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Chair

Mr. Gary Schellenberger

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•(1345)

[English]

The Chair (Mr. Gary Schellenberger (Perth—Wellington, CPC)): Welcome this afternoon. It is a Friday afternoon for the 65th 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.

You will have to accept my apologies before I announce your organizations, but I am trying to speak a little French, and so I will do that.

We welcome this afternoon the Association des producteurs de films et de télévision du Québec and the Association des réalisateurs et des réalisatrices du Québec.

I'm sorry for that, but I tried.

Welcome. It's going to be a good meeting here this afternoon.

Who is going to speak?

Ms. Samson, would you go first, please?

[Translation]

Ms. Claire Samson (President and Chief Executive Officer, Association des producteurs de films et de télévision du Québec): Good afternoon. I am Claire Samson, the president and CEO of the APFTQ, and I am accompanied by the chairman of the association's board of directors, Mr. Vincent Leduc, who in daily life is vice-president of Zone 3, one of the largest independent television production companies in Quebec.

As you surely know, the APFTQ represents the great majority of independent film and television production companies in Quebec. Our members regularly do business with all of the Quebec broadcasters, public and private, conventional and specialized. In the written brief that we submitted to your committee last February, we formulated four major general principles which in our view should guide the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage in its investigation of the role for the national public broadcaster in the 21st century. I shall first review these few principles and then ask Vincent to briefly explain the reasons why we are proposing them.

The first principle is that it is important and must continue to be important to have a strong national public broadcaster in the environment that exists at the beginning of the 21st century. The second principle is the need to ensure that this national public broadcaster receives a sufficiently large annual appropriation to properly carry out its mandate under the Broadcasting Act. The third principle is the need to preserve the generalist nature of the

programming of the CBC's core television networks, while assigning priority to certain programming categories. And last but not least, the fourth principle is the national public broadcaster's obligation to play an exemplary and leading role in the use of independent production.

Mr. Vincent Leduc (Chair of the Board of Directors, Association des producteurs de films et de télévision du Québec): Good afternoon, and a good sunny Friday in Montreal.

Mr. Chairman, in an increasingly fragmented media universe, where the number of classic broadcasting services as well as the number of new broadcasting windows and platforms are increasing, it is more essential than ever to preserve this anchor point which connects all Canadians, the national public broadcaster. A broadcaster whose distinctive, diverse and predominantly Canadian programming is widely available in every region of Canada, in both the official languages, and on radio and television as well as the new media. Recognition of this principle is crucial. For it is at the heart of what has characterized the Canadian broadcasting system for decades and what should continue to characterize it in the coming century, that being the existence of both public and private components that are strong and solidly rooted and that complement and emulate each other, thereby offering Canadian citizens a true diversity of programming and editorial voices.

It goes without saying that such a national public broadcaster cannot fully play its role unless it has the appropriate financial resources at its disposal. In our view, it is very important that the majority of those resources come from the State, from parliamentary appropriations. Essentially, what distinguishes a public broadcaster from a private broadcaster is that the former is not primarily dependent on market forces and commercial revenues. It is this independence that allows it to give precedence to the public interest and the social and cultural objectives of the Act. It is this independence that guarantees the distinctive and complementary character of its programming and its capacity to fulfil its public service mission.

Furthermore, the financial resources that come from the State must be substantial enough to allow the CBC to carry out its mandate under the Broadcasting Act in full. On this subject, if it is true, as CBC/Radio-Canada maintains, that between 1990 and 2005 its parliamentary appropriation increased by only 2.3% in current dollars and decreased by 33% in constant dollars, that is, by close to \$375 million, that is matter for concern. An adjustment is urgently needed: CBC/Radio-Canada must be restored the resources to realize its ambitions and full capacity to fulfil the mission it has been entrusted by Parliament. It is also essential, in our view, that the CBC's core television networks continue to be general-interest and to offer the Canadian public a diverse and balanced range of information and entertainment programs in all genres.

The CBC must attempt to reach all of the socio-economic segments and age groups of the Canadian population by offering programming in a variety of genres likely to meet the needs, tastes and expectations of Canadian men, women and children. Of course, this generalist mission is not incompatible with the need to assign priority to certain programming categories that are not sufficiently represented in the private component of the broadcasting system or that are of exceptional importance in promoting Quebec and Canadian artistic creativity and cultural identity. In the current context, we feel that the CBC should make special efforts to encourage the production of original Canadian programming in the following sectors: drama, children's programs, documentaries and cultural programming.

The Broadcasting Act stipulates that the programming offered by the Canadian broadcasting system must make substantial use of Canadian independent producers. This obligation is contributing to an essential diversification of producers and in return offering thousands of freelance Canadian creators, artists and artisans a variety of entry points into the Canadian broadcasting system. These are essential gains, which must not be called into question or compromised.

In this era of constantly rising private-sector concentration of ownership, convergence, vertical integration and multimedia cross-ownership, it is essential that the national public broadcaster play a heightened and exemplary role supporting the development of a versatile, varied and dynamic Canadian independent production sector.

• (1350)

That is why we believe that a growing portion of CBC/Radio-Canada's annual spending on original Canadian programming should be allocated by statute to funding independent programs produced by a wide variety of Canadian producers in every area of programming that we have identified as a priority.

Claire, do you want to conclude?

Ms. Claire Samson: Thank you.

We hope that these few simple but basic principles can help the Committee clarify the role of our national public broadcaster and convince the Canadian Parliament to provide it with adequate financial resources to carry out that role. We believe that the implementation of these four principles is essential if Canadians want to maintain a broadcasting system that is dynamic, effective and open to diversity.

I thank you for your attention. We will be pleased at this time to answer your questions.

Thank you.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you for that.

