle Beaulieu: The youth issue is important. I will not doubt ask my colleague to add something on this issue. I can, however, tell you that in many cases, the Radio-Canada journalists who arrive in the francophone communities and must contribute to the SRC mandate if I can express myself in that way, come from Quebec. Very often, it is a foot in the door for them. They stay one, two or three years, then...

Ms. Diane Bourgeois: There is quite a turnover.

Ms. Marielle Beaulieu: Indeed. Of course, they do acquire a knowledge base, but the fact remains that for them, it is often a foot in the door. However, that does not mean that these people are not able to do good work. In many cases, they are starting from scratch, they have little knowledge and they are delighted to see that there are francophones elsewhere, be it in Regina, in Edmonton or another place. These people are often discovering a new reality.

Having said that, more and more programs are being offered. There are excellent ones at la Cité collégiale, for example, and at the Collège Boréal. With these, we will be able to train young people in their communities so that they will be in a position to fulfil mandates, be it those of the Société Radio-Canada, the community radio stations or others. Clearly we must count on training youth from these communities. Then they will be able to take over, get jobs and become, in my opinion, very good intermediaries. It is very important that youth be present.

Ms. Diane Bourgeois: My last question has two components.

We have been told that there is a huge lag regarding French content on the Web. Given that young people use the Web a great deal, it could be used to promote the French fact outside of Quebec. I don't know if you are aware of that.

Furthermore, there is one place, and I believe it is Yellowknife, where the Société Radio-Canada uses the local francophone antenna to broadcast its programming to other francophones, particularly in the Northwest Territories. Moreover, Radio-Canada does not provide any money for the repair and maintenance of this antenna.

Do you approve of this way of doing business? What can we do about this?

Mr. Serge Quinty: I will begin by answering your first question.

As far as young people and community networking is concerned, I think that we will have to turn more and more to new technologies on the Web. We have to reach out to where the young people are. This is absolutely clear. We are talking about the future audience of Radio-Canada and the new generations in the communities.

Ms. Diane Bourgeois: It is only in English for the moment. There is nothing on the Internet in French, at Radio-Canada.

Mr. Serge Quinty: Currently, Radio-Canada is webcasting news bulletins. Moreover, there are certain shows that are available live. On the other hand, I agree with you that as far as the regional stations are concerned, there is a great deal of work that remains to be done.

As for your second question, you were probably referring to CIVR, which is in the Northwest Territories. I am not aware of the situation, but I will ask one of our members, the Alliance des radios communautaires about it to see what is happening.

Ms. Diane Bourgeois: Perfect.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

[English]

The Chair: Mr. Angus.

Mr. Charlie Angus: Thank you.

[Translation]

Thank you.

As an MP representing an isolated Franco-Ontarian rural region, I believe that Radio-Canada plays a critical role in the cultural life of the Franco-Ontarian community. In the Timmins-James Bay region, for example, Radio-Canada is the sole voice representing the communities.

Hearst communicates with Sudbury and Timmins communicates with Larder Lake. I'm well aware of the role and importance of the radio in the francophone regions, but I am asking myself the following question: in your opinion, is there enough funding for the francophones in the regions to really see themselves on television?

Mr. Serge Quinty: We've discussed that in our brief. We collected comments from the members of our federation. They told us that there was not enough local content on Radio-Canada television, in this case one or two shows. For example, during the 1990s, the broadcasts called *Ce soir* out west were merged into a single program, and it proved to be most unsatisfactory. And so the answer to your question is very simple: in our opinion, no.

•(1035)

[English]

Mr. Charlie Angus: Thank you.

Would you have specific recommendations then? It seems to me that if Radio-Canada is going to fulfil its role, the francophone regions of Canada have to be able to speak to each other. We see the extreme importance locally and regionally, but we're talking about isolated islands across Canada. In television and radio, how do we bring those islands together into one common dialogue?

[Translation]

Mr. Serge Quinty: That is a very good question, Mr. Angus. In fact, there is a dynamic concerning editorial freedom that prevails as we speak as far as the national news is concerned. Of course, the people at Radio-Canada want to maintain their rights, their editorial independence when the time comes to choose the news items, but they should perhaps have the responsibility of guaranteeing that when we are talking about national news on the *Téléjournal*, it is not just about Quebec. I was watching Radio-Canada a few weeks ago when the census data came out. At one point, the person presenting the data talked about the growing urban population in Quebec, but she then corrected herself to say that she was referring to Canada. I don't know if it was a slip of the tongue. That still gives you an idea of the dynamic.

