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## Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage

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**Wednesday, April 11, 2007**

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**Chair**

**Mr. Gary Schellenberger**

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• (1445)

[English]

**The Chair (Mr. Gary Schellenberger (Perth—Wellington, CPC)):** Order, please.

I make apology right off the bat for us being a little late. This morning our witnesses were a little late. Now the committee is a little late this afternoon.

Thank you very much for taking the time out of your day to come to speak to us.

We have Mr. Paquin and Mr. Boucher here from the Les productions Rivard.

Whoever would like to go first, please feel free.

[Translation]

**Mr. Louis Paquin (Executive Producer, Les productions Rivard):** I want to thank the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage for giving us the opportunity to provide you with our comments on the CBC's mandate. It is not often that you come to Winnipeg, and I want to welcome you. I will stick to my written text, so that my ideas will be clearer and more direct and my speech will be shorter.

I am co-owner of Productions Rivard, an independent film and television company. Our business was set up in order to ensure a greater presence of western French speaking communities within the Canadian film industry. We already have approximately a hundred productions. They are in various areas, documentary, variety, drama and education. Since it was established, the number of the company's employees has risen to 30 and that of contractual people is now over a hundred on a regular basis.

The firm, Les Productions Rivard plays a leadership role in the Franco-Manitoban cultural industry. We provide work and opportunities to authors, producers and other content generators. We cooperate with the other members of the cultural industry. We borrow our actors from theatre companies and we enlist the aid of some writers, composers and singers. We provide work to hundreds of craftsmen.

Such has been the role of CBC during the 1970-1980 decade. During that wonderful period, local television produced soap operas, variety programs, documentaries, public affairs and youth programs. Then its role changed and it finally almost disappeared in view of the budget cuts and the growing complexity of the telecommunications sector. Budget cuts and the decisions that followed had a disastrous

effect on our community with regard to our capacity of telling our stories and contributing to the national dialogue.

It is essential that the committee be aware of the impact of government's cuts on the ability of the CBC to discharge its mandate and on the communities which rely on the CBC to reflect Canada's diversity. "*No TV, no country*" wrote Geoff Pevere, the famous historian of Canadian motion pictures and long time programmer of the Toronto International Film Festival. Television has this unique ability to allow Canadian to share their experiences. With regard to the creation of an identity and a national conscience within a country as large and diversified as ours, television has been a determining factor.

The comment made by Geoff Pevere could probably apply to artistic production in general. It remains that television has carved for itself an enviable place. It has the ability to channel the expression in all the arts and all the communities, whatever their size. It helps develop ties between all Canadians and to bring them closer to their roots while providing them with food for thought and grounds for discussion, pride and hope.

I will now speak about the role of the CBC.

Television defines the values that we wish to leave to our children and grandchildren. Let us also mention how this industry plays a leading role when major Canadian cultural policies are being developed. If CBC has a role it is to give a voice, a face and a mirror to the Canadian cultural and social texture. As opposed to other broadcasters, the mandate of CBC is not first and foremost commercial. Our public broadcaster cannot play this role alone, especially when it is located at the core of a metropolis which has to fight for its creative territory.

The House of Commons must continue at all costs to support the national mandate of the corporation. If CBC must factor in business interests and audience rating, it cannot do so at the expense of its rationale. The government must ensure long term financing to CBC so that it can achieve national results. It is imperative that the government recognize the exceptional dynamics of the link between itself, the corporation and the general public. In the Canadian context, this deep connection promotes a productive dialogue. But all of course must be able to participate.

The fact that CBC has gradually withdrawn from local production has had quite a few negative effects. I am certain that you have heard a long list of complaints during these hearings. But this withdrawal has also had some positive results.

Independent production came out during the last decade and it went a long way to expand the horizons of Canadians. These production companies developed in Quebec but also in several parts of the country. Les Productions Rivard is soon to celebrate its 12<sup>th</sup> anniversary.

My concerns however are greater than those of a producer. Here, in Winnipeg, we are committed to build the capacity of a community with regard to TV production. We are also a training school. A program shown at 7:30 on Monday night is the tip of the iceberg. It is the result of a creative approach requiring professional ability. It is the reflection of creative people, but also of a society really alive. Independent production outside Quebec today represents a condition *sine qua non* to the fulfilment of CBC's national mandate but independent production cannot do anything without a broadcaster. The broadcaster must have the resources necessary to fulfill its ambitions.

In that sense, the decisions of our government and of our public television, which seems to marginalize the regions, are contrary to the national mandate. They also represent a refusal to recognize the place of the official language communities.

Let's talk about television in Quebec.

The success of the Quebec industry remains, for Les Productions Rivard, a model and a source of inspiration. That industry has set itself apart by offering to its public diversified and high quality programs in his own image. Nowhere in the world can we find such osmosis between television and viewers, between creators, performers and their public.

The Quebec industry has a particularly good track record in drama series. The public also had the good fortune to see the expansion of documentary and variety programs making it possible to discover new realities and new talents. As far as children's programs are concerned, the public discovered programs especially created to appeal, entertain and teach.

Worth noting is a fact which is of particular interest to us as producers: Quebec creators and artists found in public television an extraordinary challenge. Quebec writers, comedians, musicians and film-makers regularly work for television. The small screen gave them new opportunities to express themselves and a second to none window on the world. The success of television in Quebec is the result of our corporation's commitment.

The state of television in Quebec reveals the potential of our public television in minority setting. In spite of criticisms, we recognize the impact, the vision and the contribution of our corporation in Canada. Alone CBC has set quality standards in the communication industry and the cultural industry generally. Which has been accomplished in Quebec can now be extended to other French speaking communities of the country and we need the CBC to do so.

As the saying goes, the devil is in the details. For us, it is important to boost the corporation on two fronts: first as a tool of broadcasting where there is room for local regional and national broadcasting. Second as an agency aware of its structuring role when it comes to developing a regional contains from the regions.

In spite of the concerns one may have regarding the imposition of quotas and quite specific guidelines, I think it is important to look at the details. The mandate, as established by the government, leaves too much room for interpretation. I would recommend that more specific directions be introduced regarding CBC's commitment to broadcast over the entire Canadian territory. Furthermore, the federal government should remind the CRTC of its duty which is to require CBC to broadcast over all the territories in the basic services provided by cable operators.

Les Productions Rivard recommend to the federal government to add to the contribution agreement to CBC a provision aiming at increasing the broadcast of contents emanating from all French speaking areas. And that these contents not be limited to newsreels but that they should also includes variety and documentary programming as well as fiction films, magazines and youth programs. Such framework would make it possible to reflect the conditions and the needs of official language minorities and to incorporate francophone Canadians within the large francophone industry which should be that of Quebec and the regions all together. Such framework would also allowed the CBC to discharge its national obligations with its audience.

● (1450)

Telefilm Canada, the Canadian Television Fund and other funding sources have made adjustments in recent years to integrate community-based projects into the television landscape. It's fundamentally important that the SRC follow their lead and incorporate into its action plans strategies that focus positively on the regions.

By looking to independent regional production companies, not only is the SRC meeting its goals in terms of quality and diversity, it is also achieving savings in that investing in public television enables producers such as ourselves to secure funding from other sources and to maximize the impact of the initial funding received.

In spite of the efforts on the part of a number of managers, federal budget cuts and SRC priorities have combined to minimize the presence and capabilities of the regions. The effect of this has been to marginalize communities and to create the impression that they are incapable of contributing to the creative and production processes. The history and successes of the regions have been ignored, thereby compromising artistic expression and weakening regional infrastructures.

Community reliance on the personal convictions of the SRC's internal champions must change. Relations with Montreal must be strengthened through the introduction of clear policies and goals to be attained in the short and long term. The champions will always be there, but they must have the support of the organization at all costs. Dependence and the resulting internal and external tensions would be eliminated if a contribution agreement clearly identifying the hoped-for results in the area of regional production was put in place. The regions' role cannot remain forever open to negotiations. Public television must structure its resources in a way that is in keeping with its mandate.

The most positive outcome of the concerted efforts made in recent years is without question the decision in 2004 to dedicate 10% of the Canadian Television Fund's francophone envelope to French-language production in minority regions. This has led to the acquisition of other important and essential tools and sends out a signal that the Canadian Television Fund is committed to production in Canada's francophone regions. As such, Les Productions Rivard would like to present three recommendations:

That the government affirm its commitment to public television and invest adequately in the SRC so that it can carry out its mandate;

That, given the government's expectations with regard to regional production, a reasonable portion of SRC funds be allocated to independent production activities and be invested in production outside Quebec for broadcasting on local, regional and/or national channels;

That the public broadcaster be bound by its mandate to broadcast various programming genres — news, documentaries, dramas, variety and youth programs — with francophone content originating from francophone communities outside Quebec.

