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Chair

Mr. Gary Schellenberger

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•(0835)

[English]

The Chair (Mr. Gary Schellenberger (Perth—Wellington, CPC)): Good morning. Welcome to the 64th meeting of the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage. Pursuant to Standing Order 108(2), we are doing a full investigation of the role of a public broadcaster in the 21st century.

I know I've always introduced everyone else, but this morning I will say that I am Gary Schellenberger. I am chair of the standing committee, and I am very pleased to be here in Montreal. This morning I am going to try to read French.

[Translation]

This morning we are hearing from the Conseil provincial du secteur des communications du Syndicat canadien de la fonction publique, the Fédération nationale des communications and the Syndicat des communications de Radio-Canada.

[English]

Welcome.

We will go in order. Could we have our first presenters, please?

Thank you.

[Translation]

Mrs. Jacqueline Turgeon (President, Syndicat de Radio-Canada, section locale, Conseil provincial du secteur des communications du Syndicat canadien de la fonction publique): Good morning, Mr. Chairman. Good morning, ladies and gentlemen.

My name is Jacqueline Turgeon, and I am President of the Syndicat des employés de bureau de Radio-Canada, of the Syndicat canadien de la fonction publique. With me is Michel Bibeault, Union Advisor and Coordinator, Communications Sector at CUPE. We are pleased to be able to discuss with you a very important issue, the role of the public broadcaster in the twenty-first century. From the outset, we would emphasize that the role of a public broadcaster will be all the more relevant for twenty-first century issues. Media fragmentation, specialty channels, on-demand services and the Internet will mean fewer gathering places where citizens can meet and discuss their communities, be they local, regional or national.

In this new media universe, consumers will increasingly have access to an enormous selection of audiovisual products. The question that will then arise is this: what product do you choose? In a fragmented market, Radio-Canada has a not negligible asset: recognition of a brand name that is an expression of our identity

values and a guarantee of high quality in programming and information.

In the name of social cohesion, we must ensure that this public place, the public broadcaster, continues to exist. It is our view that the mandate set out in the Broadcasting Act adequately reflects the mission of a truly national public broadcaster. However, the Broadcasting Act, more broadly, could be amended to give clear priority to news programs and information. Section 3 states the objectives of Canada's broadcasting system as a whole. An amendment of the wording to reflect the importance of that type of programming would be desirable.

The communities far away from major centres such as Montreal regularly express their dissatisfaction over the more frequent broadcasting of the information from Montreal. There is a decline in the spread and especially gathering of local news. In Quebec, we call that the "Montrealization of the airwaves", and Radio-Canada's airwaves are no exception.

A similar recommendation was made by the Standing Senate Committee on Transport and Communications in its final report on the Canadian media, published in June 2006. Promoting information in that way would be beneficial not only for Radio-Canada, which excels in this niche, but also for the broadcasting system as a whole. We must now ensure that the necessary tax and regulatory parameters are put in place to support and defend the values expressed in the Broadcasting Act. The annual subsidies paid by Ottawa to Radio-Canada declined from \$946 million to \$877 million between 1994 and 2004. This gradual withdrawal by the government leads us to fear the worst, particularly at a time when it should be more of a presence on a larger number of platforms.

For the public broadcaster to be effective, it must be independent of political influence. Thus, to ensure its stability, parliamentary allocations should be paid on a multi-year basis. In addition, Radio-Canada's budget has been cut, to the benefit of independent producers, and the impact of that on the industry as a whole has never been measured. Independent producers are benefiting from a system that continues to favour them, despite the fact that they are not accountable to taxpayers. To understand the scope of the problem, consider the following example.

Our members who work in the television production field have informed us that a program that used to be produced by Radio-Canada and that today is produced outside the corporation now costs approximately 25% more to make.

A program produced outside undeniably costs Radio-Canada less because it only pays 20% of the production budget to broadcast it over its airwaves. However, the question must be asked: is that the best way to spend public money?

Thirty-seven percent of the Canadian Television Fund budget is reserved for independent productions that are broadcast on its airwaves. However, we believe that Radio-Canada should be able to access this money for its own productions in order to foster creation and production by public broadcasting artists.

This change would be even more pertinent seeing that the CTF funds four distinct categories of programs: drama, documentaries, youth programs and variety and the performing arts. Radio-Canada's mandate requires it to broadcast exactly these types of programs. Consequently, it should be granted the means to carry out its public function and fulfil its mandate, thus doing its duty to society.

As an introduction to our discussion today, we simply wanted to reiterate our main ideas and concerns. We are now available to discuss with you the subjects we have just raised or any other question concerning the role of the public broadcaster in the twenty-first century.

● (0840)

[English]

The Chair: Thank you very much for that.

We'll move on to our next presenter.

Pierre.

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre Roger (General secretary, La Fédération nationale des communications): My name is not Chantal Larouche, but rather Pierre Roger, and I am General Secretary of the Fédération nationale des communications.

FNC is affiliated with the Confédération des syndicats nationaux and has 7,000 members from roughly 100 unions. In that respect, FNC is the largest and most representative union organization in the communications sector in Quebec. The federation represents member technicians, journalists and presenters of the main private and public Francophone broadcasters, that is Radio-Canada, Télé-Québec, TVA, TQS, Radio Nord, Astral and Corus.

As I said at the start of my presentation, Ms. Larouche could not be here today. I will be making the presentation for her.

The current context is such that the relevance of and need for a strong public broadcaster as an alternate source of news and information programming are greater than ever. We believe that the public broadcaster has to do more and to do it better as far as the regions and communities are concerned, but we realize that the CBC sometimes has to make unpopular choices because of its situation.

The problem is not so much the CBC's mandate as the framework in which the CBC has to operate. On the subject of governance of the public broadcaster, criteria and guidelines must be established for appointments to the CBC.

It is hard for the CBC to fulfil its legislative mandate with its current parliamentary votes and revenue. Since 1990, the corpor-

ation's financial capacity has diminished significantly. The CBC needs stable, continuous funding so that it can remain a public benefit not-for-profit corporation.

The public broadcaster is known especially for its general programming and news and information services. Amid today's proliferation of broadcasting platforms and new media, there is a high risk of Canadian society becoming fragmented. In that context, the public broadcaster can play a determining role in ensuring social cohesiveness and protecting cultural identity by using the different broadcasting platforms.

The melding of radio, television and the Internet can work in the broadcaster's favour relative to other competing services. However, this strategy must not be applied at the expense of the quality and credibility of content. The CBC must endeavour to provide television viewers with programs that offer Canadian content, which tend to be under-represented in the programming schedules of Canadian broadcasters, especially in dramas, music programs, children's programs and documentaries, which the CRTC recognized when it renewed the CBC's licences in 2000. The CBC cannot be compelled to focus on complementary programming without adequate, stable public funding.

The emergence of new media poses many new challenges for conventional media. The new order is not only having a financial impact, but is bringing about cultural changes as well. Preserving the current funding rules for television production could make it extremely hard for the CBC to position itself on new media.

The allocation of payable royalties creates real problems, however, and could ultimately foster a return to in-house production. The current system also raises the important issue of the future of Canada's television heritage. The government has chosen to place the production and ownership of television programs in the hands of private independence. What this means is that we are using public funds to deprive Canadians of ownership of material some of which has great heritage value. We believe that the television production funding system is no longer in tune with reality and that it needs to undergo a comprehensive review to make sure that it is meeting national cultural objectives as a priority and that it actually takes the latest changes into account.

In conclusion, public broadcasting remains an extremely important tool for ensuring the viability and vitality of a strong and unique national culture. The cultural sovereignty of states is being threatened at a steadily growing pace because of technological and industrial changes, in particular the concentration and joint ownership of media outlets.

● (0845)

The need for Canada to have a strong and effective public broadcasting system demands a more comprehensive and systematic assessment of the obligations we have to set for a public broadcaster and the financial resources it needs to meet its objectives.

While the cohabitation of public and private broadcasting services has proven itself, we have to keep it going, especially in a context where private sector media outlets, which are highly concentrated, tend to subscribe more and more to the notion of shareholder return over public interest.

The objectives of democracy set out in the Broadcasting Act mean that the CBC has to be supported as it should so economic ups and downs do not affect its choices at the expense of the public interest.

Finally, the Fédération nationale des communications believes that it would be good for the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage studying broadcasting and the Standing Senate Committee on Transport and Communications to act on the analysis and recommendations made in the past decade.

We believe it is essential that these major exercises, carried out at taxpayers' expense, be taken more seriously by government representatives.

Thank you.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you.

Our next presenter is Mr. Fontaine.

[Translation]

Mr. Robert Fontaine (Former President, Syndicat des communications de Radio-Canada): Mr. Chairman, honourable members of the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage, my name is Robert Fontaine, and I am outgoing President of the Syndicat des communications de Radio-Canada, which represents nearly 1,500 Radio-Canada employees in Quebec and Moncton.

I would like to introduce the people here with me: Alex Levasseur, the union's president elect, and Wojtek Gwiazda, our union's delegate to Radio-Canada International and spokesperson for Radio-Canada International's Action Committee.

Our committee is aware of the importance that the members of the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage attach to the role that Radio-Canada should play in order to reflect and better serve the various regions of the country. That concern is not new. It has been conveyed for years by parliamentarians concerned with Canadian Heritage, and our union shares it entirely.

On March 22, the President and CEO of Radio-Canada asked you to determine as precisely as possible the priorities that you would like to see the public broadcaster meet in a contract that it proposed to establish for the next 10 years. He asked you to set priorities, but, when you questioned him about the way in which Radio-Canada could be more present in the regions and you told him your wish that Radio-Canada would open more to the regions that serve them better, Mr. Rabinovitch systematically took refuge behind the corporation's budget constraints.

Don't go thinking that the union is unaware of our employer's financial problems and that it does not support its demands for increased funding, particularly for the funding it says it wants to allocate entirely to increasing its regional budgets. The Syndicat des communications is pleading in favour of granting those additional votes, but given Radio-Canada's current centralizing tendencies, it is also arguing that those additional votes be combined with a rigorous form of control, so that you and Canadians have assurances that that special budgetary envelope will actually be spent for the benefit of the regions.

While the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage reaffirms the importance it attaches to the need for Radio-Canada to better reflect the regions, and Mr. Rabinovitch does his utmost to convince the committee that its priorities are or will also be his, Radio-Canada's regional stations are constantly making cheese-paring economies in order to make ends meet.

Last month, Radio-Canada Atlantique decided to stop broadcasting a regional newscast on statutory holidays. However, in the week preceding the Easter holiday, seven soldiers from the base in Gagetown, New Brunswick, were killed in Afghanistan. The reactions of the families and other soldiers on the base were widely covered. They made the headlines on the ATV and CTV news broadcasts, but not Radio-Canada. Radio-Canada Atlantique had decided not to broadcast a news program on Good Friday or Easter Monday. Our journalists in New Brunswick are wondering whether Radio-Canada's decisions for the Atlantic Region are not designed to assimilate the Acadians.

The Syndicat des communications de Radio-Canada would also like to make you aware of the fundamental changes that have been made on the sly at Radio-Canada International. When the Broadcasting Act was amended in 1991, the CBC's obligation to provide international service was one of its conditions of licence. That amendment became law just after the virtual disappearance of Radio-Canada International, which was ultimately saved thanks to Canadian parliamentarians. The future of the CBC's international service is still under threat. The Radio-Canada International Action Committee sounded the alarm in 2002, and it was sounded again the following year in the report of the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage.

Until the Broadcasting Act has been amended to protect RCI's mandate, which is to present the Canadian reality to foreign audiences, there will be nothing preventing the CBC from changing its international service. In fact, that has already started. In 2005, the CBC's board repealed all its policies requiring Radio-Canada International to present a program designed for a foreign audience. Last fall, the resources and priorities of the international service were amended mainly in order to serve newcomers to Canada.

● (0850)

That was a break with an information and public affairs tradition that had made the reputation of Radio-Canada International for more than 60 years. On the RCI Web site, for example, instead of finding new background items for foreign users, as used to be the case, you now see links to other CBC news sites intended for Canadians. We think that the erosion of the CBC's international service must stop and that the original mandate of Radio-Canada International must be reinforced.

The Cree-language northern service is another component of the CBC that seems to be going to the dogs. Its employees are already overworked, and the CBC tells us that it is abolishing the position of the only journalist who writes the news broadcasts for the radio programs broadcast in Cree. You must decide whether CBC/Radio-Canada's mandate in the twenty-first century should be a second class mandate for the country's Aboriginal communities.