In my opinion, some steps could be defined. RDI has done some work on this by developing mechanisms and software, among other things, that guarantee that a certain percentage of the news comes from the regions. In the past, these regions had their own shows, including *L'Ontario en direct*, *L'Atlantique en direct* and *L'Ouest en direct*. There is perhaps something we might explore in that direction, in order to guarantee that on the *Téléjournal*, we hear about what is happening in New Brunswick, in Ontario, out west, and so forth.

[English]

Mr. Charlie Angus: In my region we've had a wonderful renaissance of Franco-Ontarian identity. There are many reasons—the catholic and public francophone school systems created a generation of leaders. But Radio-Canada has been there at the centre, taking the very isolated rural communities and making them believe they're part of something and that there's a common voice. In our region it's very much centred on the Franco-Ontarian identity.

Do you believe that in areas where the francophone communities are more challenged because of demographics and lack of linguistic services, an increase in Radio-Canada's regional and local presence would help at least maintain or build cultural identity?

[Translation]

Ms. Marielle Beaulieu: Mr. Angus, to us, this is obvious. You are talking to me about your region, which in fact I know very well because I am a Franco-Ontarian, but I would say that if you were to go out west, you would observe exactly the same phenomenon. It is evident that the support of a significant public broadcaster like Radio-Canada would have an absolutely extraordinary effect on the community both in terms of supporting it but also in terms of its cultural identity.

This is a vital component. For people living outside of Quebec, access is a problem. The fact of being supported and of hearing their own voices would have, evidently, a very significant impact on their identity. That is one of the reasons why we state in our brief that we need Radio-Canada. Nevertheless, I agree with you Ms. Bourgeois, in stating that it goes beyond the issue of needs: it is part of what Radio-Canada must do.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you for that.

Mr. Warkentin.

Mr. Chris Warkentin (Peace River, CPC): Thank you very much for being here this morning. We appreciate your testimony.

Like Mr. Angus, I represent a community that has some rural and isolated French communities. We also have isolated English-speaking communities. The complaint seems to be the same in both communities—simply that the CBC doesn't seem to represent who these people are.

We heard some interesting testimony this morning. You were here for the earlier presenters as well. Where the CBC is not representing evening news or reflecting the communities it serves now, is there another way we might be able to better reflect both French and English communities, one to another, across this country?

The idea was floated of a possible renaissance toward more of a documentary style of production, and that type of thing. You probably heard that idea. What are your thoughts on it?

• (1040)

[Translation]

Ms. Marielle Beaulieu: As we mentioned in our brief, one of the dilemmas for Radio-Canada—and in my opinion, the previous witness clearly demonstrated this—is the whole issue of competition. There is talk of making Radio-Canada function in the same way as any other broadcaster, subject to market forces.

You propose to direct them towards the documentary format. I would say that that would be very risky. Canadian society is what it is. It is interested in what is happening domestically and elsewhere in the world. It likes comedies, documentaries and a great variety of programs. In any case, I believe it is very important that our public broadcaster speak to what is going on in the country, be it locally, regionally, provincially or nationally.

I believe that if we were to reduce the scope of Radio-Canada to give it a more documentary style, we would risk losing a large part of our current audience share. In my opinion, we must on the contrary strengthen Radio-Canada and Canadian content, so that we can better speak to what Canada is today and reach out to isolated communities, whether those are anglophone communities in Quebec—we must recognize that—or francophone communities like those Mr. Angus was talking about.

I am tempted to say that in my opinion, the solutions are not necessarily easy nor unique. I think we need to assess the entire problem—and that is to some extent the role you have given yourselves—and ask ourselves what we expect of our public broadcaster.

[English]

Mr. Chris Warkentin: Yes, and that leads to the question of what we want. Obviously there are a number of things in terms of programming. I have no way of judging what Canadians want at this point, and we're going to have some mechanisms to get feedback from Canadians. But generally I think Canadians would like to see a public broadcaster bringing Canadians together as a country. We want to better understand who our neighbours are. We want to better understand other provinces. We want to better understand what people are doing in other parts, both the French and the English.

Do you have some ideas as to how we might begin to bridge what the CBC and Radio-Canada have possibly left out of their mandate in past years? There's talk of silos—of CBC being in one silo, Radio-Canada being in another silo—and that the two don't necessarily mesh. Do you have some ideas on how to better blend and communicate one to the other, at least to Canadians in different communities, so they might better come to understand one another?

• (1045)

Ms. Marielle Beaulieu: I agree with you on this.