These recommendations represent concrete options for resolving problems that francophone minority communities have been dealing with for several decades. Canada's francophones have built their schools, their health services and their cultural, communication and economic development institutions. They exercise their right to speak their language and express their unique cultural diversity.

The audiovisual production sector is another sector that needs to be harnessed in order to support and consolidate these assets. Its position remains fragile in light of the small numbers and the isolation from major production centres. Measurable, stable and ongoing political and institutional support is a definite condition for achieving success.

Before I wrap up, I would like to give you an example of how the SRC could fulfil its obligations toward the regions. Recently, a cooperative venture proved to be very successful.

Les Productions Rivard, in conjunction with the SRC, produced a major series to showcase the Festival du Voyageur 2007. Entitled *Pour un soir seulement*, the series showcased the talents of various artists from different fields and often, artists with different styles. This series, which was comprised of 18 half-hour programs, gave the studio and viewing audience an opportunity to discover new talented performers and to witness artists performing together for the very first time. The series reflected the diversity of performers from across the country and their connection with one another. The SRC helped to bring together in Winnipeg in the middle of February over 117 performers to tape 18 programs. Efforts of this nature must continue.

• (1455)

Artists from Quebec and from elsewhere were able to witness firsthand the energy of the francophone community and to see just how much Manitoba's francophone community values culture. We proved our ability to welcome artists from other regions and to produce a series for the national network, all the while contributing to the development of our community. Regional production resulted

in an important program for the SRC and, according to many artists, this would not have been possible anywhere else but in Manitoba.

Producing a series of this nature was made possible because of the SRC's mandate. You should not lose sight during your deliberations of the fact that this mandate provides a window to the future and inspires producers as well as consumers to explore all facets of our collective heritage.

You can always review this mandate and clarify procedures, but for heaven's sake, do not take away from us public television, because it belongs to all of us. At times, it may seem distant and unfocused, but its mere presence gives us hope.

Members of the committee, can you help us?

[English]

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Monsieur Boucher.

[Translation]

**Mr. Daniel Boucher (President and Executive Director, Société franco-manitobaine):** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. It's never easy to speak after an expert, but I will do my level best.

Members of the committee, on behalf of the Société franco-manitobaine, or SFM, I want to thank you for this opportunity to present our position on the mandate, role and impact of the SRC on our community.

Let me begin by recalling the mandate of our organization. The SFM, the official voice of Manitoba's francophone community, has a mandate to ensure the growth and development of this community and to demand full rights for it. Together with its partners, the SFM plans, facilitates and promotes the overall development of the francophone community.

The SRC plays a critically important role in ours and in all communities from coast to coast. No one can argue that the SRC has had a direct role in the development of our community for a number of years now. The SRC has long been in many respects the sole vehicle for francophone media for many of our communities.

Today in Manitoba, we have an opportunity to access other media that serve our communities in special ways. However, there is no question that the SRC has earned a special place for itself as a communicator and partner in our community's development.

CKSB, the SRC's radio station in Manitoba, has been broadcasting over the airwaves for over 60 years. It offers us a window on our community, our country and our world. This station is a reflection of most of the activities in which our community is engaged. It broadcasts quality programs produced right here in Manitoba, programs that strengthen our identity and our community. With its morning, noon and afternoon programming CBC Radio Canada focusses on the issues and priorities that matter to our community.

CBC Radio Canada must have the resources it needs to continue offering quality programming to our community. We would like to see more air time set aside for local programming. We would also like most decisions involving local programming to be made at the regional level, bearing in mind the specific nature of our community. The recent decision to relocate reporters with CBC radio in Saint-Boniface to the studio on Portage Avenue has raised some concerns within the community. Is this the beginning of the end for the historic facility in Saint-Boniface? Too often, decisions to streamline operations for profitability's sake are made far away from the regions and a corporate philosophy which puts a priority on dollars and cents fails to take into account that often, investing in the regions is less cost-effective. While a local production may be more costly an endeavour, its impact in terms of training and community visibility cannot be measured in dollars and cents. We are neglecting to take into account the adverse effects of cutbacks at the regional and local levels where in our opinion, facilities are already understaffed.

SRC television also plays a key role in the community. Television is a partner in community development, whether it be *Téléjournal Manitoba*, which provides a daily glimpse into the community or local productions that showcase our communities. RDI provides a window on the rest of Canada and showcases the talent, dynamic energy and contribution of Manitoba's francophone community to the rest of Canada.

The SRC's local team works diligently to present an accurate picture of community life. However, we worry that the SRC does not always adequately carry out its mandate as a public broadcaster from coast to coast. While we recognize the importance of the Quebec and Montreal markets, we want a corporation that is a truly national broadcaster, one that gives all Canadians an opportunity to enjoy francophone content that reflects the collective experiences of all of Canada's francophones.

• (1500)

The SRC has a very unique role to play in our communities and in the vast world of broadcasting. It is vitally, indeed crucially, important that the SRC be a truly Canadian entity designed for Canadians by Canadians. Content must be truly pan-Canadian, produced by members of local and regional communities. Despite some similarities, the voice of a francophone from Western Canada is different from that of a francophone from Quebec, New Brunswick or Newfoundland. We all have a unique message to convey, even if we do share the same language and culture.

Since the cutbacks in the 1990s, we have observed changes at the local level in SRC productions. These cuts immediately resulted in a sharp drop in local productions and cultural programs. Opportunities for developing local programs now appear limited. It is critically important that this trend be reversed and that the number of hours of local programming be increased. We have independent production houses that are more than capable of filling the void left by past cuts. The SRC must champion local and independent products and act as a pan-Canadian partner and broadcaster.

The SRC team in Manitoba has made great strides because it advocates a partnership approach. It is also very important that our productions be shown on a regular basis across the country, in addition to RDI programming. We don't deny that many more

products do and will continue to originate in Quebec. The quality of Quebec productions is impressive. However, we are seeking to have a greater voice within SRC's production sphere to ensure that the reality of francophones nationwide is better reflected. Productions originating outside Quebec would complement Quebec content very nicely.

Manitoba boasts a very rich history. Its community has the ability to contribute to the SRC's efforts. Whether at the production, artistic or news programming level, we have developed solid teams and quality products worthy of being exported across the country. We have a history to share with others and we need the SRC's support to relate that history to Canada and to the world. Nevertheless, we are eager to discover and learn new things, and we benefit from programming produced by francophone communities outside Quebec. The SRC can act as a bridge for communicating with other communities across the country. It is important for us to ensure that our voice is heard by all media components of our Crown corporation.

Although RDI provides quality programming, a number of francophones living outside the Winnipeg city limits are unable to tune in because they do not have cable service. We realize that this is not the SRC's responsibility, but rather the responsibility of cable companies. However, we do regret the fact that when RDI hit the airwaves, the SRC did not request that the service be mandatory from coast to coast.

At the same time, the federal government has a responsibility to ensure that all Canadians have equal access to the same quality service, regardless of where they live in Canada. A two-tiered or multi-tiered system must be avoided.

The point that we are trying to make here is that it is important for the SRC to work with communities to ascertain their needs, concerns and views on a Crown corporation that is part of our day-to-day lives, and that contributes tremendously to the development of our community. At the local level, we often work with SRC managers to improve programming and to make it more accessible to the community as a whole. The SRC must remain on the cutting edge of technology to ensure that Manitobans have access to quality programming for their viewing pleasure from anywhere in the province.

Canadian values are non negotiable and we hope that the SRC and the Government of Canada will be mindful of the importance of preserving and especially, of strengthening the SRC in our regions. The corporation must be a reflection of the dynamic spirit and contributions of the entire population of Canada.

To our minds, Canada is a bilingual nation from coast to coast. Given the number of francophones living outside Quebec and the growing number of immersion program graduates, it is important that SRC programming be available from coast to coast. The federally funded corporation has a very clear, direct mandate relating to fundamental Canadian values. It should be remembered that one of these values is that Canada has two official languages. This must transcend financial considerations. This value must be part of the federal government's message and be reflected in its actions. Indeed, the federal government has a duty to support our Crown corporation by giving it the resources it needs to lend a voice to official language communities across Canada.

• (1505)

Finally, the SFM believes that the SRC has a clear mandate to reflect Canadian values. The SRC must develop in an innovative way while respecting competition from the private sector. It must emphasize its partnerships with community stakeholders in order to enrich programming content and expand its broadcasting range. Armed with these guidelines, the SRC will be strong enough to withstand North American influences and to continue to carve out a place for itself in Canada and around the world.