We will move now over to Monsieur Jean-Pierre Lefebvre.

[Translation]

Mr. Jean-Pierre Lefebvre (President, Association des réalisateurs et des réalisatrices du Québec): Mr. Chairman, gentlemen, I would like to introduce Lise Lachapelle, who is Director General of the Association des réalisateurs et des réalisatrices du Québec. Thank you for having us.

We could simply walk away because we agree with what the producers have just said. Moreover, who will say that we don't agree with them? So there will be unanimity, in a way, between what we have to tell you, what we have written for you and what the producers have just told you.

I would remind you that we represent approximately 550 freelance film and television producers in Quebec and that we are recognized for all of Quebec for all films made in all languages, except those made in English, which belong to the Quebec Chapter of the Directors Guild of Canada. So we are Radio-Canada's first customers. We are in the front line with the producers. For that reason, we virtually hope that the same things will continue on both sides and that they will increase in other sectors.

I will briefly read the preamble that you no doubt have in your hands. Every since its founding, the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation has unquestionably played an historic and crucial role in the development of communication and creativity in Canada. This may be even more true in Quebec, where the French arm of the CBC has made it possible for a language and culture unique in North America to take root and to blossom.

Certainly the landscape of television, which is what concerns us directly, has been substantially transformed over the past 40 years with the arrival of private networks, pay TV, specialty channels and the Internet. These upheavals, however, far from threatening the CBC's role have on the contrary demonstrated its absolute necessity. They have shown that, like the model on which Canada's public broadcaster was originally based, the BBC, it must remain the preferred locus for democratic exchange and creativity free from political and commercial constraints. We would even assert that the CBC will survive only on condition that it stand out from its direct and indirect competitors and that it open its airwaves to the diverse peoples and cultures that inhabit Canada, from sea to sea to sea.

Lastly, while the television landscape is our topic here, we consider that the CBC Radio model, with its various — and varying — channels, points the way to follow, by largely devoting itself, so appealingly and effectively, to news and culture.

I won't read the 11 principles and recommendations that you'll find in our brief. We want the CBC to be independent, pluralist, that it not be privatized, that it be a state-of-the-art television network that leads by example, a popular network, but not populist.

I will perhaps emphasize one point, recommendation 8, which states:

The CBC must do more to assist the growth of Quebec and Canadian cinema by investing substantially in film development, production and distribution; this could perhaps be made mandatory for it.

It is curious to say, but I think that would help it a great deal, especially in English Canada, if such a measure existed. You know that English Canada has a lot of difficulty making contact with its audience. Quebec is much more successful. Nevertheless, it could also benefit from a joint venture between the private feature film industry here in Canada and the Crown corporation.

That system exists in a number of other countries in the world. The French model, in particular, produces an incredible number of feature films for television. We have always seen it as a way to put forward larger numbers of productions and also train technicians of all levels, actors and even the public.

• (1355)

In conclusion, we say that Radio-Canada must be the preferred vehicle of information, knowledge and culture among and for all Canadians. We emphasize the fact that, as I said, it can be a popular television network, but it must avoid the traps of populism at all costs.

Without Radio-Canada, without the CBC, we do not see how culture could be maintained and progress in Canada. Culture is something that is cultivated, that is taught. Look at the state of gastronomy in Toronto today, relative to 40 years ago, and you will realize that English Canada has made an extraordinary leap. So we must not consider giving people the cultural fast food they demand at any cost, on the pretext that it's more profitable than culture. We must not fall into that trap. On the contrary, the CBC and the federal government must increasingly affirm their mission as informers, Canadian cultural agents for all and among all Canadians.

That was the essential part of what we had to tell you, in addition to what I didn't read. Thank you very much for your attention.

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you for that.

We will go to the first questioner. Mr. Scarpaleggia, please.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia (Lac-Saint-Louis, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Welcome and thank you for your presentations.

In fact, I believe that everyone here is on the same wave length. We all understand the role of the public broadcaster, and we want it to affirm culture, diversity of opinion and general interest, not superficial programming. We are all in agreement on that point.

Obviously, a lot of groups like yours are appearing before us, in some instances, to request additional funding to support their public

broadcaster. Some would say that you are lobbying for your own interests. You say you want to develop more products, and CBC/SRC is the only network interested in Canadian cultural works. That has to be said, I believe. So, since the government is the distributor of funding, you would like it to give Radio-Canada more. You mentioned the idea of granting a dedicated budget envelope to film production. I think you are right in that sense.

In addition, we have to talk a little about accountability. Perhaps you didn't mention it, but others said that, at the same time, advertising is being taken away because the commercial imperative must be removed if we want a really good cultural product. So where does accountability come from? In the long run, who will judge the relevance of the product that CBC/SRC broadcasts? Who would prevent CBC/SRC from diverging into a field where Canadians no longer are, so that that plays against its long-term interests? Canadians might say, at some point, that, since they are not watching it, why should it be subsidized? We have even heard from people who hate CBC/SRC. I know a lot of people who don't watch CBC/SRC. They increasingly wonder why we subsidize it.

In the interests of everyone, how could we guarantee accountability? Perhaps advertising should be retained in order to determine whether sponsors find the programming relevant, though without going too far and without that becoming a commercial imperative.

I'm asking you a kind of philosophical question.

• (1400)

Mr. Vincent Leduc: As a general-interest broadcaster, CBC/Radio-Canada currently relies on public funding and depends on the market for a certain portion of its revenue. As the saying goes, this keeps it honest, and it is in its interests that it stay that way. I think everyone wants a strong CBC/Radio-Canada. I agree with you that it must also be relevant. Part of its relevance will come from the fact that the public watches it. CBC/Radio-Canada plays an important role as a leader in the television markets. That is where the best television in Canada has always been done, and that is where the standards, the markers against which the others are measured, are established.