Despite the little time at my disposal, I cannot pass over in silence the other important points that we have shed light on in the brief that we submitted to the committee. As you will see, if you have not already done so, we are very much concerned, as are our colleagues, with the virtual almost disappearance of programs other than information programs by CBC/Radio-Canada television and the increasing privatization of the content of public affairs programs. CBC/Radio-Canada programming currently includes only one drama which it produces itself and four entertainment programs. Even excluding the information programs, that original production does not even represent 15% of the public broadcaster's programming schedule.

CBC/Radio-Canada management recently stated that it was going to give renewed prominence to youth programs, a sector in which original in-house production clearly distinguished Radio-Canada from other broadcasters, but which has since been abandoned. Will Radio-Canada be producing these new youth programs itself, or will it contract them out to independent producers, who offer their concept to both public and private broadcasters?

Without questioning the promotion of private production that was decided on in the late 1980s, we consider the system to be in need of rebalancing. This private production is very expensive for taxpayers. As you know, independent producers in Quebec are reinvesting only 3% of their own funds in production.

Furthermore, the exodus of advertising revenue to the new media and the imminent massive arrival of high definition television via the Internet are threatening the funding of our broadcasting system and the country's cultural sovereignty. In this context, a reaffirmation of the crucial role of the public broadcaster is necessary.

The way the CBC operates must also be reviewed. The members of the board, holding no real power over the administration of the day, are chiefly persons appointed on the basis of political considerations. Furthermore, these persons are rarely known for their personal commitment to the public mission of the broadcaster. We unreservedly support the following recommendation made by the Heritage Committee four years ago, and I quote:

In the interest of fuller accountability and arm's length from government, nominations to the CBC board should be made by a number of sources, and the CBC president should be hired by and be responsible to the board.

Lastly, the Syndicat des communications de Radio-Canada believes that the public broadcaster's presence in new media should be part of its mandate in the twenty-first century. In this century, it is likely that the Internet, which is not regulated and the Canadian content of which is beyond any control, will replace television as Canadians' main source of information. It is high time the competent authorities realized this and provided the CBC with the means to distinguish itself on these new platforms without jeopardizing its other services.

Thank you.

• (0855)

The Vice-Chair (Hon. Andy Scott (Fredericton, Lib.)): Thank you everyone.

Mr. Scarpaleggia will ask the first question.

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia (Lac-Saint-Louis, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you for being here this morning.

I found your presentations very succinct and clear. We clearly understood your point of view. Ms. Turgeon, you said that the independent productions commissioned by the CBC now cost 25% more than when those programs were produced in house.

Mr. Michel Bibeault (Union Advisor and Coordinator, Communications Sector, Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE), Conseil provincial du secteur des communications du Syndicat canadien de la fonction publique): I'll answer.

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: Can you tell me why? We still think the private sector is more efficient.

Mr. Michel Bibeault: We think that, yes. When a union says it costs more to have it done by someone on contract than to do it in house, one is often inclined to think that the union is lobbying for itself. We're saying that there have been a lot of independent productions in the past 10 years or so in a number of fora. Unfortunately, we didn't have any concrete examples. We said that the private sector was more expensive, that it was going to cost more, but the same stars were not involved, there were outside filmings, the number of hours was different, the sets were not the same. We never had any specific cases.

However, we conducted a study and we have a specific case. For the 2004 season, a half-hour program, *Virginie*, cost \$60,000 to \$68,000 at Radio-Canada. In September 2004, production of that program was contracted out to Ms. Larouche's production company. It cost \$86,000. They used the stars, and the program was produced in the same studios, using the same technicians. It was still produced in Radio-Canada's studios. It was the same cameraman, the same director of photography, the same sound man. It was cost-effective for Radio-Canada because it cost it only 20% of the total cost since it was produced by an independent producer that received assistance from the Canadian Television Fund. It was cost-effective for Radio-Canada managers, but it had just cost \$18,000 more for a half-hour program.

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: That's—

Mr. Michel Bibeault: Unfortunately, that's the only case we have.

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: That's a good example. What was the cause of that increase? Was it management expenses, administrative expenses? Did the stars ask for more money because it was a private producer?

Mr. Michel Bibeault: No. When you request copies of the contract in the private sector, competition is cited as a ground for refusal. Ms. Larouche's production company will not tell us what its costs were. We only know the amount of the cheque made out to the producer. We know that the Radio-Canada technicians who worked on the production were the same and that their wages were the same. We know that the same stars were used. They normally request the same fees.

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: Did they use another studio?

Mr. Michel Bibeault: No, it was the same studio. The program *Virginie* was produced in Radio-Canada's studios with all the Radio-Canada technicians. When it was contracted to Mr. Larouche's production company, it was produced in Radio-Canada's studios with all the Radio-Canada technicians. The only difference was that, since this was an independent producer that had access to the Canadian Television Fund and was entitled to its 15% profit like any producer, it cost \$18,000 more for half-hour program.

• (0900)

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: That \$18,000 amount may correspond to the time the producer spent filing an application with the Canadian Television Fund. Could that be the reason?

Mr. Michel Bibeault: That is part of the producer's administrative costs.

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: We heard from certain witnesses, including Mr. Bensimon, former Director of the National Film Board of Canada. He said to forget the infrastructures, that that was not important. In his view, Radio-Canada and the CBC must broadcast internationally as much as possible using partnership models. He seemed to be opposed to the idea of preserving this production infrastructure and to be more in favour of a certain amount of flexibility in order to be able to act better and more quickly in the new technological context, which is more dynamic than it used to be. Your view is diametrically opposed to his.

Mr. Michel Bibeault: Yes, we are at opposite ends, especially in view of the following context. When Radio-Canada decides to fund a production, whether it produces it or finances it, it takes all the risks. I'll give you a recent example. Radio-Canada financed *Le ring intérieur*, a drama on boxing that was broadcast in prime time, on a Thursday at 8:00 p.m. It was a failure. The program drew between 200,000 and 250,000 viewers. This kind of program, which costs \$800,000 an hour, should usually have drawn one million viewers. It didn't work.

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: Yes.

Mr. Michel Bibeault: However, Radio-Canada paid for the whole thing. The independent producer received \$800,000 per program. Of that amount, according to the funding rules, it is entitled to 15% profit and administrative expenses. That means that the independent producer made \$120,000 profit per program, and it was a failure. The same producer owns the resale rights. It's going to make DVDs. It will at least be able to make some money by launching a DVD. The 200,000 or 300,000 persons who watched the program may buy 20,000 or 30,000 DVDs. They are also talking about eventually making a film based on that drama. Who will the resale rights belong to? To the independent producer. In the meantime, Radio-Canada, which took all the risks, has no resale rights. That is why this isn't really a partnership, it's a win-win partnership for the independent producer. I understand why it defends—

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: Perhaps the administrators at Radio-Canada are a little more cunning in negotiations.

Mr. Michel Bibeault: They can be as cunning as they want; it's illegal. The broadcaster is currently not entitled to negotiate resale rights. Even if it wanted to, it's illegal. The only case in which there can be resale rights is when it produces a program itself. Furthermore, if it contracts it to an independent producer, according

to the Canadian Television Fund rules, it is not authorized to negotiate resale rights.

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: Thank you for your answer.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you for that.

Mr. Kotto.

[Translation]

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

I'm going to continue in the same vein. Most of the witnesses who appeared before us asked that Radio-Canada's funding be maintained, even increased. We've asked questions to determine whether the money was well managed, if there was transparency with regard to accountability. In the past, we heard the evidence of Ms. Fraser, who herself did not have access to all the relevant information to support the work of the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage. In light of what we've heard this morning, considering what might be called game-playing with independent producers, there is reason to believe that the money is not rigorously managed.

Is that a misinterpretation of your statements this morning?

Mr. Michel Bibeault: I would say the contrary. I think Radio-Canada managers manage their budgets rigorously. Managers see that the Radio-Canada budget is smaller. The production of *Virginie* cost it only 20% of the price. However, the \$86,000 amount, as opposed to \$68,000, was paid by Radio-Canada, but it has access to funds to pay virtually 80% of the price. So Radio-Canada's management is fine. However, we are asking you whether that is good management of public funds.

If we take all of the \$5 billion that, in Canada, is—

Mr. Maka Kotto: It's up to us to ask you questions.

It's the information you provide us that fuels the recommendations that we'll be making in this report. That's a question that I would eventually ask you to answer, but first I'll ask you how long this phenomenon of delocalizing production from within the corporation to outside it has been going on.

• (0905)

Mr. Pierre Roger: With your permission, I'll answer that question. The Fédération nationale des communications has conducted two studies which are consistent with the one my colleague mentioned. It isn't the same study, but I could send the committee copies of those studies, which have been conducted since 2000. In fact, the introduction of independent production has occurred gradually since 1986, with the advent of *Télévision Quatre-Saisons*, whose licence was related to the fact that production had to be done using independent producers.

However, I would like to draw your attention to one factor that I referred to in my presentation. It indeed costs less for broadcasters, but it costs more for the public, because these subsidies are granted out of public funds. One of the dangers lies in the ownership of those programs. This is a danger for Canadian heritage. If Radio-Canada no longer owns the rights to those programs, who will? It is the producers who will get them. As Mr. Bibeault said earlier, they will continue making money on derivative products and a lot of other things. They can even resell a program to another broadcaster.

For example, the program *Catherine* was broadcast on Radio-Canada about four years ago. But we have just learned, in the newspapers this morning, that it will be rebroadcast on TQS, whereas Radio-Canada invested large amounts of money in that production. But it doesn't hold the rights to it. The producer has a right to leave with the program. What happens to the amounts of money that are invested in those productions, if the producer disappears after a certain number of years?

Fortunately, before it was possible to use independent producers, Radio-Canada had extensive archives in place. As we're currently seeing, it has put a large part of its archives up for sale in the form of DVDs and derivative products, and the profits go to Radio-Canada. It can do that because it owns the rights to those programs, which it produced within its infrastructures. Let's take the example of the children's program *La boîte à surprise* or *Les belles histoires des pays d'en haut* and a whole series of programs; there are tens of them at Radio-Canada. It can do that in the case of programs that it itself has produced entirely.

We said that the structure for funding television productions had to be reviewed and that the broadcaster had to be allowed to have this access to that funding as an independent producer. We're not saying independent production should be stopped, but the television or radio broadcaster must be allowed the choice whether to produce in house or to opt for independent production.

Mr. Maka Kotto: We were told that the Canadian Television Fund guaranteed Radio-Canada a 37% share. Is that correct?

Mr. Pierre Roger: Yes, that's correct. That's not the problem.

Mr. Robert Fontaine: Radio-Canada has to allocate that 37% share to private productions to which it does not hold the rights.

Mr. Maka Kotto: I'm asking questions candidly, while also playing the devil's advocate. I'm very up on the information. If you had to make two or three specific recommendations to improve the situation, what would they be?

Mr. Michel Bibeault: The idea of the 37% share is among our recommendations. However, we think that Radio-Canada should be able to spend and manage those funds as it wishes, as a reasonable person would do, like being required to produce information and entertainment programs in accordance with the established rules. It should be entitled to contract programs out or produce them itself, based on profitability. I always come back to the same example. It is more profitable for it that it be done using this 37% share because it is subsidized. If it does so itself, it does not have access to that source of funding.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you.

● (0910)

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre Roger: You heard the comments made earlier: people in the regions are complaining about Radio-Canada's declining presence. It is important that Radio-Canada continue to be a strong presence in the regions with journalists in the field and regional programming.

It must also be ensured that Radio-Canada is adequately funded so that it can carry out its mandate. It must receive funding over a longer term, five, six or seven years, and not just two or three years. For that purpose, the CRTC should be able to grant a 10-year instead of a seven-year licence, as the Senate Committee on Transport and Communications recommended.

[English]

The Chair: Okay, next is Monsieur Levasseur.

[Translation]

Mr. Alex Levasseur (President, Syndicat des communications de Radio-Canada): I'm going to continue on the question of regional production. General programming other than information programs, be it dramas, entertainment programs, youth, and so on, is currently centralized in Montreal. Independent and private producers are concentrated in Montreal because that's where the broadcasters are, that is Radio-Canada, TVA, TQS and the specialty channels. The areas outside of Montreal have been completely emptied of content production, what someone earlier called the "Montrealization" of television.

Radio-Canada's programming this year reflects what I have always called the Plateau Mont-Royal vision of Canada. I'm from Quebec City; I've lived in Sept-Îles and I'm originally from the Gaspé Peninsula. I can tell you that this programming does not always reflect the reality of Canadians and Quebecers in the Quebec City region. As the private producers are based in Montreal, their vision is necessarily always that of Montreal.