[Translation]

Mr. Serge Quilty: I think that Radio-Canada and CBC have done some work on that, particularly here in Ottawa. I am thinking of the merger of the newsrooms. They really tried to break down the barriers to ensure that, on the one hand, radio and television could work together, be it in English or in French, and on the other hand, to try and ensure that the CBC and Radio-Canada work together, that the newsrooms work together.

Standing on the outside looking in, I would say that it is going to take time before they manage to decouple things completely, change their way of thinking and take a more national perspective. But in fact, I think that this decoupling, which has already brought these people together and made them work together, is a beginning. But beyond that, who knows what the future holds? It is a good question.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you for that.

Mr. Scott.

Let's try to keep both the question and the answer to five minutes.

Hon. Andy Scott: Is that directed to me personally?

The Chair: I hope everyone around the table reflects on that.

Hon. Andy Scott: *Bienvenue.*

I was pleased to hear what Mr. Angus had to say about northern Ontario. Coming from New Brunswick, I'm quite aware of the benefits of Radio-Canada. But I'd like to consider one opportunity, and that has to do with what I think is the complementarity between community radio and Radio-Canada.

Both perform a very serious, important function in an English city, Fredericton, with about a 10% francophone population. It has occurred to me in the past that there may be some complementarity there that could be helpful.

I spoke of this before, because the second problem, which is a real challenge, is with kids. Technology is working against a lot that has been accomplished in New Brunswick since the 1960s in reversing the assimilation that was taking place, and in fact I think New Brunswick stands out in duality. Charlie mentioned the school system. I think duality has done it in New Brunswick, for the record. But I'm worried now because the new entertainment systems, the new media for all kinds of things, are heavily English.

So is there some opportunity through the school system to engage kids in a very specific, objective, and driven way to at least offer the opportunity of options? I'm particularly interested in the complementarity, because I know how engaged you are in community specifically, and I think you can help a lot in some of these challenges.

I don't want it to become an excuse either way. I don't want community radio to be an excuse for not financing Radio-Canada, and I don't want Radio-Canada to be an excuse for not financing community radio. They're both critical, but I think they can be complementary.

Do you have any comments?

[Translation]

Ms. Marielle Beaulieu: Definitely yes. I completely agree with you on the issue of the complementarity of these two tools, because they are indeed different tools. My colleague will no doubt wish to comment on that aspect.

I would say to you that community radio is extremely important to us because indeed, it has to be situated at the heart of the action. For example, if we are talking about what is going on in the French-language schools, or even the English schools in communities where anglophones are in the minority, I think that community radio stations play an extremely important role for youth, for children and adolescents, and in a broader sense in terms of cultural identity as well, this goes without saying.

Having said that, Radio-Canada also absolutely has a community mandate, but in a different way. Community radio, naturally, has to be very close to people's experience, and must offer people through the broadcast of its programming, what is at the very heart of the community, through various means.

Radio-Canada, on the other hand, has a different image and is more concerned, obviously, with news, among other things.

Having said that, I will give the floor to my colleague.

• (1050)

Mr. Serge Quinty: Mr. Scott, I am in a good position to answer your question because I know the world of community radio very well, since I am a product of it. It is interesting, but sometimes it rather annoys the people from the Alliance des radios communautaires when we talk about complementarity. In fact, in an ideal world, that is what should happen. However, in some regions, community radio stations fully play the role that Radio-Canada should play.

For example, I'll bring you back to the example of Radio Beauséjour in Shediac, in your riding, in New Brunswick. In fact, it is thanks to CJSE that there has been a refrancisation and a new

infatuation with the Acadian identity in this region, the production of new records and the creation of new groups. According to a BBM survey on audience ratings, the station had a 32% audience share, including both English and French, in the region of Greater Moncton. In this case, it is not an issue of complementarity, it is a situation where CJSE is squarely playing the role of Radio-Canada. In terms of the role that Radio-Canada could play, I would like to bring you back to television and talk to you a little bit about TFO.

In our opinion, TFO represents a television model that really piques the interest of young people, that really reaches out to young people in their world, whether it be at school, through podcasts, the Internet, or be it through chatrooms. These are solutions we should explore.

[English]

Hon. Andy Scott: I want to comment on the point made about the collaboration between Radio-Canada and CBC. There are language of work issues that are critically important to protect in that exercise. That point didn't come up in a response, and I think it needs to be made.

The Chair: Thank you.

Ms. Bourgeois.