Thank you very much.

• (1510)

[English]

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

Ms. Keeper.

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

I'm going to hand over my time to Mr. Simard.

[Translation]

**Hon. Raymond Simard (Saint Boniface, Lib.):** Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

I would also like to thank our invited guests. It's always a pleasure to be here in Winnipeg. Committee members believes it is important to travel to different locations.

My first question is directed to Mr. Paquin.

As I see it, last year's lockout was an opportunity for all of us to gauge the importance of the SRC. In Western Canada, service in French came to a halt. I for one have no doubts that the SRC is critically important. I think we need to discuss the corporation's role.

You stated that in some respects, the SRC's role was to hold the fabric of Canada together. You also stated that the corporation's mandate was not necessarily the same as that of private broadcasters.

In your opinion, is the SRC moving too far in one direction? In other words, does it feel that it should be competing with private broadcasters?

**Mr. Louis Paquin:** As I see it, SRC officials see the debate between private and public television as a double-edged sword. People inside the organization very much appreciate the fact that everything doesn't hinge on audience shares and advertising sales. However, they worry that if audience shares and commercial success

is suddenly set aside one day, the public might wonder why billions are being invested if no one is watching SRC programming.

I can appreciate the formidable challenges that they are facing. The SRC has a national mandate and receives government support. I'm concerned on two levels. I believe this committee is very important in that it provides directives and a mandate to the SRC. SRC program content must be a reflection of the entire country. The regions must be supported to this end. Otherwise, the whole situation is like a double-edged sword for us.

SRC officials can save money by centralizing operations in Montreal. Fifteen or so years ago, the SRC took a step back and communities lost their production capability. For the past five or six years, I've been hearing that the regions are not able to provide network content because they lack the proper infrastructures. The fact is that these infrastructures were taken away from us.

The SRC needs to be given a clear mandate to ensure programming content originating in the regions. That must come from us, in order to put an end to internal bickering over operations in Montreal and regional operations. The SRC must devise some strategies so that within the next twenty years, the regions produce programming content. In order to achieve this end, the corporation must cooperate with independent producers.

As I mentioned, the Canadian Television Fund and all other financial institutions modified their rules to ensure that a program originating in Saskatchewan, Alberta or Manitoba receive the same funding as a venture originating in Montreal, whether or not it is broadcast locally or on the full network.

**Hon. Raymond Simard:** I'd like to respond.

You both alluded to the adverse effects of cutbacks. Mention should also be made of the SRC's lack of sensitivity toward the regions. When he testified before the Official Languages Committee, Mr. Sylvain Lafrance mentioned wanting to make some very positive changes. I believe that these changes are happening. However, either Mr. Lafrance or another witness pointed out Quebeckers may not be interested in regional productions. The majority of francophones live in Quebec and yet, a recent program on the voyageurs attracted a significant audience share in Quebec.

Is it possible to produce programming here in Manitoba that might interest Quebeckers?

• (1515)

**Mr. Louis Paquin:** We produced a series entitled *Destination Nor'Ouest*, not for the SRC, but for TVA. An audience of one million tuned in each week. The program recounted a voyage by canoe between Montreal and Winnipeg. I maintain that we need to produce programming locally, nationally and regionally. We can develop programs that specifically target the Montreal audience, but these do not have a great deal of value added. If a program is produced entirely in Montreal, the broadcaster will wonder why the program must be ordered from Winnipeg. We need to develop programs for local audiences. From time to time, these programs can be aired on the network. For example, we produced a program on Henri Bergeron, a SRC announcer who is from Manitoba. We also produce programs for young people. We are capable of producing a range of interesting programs that could be aired on the full network.

I don't want to belabour this point. Sylvain Lafrance and René Fontaine are very attuned to our situation. That's why I believe policies must be formulated. The problem becomes apparent when you take a closer look at the SRC. Let me give you a concrete example.

I was speaking with a corporation employee who informed me that so far this year, she had worked on two projects with regional offices. She told me that she had been a SRC employee for 33 years and I was rather surprised to hear her say that she was just now finding out that the regions provided program content. The situation leads me to believe that a policy must be put in place to allow all corporations employees, and not just management, to forge closer ties with the regions. I mentioned champions. However, what's going to happen when they leave? Therein lies the problem.

We're counting on you to formulate policies of this nature, somewhat like the Canadian Television Fund did with the support of Heritage Canada. CTF officials decided to allocate 10% of all funds to productions originating from outside Quebec. I don't necessarily want to specify quotas, but I do think the funding proportion should be clear.

**Hon. Raymond Simard:** Separating programming produced in Quebec from regionally produced programs, setting directions, having your own budget and people who are more attuned to the regions: are these options that you are considering?

**Mr. Louis Paquin:** Not exactly. I think we need to win the battle, that is get closer to Quebecers. They have a great deal to offer. Quite simply, it needs to be made clear that the regions are part of the corporation. In terms of a budget, perhaps you need to be more specific.

**Hon. Raymond Simard:** Thank you.

[English]

**The Chair:** Ms. Bourgeois.

[Translation]

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

Good day, sirs. I'm delighted to finally meet francophone producers from Manitoba.

What do you estimate to be the size of Manitoba's francophone population?

**Mr. Daniel Boucher:** There are approximately 47,000 francophones in Manitoba and 10% claim to be bilingual. Therefore, Manitoba is home to about 110,000 people who speak both official languages.

**Ms. Diane Bourgeois:** Mr. Boucher, unless I'm mistaken, you stated that the SRC was facing some major financial challenges. You didn't say so in so many words, but you implied that this was the case.

Would you not also agree that the SRC has some major responsibilities by virtue of its mandate, namely to produce quality programs in both official languages and perhaps even to enter into partnerships with independent producers?

**Mr. Daniel Boucher:** I do feel that the CBC/SRC has a vital and broad role to play in many areas. This large corporation is involved

in many ventures. We believe that it is critically important to forge these partnerships. After the cutbacks of the 1990s, we've not managed to get back what we lost.

However, we have managed to right the ship, thanks especially to independent local productions and to other measures as well. We have quietly expanded our local programming. There is still much to do and the regions have a great deal of potential when it comes to producing programming likely to be of interest to a Canada-wide audience. As such, we think the SRC deserves more support in order to continue carrying out the task at hand.

• (1520)

**Ms. Diane Bourgeois:** You said two things that are extremely important. I'd like you to search back in time.

When you talk about the 1990s, to which year in particular are you referring? To 1990 or to 1994? We looked at the CBC/SRC's mandate during this time period. What particular year were you thinking about?

**Mr. Louis Paquin:** As far as production is concerned, during the 1970s and up until 1984 or 1985, many different types of programs were produced. The community was pumped up like never before. Daniel Lavoie was a product of this era. A certain kind of energy was in the air and professionals wanted to work in the culture and communications fields.

After 1984-1985, cuts were made and several minor programs were produced in Western Canada. With the advent of the Canadian Television Fund, tax credits and independent production in 1995, we arrived on the scene and once again began producing programs. However, our partners weren't the SRC, but rather TFO, TVA, Astral and others. They were so far removed from local production that even local management had given up on the idea. Any thoughts of getting into local production had been set aside because this had been in some respects the exclusive domain of the SRC for many years. Even independent producers were wondering what I was up to, because they had more or less abandoned the field of production.

**Ms. Diane Bourgeois:** So then, if I understand correctly, Franco-Manitobans can take the credit for the dynamic nature of francophone programs in Manitoba. Is that correct?

**Mr. Louis Paquin:** They didn't accomplish this on their own. Policy changes occurred with the Canadian Television Fund after the federal government stepped in to ensure that the fund was attuned to the situation, that Telefilm...

**Ms. Diane Bourgeois:** The involvement was minimal, Mr. Paquin. You said that this represented approximately 10% of the total amount ...

**Mr. Louis Paquin:** Yes, but that's an enormous amount.

**Ms. Diane Bourgeois:** In your opinion.



**Mr. Louis Paquin:** Yes, because 10% of the francophone envelope represents approximately \$8 million per year. That's the equivalent of about \$25 million currently earmarked for regions outside Quebec. In 1995, no amount was budgeted for that purpose. Therefore, the government has been very helpful in that regard.

**Ms. Diane Bourgeois:** I'm extremely proud to know that television production in Quebec is the envy of people elsewhere.

You stated that it was important for the public broadcaster to make more room for local, regional and national programming.

This week, we received a document from the TD Bank stating that if a nation is to grow, it's important that people be educated, particularly in the areas of arts and culture. Would you care to comment on this, since you reside in an anglophone community?