Radio-Canada should have the opportunity to produce regional programs—it should even be required to do them—in order to reflect the regions, somewhat as it did, for example, with *Le Temps d'une paix*, which was about the Charlevoix region. You know the story of Radio-Canada's production; I don't need to go back over it.

Regional programming is important if we want to break the mould of productions centralized in Montreal and reflect the regions, not just in the area of information. Of course, we have to have regional information programs, but we also need other types of regional programs.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you.

Now we'll move to Mr. Angus, please, for your questions, sir.

[Translation]

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Thank you for your presentation this morning. We've been told that Canada should follow the BBC model. My riding has 80,000 inhabitants and covers a larger area than that of Great Britain. Thirteen percent of the population listens to Cree radio, 50% the CBC or the English-language radio station, and 40% Radio-Canada programming intended for the Franco-Ontario community or the English-language radio station.

[English]

It's very difficult to take a model like Great Britain and say that we can apply this across Canada.

I've found on our study that about the only thing people from across the country agree on is how much they detest the voice of Toronto and Montreal. What we've heard in community after community is about the disappearance of resources, the disappearance of staffing, and the disappearance of capacity to maintain regional voices. The question has to be asked, is it possible to maintain the notion of a national broadcaster if all we're hearing is Montreal and Toronto?

[Translation]

Mr. Robert Fontaine: As we said in our presentation, we unreservedly support the request that Mr. Rabinovitch made to the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage for a special budget envelope to provide better service to the regions of the country. However, we would like rigorous control to be exercised so that that funding is in fact spent in the regions, as Radio-Canada is undertaking to do. That control is necessary precisely because the CBC/Radio-Canada tends to refer everything back to Montreal and Toronto.

• (0915)

Mrs. Jacqueline Turgeon: Mr. Angus, I'm going to answer your question. In 1995, the former Minister of Finance, Paul Martin, cut the CBC's budget by \$495 million. Consequently, our budget is still not at the level where it was before the budget cuts.

The CBC/Radio-Canada tried to save what it could and tried to maintain as many services as possible. However, as a result of the budget cuts, the corporation had to make certain decisions that might not necessarily have been consistent with what all Canadians wanted.

If we restored to the CBC the means to carry out its mandate properly, because we believe it is still highly valid, I think it will be able to do so. Every place will then see its own personality reflected in the information programs and television productions.

[English]

Mr. Charlie Angus: The question we have not had clarified is this. We recognize the massive cuts that happened in the 1990s that stripped the CBC's ability to do much of its job, but coupled with that now is a management approach that it's simpler to do new production in the major centres. Even if money was coming back, would we need a separate dedicated envelope to ensure that the capacity not just for news but for the development of indigenous programming was possible?

Then on top of that, is your position that because we've moved to the CTF funding over the last 10 years of independent production, which we have heard many good things about...? Because the

independent production is centred mostly in the major centres, we have a situation in English television where we have *Little Mosque on the Prairie* and we don't need a prairie; we can actually pretend the prairies are in Toronto, and that's where we film it. Is this the example of how we now do production, that even if the money comes back, it's a streamlined process and it'll be very difficult to restore the loss of the expertise we had in the regions—the editors, the production people, and the visionaries who used to be part of our staff right across the country?

The Chair: Mr. Levasseur.

[Translation]

Mr. Alex Levasseur: Indeed, what my predecessors said is entirely true. It is important that Radio-Canada be compelled, to a certain degree, to provide services to the regions, as regards both information and general production. In any case, that is part of its present mandate. However, that is not always what it does, and that is for two reasons. First of all, budget cuts and difficulties often encourage large organizations to centralize in order to save money, which is a natural and normal tendency during such periods, and then sometimes there is an intrinsic will to centralize.

I was in Quebec City yesterday, and the RDI team learned that its staff was being cut by half. The Quebec City information production team will be reduced from nine to five persons. Quebec City is the capital of the Province of Quebec, not some little village. And yet there are no budget cuts. There's no explanation for this reduction, the only explanation that Radio-Canada is giving us is that it needs a team in Toronto and doesn't have any additional funding available. So it is making cuts in Quebec City and sending the money to Toronto to build an RDI team.

Funding is one of the causes of the problem, but the lack of any genuine will to serve the regions adequately is another.

[English]

Mr. Charlie Angus: Sir, we have five staff for French services in Sudbury. Are you telling me that Quebec City, as the capital, is going to have the same staffing as our French services in Sudbury?

[Translation]

Mr. Alex Levasseur: RDI is the subject of these cuts, not the CBC. RDI had two hours of programming a day to serve Quebec City and the eastern part of the province, that is the region extending from Quebec City to the Saguenay, North Shore and Gaspé Peninsula. That mandate no longer exists. The team has been cut in half, as a result of which the impact will be extremely significant for this large Francophone audience. There are indeed not a lot of Anglophones in that part of the Province of Quebec.

• (0920)

[English]

Mr. Charlie Angus: Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you for that.

I want to stress that we should keep the next questions and answers relatively short. We have time for only two more questioners.

Mr. Scarpaleggia.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: If I've correctly understood, there are five RDI employees in Quebec City.

Mr. Alex Levasseur: There will be five left. There are currently nine.

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: Exactly. How many persons does Radio-Canada employ in Quebec City? Is there an overlap?

Mr. Alex Levasseur: There is a certain degree of interfunding between RDI and the Première Chaîne. Some employees of television's Première Chaîne do things that are broadcast on RDI. It's not perfectly divided. We are in the same building. The number of employees in Quebec City is approximately 190. They do local production and less and less national production. Only the program *La Semaine verte* is produced in Quebec City. Everything else has been moved from Quebec City to Montreal over the years.

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: All the witnesses talked about exercising greater control over the broadcaster in order to achieve certain major objectives such as regional programming and youth programming. Others came to see us to request more documentary programming. By setting objectives and specific controls for all these areas of activity and by requesting the necessary budgets, won't we be creating a static and bureaucratic structure similar to a public service department?

Mr. Michel Bibeault: We virtually do not have a choice. Radio-Canada is currently restricted by ratings. The only way to make it financially is to have good ratings and profitable advertising. The big ratings are in the major centres, Montreal and Toronto.

Considering Mr. Angus's example, if Radio-Canada invests in news operations in northern Ontario, the Francophone population pool won't be the same there as in Montreal. So it is more profitable for it to do that in Montreal. That is why it needs stable, recurring, multi-year funding and a clear mandate.

A number of ideas were advanced, such as the idea that 25¢ or 50¢ should be given to each person. We don't have a choice. The money has to go to the regions to ensure that there's regional information and youth programming. Otherwise, Radio-Canada managers will have no other choice but to resort to advertising in order to make ends meet. Advertising is done in the major centres. It is more profitable to do something in Montreal, which has a population pool of three or four million inhabitants, than to do it in the Atlantic, where there are 500,000 Acadians. It's mathematical. It will result in a little bureaucracy, but it's enough to have a clear mandate, and the managers will implement it.

Mr. Robert Fontaine: I would point out to you that Mr. Rabinovitch, the President and CEO of the CBC/Radio-Canada, is asking you precisely to set the priorities of the 10-year contract that he is requesting. He himself is asking to comply with his contract. If he enters into that kind of agreement, we have to be able to know whether he is complying with it.

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: I understand that we're talking about regional production, but if we add, we add and we add... In any case, I'm going to give someone else a chance.

You told me to be brief, Mr. Chairman.

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you.

Ms. Bourgeois.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Diane Bourgeois (Terrebonne—Blainville, BQ): Good morning, ladies and gentlemen. To please my Chair, I'm going to ask you four questions in quick succession. If you want to take note of them, perhaps you can answer them.

We know the present degree of media convergence and concentration. Can one of you shed some light on relations between the press and Radio-Canada? That's my first question.

I'll ask my second question. We are here to review the CBC/Radio-Canada's mandate, the role of a public broadcaster. One of you said that it should be reviewed quite frequently. How often should that mandate be reviewed?

As for my third question, I think it was Mr. Turgeon who said that criteria and guidelines concerning appointments should be put in place. Perhaps it was Mr. Roger who said that.

•(0925)

Mr. Pierre Roger: Both of us said it.

Ms. Diane Bourgeois: Pardon me. Both of you said it. You talk about criteria and guidelines for appointments, to both the Chair and the board. Could we have some examples of ideal criteria and guidelines. Can you give us some examples that have occurred outside Canada? Perhaps that's been done elsewhere, at the BBC, for example.

Lastly, I'll ask you my fourth question. Discussions are currently underway about the distribution of royalties with independent producers. And we know where negotiations with the artists stand. Do you know that?

Those are good questions, aren't they? Thank you.

[*English*]

The Chair: It was great to have a short question, but four questions? You tried to trick me here.

I have to say this—

[*Translation*]

Ms. Diane Bourgeois: You can answer us in writing, if you wish.

[*English*]

The Chair: If you could send, through the clerk in writing, the answers to the questions that have been asked to me, the chair, that would be great. We do have more witnesses coming up, and it would only be fair to them that we end this part of the meeting right now.

Thank you very much for your presentations and for your answers. We look forward to hearing from you. Have a great day.

We'll recess for a few minutes.

- _____ (Pause) _____
-
- (0935)

The Chair: Order.

Good morning, and welcome to the second session of our 64th meeting of the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage. I am Gary Schellenberger, chair of the standing committee. Pursuant to Standing Order 108(2), we are doing a full investigation of the role of a public broadcaster in the 21st century.

I welcome here this morning you lovely ladies from Productions Virage and from Réalisatrices équitables.

I'm not very good at French; you will have realized that. This morning when I went to my door, there was a copy of *La Presse* outside. I sat down and read it for half an hour, and I kind of got an understanding of what it was.

So I apologize for not being able to say your names properly, but we do welcome both of your groups here this morning.

The first presentation will be made by Monique Simard.

Monique, please.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Monique Simard (Chief Executive Officer, Productions Virage): Good morning, Mr. Chairman, committee members. Thank you for inviting me to testify before you this morning. I'm delighted to be here.

I am a producer at Productions Virage, a production company that has been in existence for 22 years now and that is mainly known for the production of documentaries on major social issues. I am also President of the Documentary Section of the Association des producteurs de films et de télévision du Québec. The Documentary Section represents approximately 50 Quebec production companies in Montreal and the regions, that is in Abitibi, the Gaspé Peninsula and Quebec City. I am also Vice-President of the Observatoire du documentaire, an organization that has been around for three years and represents all the main national organizations, in Quebec and Canada, that are advocates for the documentary genre: producers associations, the APFTQ, the CFPTA, DOC, directors and broadcasters, Radio-Canada, the CBC, the Astral stations, Télé-Québec and the National Film Board. Lastly, I am also a citizen of this country and I watch television.

It is somewhat as a wearer of all these hats that I'm going to offer you my thoughts and comments on the mandate that you have to explore.

My comments will focus essentially on four ideas. You have a mandate to conduct an investigation into what a public broadcaster should be in the twenty-first century, but need I take the trouble to repeat that it is extremely important that the public broadcaster stay around. We know that there are questions about the relevance of having a public broadcaster in the twenty-first century. Is that necessary, at a time of major upheavals in the media and communications fields, where we also see a reorganization of

networks, convergence, concentration? Some question the relevance of a public broadcaster.

I think, on the contrary, that we must reassert the relevance, the necessity, more than ever, of having a strong public broadcaster in television, radio and new media. It is precisely because of the major changes that we observe around the world and because the supply has developed to such a great extent, literally exploded that, to maintain—and here we must meet this objective—a minimum of social cohesion and identity, we must have a public broadcaster that can do that.

For my part, I unhesitatingly ask the committee to reassert forcefully that it is important to have—and this is part of Canada's identity—a public broadcaster. Radio-Canada and the CBC have helped build this country's identity. It is a reference point for citizens, particularly since the Canadian population is undergoing major change and mutation. The segment of the population that is of foreign origin is constantly increasing. Precisely because of this diversity, we must have a gathering place, and only the public broadcaster can provide that.

I'll tell you right off the bat that I work for all the broadcasters: a lot for Radio-Canada, the CBC, RDI, but also for public broadcasters. The private broadcasters, which also do good work, have other interests, pursue other objectives, which are commercial objectives. As a result of that, of course, they cannot carry out a mission that goes beyond those strictly commercial objectives.