I think that, in Quebec—and Jean-Pierre will agree with me, I believe—the better Radio-Canada performs and the higher the quality of its products, the more the other stakeholders in the industry will head in that direction. It's like a Hygrade sausage, if you will. In CBC/Radio-Canada's current funding mix, public funding predominates, which preserves the corporation's independence, boldness and creativity, as well as cultural notions. The commercial aspect, which generates a portion of its revenues, balances its relevance. I don't think the current model is bad in itself.

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: You aren't satisfied with the existing model?

Mr. Vincent Leduc: Of course it could be refined. If you asked me my opinion on a program or a given area of jurisdiction, I might say that I don't want anything to do with it, whereas it would be the opposite for someone else. The fact remains that, on the whole, I think the current model is—

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: Are you satisfied with the programming?

[English]

The Chair: Mr. Scarpaleggia, I think Mr. Lefebvre would like to say something.

[Translation]

Mr. Jean-Pierre Lefebvre: Since we absolutely want CBC/Radio-Canada to remain a general-interest television network rather than become the equivalent of ARTV, Télé-Québec or PBS, advertising must clearly be one of its components. The Association des réalisateurs et réalisatrices du Québec absolutely does not advocate eliminating advertising. Radio-Canada's big mistake, at least in French-speaking Quebec, was to do away with hockey, which the CBC did not do. Thank God, the Ottawa team will be taking part in the finals, which I'm at least certain of seeing on CBC. I won't be seeing them in Montreal. It costs my son and me, who are sports fans, \$700 a year to watch sports that used to be broadcast on Radio-Canada. We were able to start measuring the impact of this situation on Radio-Canada's airwaves last weekend.

I cite that example to emphasize the fact that Radio-Canada absolutely must not become dry and focus solely on ultimate forms of culture and art. Good taste is in everything, whether it be in sports or culture. But I mean "good taste".

Earlier you asked how the CBC and Radio-Canada could determine whether the programs it broadcasts are good for the audience. I think it's obvious. When you work with the public, consult it and know its preferences, you can orient programming in such a way as to satisfy its good taste. Certain cooking programs broadcast on the advanced cultural networks such as PBS, Télé-Québec and Radio-Canada are really popular around the world. For my part, I watch them all.

We want a general-interest television network, but we must not fall into the area of bad taste. Good taste is hard to define, but we more or less know what it is. I'm going to cite some examples of the contrary. It would be easy to talk to you about specific channels or even certain CBC and Radio-Canada channels. That's bad taste and it doesn't work. It goes without saying that the people who do the programming at Radio-Canada or the CBC are competent and that they have to listen to their co-workers, who in turn have to listen to the public. By working in this way, the CBC and Radio-Canada will survive. This is one of the essential television networks in the history of the world.

•(1405)

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: But if—

[English]

The Chair: You can have one quick question.

[Translation]

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: This morning, we heard from the group Réalisatrices équitables. Those people were seeking greater participation by women directors.

Do you agree that progress has to be made to ensure that more women directors present and distribute their products? Do you support their position?

Ms. Lise Lachapelle (Director General, Association des réalisateurs et des réalisatrices du Québec): Absolutely.

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: Do you think there is a gap to be filled in that area?

Ms. Lise Lachapelle: Yes, and I think other associations as well could eventually support those people.

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: Thank you.

Mr. Jean-Pierre Lefebvre: That's an association that comes from my home.

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: Indeed.

[English]

The Chair: Did you have anything to say on that?

[Translation]

Ms. Claire Samson: Vincent and I are former Radio-Canada employees. I don't know whether that's the case of Lise and Jean-Pierre. There are 12 of us around this table. If each of us went off on our own and prepared our own optimum programming schedule, the result would be 12 or 18 different proposals. Radio-Canada has to offer something for everyone, whether it be international information, scientific magazines, youth programs or major Canadian dramas. There has to be something in it for everyone, perhaps not constantly, but part of the time. That's the reason why Radio-Canada is in a way condemned to succeed.

If that success enables Radio-Canada managers to generate independent advertising revenue, I don't see why the broadcasting system would deprive itself of that. It is its ratings success that generates that additional revenue. It would be hard to justify doing without it, in view of the fact that the potential is there, in the same way as any other resource available to the country.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you for that.

We're going to try to keep the questions and answers short so that we can get all around the table.

Mr. Angus.

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

[Translation]

Thank you for your presentation. I believe that today's conversation will be profitable. Of course, we've been told that we had to increase funding, contribute to the development of television drama and variety shows, and we've listened to that message. However, today I would like to discuss the need to develop a plan for new media.

•(1410)

[English]

We have heard from our good friends at Vidéotron that they would like to change the CTF because they think they are being hampered in their ability to take programming and have it in all the multi-platforms because of the rights issue, and they would like to have all the ancillary rights.

There is another question we also have to raise. We've seen that the entire catalogue of the BBC can be viewed at any time of the day or night because the BBC has all its rights. Wherever you are in the world, you can watch BBC.

And yet we still have a system here in Canada in which we're paying for shows that may be shown two or three times, and then they sit in a vault. Clearly, our question has to be how we can be ready for the 21st century if we haven't addressed that issue. We've been trying to get an answer here about how we get our programs into every multi-viewing platform.

Some of the broadcasters blame the producers, and some of the producers blame the broadcasters.

We don't know what the financial value of online viewing is yet. It's all speculative. But is there not a simple percentage formula that can be worked out to ensure that a production, if it's independent, can be shown forever and a day, based on a percentage basis, or shown for 10 years, or five years, so that at least we can be assured that the product is available online wherever?