**Mr. Daniel Boucher:** Arts and culture are essential. Without them, a people cannot grow. That's pretty obvious. In that respect, the SRC can help because it broadcasts cultural and arts programs and conveys a people's sense of identity.

We're attempting to convey an important message, namely that the SRC, which has a national mandate, must place more emphasis on its national mandate so that Canadians can communicate with and understand one another and share resources, expertise and talents. That has always been our goal.

What the TB Bank was saying is true. We're asking to partner with institutions like the SRC — and there are many others — to share our community's wealth with others.

• (1525)

**Ms. Diane Bourgeois:** Thank you very much.

[English]

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Mr. Angus.

[Translation]

**Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP):** Thank you for your presentation.

As a Member of Parliament for a Franco-Ontarian region, I'm quite familiar with the SRC's role in the life and culture of the Franco-Ontarian community, particularly in the area of regional and local radio, which is excellent.

However, there are not enough resources to produce dramas or independent programs in my region. The resources are also lacking to support Franco-Ontarian television programming.

[English]

Monsieur Paquin, what steps would we need to take to build regional, independent, francophone productions across this country that can tell the stories of the regions?

[Translation]

**Mr. Louis Paquin:** Would you like me to answer you in French, or in English?

[English]

Maybe I can deal with this in English.

What's essential is that this is long-term. This is why I feel this committee and the policies of our government are fundamental, because if we depend on champions, it will not last. We have to have a long-term strategy to ensure that the regions can supply the content. By having cut the regions after 1984, we basically reduced it. We had seven directors in Manitoba in 1985; in 1995 we had zero. They had all left the province because there were no more.... Once you lose that capacity you have to rebuild it.

We are starting to rebuild in Manitoba, for example, some of these resources, and it's amazing where they're coming out of. We're doing casting now and people are saying there's not going to be anybody. We have 30, 40 people lined up. People from Montreal or from Alberta, wherever the representatives come from, are amazed with the talent. It's been abandoned for 15 years, but it's coming back.

We need long-term commitments to build the capacity in the regions. This is why, even though we have to stay together with Radio-Canada Montreal—we have to work together—because they do have the expertise to help us rebuild the capacity, there needs to be commitment to doing it in the long term. If it's just dependent on a few champions, the minute they retire you're back at zero, and we're back to re-educating everybody. So there needs to be a decision made that the regions are non-negotiable, that we need to have the capacity in the regions.

In French Canada it's probably a bit more dramatic than in English Canada. I think that in French Canada there's an infrastructure and it's weaker because it requires more strategic alliances. I think Radio-Canada is the best institution to be behind that. So I think we need long-term strategies and commitments.

**Mr. Charlie Angus:** Paul Martin made extensive cuts to CBC in 1996, and we have not recovered. We haven't even come close. We have the Canadian Television Fund, with its 37% for Radio-Canada now, and we have a \$60-million top-up, maybe this year or maybe next year. We have two years in now, but it's always year to year. In fact, up to budget day, we have CBC phoning asking if we know whether they'll get their top-up or not. There's that sense of instability. Has this little patchwork of programs gone anywhere to recouping the terrible loss that we saw after those 1996 cuts?

**Mr. Louis Paquin:** Yes. When the various parties came together—and I was actually part of the process where Heritage Canada, Telefilm, and all these institutions made the decision that the francophones outside of Quebec were going to be part of their business plans and they established policies that favoured this type of decision—it sent a clear signal to all the broadcasters that there were resources for productions that come from the regions. This has done a lot to set the stage, but I feel that at Radio-Canada.... Even though lately, I must say, in the past couple years, there's been a change and a commitment to what's going on, my concern is that when this phase of people come over, then where are we again? Where are we with the policies? This is why I feel that the decision has to be at this level. Once the money gets down there, people start making decisions about priorities.

This is why I think the regions become negotiable things, and I don't think they should be negotiable. I don't think we should weaken Montreal to support the regions, but I think that the regions should not be negotiable. If you're mandated to have content coming from the regions, and not just news, then it will have to be that people have documentaries and other kinds of content. Once that's established, then the signal to Radio-Canada will be that they have to work up a business strategy to make sure that what they're getting from Vancouver or Winnipeg is quality stuff that could be broadcast on the national broadcaster. So we have to work on a long-term strategy.

• (1530)

**Mr. Charlie Angus:** We have the same problem when we're trying to have our voice in the north heard. We only ever get on the news nationally if a moose walks down the main street, and then it's a funny little side story and there's our town. Then we're not on for anything else that we do, ever.

You talk about it being non-negotiable. But how do we set it in stone, into policy, to ensure? Are you talking about a specific money envelope? Are there other steps that we could take to ensure that our regional voices, that we're grassroots, will be strong?

**Mr. Louis Paquin:** The big scary words are “quotas” and “percentages”. I think that has to be when you're talking about the contribution agreement. This is why I'm saying I'm not necessarily for quotas and I'm not for telling them how to do their job, but I think there have to be expectations that the regions will be supplying content in all their genres, for local, regional, and national broadcasts, and that they have to have a discussion about how much money it's going to cost to do that.

In the past 25 years there has been a big change in the picture. There are federal tax credits, provincial tax credits, the Canadian Television Fund, and provincial agencies. Therefore, it seems to trigger all these projects.

Right now, there's always this debate that here's money set aside for the regions, and if it's not set aside, then we're going into the Montreal budget. That debate skews everything. At the end of the day, you're going to get to a budget; you're going to get to some kind of quota. But there has to be a serious dialogue about this subject.

I know the debate is always about them wanting the least amount of commitment in that contribution agreement and you wanting more, but I think the regions have to be discussed. You have to sit there with Rabinovitch and the people who figure it out: How do we ensure the regions are in this? This means the television fund and everybody else could be part of the discussions, because they are willing to do this.

**Mr. Charlie Angus:** Thank you.

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

Mr. Fast.

**Mr. Ed Fast (Abbotsford, CPC):** Thank you to both of you for appearing here today.

My focus is going to go back to CTF funding. As you know, our government has announced that we're committed to a two-year funding program, not only for the CBC—I think that funding

announcement was \$60 million—but we've also committed to a two-year program for the CTF. I think that indicates there is a commitment to the CBC and to the Canadian production industry.

As perhaps a question first, do you have any idea what portion of CTF funding is actually dedicated towards productions geared to the francophone community outside of Quebec?

**Mr. Louis Paquin:** In the overall envelope, it's two-thirds English, one-third French. The French envelope is about \$80 million. We get about 10% of that, \$8 million of that. Of the \$200 million, \$8 million goes for francophones outside of Quebec. It's a bit higher than that. When we negotiated the amount, the people from Quebec wanted zero for outside of Quebec, so we had to make a deal there. But we're 15% of the population of French Canada, so we wanted 15%. We agreed on 10%, but we have access to the broadcaster envelopes as well. Our tradition in the past three years has been close to 12% or 13% of the francophone envelope. That's about what we've had, so maybe \$9 million to \$10 million.

**Mr. Ed Fast:** Are you referring to the CTF?

**Mr. Louis Paquin:** Yes.

**Mr. Ed Fast:** All right.

Earlier, Mr. Simard had a discussion with Mr. Boucher regarding the possibility of separating francophone productions outside of Quebec from those within Quebec—I may have misunderstood, but I think that's what he was implying—and perhaps by extension, even, the funding mechanisms would be completely separate.

Mr. Boucher, your response was no, we believe—

**Mr. Louis Paquin:** Well, no—

**Mr. Ed Fast:** Oh, Mr. Paquin, it was your response, that there needs to be more collaboration and working together with Quebec, as opposed to separating ourselves from that industry. Could you elaborate a little further on that?

• (1535)

**Mr. Louis Paquin:** Quebec is a worldwide success story in terms of its content. Six million people—they're at Cannes; they're all over the world. In Las Vegas, there's Cirque du Soleil and there's Céline Dion. They're a huge success, and I think we want that expertise. But we also want to exchange with Quebec, so I don't think separating us would contribute to that.

In my experience, when people start to know the regions—and lately it has been happening more because there's a leadership that is committed to integrating the regions—when that happens, there's room for cooperation, and I think it will support our industry in the regions to be working in cooperation. My concern is that if there's not a clear direction from the government about the regions, that they are non-negotiable in the process of what's happening, if that doesn't happen, then we become negotiable.

**Mr. Ed Fast:** So you're not suggesting a silo approach to dealing with productions.

**Mr. Louis Paquin:** No. We have to win that battle to work together. That's my feeling.

**Mr. Ed Fast:** I'd like to go back to the history of the funding cutbacks to which Mr. Angus just alluded. Were either one of you or your organizations involved in negotiating these cutbacks, or did they come down unilaterally?