The second point is cultural diversity. Canada is a country that is proud and boasts of having been in the forefront of promotion of a convention on cultural diversity. While it was not the first, it was among the first to sign that convention in 2005. I think that, all parties considered, we were proud of that initiative. Consistency therefore requires that we be logical, that we respect that signature and that we maintain in our own country a cultural vehicle that is a vehicle of popular culture, which is conveyed mainly by radio and television.

We must also emphasize the excellence of radio and new media. This cultural diversity, which is that of Canada and its various components, must be able to find a cradle, a place where it can be expressed, produced and encouraged. That is the second principle.

- (0940)

The third principle is programming. I know that many people have just made recommendations to you on various types of programming and have told you that there should be a little more of this and a little less of that. That's normal. However, I think it has to be kept in mind that an enormous number of reforms will probably be announced in the communications world in the coming year or 18 months. There are a lot of regulatory agencies that have review mandates. There is the CRTC, but there is also your committee, which is important and which is studying the question right now. There will be others. The Canadian Television Fund is also in a perpetual review process.

So it is important, precisely for the two preceding reasons, that the programming on CBC/Radio-Canada television remains general-interest programming. The current trend is obviously toward specialty and hyper-specialty programming. That is the case, in particular, with cable television networks, which are also doing a good job. However, there has to be a general-interest television that has the resources to produce things that could not be produced elsewhere because they do not necessarily meet narrow commercial criteria or please narrower audiences.

Radio-Canada's programming must therefore remain general-interest programming that still emphasizes four major genres. I'm not talking about information. The CBC/Radio-Canada plays a public broadcaster role that must be maintained in the area of information. However, in terms of original productions, that programming must be of general interest. It must reflect the country's diversity and new realities. In fact, if there's one thing that should be improved, it is that aspect.

Someone referred to *Little House on the Prairie*. That's a first. I think we have to be able to find that in all genres: drama, youth programs, cultural programs and documentaries. In the area of documentaries, we have always done a little better in order to raise, reflect, interpret this new cultural diversity.

I'm now going to talk to you a little about documentaries because I am a documentary producer. You have no doubt received submissions concerning documentaries. In recent years, documentaries have become popular again around the world, and that is not for no reason. We live in a complex world. In Canada, as elsewhere, we live in a world that is changing and where it is not necessarily clear and easy for everyone to understand all those changes. The documentary genre makes it possible to ask questions differently, to sift through the major social issues more than in an ordinary news report on a news broadcast or in a news feature, and to ask questions about a situation in a different way. It's said that the documentary is reality film; it means taking a look at the world.

I think that it is the role of a public broadcaster to encourage this genre, to broadcast documentaries in prime time. It is its role not only to present documentaries, but also to ensure that the public debate, the debate among citizens that can arise over documentary productions also be broadcast on that broadcaster's airwaves. In my view, that's extremely important.

To be able to do all that, it goes without saying that the public broadcaster must not be constantly limited, restricted by solely commercial imperatives. It's base of parliamentary appropriations must therefore enable it to produce on the basis of a broader, more complex and more comprehensive mandate than that of its competitors. That's extremely important. Otherwise, there's a spiral, a logic whereby there will be fewer and fewer different or original productions, and we'll move toward the easiest path.

• (0945)

Someone previously said that we would go to the major centres. Obviously, those are the great population pools. We're going to opt for the most entertaining programs, which are also good—I don't disdain that genre at all—but they are easier.

I'll give you an example. Right now, I am working on an enormous project that is currently in production and that has brought together 100 creators: 50 poets, 11 filmmakers, 11 musicians and 24 photographers. It's a multi-platform production. Only one public broadcaster could support me in this kind of production, and that was Radio-Canada: RDI, Espace Musique radio, the Première Chaîne, Nouveaux Médias. This is a cultural project in which a private broadcaster would obviously have been unable to get involved because it was too commercially risky. But at the same time, this is an example of a production that is necessary and important in order to stimulate and encourage creation, but also to remind us of a certain number of identity issues.

Lastly, I would simply like to say that the world is very much changing in the technology field. Radio-Canada must absolutely continue to seize the opportunity to develop those new technologies and that must also be a way of making ourselves known in the world. We Canadians aren't the only ones who look at what we do. This is extremely important, but it must also be a vehicle that enables us to convey to the world an image of what we do, of what we can do and, especially, of our way of seeing the world. I believe that only a public broadcaster can do that.

Thank you very much.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you.

We'll move on to the next group. I couldn't say your name, and I apologize again.

Ms. Lepage.

Ms. Marquise Lepage (Producer, Réalisatrices équitables): Marquise. It's easy.

The Chair: It is easy.

[Translation]

Ms. Marquise Lepage: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Committee members, thank you for receiving the members of Réalisatrices équitables here this morning. I am here with Lucette Lupien, Marie-Pascale Laurencelle and Isabelle Hayeur, who have come here with me this morning and who will also be able to answer questions following our presentation.

First of all, I won't dwell at length on the obligation to fund Radio-Canada adequately, as Ms. Simard has so brilliantly shown. In our opinion, that is very important. Radio-Canada must not be forced to follow the same dictates as commercial television broadcasters. It must be different, have its own voice and reflect the values of all Canadians in the world, and not be confined to genres that would be "more popular", but that would marginalize everything else.

Having said that, we are going to address our main subject, which is the place of women, particularly women directors, in our public broadcaster. Although the description of its mandate is praiseworthy, Radio-Canada, among others in the case of cultural diversity, fails to mention the importance of representing more than half the population, that is to say women. Last year, Statistics Canada announced again that we formed 51% of the population. Since all the citizens of our country are deemed to be equal, someone might respond to me by saying that, in the view of Radio-Canada and the government, women are included in that designation.

However, when I look at the statements in greater detail, I see that in (ii), it says that the corporation must “reflect Canada and its regions”, that, in (iv), it states that it must reflect the needs and circumstances of each official-language community and that, in (viii), it states that it must “reflect the multicultural and multiracial nature of Canada.” Why was it necessary to name these realities? No doubt because parliamentarians realized that, without specific rules, the major centres tended to be favoured to the detriment of the regions, as was said earlier. They also probably tended to think that the citizens of different cultures might not find their place and that the two official languages might be unfairly represented. They thought it wise to state that specifically in the mandate.

Now we would like the government to concern itself with the unfair amount of space made available to women's imagination on the screen and the unequal presence of women directors on our national television network.

It is my turn to apologize, Mr. Chairman, because we had to change our brief slightly, particularly the tables, which are easy to understand. If you read *La Presse*, you should be able to find your way through it very easily. These are mainly figures. Table A represents the CBC/Radio-Canada's current situation, in the spring of 2007, and Table B represents other aspects of the system that are unfavourable to women directors from a production standpoint. As you can see, the gaps are quite significant, 63% and 37% for Radio-Canada. These tables are on pages 9 and 10.

Do you have Tables A and B on pages 9 and 10?

• (0950)

[English]

The Chair: It's okay.

[Translation]

Ms. Marquise Lepage: In my opinion, those gaps, which are in the range of 90% and 10% for fictional feature films at Telefilm Canada and 63% and 37% at CBC/Radio-Canada, all genres included, and for all members of *Réalisatrices équitables*, these figures are unjustifiable in 2007, in a sector that is 100% subsidized by the government. We haven't noted everything, but these figures, among many others, confirm that the existing systems are highly unfavourable to women and result in unequal incomes for women directors, not to mention the unequal representation of women's imagination on the screen. I entirely agree with regard to cultural diversity, but it is also essential that we think about half of the population.

The figures in Table A were compiled from the spring 2007 programming schedule. As you can see, the CBC/Radio-Canada is

far from giving women directors the same amount of room as male directors. In addition, most women directors are confined to magazines. There are virtually no women in the drama sector: 1.5%.

Some will tell us that a number of women screenwriters often see their fictional works put on the screen. That's true. We might be pleased about that if we didn't see that the vast majority of screenplays written by women are directed by men, whereas the reverse is not true.

The director's trade is poorly known, and it is just as essential to the creation of a work as its writing. It isn't just the story that is different, but also the treatment, the viewpoint, the approach and the 1,000 artistic choices that that entails.

Of course, the CBC/Radio-Canada is not solely responsible for the present situation of half the population and of women filmmakers, but it has a very great influence and is part of a set of systems that do not favour women, even in everything that is done and funded by other bodies in “private industry”. We put the words “private industry” in quotation marks because, in a way, that industry is virtually non-existent in Canada, being subsidized in one way or another by the taxes of all of us, that is 50% or more by women.

In Table B, you see the gap between the amounts invested by Telefilm Canada and SODEC in Quebec in projects by men and women directors. Why does our national broadcaster have such a decisive role in these figures? Because, under the rules laid down by the Canadian industry, television, by the purchase or pre-purchase of licences, determines the projects that will be produced and the people who will produce them. Television also very often dictates production budgets, because they are calculated based on the licence granted by the broadcaster. Radio-Canada is thus part of the decision-making process that judges and gives its approval to the production of a large number of so-called “private” projects. It is also its managers and staff who discuss the orientations of the projects and target audiences that will be favoured. All those decisions are clearly decisive in the choice of programs, films, series and documentaries produced in Quebec, even for projects financed mainly by other bodies. In particular, the CBC/Radio-Canada manages nearly 40% of the Canadian Television Fund's budget.

The current imbalance does not just harm women who have decided to choose direction as an occupation. The impoverishment of content, lack of diversity of viewpoints and the shrinking of imagination have obviously had an impact on society as a whole. In 2005, a group of women actors stated that claiming a greater place for women in the collective imagination was an essential battle for the democratic and economic survival of our society. We agree. The battle of the imagination is just as important as the battle for wages and support for families.

We also believe that the inadequate place granted to women on our screens and behind the camera does much to influence the perceptions of the public, who tend to believe that women are less important than men in our society. The stories and concerns broadcast on television are models for all young Canadians, girls and boys. For everyone, but particularly for our children, we must build a national television that fairly represents society as a whole. It must give as much space to the girls and women of this country as it does to its boys and men. According to a recent survey conducted by the Association for Canadian Studies, 94% of Canadians said that gender equality was one of their priorities. In fact, in the minds of Canadians, gender equality is the second most important value, immediately after health. For Quebecers, it apparently ranks first, even before health.

• (0955)

The shortcomings. After what we've just revealed, we believe that the CBC/Radio-Canada is failing to meet a number of its statutory obligations.

Paragraph (ii): the CBC/Radio-Canada does not reflect Canada, since 51% of the population is under-represented.

Paragraph (iii): the CBC/Radio-Canada does not contribute actively enough to the flow and exchange of cultural expression. Gender diversity, in our view, is essential.

Paragraph (vi): the CBC/Radio-Canada does not contribute adequately to shared national consciousness and identity, since equal rights for men and women are a core element of Canada's national identity. We already knew that, but that was confirmed in a poll the results of which appeared this month.

In a concern for fairness toward all women and to address a public priority, we recommend the following amendments to paragraphs (v) and (viii), which should read as follows:

(v) strive to be of equivalent quality in English and in French and to achieve balanced funding for, and broadcasting of, work by men and by women;

(viii) reflect the multicultural and multiracial character of Canada, also taking into account the equity between men and women in this country.

Concrete measures. In order to quickly correct the present imbalance, bolstering of the mandate's principles should go hand in hand with concrete measures. We suggest that the CBC/Radio-Canada urgently adopt incentives that openly promote the achievements of women in all production sectors where women directors are under-represented, particularly for dramatic series and fictional feature films, where they are even scarcer.

Rules requiring real representation of women's imagination would not hurt freedom of expression, so dear to some, or diminish the quality of products on the small screen. On the contrary, we would find ourselves with even more diversity and a real plurality of perspectives and talents.

As was the case in 1991, when the Broadcasting Act was amended to request that a larger share of productions be done by the private sector, and we witnessed an explosion in the number of production

companies and independent producers, we think that incentives such as including in the act an obligation to call on more women directors in all sectors will result in an explosion of female expression and talent. In addition to having a positive impact on the industry as a whole, that will benefit the entire population, of all ages, origins and languages.

We are convinced that an equitable presence of women's viewpoints, stories, concerns, backgrounds and roles on television would be a tremendous stimulant for a society that wants to encourage equality of opportunity in all areas of human endeavour. Society has everything to gain from promoting women's imagination as much as that of men. All Canadians would benefit from having a national broadcaster that showed equity leadership.

In closing, at the dawn of the twenty-first century, it is definitely important to discuss new technologies and funding for the CBC/Radio-Canada, but we believe that it is even more urgent to examine this significant imbalance, which has only been aggravated in the past 20 years, believe it or not. This concerns us in our capacity as directors, but also affects us, like the majority of the population of Quebec and Canada, as spectators and citizens.