Ms. Claire Samson: I guess somewhere there is a solution. A year and a half ago, the APFTQ started working with a committee on new rights and new platforms. We've done our homework. We've had some research done and so on as to what the models in the world were and how they were working. We tried to look outside the box. We prepared a report that we submitted to all broadcasters in Quebec, and we had the opportunity to discuss this with them.

Of course, as you're saying—and you're quite right—the economic model is not known yet. Who's making money in all of these things, in YouTube and all of these other manifestations we see around the planet, we don't know yet. But of course we are open. The producers have clearly stated to the broadcasters that we are open to looking at the new economic model. We're willing to discuss this with the rights holders, who are the writers, comedians, directors, and so on. And we're willing to explore a model of sharing the revenues of those new platforms. But so far, no broadcaster has come back to us and said, all right, what would be a fair way to look at that? What should be left to the broadcasters? What should go to the rights holders? What should stay with the producers? So far the reality is that right now the broadcaster asks the producer for all of the rights forever.

We can't sell them. In the actual legal framework of labour relations in Quebec, it's not something we can sell because it's not something we have. All we have are licences to exploit a product on XYZ platform. That would mean for us reopening the entire way of doing business that has been going on for the past 40 years. It's not going to happen soon. It's not something that can be done within weeks or months. It can only be envisaged if we feel somewhere that the broadcasters are willing to be a part of the discussion. We cannot determine that by ourselves. So far we have no signals from the broadcasters to do that.

We do feel that CBC/SRC should, as a matter of fact, exercise a certain leadership in that particular case. It's the public broadcaster. If CBC/SRC were to take the leadership as to how it's going to work in this new environment, it could certainly open the way for all of the other broadcasters, be they Vidéotron, COGECO, or Shaw.

•(1415)

Mr. Charlie Angus: This is my concern here, because through Parliament we support probably half a billion dollars a year in development of product. Again, I can't see why we're paying for

product if people aren't going to be able to see it in this new world. It just seems like a complete waste.

So is it a necessity for government to step up to the plate through our funding agencies to insist on a percentage-based agreement, and to insist that if you're going to make a production, we're not going to have two shows, that it's going to be available if people want to watch it on their shoe phone?

Is there a model out there? We've heard a few thrown about. For example, we could have a standard distributor fee, whether it's CBC or TVA, and then a percentage that goes to the producers. Your obligation is then to pay your writers, the musicians, and everything else. Whether that show gets 2¢ of play from commercials or \$10, we don't know. But should that percentage be written into the actual contracts with Telefilm, and CTF, and the video fund to ensure that through our investment as the people of Canada, we are making sure our cultural voice is being accessed? Is that a possible model?

Ms. Claire Samson: It's an option; of course it is an option. In the ideal world, the broadcasters, producers, and rights holders would be successful in establishing among themselves what they feel is fair treatment. If we start with the fact that everybody is reasonable and of good faith, fine. But to do that, we have to look at the whole economic...or at every step of the exploitation.

I'll give you an example. You talked about Vidéotron. We know this thing about Illico and so on and so forth. Let's say my producer produces a show for TVA, and TVA puts it on Illico, video on demand, but decides to charge nothing to the viewers at home for downloading the show. Viewers can watch the show he produced at any time of night or day, any day of the week. They're not charged anything.

So TVA tells my producer that TVA is not getting any revenue from it. But down the road they are. They're selling the technology and the machine. You pay \$87 a month to get the machine at home so that you can download at any time of the day or night.

It's not true, then, that there are no revenues. A corporation is benefiting from that technology somewhere. It's the same thing with the Internet. That's why everybody in the industry is willing to reopen and revisit the whole system. Everybody just wants to make sure that it's not going to be the same thing as in the past 50 years. The major people who made the money in the past 50 years are broadcasters and film distributors. Unfortunately there's never been....

I have been a broadcaster. I have sold advertising to finance my programming. Never have I as a broadcaster called an independent producer and said to them: You know that show you sold me? I was expecting to make 600,000 viewers, but guess what—I made a million. I generated more advertising revenue than I expected, so I'm sending you a cheque; the performance went way above.

I've been in this business for 35 years, and I've never done that. I've never seen it.

Mr. Vincent Leduc: And you won't, either.

Mr. Charlie Angus: So there's no percentage base—

Ms. Claire Samson: None at all. Vincent can confirm this; I can produce a show that will generate a million viewers, and—

Mr. Vincent Leduc: But rightfully, the broadcaster will see that the opposite is true too. He may have expected a million viewers for my show and got only 500,000. He's not penalizing me for it. So we're not returning any money.

Ms. Claire Samson: That's true.

If we wanted to revisit the whole system, it would be a huge job. Who could arbitrate that for the next 10 years? I don't know. But it would be a huge challenge.

Everybody is quite open to revisiting it, but right now we're faced with a way of doing business that has not adapted to the new technology.

Mr. Vincent Leduc: And you're right, Mr. Angus, that it will have to be addressed very soon. Canadians pay a good part of that bill, and they're entitled to access the programs they finance.

• (1420)

The Chair: Very short, Mr. Lefebvre.

[Translation]

Mr. Jean-Pierre Lefebvre: I agree with what's just been said. We are in a vicious circle. When producers say that broadcasters want all the rights, we can say that producers want all the rights. So, since everyone has to protect himself with all the rights, we don't have any more rights, on the one hand. On the other hand, in the confrontation, the federal government will have to make a rationalization effort between CBC/Radio-Canada and the National Film Board. These are two different models. Unfortunately, the National Film Board is doing too many things, as it has all the rights in everything it has produced since the beginning of time.

That's what I wanted to add.

[English]

The Chair: Again, very short, please.