**Mr. Louis Paquin:** Do you mean in the community, or what is just happening?

**Mr. Ed Fast:** I mean the funding.

**Mr. Louis Paquin:** I think cuts to funding from CBC in the regions just happened. They cut it in Montreal and in the regions as well.

My argument has always been that you have twenty cards and I have one card, so let's each cut ourselves one card. We both lose a card, but you still have nineteen cards.

We're cutting both ways, but at the same time you have to understand the impact of what has happened. In the seventies and eighties we had seven directors doing dramas and variety. We had a strong community, and they all left. The signal was that there was no future here. Radio-Canada is the only one that has a mandate and is established in the regions. These people care about us, but once there was no more work, that was the signal, and it should not happen again.

Either we're in this country for the long term or we're not. Sometimes you go to Quebec and they think it's a lost cause. So if on top of that the policies don't say we're in it for the long term, they have to change their mindset. Otherwise you say we cut over there.... If they're already convinced we're a lost cause, they'll say "Let's not invest over there".

**The Chair:** Thank you very much for your testimony this afternoon and your great answers to the questions that were put forward.

I have tried to make up some of the time, since we were a little late starting. We'll take a recess and then go to our next witnesses.

- \_\_\_\_\_ (Pause) \_\_\_\_\_
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- (1550)

**The Chair:** I call the meeting to order.

I welcome Ms. Todd as our last witness. I see you've kept one of our previous witnesses with you. I welcome him back.

Ms. Bourgeois had to catch her plane, so she won't be here, but there are still four of us around the table. Your transcript will be relayed to those who aren't here and the other people who are on the committee.

If you'd like to make your presentation, please start.

**Ms. Kim Todd (Chairperson, Manitoba Motion Picture Industry Association):** Thank you very much.

The Manitoba Motion Picture Industry Association, known as MMPIA, welcomes the House of Commons standing committee to Winnipeg. We're happy to provide you with our comments for your study on the role of a public broadcaster in the 21st century, and we're very happy to do it in our hometown, with the sun shining.

MMPIA was founded in 1987 as a non-profit association to represent the interests of the independent film and television production industry in Manitoba. At that time, the industry's annual production was under \$1 million. Today, production levels are over \$100 million. An estimated 1,000 Manitobans work directly in the industry, covering feature films, new media, and television. MMPIA has grown from a few dozen to 350 members, including individuals, production companies, labour groups, distributors, broadcasters, suppliers, and exhibitors. In all, MMPIA represents 1,400 individuals, including members of the Franco-Manitoban and aboriginal communities.

MMPIA's role as the industry's advocate is augmented by its development programs designed to build Manitoba companies and the Manitoba industry. It creates economic impact studies, celebrates the industry through our biannual Blizzard Awards, which of course are held in February, and also serves as an information hub.

We are proud of our accomplishments. We are appreciative of the strong support we receive from the rest of Manitoba, the provincial and city governments and the people. A big part of our success is due to the pride Manitobans take in their province and the generosity with which they share their homes, their streets, and their natural surroundings with our production teams.

Together we have produced such Manitoba stories as *Cowboys and Indians: the J.J. Harper Story*, *A Bear Named Winnie*, and the Royal Winnipeg Ballet's *Dracula: Pages From a Virgin's Diary*, all for the CBC. We did *Elijah* and the documentary *Brawl* for CTV in the last year. The Global series *Falcon Beach* is produced and set in Manitoba. The features *Niagara Motel*, Guy Maddin's *Saddest Music in the World*, and the Oscar-award-winning *Capote* show the range from that part of the industry.

Manitoba has played its part in the shaping of Canadian broadcasting. It is the home of the Asper family and their CanWest empire, and of the Craig family who built A-Channel. APTN was founded and is located here. The Moffatt family started CKY and founded the Women's Network in Winnipeg. CBC leaders Peter Herrndorf, Slawko Klymkiw, Diana Swain, and Jane Chalmers all began their careers here. The Manitoba news show *24 Hours* was CBC's top-rated regional news show for many years.

During the preparation of this submission, we were reminded that our members have passionate opinions about the role of the public broadcaster and the recent performance of CBC. Their expectations are high.

First, the CBC needs adequate public funding. The MMPIA membership believes that a public broadcaster is essential to the cultural and political health of the country and that it should be funded by the government in such a way that it can fulfill its mandate. There are many things to praise in the history of the CBC, but this submission is about its role in the 21st century, and we'll focus on that.

There is deep concern that reduced public funding, cost increases, and audience fragmentation have eroded CBC's ability to fulfill its mandate. There is also concern that its priorities and vision are skewed by its quest for advertising dollars because CBC television—English television throughout, please—is forced to depend on earned revenue for more than half of its annual funding. We respectfully suggest that Canada needs to decide if it wants a public broadcaster or not, and that at present, in spite of valiant efforts on the part of many CBC employees, it has a hybrid organization that is successful neither as a public broadcaster nor as a commercial network.

As the CFTPA notes in its brief to this committee, Canada's funding of the CBC puts it in sixteenth place of eighteen public broadcasters in the western world, at \$33 per Canadian as compared to the average of \$80 per person.

We do not believe publicly financed funding of the CBC should necessarily include a guaranteed portion of the Canadian Television Fund. The arrangement whereby the CBC receives 37% of the CTF seems to be a half measure, offering the CBC some compensation for the lack of government support but at a cost to the private sector and to independent producers, for whom the CTF was created.

• (1555)

In terms of the CBC's audience and its vision, adequate public funding is only the first step toward a strong Canadian public broadcaster. For the CBC to be able to fulfill its mandate to be distinctively Canadian, to reflect Canada's regions, and to contribute to the flow and exchange of cultural expression, it has to identify its specific audience and then create programs that engage and entertain that audience.

Much has been made of the negative effects of the fragmentation of the television audience, but niche broadcasters, such as HBO in America, have been successful by serving a smaller but loyal audience with bold, distinct programming. The CBC's mandate does not say it should attract more audience than the latest American hit; it says it should be providing a Canadian alternative to it.

Public broadcasters such as PBS recognize their roles in serving as a community resource. They describe themselves this way: "A trusted community resource, PBS uses the power of non-commercial television, the Internet, and other media to enrich the lives of all Americans through quality programs and education services that inform, inspire, and delight."

The BBC states its purpose as follows: "The BBC exists to enrich people's lives with great programmes and services that inform, educate, and entertain."

MMPIA looks forward to a CBC with resources that make it able to partner with independent producers across Canada to create innovative entertainment in the areas of drama, documentary, arts, sports, and news. Together we will provide unique Canadian programs and build an audience for them.

In terms of the regions, the CBC mandate states that the CBC seeks to "reflect Canada and its regions to national and regional audiences, while serving the special needs of those regions". We suggest this should instead be "to reflect Canada through its regions to national and regional audiences".

The CBC can serve its mandate and the public by partnering with independent producers to create local programming in the regions. News, documentaries, arts, and drama can be produced locally and run locally or nationally.

We suggest the CBC commit 20 hours a week to local programming on each of its stations. A genuine partnership between producers and local CBC offices would offer regional audiences unique programming and involvement with their public broadcaster. Consider the model that is CBC radio and its strength in the regions. MMPIA suggests bringing the CBC home to its constituents, back to its roots.

We commend the CBC on the series *Little Mosque on the Prairie*, but regret that this show—created by a Regina writer and production company, set in Saskatchewan, and originally filmed in Saskatchewan—was moved to Hamilton, Ontario, by the CBC. Like *Corner Gas* on CTV, the series was a great regional production opportunity that could have invigorated the Regina industry and brought CBC to that city. The decision to produce it in Hamilton raises the question of whether CBC values its relationship with Canada's regions and what those regions have to offer.

Manitoban audiences deserve distinctly Manitoban stories. The CBC could serve as a conduit from local creators to local audiences. This grassroots approach is one way to make the CBC essential to Canadians.

In terms of the relationship with regional producers, we appeal to the CBC to improve its relationship with regional producers. MMPIA believes that an increase in the resources and authority of the regional offices of the CBC would help to develop this important relationship.

We invite the CBC to become more engaged in our community and to work with the independent production sector to build capacity and provide high-quality programming to Manitobans and beyond. We want to build a long-term relationship.

We find that the local office of the CBC is given neither a clear mandate to develop programming nor the financial support or resources to accomplish it. At present producers wishing to work with the CBC must present themselves in Toronto; the \$1,000 cup of coffee is very much a reality for Manitoban producers.