On a personal note, I would add that this also concerns me as a mother of twins, a boy and a girl 10 years of age. I hope that, in 20 years, they will see Canadian society representing them equitably and offering them both the same opportunities.

Thank you very much for your attention.

• (1000)

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you for that.

I must remind everyone that this session will be over in about 26 minutes.

I'm going to ask Ms. Bourgeois to give the first question. Let's try to keep our questions and our answers as short as we can, please, so that everyone has an opportunity to ask those questions.

Ms. Bourgeois.

[*Translation*]

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

Mesdames, first I want to congratulate you for shedding an entirely new light in this committee. I am the only woman member of the committee who has toured Canada, apart from Ms. Keeper, of course, who was not often here with us during the meetings held off Parliament Hill. You have shown us an aspect that no one had thought of. This is really a new element.

I was watching my colleagues while you spoke to us, Ms. Lepage, and I wondered how they were going to react when you said that women, who represent 51% of the population, may not be commensurately visible on television with regard to the handing on of values. I'm not sure. And it's even worse when we go to western Canada. We know perfectly well that here in Quebec, women, the women's movement, has been the leader, has opened a lot of doors.

Ms. Marquise LePage: I don't know what the situation is in the west because we obviously don't have the resources to get figures for Canada as a whole.

Ms. Diane Bourgeois: It's worse in the west. I find it extremely important that you have informed us this morning about what is going on in Radio-Canada television because we know about Canada's duality. That duality is also felt in the area of values. However, we are increasingly headed toward the right, and Canadian women are losing what they have acquired in the past 30 years. It is urgent that women be there to make documentaries for us, to reflect us, to give us a vision of what you are experiencing, of what we are experiencing as women with our children, our everyday burdens, and so that we can tell the rest of Canada that enough is enough: we need different services.

That said, we aren't here for political reasons, but I nevertheless want to send that message. Bravo! Congratulations! And know that that hasn't fallen on deaf ears. I'll try to come back to it.

My question is for Ms. Simard in particular.

You talked about Radio-Canada, saying that it had to be a strong broadcaster that must continue to do more. Ultimately, you were virtually talking about excellence as well. I'd like to know what that implies in concrete terms, in three or four lines. What, in your view, is a strong broadcaster?

• (1005)

Ms. Monique Simard: In my view, it's a broadcaster that has the means, the resources to carry out a mandate that must be clear. That's important. I think that that mandate must also clearly state a certain number of things. That's the responsibility of the body that feeds it, that is the government. But it's a broadcaster that also has to have room to manoeuvre. It isn't a government television network. We understand that: it's a public television network. That broadcaster must therefore be independent in its programming and have the resources to be bold. There is the production of information, but there is also so-called artistic, cultural production. It must be bold because excellence can also be seen in boldness, the ability to be avant-garde, to do things that others will not do because it is too risky, not conventional enough or not commercially profitable enough in the short term.

If you recall the things that have been the most striking and distinctive in the production of CBC and Radio-Canada, including in the information genre, you see that we had the means to enable creators, designers and programmers to have imagination, to innovate in various areas. That's what I mean when I talk about a strong broadcaster. Strong means having the means not only to represent everything I've said, but also to be able to do it in an entertaining and seductive form. For me, that is a strong broadcaster.

Ms. Diane Bourgeois: Mesdames, I'll close on this note. Either of you may answer me. When we talk about a strong broadcaster, when we talk about passing on female values—I don't dare say feminist because that word scares people—can we talk about governance?

Ms. Monique Simard: Do you mean the governance of Radio-Canada?

Ms. Diane Bourgeois: Of Radio-Canada.

Ms. Monique Simard: Radio-Canada is currently directed by a board of directors that you appoint, is it not?

Ms. Diane Bourgeois: We are supposed to.

Ms. Monique Simard: It is a board appointed by the government or, in any case, by the minister. That board of directors does not assume the day-to-day management of the Crown corporation, but it ensures that its mandate is carried out. That is the role of governance. It is a board of directors that must ensure that the mandate is presented, and regularly and carefully verify that that mandate is carried out, and make occasional reminders when it is not. I don't think that the governance structure is necessarily a problem in itself. It is the way that governance is exercised that may at times be debatable. I'm not saying it is particularly debatable; I'm talking about governance in general. It is nevertheless important to keep a certain distance and to allow those who have to do radio, television or new media the room to do it, always in a manner consistent with the mandates.

Ms. Marquise LePage: That's why I think it's important that the mandates be clear and that we be able to change them as necessary. They are generally followed. I cited the example of 1991, when we put it in the act that private producers had to be more involved in Radio-Canada television. There was literally an explosion of new production companies, which resulted in a high level of vitality in the industry. So those rules are followed. Perhaps they should be changed more regularly, verified and quantified to see whether that worked well. No one can deny that it has worked extremely well in the private production sector. If content rules are established, they must be made very clear and their application verified. There are screenwriters. Does that count? Yes, it counts, but they are also needed for direction. That's not very well known.

Moreover, on the list, we're called producers. We are directors. That's different. Monique is a producer, but we are directors. We make artistic choices in the same way as screenwriters do. We do the creation. Production is a creative thing. Producers—Monique is one of my producers, and I can't say anything bad about her, because she's great—do a very good job and are creative in part. No one will say that Denys Arcand's films are women's films, even though they were produced by a woman. When you think of similar things, you have to say that directors have to have an important place at Radio-Canada and throughout the corporation. That's where the reality of women is conveyed, whether it be a mother's reality or that of anyone else. Radio-Canada has to put more women on the screen.

In the United States, the surveys have started to change. Americans may have started to accept the idea of having a woman president when a very popular actress played the role of president of the United States in a television series. So you see how important television is. Fiction and documentaries enter people's living rooms. I have previously heard children ask why boys were better than girls. That's because, on television, it's one thing or another. Television is starting to tell my daughter that. It's not what is specifically being said, but, after a while, that winds up being the reality. There are only presidents, prime ministers and we say to ourselves that that's reality. That's not what we want. I'm sure that everyone shares our values on gender equality, but television doesn't represent those values.

•(1010)

Ms. Lucette Lupien (Consultant - film and television, Réalisatrices équitables): I would like to add one brief comment. SODEC invests 14% of its funds in women's films, and Telefilm 11%, in large part because audiovisual production in Quebec and Canada is triggered by television. Radio-Canada, which controls 37% of the Canadian Television Fund's budget, can make major changes. It can ask SODEC and Telefilm Canada to change their rules. If the CBC/Radio-Canada changes its requests to the production companies, there will be changes throughout the audiovisual production chain.

Ms. Monique Simard: We could set a rule that 50% of the boards of directors of Crown corporations must consist of women. Men and women are now equally represented in cabinets in France and Quebec. It's even easier to reach parity when you can appoint people to a board of directors. A right step would be taken by requiring that women make up 50% of the CBC/Radio-Canada's board of directors.

An hon. member: But that would not be enough.

[*English*]

The Chair: I know we could go on forever, but we have gone a little bit over. So if everyone is going to have an opportunity to ask a question, we have to stay within the time. We only have 15 minutes left.

Mr. Angus.

I'm switching the roles around here a little bit.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Charlie Angus: Thank you for your presentation.

[*English*]

I find this discussion fascinating. In fact, I'm going to diverge from my normal course. I usually leave philosophical thoughts to my good friend Mr. Kotto, and I usually just ask precise, technical questions. But I feel this morning I need to adopt some of his grand vision.

We're talking about the role of a public broadcaster in a fragmented media universe. The argument has been laid out that in a world of massive fragmentation...and clearly there's less fragmentation in the Quebec market, for specific reasons, than we've seen in the English market. But what role is there, what need is there for the voice of a public broadcaster when we have a thousand channels? When we had Mr. von Finckenstein here, he referred to all the other voices out there. We have ten million blog sites. Where we used to have reporters and documentary producers, now we have ten million opinions.

I'm fascinated by this discussion, because it seems that more than ever there's a need for coherent, engaged, intelligent—not intellectual, but intelligent—discourse. What we see in a thousand-channel universe.... I'm not disrespecting the specialty channels, but I watched television last night, and there was a program on teaching yuppies to put their plumbing together for an hour and a half. The other night we saw the reality TV show about a tattoo parlour that went on for about two hours. Where are we as Canadians in this?

So my question is twofold.

Number one, is there not a greater case now, in a multi-channel universe, for a coherent public broadcaster than even before?

Secondly, we are now on the verge of a major upheaval in terms of the BitTorrent capacities of people to download whatever they want, whenever they want. At a time when we as a nation should be ramping up to meet, I don't believe the challenge, but the opportunity to get our product into the international realm on the Internet, actually instead of ramping up as a national broadcaster and as a nation, we seem to be in retreat. We're talking about further deregulation. We're talking about letting whoever do whatever, and we're going to sit behind this little blanket on the beach and wait for the great tsunami to wash over us in terms of what's coming down in the digital realm.

What role do we have to have in utilizing our resources to meet a 21st century challenge in terms of the media, not just in a thousand-channel universe, but across the web?

•(1015)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Monique Simard: In response to your two questions, I can't say anything other than what you just said, because that's precisely my first point. The fourth point of my presentation is that, now more than ever, in this fragmented era, we need it. In fact, the unimaginable constellation of channels, Web sites, blogs and so on won't necessarily give you a whole picture. Everyone will look for it a bit in what I call the specialized ignorances: people focus on small fields. They don't expose themselves to more.

We are obviously living in a free country where we are all free to go and look at what we want, but we nevertheless live in a society. We are still a country, a complex, changing society. What kind of tool does that society create in order to be cohesive? What kind of tool does that society acquire in order to try to share a certain number of values and criteria, including representativeness, obviously. I talked about cultural diversity, but there is also gender representation: male, female and other.

Otherwise, why are we here, around this table today? I think that new technologies and new broadcasting platforms are, on the contrary, extraordinary tools for expansion and visibility that must be used. There may be a little marking time, but we have nevertheless done a fairly good job in using them to date. The CBC/Radio-Canada must be encouraged to move more toward that side. That's central to the debate.

Personally—if I may be a little philosophical, as you are—I think that the problems we are currently experiencing on the planet are partly attributable to the fact that we confine ourselves to closed, specialized worlds, in closed groups. So other people's understanding of reality escapes us. We don't have the means to understand or see that. So, in a way, we have to force a break-up.

•(1020)

Ms. Marquise Lepage: In Greece, one year after the state television network was privatized, 82% of programs broadcast on television were foreign. When we talk about tools for cohesion, CBC/Radio-Canada television may be a tool for cohesion where there are rules. More than ever, as you said, Mr. Angus, we need a strong, well-funded state television, where we can see ourselves, not the country next door, which is very nice, but... We have to see ourselves, see our values and what we want to be.

Ms. Monique Simard: Brazil is an example. Brazil is an enormous country with nearly 200 million inhabitants, a country where economic inequalities are terrible, but a country where there is also a lot of money. Brazil has never had public television. However, it is now studying the possibility, indeed the necessity of establishing a public television network. That shows you the extent to which not only will the twenty-first century not mark the end of public television, but, in certain cases, where there has never been any, we sense the need to create such a network, for reasons I have stated here.

[English]

The Chair: Ms. Lupien.

[Translation]

Ms. Lucette Lupien: I would like to add that Dominique Volton, who is a French researcher, has previously said that public television is a great place for democracy. After elections are held every four years, it is the place where people gather and it also provides, of course, an image, which, at the same time, has an objective of an image of a country to propose.

I would add that, if you look at the CBC/Radio-Canada in particular, the use it makes of the Internet is one way to guide us through this universe, where there are indeed 100,000 sites on any subject. So when we look at a program on Radio-Canada and then go on the Internet, we are guided to various sites or various types of information that can assist our thinking. In that sense, no other channel is doing that job.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Scarpaleggia.

[Translation]

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Earlier we heard from groups—perhaps you weren't in the room—who told us that a program produced by independent producers cost approximately 25% more. What is your reaction to that statement? Perhaps we could start with that question. Do you believe we should produce more in house? We're talking about Radio-Canada. You are producers and independent producers. So I imagine you are more of the view that Radio-Canada should produce more programs or, at least, as many as it has currently has produced.

Ms. Marquise Lepage: I think we should have increasing numbers of women's films produced because, 10 years ago, statistics showed that women's films cost 20% less than men's films. So that would ultimately be fair.

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: No. I'm not asking the question from the standpoint of gender equality.

Ms. Marquise Lepage: No, but I am answering you very seriously that, if that balance were already respected, perhaps it would cost less.