[Translation]

Ms. Lise Lachapelle: I'd like to go back to what Ms. Samson just said. In fact, the landscape has become much more complex, with the arrival of the Internet. It's no longer just a question of a given number of broadcasts, it has now become impossible to rely on the number of broadcasts. There's also the means whereby those programs are conveyed, which are not necessarily local Canadian properties. So the U.S. vehicles also make the issue more complex. In fact, there aren't just more people working more or less directly in the industry, they are also dealing with a lot more people.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you for that.

Mr. Kotto.

[Translation]

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

Good afternoon and welcome once again.

We are going to exchange remarks very quickly. I have a lot of questions to ask you, and I'm going to try to select a few that are essential and fundamental.

You talked about the need to provide CBC/Radio-Canada with adequate financial resources and necessary means for it to be able to cover the entire mandate that is conferred on it by the Broadcasting Act.

How do we go about doing that, when we rely on a single funding source, which furthermore is political, because it comes from the government, in order to ensure that it is independent of the government? How do you go about avoiding the moods resulting from a change in government? How do you avoid these sensitivities over content and programs when it is the sole source of funding?

Ms. Claire Samson: It's done, since it's always been done. To date, I believe Radio-Canada has largely managed to remain independent over the years. Perhaps there have been some attempts at influence, but, in the years when I worked there, we didn't feel any jolts internally, obviously.

However, that's part of CBC/Radio-Canada's history. The corporation has been cyclically called into question. Every five or six years, people wonder whether it should close or continue and what are the essential operational needs. I think that's the story of CBC/Radio-Canada, and that's the way it will always be. I imagine the same is true for any public television network. There are models around the world where we think that works quite well. All that is part of the spirit of an act. In any case, the government that decides to close CBC/Radio-Canada tomorrow morning would have to wage quite a battle with the Canadian public, at least a major national battle in Quebec.

In English Canada, however, people might be less inclined to support CBC/Radio-Canada, unfortunately, because they are more used to watching American programs and their stars are much more American than here in Quebec. So while people in Toronto look at *Entertainment Tonight*, in Quebec, they watch *Flash*, a program similar to *Entertainment Tonight*, but which focuses on Quebec stars. So there's an enormous difference between the two markets.

I think that a government that tried to abolish the CBC/Radio-Canada tomorrow morning would have quite a job of it in Quebec, at least in view of the public support for its public broadcaster.

•(1425)

Mr. Maka Kotto: I'm going to continue in the same vein. When the government enters the picture, with considerable subtlety—I won't name one as opposed to the other or anyone in particular—because it has the power to do so, to appoint to its head decision-makers whom it mandates to achieve such and such an objective with regard to the Crown corporation, and that mandate is never public, do you think there is any reason for us to ask ourselves some questions?

We were faced with that situation under the previous Liberal government, and, this time, under the Conservative government. We asked what the actual mandate was that was given to such and such a person appointed to an important decision-making position, but were never able to extract any information whatever. It was a total stonewall. That's why I asked you the first question, which wasn't an innocent question.

Normally, when someone is given a mandate to direct a corporation such as this one, it should be a transparent exercise, but it isn't in actual fact. That's what caused the fears over the proposal that the parliamentary appropriation for the Crown corporation should be increased.

Elsewhere, at the BBC, for example, or even in Australia, the public broadcaster is funded out of television fees, which makes it possible to maintain a certain degree of independence. In Australia, the public broadcaster's mandate even states that it must remain independent of political authority, which is not the case here. It isn't a public television network, but, without impugning anyone's motives, the facts, from a historical perspective, show us that it's a state television network, whether we like it or not.

In view of the fact that we are currently engaged in what can be characterized as group think, market logic, which applies even in public institutions with considerable finesse, where that logic would take over the Crown corporation, that is to say where the government would gradually reiterate its duty to support the CBC/Radio-Canada financially, in this case, what other types of funding should be considered, apart from advertising? This is anticipation; it's a scenario.

We know the consequences that can have on a public broadcaster. The more advertising there is, the more you acquire the profile of a private broadcaster and the more you cast off Canadian content, in this instance, and the more it loses its specific characteristics. So, apart from advertising, are there any other funding options, in your view?

Mr. Vincent Leduc: To answer the last question, I would say that the system, both in French and in English, operates on the basis of fees. The same is true in Australia. That has never been applied here because we have always relied on appropriations. I'm not up to date on my reading. I know that CBC/Radio-Canada had requested multi-year funding in order to provide against parliamentary and government moods, but I don't know whether that solution is still being contemplated. To my knowledge, since CBC/Radio-Canada's inception, that solution has never been approved by any government whatever, for either radio or television.

With all due respect, I would say, despite what you are putting forward, that the balance between government subsidies and independent revenues generated by advertising affords CBC/Radio-Canada a certain degree of independence.

Moreover, even though I don't have the text of CBC/Radio-Canada's enabling statute before me, I believe it is a creation of the act and that it is governed by it. Claire referred earlier to those who would like to abolish it. However, any significant structural change in governance and decision-making within CBC/Radio-Canada would have to be debated in Parliament under the act.

•(1430)

Mr. Maka Kotto: That's the theory.

Mr. Vincent Leduc: That's interesting, though.

[English]

The Chair: Okay, give a very short response, sir.

Mr. Jean-Pierre Lefebvre: Every time you come to me, I have to be very short. Is that because I'm more intelligent?

[Translation]

Mr. Kotto, you raised a major question of political appointments and funding for culture in Canada. CBC/Radio-Canada is dealing with the same problem as the Canada Council for the Arts, Telefilm Canada and the National Film Board. Since Telefilm Canada has been waging the battle for a long time, we know that, at times, now for example, when the government categorically refuses to grant one cent more, we are in trouble. I dare believe that we are living in a democracy and that, if a government, whatever it might be, started maneuvering in order to influence an institution as important as CBC/Radio-Canada, there would be an angry outcry and people would fight hard, starting with people in government and citizens.