The CBC's track record of working with Manitoba producers over the past ten years shows that the total CBC investment in Manitoban productions has fallen behind four other broadcasters—in order, CanWest Global, CTV, Corus, and Alliance Atlantis.

New technology and sophisticated regional production centres like Winnipeg, Vancouver, and Halifax confirm that centralization is not required for quality production. Manitoba also offers financial incentives in the form of a very attractive provincial tax credit.

• (1600)

The CTV western development office located here in Winnipeg is a good model. It was originally part of a modest benefits package, but the office and the development funds that have come with it have become a lifeline between our community and CTV. The results have been Manitoba-produced programming that speaks to Manitobans, like the *Manitoba Moments* stream, and larger-scale productions from Manitoban producers that air nationally. There has also been a stepping-stone effect for many young producers and directors, as CTV invested in them for smaller local productions and eventually gave them opportunities on national projects. Trust was built between regional producers and CTV because of their presence in our community.

Empowering the regional office of the CBC in Winnipeg with experienced people, real authority, development funds, and a regionally dedicated programming stream would result in better collaborations with Manitoba's talented creators and producers and distinctive programming for the CBC.

In the past, the CBC made it a priority to encourage talented young Canadians. MMPIA finds that there are fewer chances for new Manitoban storytellers to work with CBC today. We encourage the CBC to renew its role in developing the diversity of Canadian talent.

On working with the CBC, members of MMPIA have raised the following issues about actually working with the CBC's various departments. The first issue is clarity. Independent producers need a clear statement of CBC's programming plan so they can know what to pitch to the CBC and how to help them fill their programming needs.

Another issue is timely decisions and payments. Small production houses, especially in the regions, need timely answers from the CBC in order to keep their projects moving and their businesses healthy.

Finally, with respect to rights issues and terms of trade, the CFTPA, the Canadian Film and Television Production Association, has called for terms of trade being negotiated between the independent producers of Canada and the CBC. We agree. The CBC/SRC should engage in fair and equitable business practices with respect to contract terms such as paying adequate licence fees, not requiring unduly long licence agreements, and equitable sharing in rights exploitation. Furthermore, the CBC/SRC should be leading a movement to find funding models for the creation of independently produced Canadian programming that will strengthen their relationship with producers and further the growth and sustainability of the independent production sector.

In terms of the national CBC, while we believe that the CBC should support regional and local programming, we also believe that as Canada's national public broadcaster it should deliver innovative, entertaining, national programming. We note that the most entertaining of any television programming is innovative, including the most commercially successful drama in the United States. "The

flow and exchange of cultural expression", which is part of the CBC mandate, is only achieved through entertainment, whatever the genre. We also believe that the CBC should offer viewers international programs that fit within its mandate, programs that will interest its audience and that cannot be found on the commercial networks.

Robert Rabinovitch said to this committee on February 15, during the review of the future of the Canadian Television Fund, "Our goal at CBC/Radio-Canada is not always to get the largest audience; it is to offer Canadians significant Canadian programs." But CBC programmers have been forced by their financial situation to try to reach the broadest audience possible by programming generic reality shows and blockbuster American films. These genres are well covered by the commercial networks and are not unique programming. They are there to attract advertising dollars.

MMPIA believes the government should give the CBC the resources it needs to take risks. We agree with the CFTPA's recommendation that the CBC should be "subject to regular reviews of its role and mandate to ensure that it remains relevant to Canadians as the broadcasting and communications environment changes". We believe CBC's success should be measured by impact, rather than numbers.

With respect to arts and entertainment and documentaries on the CBC, Manitoba has long been a centre of the arts, and Manitoban producers have produced many arts and variety programs for the CBC, including the international Emmy-winning *Dracula: Pages from a Virgin's Diary*, a collaboration between filmmaker Guy Maddin and choreographer Mark Godden and the dancers of the Royal Winnipeg Ballet. We've also done *Appassionata* and *The Tales of the Magic Flute*.

The cancellation of *Opening Night*, the CBC's well-regarded performing arts strand, was felt in our community. MMPIA fears that arts programming, a critical link to the cultural expression of Canadians, has lost its place on the public airwaves.

Similarly, we note that there are fewer documentaries being shown on CBC. Documentaries have been, and continue to be, a mainstay of Canadian television and of the CBC. We encourage the CBC to take the lead in this area and work with independent producers to shape the documentary genre for the 21st century.

• (1605)

On the CBC's role, MMPIA's members worry that the CBC has been in survival mode, and its mandate has been put aside while the bills get paid. The problem is that without the mandate it's hard to justify having the public foot those bills. It is a vicious cycle. We applaud the dedicated CBC employees who have managed to keep the CBC alive over the years of cuts, but we do not think that simply surviving is the standard that is acceptable.

We request that the committee recommend stable, long-term financing for the CBC, coupled with regular reviews. We request that the CBC be allowed to become Canada's public broadcaster, providing programming that is an alternative to the mainly American shows on the commercial networks; that it be encouraged to take risks and work across the country with Canadians; and that it be judged by its fulfillment of its mandate and the role it plays in our culture and society.

We suggest that the CBC review the mandate, come up with a plan, and publish it. We will encourage all our members to read it and have the inevitable debate. But Canadians will be talking to each other about our country and our culture, and that would seem to put us on the right road.

MMPIA greatly appreciates the opportunity to provide its input to the committee during this important process. We would like to take your questions now.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Ms. Keeper.

**Ms. Tina Keeper:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'd like to thank Ms. Todd for presenting. That was an excellent and very in-depth presentation. You touched on so many points that we've heard repeated in our review.

I'd like to talk about the local picture and what kind of impact there has been in Manitoba with CBC and its relationship to MMPIA, including independent producers.

We heard from ACTRA this morning that over the last 10 to 15 years they have gone from participating in a vibrant type of environment to feeling that there isn't an environment to participate in any more. Gone are the days of radio drama, and gone are the days of feeling that as actors they were going to get calls from any CBC production to have an opportunity to even have day jobs.

On page 4 you say, "We find that the local office of CBC is not given a clear mandate to develop programming or the financial support or resources to accomplish it." Following that is a graph that clearly shows investment has gone down over the last ten years. Can you talk about the impact you've seen since maybe 1996 or 1997?

**Ms. Kim Todd:** I can, and I will also ask Louis to.

I moved to Winnipeg in 1993. It may interest the committee to know that I lived in Toronto for many years before that. I was a producer with Atlantis Films in Toronto, and I've lived in and had homes in Toronto and Winnipeg, so my perspective is from both places. I understand my colleagues in Toronto who don't want to hear about the regions. I also understand my colleagues in Manitoba who see the importance of regional representation.

In terms of my personal story, what first brought me to Manitoba was the fact that I was making the movie *The Diviners*, based on the Manitoba novel written by Margaret Laurence. Even as a Toronto producer, I knew that if I didn't make it in Manitoba, Margaret would rise up from her grave in Neepawa and smite me down. I just knew that it had to have the flavour of Manitoba, this novel. So that's how I came here. That's how I learned about Manitoba, and it was a

wonderful introduction. I understood what Margaret was writing about when I came here. That was in 1993.

When I was leaving Toronto and leaving the Toronto office of CBC—I wasn't working there, but they were our broadcaster and I was the independent producer producing it—everyone at CBC said I would have a great time in Manitoba, and to say hello to so-and-so at the Manitoba office because he was great. One even told a very Torontonian story, saying that one person was such great guy and was offered a job at head office but decided to stay in Manitoba, and they called it a heroic sacrifice. There was a real camaraderie, so I had the feeling that CBC had connections.

I'm not sure I can pinpoint when it happened, but I can tell you that I produced the movie *A Bear Named Winnie* most recently. It was a big hit for the CBC, getting 1.4 million viewers. It clearly was a story that was nationally popular coming right out of Winnipeg, because it's a Winnipeg story. But the Toronto office did not involve the local office at all in the production of *A Bear Named Winnie*, except as a kind of cheering section, which was great. They helped us set up the local premiere at a theatre and they were wonderful in doing that. But in the actual production, the truth is that no one at the Winnipeg CBC office has any experience in the making of TV movies or drama, so they do not feel, to their credit, that they can judge a script, make comments on a script, tell you that you have the right writer, in their opinion, and therefore approve him. There is no one at the office.

There is someone there who is a very nice man. I'm not sure what his title is, but I think Carl Karp is in charge of independent production. Carl's experience is not with drama. The people at head office don't think of calling Carl and asking him what he thinks. In other words, they don't have any confidence in their local office. I don't want to insult anyone, because I think Carl does his job admirably. But that's not what he's been asked to do, and it's not what he's been trained to do.