Ms. Monique Simard: First, you have to see how that was accounted for. I wasn't here when that was presented. What types of programs were involved? What was counted or not?

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: We were talking about *Virginie*. They said that, when *Virginie* was produced by an independent producer that had used the same studio and the same actors, it cost 25% more than when the program had been produced in house.

Ms. Monique Simard: We would have to check. But once again, once it's produced outside, there is a certain amount of financing that comes from the outside which is not internal funding. So, in the final accounting, it may cost the Crown corporation less.

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: But do you think more productions should be done outside? Others have come and told us that more should be done in house.

Ms. Monique Simard: I think that we currently have a mixed system. Virtually no more dramatic productions are done in house. There is one, I believe, at Radio-Canada. I'm not talking about the CBC, but rather Radio-Canada. In documentaries, they're done outside exclusively. So there is currently a balance that I think is suitable and that was enriching, incidentally. Radio-Canada also has its ranks of extremely competent people who provide and who make, for example, a number of excellent, well-known public affairs programs. If you consult Input, every year, you'll see Radio-Canada programs.

•(1025)

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: On the gender equality issue, what is important is that everyone is well represented in the decision-making bodies. Earlier we were talking about perhaps requiring that half of the board of directors consist of women. In the decision-making bodies at Radio-Canada and the CBC now, what are you able to observe? We went to Toronto and met two high-level officials there, one from radio, the other from television. Both were women whose names I do not remember. What do you see?

Ms. Marquise Lepage: That's very good, and I'm not opposed to parity on boards of directors or cabinets. On the contrary, I wholeheartedly applaud that. However, people often forget to require a 50% split in public funding for creation. That ultimately might be understood in a private business, but, when you do a quick analysis of TVA, you see that TVA was more advanced than Radio-Canada in that respect. How is it that a private business, whose purpose is to make money, is more representative of our society than our state television network, which is funded by everyone?

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: You're talking about directors?

Ms. Marquise Lepage: Directors, yes. Yes, there have to be people of both genders at the head, but everyone lives in the same world. I nearly fell off my chair when I saw those figures, and that is why I have become partly militant. I have been working for 20 years, and I have so many contracts that I can hardly breathe between two films, and I naively had the impression that everything had been resolved. When I saw that, I said to myself: "Oh my God!" When I attended a meeting where I saw extraordinary women, talented women who had not made a film for four or five years, I said to myself there was a problem. How is it that, in our society, we have the luxury to waste that talent?

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: You're saying that you find more opportunities for women in the private sector.

[English]

The Chair: We have one minute left.

[Translation]

Ms. Marquise Lepage: As you said, Radio-Canada triggers everything that happens in the private sector. There is no private industry in Canada.

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: There is TVA and there is—

Ms. Marquise Lepage: Yes, but TVA will also take money out of our pockets, from the Canadian Television Fund. There's SODEC as well.

Ms. Isabelle Hayeur (Member, Réalisatrices équitables): Here's how things work. To get money from SODEC and Telefilm Canada to do a feature film, you first have to go and see the television stations and request a pre-purchase or a licence. If Radio-Canada doesn't give us that licence, we have very little chance of getting financing for a feature film.

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: Are you saying that you have greater success with the private networks like TVA and CTV?

Ms. Marquise Lepage: No, no.

Ms. Isabelle Hayeur: No, but there are works by women directors in their programming schedule. Radio-Canada is more or less the only one that buys feature films, because the private sector is somewhat withdrawing from that. That is why it is important that that be done through in-house production and in what we call the "private sector" in Canada, particularly in Quebec, because that's what we know best.

[English]

The Chair: Okay, I have to apologize; it seems this particular session could go on for probably another hour or so, but we are limited to our time.

I thank you again for your presentations and your answers.

Ms. Marquise Lepage: At what time do you finish? We could meet later.

Voices: Oh, oh!

The Chair: I have to get home sometime.

We're going to recess for a couple of minutes.

Again, thank you.

• _____ (Pause) _____

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• (1030)

The Chair: Welcome back to our next presentation.

This is the 64th meeting of the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage, pursuant to Standing Order 108(2), a full investigation of the role of a public broadcaster in the 21st century.

I welcome our next presenters.

I have been asked, and I would also ask that we try to keep our presentations as short as we can at the start so that we have opportunities to ask questions. We can go a little longer on them. If we could stay in the neighbourhood of eight to ten minutes, it would be great.

In this session we have CKRT-TV, Radio Nord Communications, and Coalition pour la radiotélévision publique francophone.

From CKRT-TV, Mr. Simard, are you the presenter, sir?

• (1035)

Mr. Marc Simard (President, CKRT-TV): Yes.

The Chair: Okay. You have first go.

Mr. Marc Simard: *Monsieur le président*, let me just say a few words in English.

My wife is English, by the way. She is from Sudbury, Ontario.

We understand certainly that it is perhaps difficult for you to pronounce our names, but it would be very difficult for us to pronounce your name.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Chair: I am Gary Schellenberger.

Thank you.

[Translation]

Mr. Marc Simard: Mr. Chairman and committee members, my name is Marc Simard, and I am the President of CKRT-TV Ltée, which owns CKRT-TV, the CBC/Radio-Canada affiliate in Rivière-du-Loup for the past 45 years. I'm accompanied today by Raynald Brière, President and CEO of Radio-Nord communications, which owns CKRN-TV, the CBC/Radio-Canada affiliate founded almost 50 years ago in Rouyn-Noranda. Also with us is Pierre Harvey, Executive Vice-President of CKRT-TV.

We want to thank you for taking the time to listen to us here today. We feel that your committee's work is essential in order to orient CBC/Radio-Canada's future activities and to ensure that all Canadians have free access to this public service.

Our submission will not deal with all the issues raised in this investigation of the role of a public broadcaster in the twenty-first century. We will be talking about certain issues of particular concern to us as CBC/Radio-Canada affiliate television stations in Quebec operating primarily in the regions for almost 50 years.

On June 2, 1952, the first test pattern (an Indian head) appeared for the first time on television screens on CBFT-Montréal, which presented its first program a few weeks later, on July 25. At that time, the Government of Canada and CBC/Radio-Canada wanted to make the French-language and English-language television service available to all Canadians free of charge and as quickly as possible. For economic reasons, CBC/Radio-Canada television was established in the country's large cities.

To extend its services to the regions, CBC/Radio-Canada, which did not have the financial resources, would have to call on local individuals or companies who would set up the first private television stations in the region, as affiliates of CBC/Radio-Canada, thus giving the vast majority of Canadians the country's first French-language and English-language television service.

In Quebec in particular, the arrival of television in the regions was made possible by major amounts of local capital and a colossal effort by people who wanted to develop their community by giving it an unparallel means of communication and exchange, television. At the same time, they were responding to the government of the day's desire to give all Canadians access to television as quickly as possible. It is worth noting that most of these families are still active in the communications field today and that their contribution to extending and maintaining CBC/Radio-Canada television in the regions, even today, is inestimable.

Mr. Raynald Brière (Executive Director, Radio Nord Communications): The development of television in small markets in Quebec was facilitated by flexible regulations and the desire of the CRTC to bring the maximum number of television services to the regions. Subsequently, because of the great fragility of the small markets, the CRTC encouraged the owners of the television stations to obtain licences to operate television stations affiliated to the other two French-language television networks in Quebec in order to provide local populations with additional television signals and local services.

Now more than ever, the operation of regional CBC/Radio-Canada affiliates represents an essential contribution to the viability or profitability of all the television services offered in our small markets.

The French-language CBC/Radio-Canada affiliates in Quebec currently serve 20% of CBC/Radio-Canada's audience in Quebec. The markets of Sherbrooke, Trois-Rivières, Saguenay, Rouyn-Noranda and Rivière-du-Loup represent a total population of 1.4 million people aged two or more.

Taken together, the affiliates represent an audience of 4,300,000 viewing hours/week out of a total of 20,700,000 viewing hours/week generated by all the programming presented by CBC/Radio-Canada. That represents a contribution of almost 21% of CBC/Radio-Canada's total viewership generated by the affiliates in Quebec.

The five CBC/Radio-Canada affiliates have local production commitments of 15 hours and five minutes a week, representing a minimum commitment of almost 800 hours of local programming content a year.

Local programs consist primarily of local news, interviews with local celebrities and community bulletin boards for the many

communities we serve. The local reflection is thus continually present, hour after hour and day after day, through the free messages on local activities in our communities or the advertising offering services or products available from companies in our regions.

Point 2 of CBC/Radio-Canada's mandate, as mentioned in the study themes and questions suggested by your committee, says that CBC/Radio-Canada must reflect Canada and its regions to national and regional audiences, while serving the special needs of those regions.

We think that CBC/Radio-Canada has fulfilled this part of its mandate very well, thanks in particular to the affiliates that serve a number of Quebec regions. We think that it is extremely important that the affiliate stations continue to fulfil their role by ensuring a regular, daily presence.

• (1040)

Mr. Marc Simard: Point 7 of CBC/Radio-Canada's mandate mentions that it must be made available throughout Canada by the most appropriate and efficient means and resources as they become available for the purpose.

We feel that the best and most effective way of attaining this objective, which we consider fundamental, is to continue to broadcast CBC/Radio-Canada programs over the air to all Canadians without exception. Indeed, even with the arrival of HDTV and other distribution platforms, all the countries of the world have chosen to continue digital over-the-air broadcasting.

Even today, in 2007, certain households still cannot receive cable or high-speed Internet, because they live in regions too far away from telephone exchanges or in areas that the cable companies do not consider profitable to serve. Even in the medium term, it is highly likely that these areas will not benefit from high-speed Internet or cable because of the cost involved. Moreover, many Canadians, including lower-income Canadians, do not want to pay to subscribe to a television service when the free signals they receive over the air suit them perfectly.

Economically speaking, it will cost our industry less to implement HDTV in a few years than it did, comparatively, to implement analog television in the fifties and sixties for the following reasons: developed transmission sites and access routes already exist; and the infrastructure, such as towers, antennae and buildings, already exist.

Obviously, when we assess the overall cost of implementing HDTV, it may represent a significant amount. However, when we consider the cost of replacing obsolete analog broadcasting equipment, which will have to be replaced in any case, this cost seems more acceptable and justified to us, given that it will make the first public television service available, free of charge, to all Canadians.

We feel that CBC/Radio-Canada, as the public broadcaster, should exercise leadership in the field of digital over-the-air (HD) broadcasting in Canada and thus set an example for the country's private broadcasters.

Once again, we firmly believe that no new platform or new medium will ever replace conventional television around the world. Indeed, according to a number of experts and observers, conventional television will continue to occupy pride of place among consumers as a mass medium for years to come.

If it is possible for the affiliates to renew reasonable affiliation agreements with CBC/Radio-Canada, we plan to invest to convert our broadcasting equipment to HD in a few years in order to continue to properly service the entire population of our regions free of charge.

• (1045)

Mr. Raynald Brière: As to the question whether CBC/Radio-Canada is able to fulfil its legislative mandate with the parliamentary appropriations and revenues it currently has, we feel that CBC/Radio-Canada will no longer be able to count on an increase in its advertising revenues in order to maintain its current level of service. Indeed, in Canada, and Quebec in particular, there is a great deal of pressure on conventional television's revenues because of the ever-growing competition from specialty channels and the attraction that the Internet exercises for major advertisers.

The key therefore is not an increase in advertising revenues, particularly in Quebec, but rather adequate funding from the Government of Canada. Better government funding of CBC/Radio-Canada will give it the financial stability it needs to better fulfil its mandate as a public broadcaster and at the same time allow the two private broadcasters in Quebec to evolve in a less crowded advertising market.

Mr. Marc Simard: As for section C, on the challenges facing the various CBC/Radio-Canada services, we want to emphasize the following elements of the programming offered.

Given that CBC/Radio-Canada has significant human, technical and financial resources and a mandate as a public broadcaster serving the Canadian public, the programs produced or broadcast by CBC/Radio-Canada should always be of high quality and offered free or charge, by over-the-air broadcasting, to all Canadians without exception across Canada.

That will not stop CBC/Radio-Canada from positioning itself on new communication or information platforms as it is currently doing. However, the principle of free and accessible service from CBC/Radio-Canada, financed largely by public funds, should be maintained by using digital over-the-air (HD) broadcasting for the next few years.

In conclusion, Mr. Chairman, these are the elements of our presentation that we would particularly like the Committee on Canadian Heritage to remember.

The affiliates of CBC/Radio-Canada French-language network currently serve 20% of CBC/Radio-Canada's audience in Quebec.