[English]

Was that short enough?

The Chair: Yes, it was beautiful.

We came in at just the right time. I know we started a little late. I've extended this period a little bit, so we're trying to gain from everyone.

I'd like to say one thing. We are studying the role of the public broadcaster in the 21st century, and I have heard no indication that we are going to ever get rid of the CBC. I must say that there were drastic cuts a number of years ago, and I think that the CBC is a very vibrant part of our culture and our broadcasting system, because with those drastic cuts, they have still done a tremendous job. They're still here today for us to talk about how we're going to go forward in the 21st century.

Thank you very much for your presentations today, for answering the questions. Feel free, if you have any other questions or ideas that you would like to send forward to us, to please do that.

We will recess for a couple of minutes to change witnesses.

• _____ (Pause) _____

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• (1435)

The Chair: Welcome to the next session here in our afternoon meeting, our 65th meeting. I would like to welcome the Union des artistes and Société des auteurs de radio, télévision et cinéma.

Mr. Legault, would you like to go first, sir?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Raymond Legault (President, Union des artistes): We've already submitted a document to you. I can read it in full, if you wish.

[*English*]

The Chair: Could you keep your presentation to somewhere around eight to ten minutes? Is that about what it is, or a little less maybe?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Raymond Legault: I'm going to address the main points of the document instead.

The position of the Union des artistes is that of artists, but also that of Canadian citizens. In a world where convergence is increasingly a fact, the role of the public broadcaster is major, if not fundamental. The mandate of CBC/Radio-Canada is very broad: it must cover the regions, linguistic duality, indeed plurality. This mandate must also ensure that all regions and Canadian values, our Canadian identity and regional identities are represented right across the country. I don't think that private broadcasting or television corporations are able to fulfil the role carried out by CBC/Radio-Canada. In our opinion, it is important that CBC/Radio-Canada be maintained and extensively funded, perhaps even more than it is now, in view of the scope of its mandate.

In addition, I'd like to talk about the presence of women. Gender equity is one of the values advocated by Canada. If that equity exists, under CBC/Radio-Canada's mandate, we must ensure that it is visible on the screen. That is important for the Union des artistes and, I think, for all Canadians.

In addition, the CRTC has recently deregulated a number of objectives related to the production of television serials, serial dramas, dramatic programs and youth programs. We note that, since that deregulation, programs of that kind have been on the decline. However, if there's one place where CBC/Radio-Canada could distinguish itself, it is in those fields.

We also see that our television, generally—and I'm not talking about CBC/Radio-Canada here, which is broadcasting increasing numbers of programs in foreign formats—is broadcasting programs that are slightly adapted to audiences here. We think that is harmful for Canada's identity as a whole.

You'll find our position on most of the rest of the issues in the brief we have submitted to you. I could read it to you, but I imagine you've had the opportunity to read it yourselves. Repeating it to you would add virtually nothing to what we've said or written thus far.

• (1440)

[*English*]

The Chair: As we go forward and there are questions, I'm quite sure I'll give you a little extra time so that we can embellish whatever the questions are. That's great.

Mr. Grégoire.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Marc Grégoire (President of the Board of Directors, Société des auteurs de radio, télévision et cinéma): Good afternoon, Mr. Chairman.

We represent writers, who form the bottom of the pyramid of television culture, since it is our members who write the scripts. Among other things, the Broadcasting Act provides that the broadcasting system should:

(ii) encourage the development of Canadian expression by providing a wide range of programming that reflects Canadian attitudes, opinions, ideas, values and artistic creativity, by displaying Canadian talent in entertainment programming [...]

That act has been in existence since 1991, and we feel it is still entirely current. Radio-Canada's culture mandate is very important. It has served the Francophones of Canada well, particularly in Quebec. It is often said that English-language television doesn't operate as well, which suggests that French-language television has no problems. In our view, that idea is false.

In the case of French-language television, nine of the 10 most watched programs in 2001 were dramas. In 2005, that figure fell to three. So there has been a decline. Of course, I'm talking about dramas because, of all the priority areas, drama counts the most for our members, the writers. It makes it possible to express Canadian culture through stories written by and for Canadians.

The CBC/SRC played its leadership role well in the twentieth century, and we believe it should continue to do so in the twenty-first. With regard to the creation of dramas, it should consider culture as the very basis of its existence. It must of course be granted the funding that will enable it to pursue its mandate, but it must also be ensured that the cultural objectives are the same for the new technological platforms. A business model must therefore be found that will enable the new platforms of the twenty-first century to be profitable for everyone, so that everyone can live off it and Radio-Canada can receive from those platforms the funds enabling it to continue generating dramas. Let's not forget that both private and public general-interest television networks, including CBC/SRC, are, in 95% of cases, those that generate the funds for the licences that make it possible to create the programs that are watched by Canadians.

In 2005, the specialty channels allocated only \$1.9 million out of \$41 million to the creation of dramas. They cannot be expected to increase that figure considerably. Nor can we expect private general-interest producers to think of culture first rather than their shareholders. Consequently, to protect this cultural universe, there is still CBC/SRC. That is why we strongly support the past, present and future mandate of the CBC/Radio-Canada.

These are good words indeed, but if the necessary money is not there to support them, what happens when a pipeline is closed down will happen to our culture. In 15, 20 or 30 years, it won't be there anymore.

Thank you.

• (1445)

[English]

The Chair: Thank you for that.

We'll now move to the first question.

Mr. Scarpaleggia, please.