● (1610)

**Ms. Tina Keeper:** How does MMPIA see the role of the regions growing?

**Ms. Kim Todd:** I really don't mean this to be insulting, but I'll use the example of CTV and what they've done in the region. The two never like to be compared, but because of the benefits package, CTV had to find a local person. They found that person in the form of Rob Hardy. They hired him and told him they wanted him to dig in, find the talent in Manitoba, find the ideas, get some money in there for development, and develop things for their network. Rob did. He was an enterprising man who has taught himself a lot about the business, because he was told to go and learn it.

Rob wasn't a producer and didn't have the experience beforehand, but he has done wonderful things with the office. In fact, the benefits package was recently due to expire, with that office possibly closing. There was such an outcry from local producers—not an outcry, but a showing of support—that Ivan Fecan himself started answering the e-mails, because we were saying, “This is great. This is fabulous. Look what it's done for both sides.”

So it seems to me that finding someone—one person, one office—putting them in the community, and giving them a budget and a mandate is the kind of stuff we want. This is who our audience is and what we want on our network. Go find it. It's there. It's not big, and it's not expensive.

**Ms. Tina Keeper:** If I could ask one more question, Ms. Todd, I know you produce a television series that has been successful in the American market as well as in the Canadian market. When you're talking about CTV and that type of model, of course, one of the things that is of primary importance—and you mentioned it here, and we hear it every single time we talk about the CBC—is the protection of cultural content and cultural identity. Can I ask about your experience in terms of that project and how you feel a Canadian cultural identity has been maintained in that while it has also been successful as a business?

• (1615)

**Ms. Kim Todd:** The project you're referring to is called *Falcon Beach*. It's a series that's on Global Television—no longer, by the way, otherwise I'd tell you to watch it at eight o'clock on Friday night, but it finished its run last week. It has sold in 115 territories around the world. It has a broadcaster in America on ABC Family, which is a cable broadcaster owned by Disney.

It's set in Manitoba, on the shore of Lake Winnipeg, in a fictional town called Falcon Beach. The entire world, except America, knows it's set in Manitoba. In America, we actually changed the names of the places so it's set in New Hampshire, so that they can identify with it for where they are. That's the business of it, and that was the deal we made. We obviously talked to the CTF and Telefilm about doing that, because that was changing a location for one territory.

It is a huge success. It will pay back its investors. If it continues to be produced, if Global renews it, which we'll find out this week, the money invested by CTF equity will be entirely paid back through sales—and I don't know how frequent that is, but I know it's not very frequent. It will also pay back Manitoba Film and Sound and the other equity investors. The producers will receive proceeds from those sales.

The characters are all Canadian, the situations are Canadian, and the landscape is Canadian. The rest of the world looks at it and says, “What a beautiful place”, and the people who live in Winnipeg Beach, where we shoot it, have started to look at their town differently, which is very interesting.

It is unique in that it's an idea that caught the world's imagination, because it's a bunch of young people at a beach resort town. Not every Canadian idea will. When they can, that's fabulous. I think if CBC has an idea that attracts the rest of the world, that's great. I'm not one of the people who think they shouldn't broadcast NHL hockey because it has a big audience. Canadians love NHL hockey and it's a reflection of our culture. So I'm not suggesting that the

CBC should only do things that are small and insulated and Canadian, not at all.

It's a global world now. It just is. Soon enough, territories won't even be the way we sell things, because it will be put on the Internet and it will be gone. We producers are aware of that. Our stories travel, no matter what.

Our stories, well told, will go out into the world and be ambassadors for us, but also, we want the rest of the world's stories to come to us, which is why we suggest, for instance, that programming from the BBC can be shown on the CBC, that they can co-produce stories. So we're not suggesting that borders and walls be built, but a business model, yes.

American broadcasters are now calling us and saying *Falcon Beach* is a great model. It's also a great financial deal for them because we're covering a lot of the costs. They're used to writing a cheque and paying the entire amount for their series. So they're discovering us, and I think it's a great idea that CBC, CTV, or anyone says “Yes, we have other great stories. Here they are.” But that's a way of making money that isn't going after advertising dollars and trying to be generic. That's a way of being more specific and saying that our stories have value and we can produce them well.

**Ms. Tina Keeper:** And that's one of the arguments, that it's the very reason we would need the CBC, to have a clearer mandate in that regard.

**Ms. Kim Todd:** That's right.

The other networks, I will say—because I've worked for all of them, sold to all of them—are driven by simulcasting. I think everyone on this committee knows what that is. For instance, *Falcon Beach* on Global gets the time slot that's left over, that no American show is put into by the American networks. So if Fox in America decides to move a show from Thursday to Friday, Global would simulcast the show, move the show instantly and bump the Canadian show that's in the time slot.

They didn't do that to us this year; they simply gave us the time slot that no one else wanted. That's difficult for us, because the reason no one wants it is that the audience is all out on Friday night and aren't home watching TV. So in the commercial networks, just because of the economic model and not because they're bad people, a Canadian series doesn't get a fair chance. It doesn't get the chance that *Prison Break* gets, that comes in from America. It doesn't get simulcast because advertising dollars aren't automatically attached to it.

Only on CBC will we get that chance, but the CBC cannot hide under their desks thinking they have to make inoffensive programming that appeals to millions and millions of people. That's not what Americans do. Americans make *Six Feet Under*, and they make *The Sopranos*. The hits are the ones that take chances, and that's why we're talking about that.

In fact, when you ask the CBC, they say they want normal television, just like American but Canadian; they want middle-of-the-road television. That's the answer that producers are getting. I had to adjust my microphone to hear that. I couldn't believe what I was hearing.

I'm sorry; we hit a nerve.

•(1620)

**The Chair:** Me either.

Mr. Angus.

**Mr. Charlie Angus:** Thank you.

This is a very interesting discussion. I'd prefer that it was without a microphone, around a bottle of wine, and I think I'd feel more comfortable being honest, but I have to assume my role as a cultural critic and be very careful.

It's this issue of regions and this issue of why we have such mediocre television, as a general rule. I'm hearing from your presentation and the presentation we heard before of two possible reasons it might actually converge. One is the issue that we're chasing after advertising dollars. We've become increasingly committed to safe television, and safe television is boring television. People don't watch boring television, so it's a dead-end run that we're on there.

The other issue, I guess, is the loss of nuance when you don't have a regional voice. I think there is a general belief—and I'm not knocking my artist friends in urban centres, because I worked in that milieu for many years—that we can do a show and that people in St. Boniface or people in Sudbury are just like us; they just don't have good coffee. So we'll just get a bunch of people and we'll put lumberjack jackets on them and then we'll set up a story and it will be nowhere, anywhere, because we don't want to have any particular landmarks or any particular references because that will limit our audience.

I've always felt that's a dead end to anything culturally. I think people are attracted to nuance. I think that the particularities of regions actually speak more to Canadians because they say it's real and not just a blank family set on a blank stage and now let's give them some funny lines and a laugh track.

Mr. Paquin had said before that it has to be non-negotiable, that in every genre there has to be a regional commitment. Is that what you would support, that for television—whether it's comedy, drama, or news—it's non-negotiable and we have to insist that CBC starts to take productions from the various regions?

**Ms. Kim Todd:** I personally have a problem with layering more bureaucracy on the decision-making process, because the minute you say that 10% has to come from somewhere, then one year maybe the good ideas aren't there in that place. I am a little worried about that.

And I don't think it's what the MMPIA membership indicated. I think what they felt was that the ideas are strong enough if they're simply allowed to surface. The policy is there in the mandate now; there are only four things mentioned in the mandate, and one of them is regions. So if the policy is that the regions are important to the country—and certainly many people outside of Toronto and Montreal watch television—and if the understanding by the people who work through the policies is that they have to make it work, then we're just making some suggestions. They may have some better suggestions about how to make it work. I think having people in the regions in their own office whose opinion they trust and whose experience is in the area is a good start.

I've never had a problem selling to CBC. I've done a series on CBC. I've done many things. I think a good idea has to sell. What you don't want is mediocre TV because “we had to do it because it was regional”.

**Mr. Charlie Angus:** You could have mediocre TV just because it was easier to do out of Toronto.

**Ms. Kim Todd:** Exactly. You don't want that either.

*A Bear Named Winnie* isn't an idea that a Torontonian was going to have. It's an idea that a Torontonian who moved to Winnipeg discovered. It's a richer landscape to go across the country. There has to be the will.

I have to ask this. My fear is—and I don't know this—that the move of *Little Mosque on the Prairie* to Ontario was because the corporate group at CBC didn't want to go to Regina. They felt it was too far from their own creative input. That would worry me.