Twenty-one percent of CBC/Radio-Canada's viewership in Quebec is generated by its affiliates.

For 50 years, our CBC/Radio-Canada affiliates have been broadcasting local content during the vast majority of its station breaks, six times an hour, 18 hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year.

Local television has allowed our regions to forge their own identities by preventing them from being flooded by messages from the major centres like Montreal and Quebec City.

If the affiliates can renew reasonable affiliation agreements with CBC/Radio-Canada, we plan to convert our equipment to HD broadcasting in a few years in order to continue adequately serving the entire populace in our regions.

No other distribution platform, including the Internet, will ever be able to equal the technical broadcasting quality offered by digital over-the-air (HD) transmitters.

According to a number of experts and observers, conventional television will continue to occupy pride of place among consumers as a mass medium for many years to come.

As a national public broadcaster, CBC/Radio-Canada should exercise leadership in over-the-air HD broadcasting, setting the example for the country's private broadcasters. CBC/Radio-Canada should provide high definition conventional television, free of charge, to all Canadians without exception.

Finally, Mr. Chairman, we would like to mention that, as an affiliate, we want to continue playing the role that we have played over the past 50 years.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you for that.

Now we switch to Mr. Morin.

[Translation]

Mr. Sylvio Morin (Spokesperson, Coalition pour la radio-télévision publique francophone): Good morning, Mr. Chairman and committee members.

With me is François Lewis, who is a member of the coalition's steering committee and President of the Syndicat des techniciens et artisans du réseau français de Radio-Canada. He is an active member of the coalition. For my part, I am the coalition's spokesperson, although that is not how I earn my living. I am a contract employee of the Télé-Québec public network in Quebec. I am organizing a magnificent international competition called "La Dictée des Amériques". I won't be telling you about the dictation today.

• (1050)

[English]

And I'm going to stick to the rules and keep my presentation short, so we have more time for questions.

[*Translation*]

The Coalition pour la radiotélévision publique francophone was established on December 14, 2005, on the initiative of the unions and associations that represent the employees of the French-language arm of the CBC/Radio-Canada—radio and television—as well as Télé-Québec. It is made up of individuals and organizations representing various sectors of Quebec and Canadian society that consider public broadcasting to be an essential service, an invaluable tool for democracy and social development.

Essentially, we want to argue in favour of the public radio and television broadcasting system consisting of the large CBC/Radio-Canada network as a whole and, to a lesser extent, Télé-Québec and, in Ontario, the small TFO network.

What are the coalition's objectives? The coalition wants to raise public awareness and put pressure on decision-makers so that: a stop is put to any weakening of French-language public broadcasting; a public debate is held on the future of French-language public broadcasting; French-language public broadcasting receives adequate and stable funding; public funding for private independent production is not done at the expense of French-language public broadcasters; the system of public funding for French-language television production is recognized so that the broadcasters have access to all available production grants; French-language public broadcasting has the means to promote distinctive in-house production, using its most valuable asset, the tradition and expertise of its craftspeople, in order to preserve our cultural heritage; residents of all regions, and all the various groups that make up Quebec and Canadian society, enjoy high-quality, pluralist services free of charge from public broadcasters.

On these points, I have just heard the words of my distinguished colleagues, and I believe we are quite in agreement.

In the coalition's view, the facts clearly show that general-interest public broadcasters are still the heart of the Canadian broadcasting system, and guarantee its uniqueness. The current system cannot continue without substantial involvement by government in its funding, whether through grant funds or general interest public broadcasters.

The regulatory framework for the Canadian broadcasting system should reflect this undeniable reality. More specifically, the coalition believes that general-interest public broadcasters must have the same access to grant funds, on the same conditions, as the so-called independent producers, which, incidentally, are not independent in the slightest because they are dependent on public funding. Moreover, today I'm going to make a statement that will surprise you, committee members: all television production in Canada, particularly in the Francophone community, with the exception of information and public affairs programs, is financed out of public funds.

When we hear Pierre Karl Péladeau say that it is unfair that CBC/Radio-Canada receives public funding and that is unfair competition, that's rubbish. Moreover, we saw what happened when Shaw Cable and Vidéotron decided not to pay their contribution to the Canadian Television Fund. Vidéotron pays \$14 million into the Fund, but it

gets \$18 million back. So don't tell me that private television isn't receiving public money. That's an unmitigated lie.

In addition, the broadcasting rights for subsidized productions should belong to the institutions that provide the subsidies and assume the marketing risks, that is the grant funds and the general-interest public broadcasters. Technological developments have made it possible for productions funded by the government with commercial risk shouldered by the general-risk public broadcasters to cannibalize the Canadian broadcasting system if they are widely broadcast via unregulated media such as the Internet.

The coalition considers that the government must make recommendations, or impose requirements, for stable, multi-year public funding for general-interest public broadcasters. Situated as they are at the heart of the Canadian broadcasting system, the general-interest public broadcasters are trustees and guarantors of the public property represented by almost entirely subsidized production, which is the key characteristic of the Canadian audiovisual industry.

•(1055)

The coalition also considers that the CRTC must insist to the government and to the general-interest public broadcasters that the latter themselves produce a significant portion of the audiovisual content they broadcast in order to maintain a high level of competition and quality throughout the industry.

Thank you.

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you for that.

We're going to start the questioning with Mr. Angus this time.

Mr. Charlie Angus: Thank you.

[*Translation*]

I come from the Témiscaming region, in Ontario, and my riding is Timmins—James Bay. So I know CKRN in Rouyn-Noranda well.

This morning, I would like to talk about the necessity of a long-term plan for

[*English*]

the transmitters for HD. In particular, it's been raised that we have right now an analog system, we have analog towers, and we have to start the transition over.

I'm hearing from you that it is much more cost-effective to go to HD transmitters. Is that correct?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Marc Simard: Mr. Angus, the introduction of HD television through a system of transmitters definitely involves additional costs that the small stations in particular would have to pay if we headed toward that broadcasting method.

However, that is not the most economic system, and we admit it. But we think that the television programs of CBC/Radio-Canada, as the first French-language network in the case of Quebec, or Anglophone network in the other provinces, should be accessible free of charge to all citizens and that, in spite of everything, even if there are higher costs involved in converting our transmission equipment, that is the best system because CBC/Radio-Canada's mandate is to reach all Canadians, free of charge, if we, as small affiliates in our regions, are able to continue signing reasonable agreements with CBC/Radio-Canada.

[English]

Mr. Charlie Angus: Go ahead.

[Translation]

Mr. Sylvio Morin: I would like to give you a less technical point of view on that subject. The act governing CBC/Radio-Canada states that all Canadians must have access to the corporation's service. I'm talking about the Francophone side. The same is true for Anglophones in Canada as a whole. That reality also exists for Francophones outside Quebec.

We're now being told that not only will the over-the-air signal no longer be accessible, but it will be through a digital system, and thus by cable. All Canadians will therefore have to subscribe and pay cable fees. If they want to have access to other CBC/Radio-Canada services—for a number of years now, CBC/Radio-Canada, especially the French network, has moved toward convergence of new platforms, in both radio and television and with Internet sites—Canadian taxpayers, who are already paying taxes in order to have CBC/Radio-Canada services and programs produced by the private sector, but financed out of their taxes, will then have to pay even more, in particular through satellite and cable services, to get CBC/Radio-Canada service. No later than yesterday, I paid my Vidéotron bill. I paid \$94 for high-speed Internet, digital television service and cable. If I want to watch Radio-Canada, I have to pay more. Under the act, unless it has been amended, Radio-Canada will have to find the financial or technological means to ensure that the signal and services are available free of charge to all Canadians.

[English]

Mr. Charlie Angus: Well, this raises the larger question that we're discussing in our hearings. If we're moving just to subscriber fees, where you have to have cable in order to access...

We have the situation in the west where if you're a francophone—and just over the last few years, Alberta has had 50,000 new francophones—you have to pay extra on your cable fee to get francophone services. They're up in the range of 300, 800, 900 channels. If we're looking at CRTC deregulation coming, we're looking at what impact that will have on how people access it.

So on this question of HD transmitters, I really want to get it clear. Industry Canada is promoting this. Is there a plan in place? Do you have a sense of the finances that will be necessary in order to ensure that anyone in this country can access, on channels 2 to 13 or whatever, francophone CBC services or anglophone CBC services over the air?

• (1100)

[Translation]

Mr. Marc Simard: That's somewhat what I'm saying, Mr. Angus. Even though we are required to pay additional costs, we think it is extremely important that CBC/Radio-Canada continue offering the service over the air.

Sometimes we think that the cost of introducing television by transmitter has been exaggerated. We're not talking about all the studios that will have to be set up in any case. We're just talking about over-the-air transmission using transmitters. The whole infrastructure is already in place: the towers, buildings and so on. That infrastructure is good and will remain. CBC/Radio-Canada owns a number of places. In a single tower, it has FM antennae; it rents space.

In many cases, the analog transmitters currently used should be replaced. Even if there were no transition to digital, in a number of cases, the transmitters would nevertheless have had to be replaced by new transmitters. Today, an HD digital transmitter costs the same as an analog transmitter. For the range of the CBC/Radio-Canada network, it would be important for over-the-air transmission to continue.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Scott.

[Translation]

Hon. Andy Scott (Fredericton, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you everyone.

[English]

I want to continue exploring. I should say I grew up on an affiliate, CHSJ in Saint John.

In recent years, resource restrictions have put great pressure on CBC in our part of Canada, in New Brunswick, and I just assumed that it had something to do with the fact that we were no longer being served by an affiliate. So I understand your arguments.

But I should say this: you're really the first to say—I think it was Monsieur Brière who said it—you believe CBC/Radio-Canada have fulfilled their mandate in terms of the regions. I think I heard you say that. Certainly that is not what we've heard—

[Translation]

Mr. Raynald Brière: That's not entirely what I said. Pardon me if I expressed myself poorly. I said that, as an affiliate, we are able to carry out the local programming mandate, better than Radio-Canada has done in the past. That's our business, that is our purpose. We serve the regions exclusively. We don't have any television stations in the major centres; we only have television stations in markets of 150,000 to 200,000 persons. The local programming and information mandate that CBC/Radio-Canada confers on us is thus clearly central to our business.

The difficulty we've been having for a number of years is that the agreements with Radio-Canada are increasingly hard to negotiate, and funding has been reduced. There's considerable pressure on us to cut services. The fact is that we have fewer resources than we did five years ago. The last negotiations that we had with CBC/Radio-Canada resulted in a 30% reduction in revenue for us.

Radio-Canada is faced with two choices: either it takes back its local stations and exploits them, or it hands them over to affiliated stations, while providing them with the necessary resources. I don't think there is any other solution apart from those two options.

• (1105)

Hon. Andy Scott: Mr. Simard, do you want to add something?

Mr. Marc Simard: It must be clearly understood that the amounts of money that are paid to us by CBC/Radio-Canada are ultimately only part of the revenues from network sales. In the Province of Quebec, as in the other provinces in Canada, CBC/Radio-Canada sells advertising for the entire province and remits only a portion of it to us. As affiliates, we broadcast that advertising sold by CBC/Radio-Canada and it remits a portion of the advertising revenues to us; it keeps a portion for itself. The amounts that we receive are already coming from advertising. Unfortunately, a few years ago, Radio-Canada reduced the portion of those revenues that it remitted to us.

Virtually everywhere in Canada, regional television may still remain a very strong essential component in providing good service to Canadians. We have been around for 50 years; we are established, and we know our market. We simply want to tell you about the importance of the role that we play and that we would like to continue playing.

[English]

Hon. Andy Scott: I think there's some dramatic irony there. It was probably just the timing. We lobbied for so long in New Brunswick to get the CBC studio and then got out of CHSJ. It happened just at a time when there was incredible pressure on the CBC. I guess, as we'd say *en anglais*, be careful what you wish for.

In any event, one of the concerns I have is with regard to the coexistence of over-the-air transmission and everything else that will be available. I think we're going to recommend to the national broadcaster that in order to be relevant and keep up and all of those other things, they have to be in that other space as well.

So at what point will it become a problem thinking about the intent of the service for everyone when the service is so different? As you bulk up on one side, do more and more on one side, when does that become stressful?

[Translation]

Mr. Sylvio Morin: Last week, the CRTC made an announcement on the issue of general-interest television stations, airwaves and the switch from the analog to the digital system by 2011. If I understood you correctly, Mr. Scott, you are saying that the Canadian Heritage Committee will tell the CRTC that what it has decided is no longer right and that we are going to maintain the over-the-air system. Last week, we were rejected in that respect. The CRTC decided that, starting in 2011, there would no longer be any obligation, for the CBC/Radio-Canada in particular, to maintain the over-the-air

system. A little clause is added saying that, for the isolated regions, we'll see. Are you saying that the committee will reverse that decision. The decision was made by the CRTC no later than last Friday.