[Translation]

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: I didn't entirely understand what you meant when you talked about adapted works. Are you uncomfortable with those works? Could you give us more details on the subject?

Mr. Raymond Legault: On the specialty channels, but especially on the available private sector television networks, there are increasing numbers of American television programs that have been translated and dubbed. I'm also talking about purchased American formats. The format is purchased and redone to suit audiences here. *Le Banquier* is an example of that. That's what I was alluding to. I don't mean that these programs shouldn't exist, but, with the disappearance of CRTC regulation and with the new objectives regarding youth and drama programs, these types of programs are entering into Canadian content.

So, with deregulation, we have witnessed a shift in air time occupied by the stations. It is therefore becoming all the more important in my mind that there be a public television network and that it keep the objectives with regard to what Marc Grégoire said earlier, that is to say concerning a culture from here, writers from here, and that they be able to find a place where they can express themselves. I'm thinking of high-cost series, which are probably more costly, but the quality of which is higher than what is done on the whole. I'm thinking very much about the BBC model in England. The BBC's funding enables it to produce high-quality programs that are sold around the world. So I don't think that investments in high-quality programs are necessarily a losing proposition.

There are markets for television in the world. The new platforms that are developing increasingly need content. This could be a good opportunity for CBC/Radio-Canada to produce programs with what could be global content, somewhat like the BBC model. The BBC is obviously subsidized to a large extent out of television fees. Could we possibly think of other models that would enable the CBC to get the money that would enable it to carry out this mandate? The mandate is so broad, but at the same time, within that very broad mandate, I think there is an opportunity to find ways to fund even more production by a corporation or organization that is more neutral and less subject to the laws of the market in terms of profits and shareholders.

Currently, in the context of the development of new technologies, I can even see an opportunity. I've often had occasion to go on the Canada Web site, and even that of Quebec. All the information provided there is phenomenal. This affords each region of Canada an opportunity to have a window through which it can display its

specific character, since Canada is a very big country. Vancouver is very different from Montreal, Moncton and Fredericton. These new technologies can accommodate the contribution of a vision that we could have of Canada's regions as a whole. If CBC/Radio-Canada, which is already present on the Internet, is able to find other ways to enhance the regions' presence at lower cost... Managing to have each region present on CBC/Radio-Canada television is often a problem under the CBC/Radio-Canada mandate.

• (1450)

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: Talking about the regions, we heard from one group—they must be your counterparts—writers, actors from English Canada, who lamented the fact that the CBC no longer does any local production in the regions. That was a fairly reliable source of employment for them. They could find quite regular work on radio, writing radio dramas and other programs.

We've just come back from a brief tour of the Radio-Canada offices in Montreal. We saw that Radio-Canada commissions productions from outside the corporation, as they do in Toronto, I imagine.

Where do you stand on that trend? Do you think it's as profitable to have productions done on the outside by independent producers? Do you see any reason to correct CBC/Radio-Canada's policy? Are you satisfied or dissatisfied with anything?

Mr. Raymond Legault: Yes. We're talking about regional diversity and production methods. Obviously, in Quebec—I'm more familiar with the situation in Quebec than elsewhere in Canada—some production centres are obviously more significant. Montreal is a production centre. Even independent production is mainly done in Montreal. There have been some productions in Quebec City, but there are obviously groups of artists in Quebec City as well. I think that's another production. There are also production centres in Saguenay—Lac-Saint-Jean that could eventually benefit from that. In general, it amounts to the production of the news broadcast, which is much more local, but there is no other production apart from local production.

I'm not sure I clearly understood the meaning of your question on independent producers.

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: What they seem to be telling us is that they prefer the good old days, when the CBC produced virtually all its programming in house, in Toronto, Saskatoon or elsewhere. For the writers and actors living in the regions especially, it was more profitable than the present system, under which the CBC commissions independent productions. There's less job security, if you will. Even though those people didn't work for the CBC, they were on contract, for all intents and purposes.

Ms. Louise Pelletier (Member of the Board of Directors, Société des auteurs de radio, télévision et cinéma): Radio-Canada, unlike the CBC, was, until recently, a major in-house drama producer. Raymond and I had the opportunity to work together on one of those series, which ran to 60 episodes or more, because Radio-Canada, since it had the studios, had the opportunity to plan for the long term. Marc also wrote one of those series. Whether we work for the Radio-Canada producer or an independent producer, it's the same writers, the same actors.

•(1455)

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: It's all the same to you.

Ms. Louise Pelletier: No. I don't know how it is for the actors, but what makes a difference for the writers is that the producer is the broadcaster. For the writer, the fact that no other fund, like the Canadian Television Fund or Telefilm Canada, intervenes means that decisions are made quickly and that there are fewer stakeholders. Moreover, Radio-Canada has had major successes and has built a faithful audience with those series. That's no longer the trend at Radio-Canada. Most of the people who work there permanently on direction were virtually laid off. In a way, that's unfortunate because it's hard for Radio-Canada to plan for the long term with the form of funding it has now. It depends on outside resources, on the Canadian Television Fund and so on. So it can plan 13- or perhaps 26-episode series. When you see 13 in Radio-Canada's programming, you wait for six months before you see the next 13. And the audience, since its habits have been broken, seems to do what CBC's audience has done, that is to say it switches to other television networks. In an ideal world, Radio-Canada would have the resources to do in-house production as well and to be able to provide greater continuity with private producers.

Mr. Marc Grégoire: At SARTEC, we have always advocated a diversity of production sites for reasons of quality and competition. In the case of Radio-Canada, there should be a balance between in-house productions and productions bought from independent producers, because we believe that a diversity of production sites will put people in competition with each other and incur greater creativity and probably lower costs.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you.