•(1625)

**Mr. Charlie Angus:** I guess that's the question. In radio we saw today, when we were visiting Winnipeg CBC's content factory, that there is a production team doing radio, pitching to productions right across the country, and it's centred in Winnipeg. But it's easy to do because it's radio.

**Ms. Kim Todd:** That's right.

**Mr. Charlie Angus:** You're telling me that in television we don't even have people here who can vet scripts or.... I mean, it's news and that's it. So the Selkirk flood is going to be Manitoba's contribution to the national dialogue in terms of television.

If we don't have content quotas, how do we ensure that the empire decides to send some support? No matter what we recommend, it's not in their interest to move production out of Toronto. They won't do it unless there is some commitment or obligation.

**Ms. Kim Todd:** But I would ask why it's not in their interest. I would argue it is in their interest, because their mandate says regions are important, and their goal is to create the best programming possible. It's the opposite of a creative compromise. Moving outside augments and enhances their programming.



The only reason it isn't in their interest may be financial, and I don't buy that, because it's actually cheaper to produce in the regions. So I'm not sure why it isn't in their interest. I think I'm trying to work toward a model where it is in their interest, where doing their job well involves working with the regions.

**Mr. Charlie Angus:** Mr. Paquin.

**Mr. Louis Paquin:** I agree with most of the industry. When you move *Little Mosque on the Prairie*, the involvement in the regions.... If you have a good idea from Winnipeg or Regina and you bring it there.... You could bring a good idea from Toronto to here. What you have to be conscious of as the national broadcaster is you have to feed. If you have a commitment for the long term to get regional content, you have to invest in these regions to build capacity. You have to find your mix. For example, some communities may not have strong dramatic backgrounds, but there's no reason why those communities can't deliver national magazines or other types of productions to the national broadcast.

There are different jobs, and there's the big picture, but there has to be a commitment to sustain capacity in the regions, and they have to find the tools. Good ideas are good ideas, but that has nothing to do with where the production takes place. The CBC has all the options in the world to sustain production in the regions.

I know there's a big issue about quotas, but how do you sensitize the staff? How do you make it part of their business plan to establish the regions? First of all, in the regions there has to be strong staff to sell the ideas. If you put in a token person who has no mandate to really deliver content, that's a clear signal. It's in interpretation of their mandate that I feel there's too much room without expectation.

**Mr. Charlie Angus:** We're talking about apples and oranges, and I know that. But every region of the country gets at least one shot on a national show on radio, and they get to run a national show, whether it's on Christmas Day or whatever.

My argument for television is that it's still very entrepreneurial. If Winnipeg had their one shot on Canada Day and they blew it, they wouldn't get a second one. They wouldn't blow it, because they'd say "This is our big chance to show all our independent productions." Why don't we have the same commitment on television that we have on radio to ensure that each of the regions takes one shot and one big production?

**Ms. Kim Todd:** That's a very good question. I just want to make sure it's not as codified as that. I think radio is a good example, and I know most about radio as a listener of CBC radio, because I'm a huge fan.

We're dealing with human beings. They're the ones who watch the shows, make them, and program them. For some reason, there is a great feeling that there's a richness across the country in radio, and the great thing to do with radio is gather it up and send it out nationally. There is not that feeling in television, and I don't know why. I think they used to think there wasn't the training; there weren't trained producers and trained crews. That's no longer true. I think it used to be more expensive. There are tax credits in all the regions now, so that's no longer true. The thinking has not caught up with the 21st century.

• (1630)

**Mr. Charlie Angus:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Mr. Fast.

**Mr. Ed Fast:** Thank you.

I'd like to talk about the funding. Certainly one of the focuses of your submission was that there needs to be long-term sustainable funding. That's a refrain we've heard time and again from virtually all the witnesses we've heard from.

When I hear about funding, usually people are saying the government needs to put in more money. I'm always concerned when I hear that, if there's not discussion about partnerships, about leveraging a government commitment.

I want to refer to page 2 of your submission. About halfway down you refer to public funding of the CBC and to the CTF. I'll read that particular paragraph for the record:

We do not believe that public funding of the CBC should necessarily include a guaranteed portion of the Canadian Television Fund. The arrangement whereby the CBC receives 37% of the CTF seems to be a half measure, offering the CBC some compensation for the lack of government support but at a cost to the private sector and to independent producers for whom the CTF was created.

I do want you to explain that and maybe put it a little bit more into context. We've heard witnesses such as the former CBC president and the chief of staff of former Prime Minister Joe Clark say it is time we got rid of all government subsidies of the private broadcasters, and in return we would remove the regulations relating to Canadian content for the private broadcasters. It is a trade-off.

One of the suggestions I made, which was actually echoed in private by Mr. Neville, the former chief of staff, was that there may be a willingness within the private broadcast industry to actually acknowledge that they have a role to play in defending a very robust public broadcaster by contributing toward the CBC. That doesn't in any way suggest that the government would retreat from funding or retreat from enhanced funding, but there was a suggestion that there's perhaps a more significant role for private broadcasters to play. Your statement today seems to run counter to that. Could you respond?

**Ms. Kim Todd:** I think there are probably a number of different ways, and I look forward to lively discussion over the next ten years. Things are going to change. I could suggest to you, sir, that your party could eliminate the Canadian content regulation, eliminate the CBC, take down the border, and allow the American networks to come into Canada and sell their advertising directly to Canadian—

**Mr. Ed Fast:** That's not the suggestion.

**Ms. Kim Todd:** No, no—it could very well be a suggestion, because the cost of their entry could be that they show a quota of Canadian shows.

I'm only saying that there are any number of creative ways to get Canadian shows to Canadians. I do not think that keeping the CBC alive at all costs, if it's not fulfilling its mandate, is what either MMPIA or I personally am suggesting. I'm suggesting this other radical one to show you there are many different ways.

We know why the private Canadian broadcast networks were created. It was to make sure Canadians saw Canadian programming, and they got revenue from what they watched. But if at that time NBC, CBS, and ABC had been allowed to come into Canada and had been told that the price of doing business here was to broadcast Canadian-made shows, our shows would have been broadcast on them and into America. That might have not been a bad strategy, in hindsight, because the Canadian industry would have been developed, and our stories would have gone out.

I'm only suggesting by using that example that there are many ways to skin this cat, but what's happening now seems to be half measures. In other words, the CTF is money gleaned from cable broadcasters, as we know, and from the government to support independent production in Canada. At least 50% of the reason is that the Canadian broadcasters don't pay a high enough licence fee for Canadian production to make it possible to produce it. We as Canadian taxpayers and the government have determined that it's worth it to us to subsidize this, because we want our own shows; we just don't have.... If you make a show in Canada and every single Canadian watches it—30 million people watch it—you still don't have enough advertising revenue to pay for the series; you have to sell it to outsiders, or it has to be subsidized, or both. Our problem is our small market.

To go to what you're saying, either we want a public broadcaster or we don't. As for how it's funded, I agree with you that partnerships can be explored. We're not saying we think the government should write a cheque and just give them more money. I actually think that if you keep giving a bureaucracy more money, it will just keep spending more money; it won't necessarily improve its mandate.

We're saying we think policies should be set so that the CBC has to meet its mandate, and it should be given the money to meet its mandate. In other words, the people running the CBC now should make a plan showing how it will meet its mandate and how much it's going to cost. Then they would come to the government and to the independent production sector, and maybe to the private sector, and say what they need.

•(1635)

**Mr. Ed Fast:** So you don't really care where that funding comes from, provided that there's no negative impact on your industry, but hopefully a positive impact on your industry, and that we sustain a public broadcaster in the way it should be.

**Ms. Kim Todd:** No, I'm saying—MMPIA is saying—if we decide to have a public broadcaster, let's commit to them. Let's not go halfway. Let's not say we're helping them by giving them some CTF money, but that's not really enough to help them. We're helping them by doing this, but it's not enough. I'm saying let's go straight at it and say this is what it costs to do it.

I don't know what it costs to do it, because no one has asked the question recently.

**Mr. Ed Fast:** Okay. Whatever the cost, you're not opposed to creative funding strategies to do that.

**Ms. Kim Todd:** No, not at all.

**Mr. Ed Fast:** All right. That's what I needed to know.

**Ms. Kim Todd:** I think you'll find that producers are entrepreneurs. We never know where our next dollar is coming from.

**Mr. Ed Fast:** We love entrepreneurs.

Thank you.

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

Thank you, folks, for a very lively presentation. I can now see why your productions are so successful.

On behalf of the committee, thank you very much. I would love to keep this going on a little longer, but we do have a plane to catch. So thank you for the presentation.

This now brings our meeting here in Winnipeg to a close.

The meeting is adjourned.

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