[English]

Hon. Andy Scott: As much as I'd like to decide what the committee is going to say, I don't think the chair will let me.

So no, I'm just exploring the possibilities here. One of my concerns is that while we attempt to do this simultaneously, the level of disparity between the two would grow. Then you would have a different kind of challenge. I think that's a real concern.

I'd also like to ask you about the impact of resource restrictions. We've spoken of it here and we've gotten it all across the country. I don't think anybody would challenge the idea that if there are deficiencies in the CBC's exercise or fulfillment of its mandate, it can be related to resource restrictions that go back probably 15 years.

To each of you, what has been the impact for you? What have you seen in those resource restrictions or cuts?

[Translation]

Mr. Marc Simard: For the affiliates, the impact was as follows. As responsible broadcasters for 50 years, we have maintained the same level of local production at our stations, despite Radio-Canada's cuts. Consequently, our stations are now barely profitable. As broadcasters, we have decided to make the effort to continue, hoping that there will be an adjustment at some point, but we have not at all reduced our local programming so that we can maintain services to our fellow citizens.

• (1110)

Mr. Justice François Lewis (Member of the Steering Committee, Coalition pour la radiotélévision publique francophone): There is one thing that I don't clearly understand. In the case of the affiliated stations in Sherbrooke, Saguenay and Trois-Rivières, in the past, Radio-Canada has made the decision to establish service contracts. However, programs are produced in part by Radio-Canada journalists and technicians. It is Radio-Canada that produces the news broadcasts for Sherbrooke, Saguenay and Trois-Rivières. The service contract concerns launching and broadcasting. I think that Radio-Canada has done its share to ensure the program is created. Then it remains for it to be launched. I don't know whether the percentages that I heard reflect that reality. There was a change in that regard, when Radio-Canada assumed a certain part of the production. That is probably because the corporation does not have the necessary money to have broadcast transmitters. That's done by the affiliates.

Mr. Sylvio Morin: I'm going to make a comment on the impact that has on programming. It must be understood that what was taken from Paul will be given to Peter. The cuts that were made to CBC/Radio-Canada were made in order to create funding programs, particularly federal programs. Money isn't created in Ottawa or Quebec City. In the 1990s, Gérard Veilleux closed down the local stations. The budgets that were cut at Radio-Canada were given to little private sector friends through the funding programs. That has to be clearly understood.

People talked about the impact that had on Radio-Canada's French-language programming. The corporation had a revenue shortfall and had to make programming choices that, in some cases, were not necessarily consistent with its mandate. It had to take a private commercial direction where it had to go after ratings so that advertisers would pay money to offset the cuts. So programming choices were made. For example, in sports at Radio-Canada, *La soirée du hockey* is long gone. In English Canada, people could still watch *Hockey Night in Canada*. And yet Radio-Canada is a general-interest network. The sports field was taken over by the Réseau des sports, a private channel accessible solely by cable. Programming choices were made. The cuts had an impact: they changed the entire broadcasting universe.

At the coalition, we talk about holding a public debate on the future of public broadcasting. In fact, it's a debate on the future of television in Canada that we should have. I think that the federal government shouldn't just be talking about the CBC/Radio-Canada, but about the entire industry and prepare a report. Programs were created 15 or 20 years ago. Today, we have to see how far we've come; we see the crises that this is causing. Their convergence and new platforms are factors. I think we've gotten to the point where everyone in the industry in Canada has to sit down—that can be directed by the federal government—to sum up the position and see what is going on now. I think that, before long, we're going to wind up in a dead end. If we look at each of the factors one at a time, just CBC/Radio-Canada, just the private sector, or just funding, something will eventually occur and the machine will break down.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you.

We're going to switch over now to Mr. Kotto.

[Translation]

Mr. Maka Kotto: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Hello again and thank you for being here. What you're telling us today is very interesting.

I have a lot of questions to ask you but I'm going to try to condense them in order to get the essential substance to feed our analysts. My first question is for the affiliates, and I'm playing the devil's advocate. Why do you think it appropriate and necessary to testify here today?

• (1115)

Mr. Raynald Brière: Because we play an extremely important and somewhat unknown role. We are located in regions that do not have a high profile: northern Quebec, the Lower St. Lawrence and so on. These are not regions that make the headlines every day, and people don't talk about them regularly. There's a kind of cleavage between the major centres and the regions. A lot of attention has

been focused on the big cities. I'm originally from the Saguenay region. I've been living in Montreal for 25 years. I often have occasion to go into the regions, and I see that the needs are different. It's not the same thing. It's fine that it's that way. People are entitled to a quality of life in Rouyn-Noranda, Timmins, Kapuskasing or anywhere else. We think it's important to make this viewpoint heard. Montreal, Toronto, Vancouver and Calgary are major centres. Rouyn-Noranda, Chicoutimi, Red Deer and so on are important places. Half of the population of Quebec lives outside Montreal. We work for that 50%. We respect half of the people, those who live outside the major centres. So I think it's important that we make ourselves heard today.

Mr. Maka Kotto: You say you want your present role to be entirely maintained. What do you defend locally? Culture, information?

Mr. Raynald Brière: A local television station is, first of all, the information centre: it broadcasts the news. With increasing media concentration—and that won't stop—Canada's Francophone market has witnessed a certain standardization of content. Information is manufactured in Montreal and redistributed in the regions.

We think that local life exists. The softwood lumber problem in northern Quebec, for example, had virtually no impact in Montreal. If I live in Outremont or Westmount, the softwood lumber or mining problems in northern Quebec don't concern me. However, if I live in Rouyn-Noranda, my life and my family are affected. So I need a community life so that I can talk about and debate those issues. That's it for information.

As for cultural life, an important festival was held in Rouyn-Noranda, at the International Film Festival in Abitibi-Témiscamingue. In Montreal, there's little interest in it, because there's already a major film festival in that city, and there's an even bigger one in Cannes. The Rouyn-Noranda film festival, who cares? But it's important for the people who live there.

There's also the guitar festival in Rouyn-Noranda. There are local cultural activities. These people are entitled to a community life. Television is like the church steps: it enables people to gather and talk. Economic promotion, community works, all that is disappearing because we live in big cities and that's where decisions are made.

And yet half the population lives outside those major cities. We're a kind of economic, cultural, social and information driver. One hundred percent of our news is local. No one can do it; the networks can't do it anymore because that's no longer their purpose. Their economic model is built on something else. That's the big difference.

Mr. Maka Kotto: How do you see the community radio system?

Mr. Raynald Brière: That's a good question.

That system is important. The problem stems from its funding arrangement. If I have to compete with organizations that receive grants, I'm not fighting on equal terms or with the same weapons. By giving those organizations economic advantages and the same opportunities to earn advertising revenue, you create an imbalance that will ultimately affect us. We are private businesses, and we essentially live off advertising. So it's hard for us to compete with organizations that are subsidized.

• (1120)

Mr. Marc Simard: Allow me to add something. In fact, conventional television in our regions provides a service to the public day after day, free of charge. There are volunteers who organize all kinds of activities in our regions, which we announce on our airwaves free of charge.

I'm trying to understand the meaning of your question. Of course, if they announce their activities through a community station, on cable, on channel 82, for example, and we announce an important activity of a musical organization in the evening, in the slots that we have left, on a network program, you'll understand that, if there are 50,000 listeners listening to the free message that we've just broadcast, there's no comparison with the message that would be broadcast by a community station, with all due deference to the community stations.

In addition, our infrastructures are in no way comparable to those of the community stations. As affiliates, we have to have production equipment that is virtually as state of the art as the equipment in Montreal. Imagine you're in one of our regions or in another region of Canada and you're listening, on a small station, to a half-hour program that comes from the network and that was produced at a cost of \$250,000. To produce local programs, we have to have adequate equipment. We have equipment similar to that of the major networks to produce programs of very good quality, but it's not comparable.

Conventional television, which is mass market television, gives our population a high profile. That's what is important. People can take advantage of a mass medium to advertise our activities to everyone.

Mr. Maka Kotto: I understand your message. Even though I'm not asking a lot of questions, that's quite clear to me. We've been informed in that regard.

Mr. Sylvio Morin: Incidentally, Mr. Kotto, the word "community" is included in the Broadcasting Act thanks to me. I'll explain that to you one day.

Mr. Maka Kotto: Your argument suggested that you had a fear, that the role you play in the regions will be diminished. Where does that fear stem from?

Mr. Raynald Brière: The more financial pressure Radio-Canada is under, the more it transmits that pressure onto us. It's the principle of the bigger versus smaller. It's a little like fishing: the big fish eat the small fish.

Earlier I told you that we were renewing the agreements every five years. In terms of revenue, the present agreement is 30% lower than what we had five years ago. What will it be when we renew in 2010?

In my view, there are two possible options: either Radio-Canada decides to take back its affiliates, by buying them back or otherwise, and to produce its content itself, to take care of that, to set up in Rouyn-Noranda, in Rivière-du-Loup or elsewhere and to serve the population; or it recognizes that we are playing an important role and decides to work with us to improve that role. There are little things that we can do.

In Abitibi, there is an infrastructure in which we have invested millions of dollars worth of equipment. So we should be able to provide images of that market to Radio-Canada in Montreal. However, to cover the International Film Festival in Abitibi-Témiscamingue, Radio-Canada uses its own directors. That makes no sense, since we have the necessary infrastructure as an affiliate. We should be able to provide that service. We could save money together. The public and private sectors are not prohibited from working together. There's nothing in the act that says that can't be done. I think we have an interest in doing more of that.

• (1125)

Mr. Marc Simard: I'd also like to cite an example that occurred in the eastern part of the country, in the Lower St. Lawrence, where I live. Some 15 years ago, Radio-Canada was operating a television station in the City of Rimouski, a market twice as big as those of Rivière-du-Loup and Rouyn. For economic reasons, the corporation said it could no longer operate a station in that market.

We operate in markets half that size. Twenty years later, we are still there, and we produce news broadcasts every day. I'm citing that example in response to the question you asked in your document, whether private affiliates can continue to play a role in the Canadian broadcasting system, particularly with CBC/Radio-Canada. I'm telling you: we are ready to do it.

Mr. Angus referred to many specialty services, but they virtually don't serve the regions. The only way of reaching a mass of citizens is still conventional television. I know there are community and other radio stations, but here I'm talking about television. We're ready to continue playing this role, as we have for 50 years, when the corporation couldn't afford to do so. At the time, Radio-Canada said that television was so costly that it could not afford to provide it across the country and that it would limit itself to the major cities.

We helped extend CBC/Radio-Canada's service and we would like to continue doing that. We are able to do it very well.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you for that.

I have just a couple of comments I'd like to make, although they might show my age a wee bit.

I can remember very well the Indian-head test pattern back in the early fifties. I remember we'd sit there in front of the television and just watch that. Whether it was CBC or CTV or Global—I don't think I missed an opening in our area—we'd watch that test pattern for the longest time.

Back in those times—yes, I come from southwestern Ontario—CFPL London was a CBC affiliate, and they did serve the region well. As time went on, I watched that with newspapers too. A local newspaper would serve a region and then would maybe be bought out by a conglomerate or whatever. Pretty soon, if you bought the *Toronto Star*, you knew what was in all the newspapers across the way; there was very little regional.

This is something we've heard, whether in Newfoundland or in Yellowknife or in Vancouver or in Winnipeg: regional, regional, regional. I know there are a lot of public broadcasters in small areas; for instance, in our area, Rogers Cable has a very good regional area. They look into those little things—a 100th birthday party for someone or whatever—that are very important.

I know from talking with the Corus group, they have a couple of affiliates, one in Kingston. I know how those things can work together. The affiliates end up getting squeezed a little wee bit sometimes, but if we're going to solve some of the regional

programming with the public broadcaster, CBC/SRC, I think we may have to look that way a little bit more.

Another question that has been brought up is, should the CBC be transmitters of programming or should they be programmers? Should there be a public-private partnership, with maybe the distribution of the signal shopped out in some way, and they concentrate on the programming? I know that works in some hospitals, where someone builds the beautiful hospital and someone else rents the system and carries on. There are various things like that.

I found the presentations this morning to be very interesting. I hope I haven't bored you with anything *I* have said. Thank you for your presentations and thank you for your frankness in answering the questions.

The meeting is adjourned.

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