[Translation]

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

Ms. Beaulieu, during an exchange with Mr. Warkentin, you spoke of very isolated anglophone communities. You said that there are very isolated francophone communities, but that there are also very isolated anglophone communities. In any case, it suggested that there are such communities in Quebec as well. I was not aware of that, because we know that the situation of anglophones here, in Quebec, is different: we earmark budgets within our provincial programs to help anglophones here, in Quebec.

Do you really believe they are experiencing the same situation?

Ms. Marielle Beaulieu: Personally, I would make a distinction. There is the anglophone community of Montreal, which is not what I was talking about. On the other hand, if you go into northern Quebec, in the region of Sept-Îles, etc., there are indeed anglophones, even in some areas of the Gaspé, who live in a very isolated situation. One of the things we realized in working or speaking with anglophone communities in Quebec, is that in the regions, the situation of anglophones is similar to that of certain isolated communities.

Ms. Diane Bourgeois: All right, we must be very careful.

Ms. Marielle Beaulieu: Precisely, we must be very careful.

Ms. Diane Bourgeois: There are very few similarities because, to my knowledge, they do in fact have services, whereas certain francophone communities outside of Quebec have none.

Ms. Marielle Beaulieu: I am not in a position to comment on the subject. I believe that anglophones in Quebec could certainly better speak to the issue than me.

Ms. Diane Bourgeois: All right, but I would still like to set the record straight. The situation of anglophones here, in Quebec, is very different from the situation of francophones outside Quebec, because we allocate budgets for them and we pay attention to them.

Having said that, my second question is for Mr. Quinty. You said earlier that the CBC and Radio-Canada have tried to work together. Given the fact that Quebec is a sort of beacon for the francophone communities in Canada, do you believe it is a good thing that the SRC and CBC work together to harmonize all of the things they do? Would it not be better to keep the Société Radio-Canada as it stands in Quebec and rather to change the mandate of the CBC?

•(1055)

Mr. Serge Quinty: In my opinion, we need a Société Radio-Canada that represents all of the Canadian francophonie; we need a strong CBC that also represents the specificity of Canada in the English language. I would say to you that in terms of sharing resources, this could be advantageous, particularly in the context of converging technologies. I am talking about the breakdown of silos as I am aware of the situation, here in the Ottawa newsrooms, because I do not know what is happening in the other regions or in Quebec. On the other hand, I do believe that we still should have a French-language Société Radio-Canada that reports on the overall Canadian francophonie.

Ms. Diane Bourgeois: That's fine, thank you.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Warkentin. We only have a few minutes left, so one question.

Mr. Chris Warkentin: I'll keep it short.

I certainly didn't intend to stir up any type of controversy. What I wanted to draw out is the fact that English-speaking communities, even in my riding, don't see themselves necessarily reflected when they see news coming from Toronto or from Vancouver. So I think it's a bigger issue, and you've identified it, and I certainly didn't want to put this tension between anybody on the committee. It's simply the fact that people in my constituency, if they be French-speaking, if they be English-speaking, don't necessarily always see themselves reflected by CBC or Radio-Canada, and they don't necessarily find out a whole lot more about other remote communities or communities that are less represented in terms of population.

What I'd like to do is have your feedback—and I think you've brought it—that there might be a unifying effect CBC and Radio-Canada might make. It wasn't my intention that we blow all the walls between Radio-Canada and CBC and that we merge the two; that certainly wasn't the intent.

I think there are common stories that Radio-Canada and the CBC could tell in the respective languages, certainly, but about the different cultures that we have here represented in Canada. We could tell the stories about rural Quebec to the rest of Canada. If we have to translate it into English, that would be all the better, so that everybody can understand it. That's the point I was making, and I think we might be in agreement on this.

Ms. Marielle Beaulieu: I think so too.

Mr. Chris Warkentin: Thank you very much. I appreciate your testimony here this morning.

[Translation]

Ms. Marielle Beaulieu: We dream of a day when *The National*, on CBC, will indeed be able to speak to an issue that would bring together the Canadian francophonie.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you very much for that testimony here this morning, and I thank everyone for their questions.

I have one little statement I'd like to make. Again, when we were in Yellowknife the challenge that CBC/Radio-Canada has was very evident, because CBC North not only has to work in English and French, but they also have 11 Innu and aboriginal tongues to deal with. We are quite a diverse country, and CBC North works over half the area of Canada, and it's very sparsely populated. So it is a challenge, and I know we get it in various other ways. I just wanted to make that statement .

Thank you very much for your presentation this morning, and I thank everyone around this table for their great questions.

The meeting is adjourned.

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