We'll move on to Mr. Angus, please.

Mr. Charlie Angus: Thank you very much.

Throughout this discussion we've been having across this country, there has been an underlying sense for many people that there was a glory period of CBC, especially in English Canada, and that now we've lost that. They tell us about how much people used to watch. Well, I remember those days too: we all watched because we had only one station. The shows weren't necessarily fantastic, but when that was all you watched, everybody watched.

Now we have a thousand-channel universe. So if we have 10% of that thousand-channel market, people say, "You used to have 40% of the market when you had two channels, and now you have 10% ." We're trying to find the validity of having a public broadcaster in the multi-platform, multi-channel, multi-station world. It seems to me that more than ever the need for a public broadcaster should be self-evident.

Take radio, for example. I live in my car mostly, because my riding is the size of Great Britain. I listen to the radio all the time. What I hear from private radio stations is that people listen to radio because they want to hear their own voice; they want to hear their community; they want to hear their announcements. In the morning and afternoon, there's lots of great local programming. And then it sounds like a switch is flicked, and suddenly that radio station sounds like 600 other radio stations across the country, because the

owner of that station owns 600 other radio stations. We have vertical integration of media. Now we have the same columnists in 300 newspapers, because one owner owns 300 newspapers. Why have 300 columnists? Just have one, and he'll be in every single paper.

So there's a homogenizing of voice and a disappearance of place. It seems to me that radio with CBC and Radio-Canada has become extremely effective because of its distinctiveness. People listen to it because it has content.

I'm wondering again why, with television, we are still struggling to replicate what radio has done so well. In a world where all the voices are starting to be the same, and there's a flattening out of a thousand choices—meaning going nowhere—there is a need to have a strong broadcaster with distinctive programming that will actually naturally attract people, because people want content.

I'd like your perspectives on this.

[Translation]

Mr. Raymond Legault: Pardon me, but I'm going to answer in French.

I don't know how that works. I don't know the English situation well. I know that, on the Francophone side, a lot of programs—and I'm not talking about the old Radio-Canada; I'm talking about the present Radio-Canada—have had ratings of 1.2 million, 2 million, 3 million, 4 million viewers. Obviously, markets are fragmented now. People increasingly watch... Canadian television also has to develop other markets, develop specialty channels. Private television—not to mention it, TVA or Quebecor, and I imagine that Shaw must do it in the west—does a more general-interest style of television, more specialized. Radio-Canada must also be in those contents, must also ensure its presence there.

How should I put it? In my opinion, that's extremely important. At some point, our Canadian identity and culture must transcend the narrow notion of profit. However, many choices are made solely on the basis of profits. That is why I was talking about programs that are repeats of U.S. formats served up for a Canadian audience. In your case, there aren't really any repeats, since the program is sold as is. Even *Canadian Idol* is a repeat of *American Idol*. In that sense, we must promote artists who are from here so that they don't necessarily go and enrich American culture. We have to have our own identity. I think we in Canada have a different cultural identity from the Americans. We have to rely on that to strengthen our sense of identity and of belonging to our countries. What better than culture, in my opinion, to make all that happen?

•(1500)

[English]

Mr. Charlie Angus: I have just one other question on this point about the possibilities that exist with a public broadcaster that don't exist with a private broadcaster. It seems to me that especially the younger generation wants to relate to media in a participatory way. They want something they can put their fingers in, and mould, and move, and change.

We have the infrastructure with our public broadcaster. At the studios in Montreal, we saw grade school classes from here in Montreal who come and make their own radio programs. That would be an impossible situation in any other context. There is the ability, for example, to have a national discourse on radio, as we do with Rex Murphy's show: on English radio we have two hours every Sunday during which people from across the country debate really difficult issues, and everyone is able to participate.

I see that possibility with a public broadcaster, and it seems to me that is indicative of where people want to go with media. They want content. They want something they can participate in. And if it's just a wall of sound that's coming out of Los Angeles, they will tune it out and go to their iPod instead, because they'd rather choose what they want to listen to. They don't have to listen to the traditional broadcast.

I'm just looking to see if there's a sense from you, as writers, that we have an ability and an opportunity to move forward with public broadcast in a really innovative and interesting way. Given the challenges of our universe, it might be even more interesting now.

[Translation]

Mr. Marc Grégoire: You talked about radio. Of course, the golden age of radio, when there were serial dramas on the radio, is over. I don't believe it will be back soon, unless we want to have nostalgia radio. So I think that radio is no longer the most appropriate medium for writers or for stories to tell.

However, Radio-Canada's French-language radio has been an enormous success for a number of years, first because the content is important and people who take part in it are of high calibre from an intellectual standpoint, and second because there is no advertising. You have to realize that advertising is a monstrous irritant on television and radio. We're forced to live with it, since our system has been modelled somewhat on that of the Americans, but if we had modelled it on the BBC, we might be better off today. But that's the way it is. So one of the major arguments of French-language radio, at least here, is that, when there is no advertising for 60 minutes, there is 60 minutes of content, which is wonderful.

With regard to news on the economy, culture and the life of the Quebec community as a whole, radio is extremely prominent and listened to. Radio-Canada's morning program *C'est bien meilleur le matin* was number one in the ratings a few months ago. Last year, it was second or third. So it's extremely dynamic radio.

However, I don't think we can go back to dramas. At SARTEC, contracts received for dramatic works on radio don't even amount to \$100,000 a year. In my opinion, it has disappeared, and I don't see how it will come back.

•(1505)

[English]

The Chair: Have you completed your questions, Mr. Angus? Thank you.

Mr. Kotto.

[Translation]

Mr. Maka Kotto: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Good afternoon. Thank you for being here to assist us.

This is a difficult exercise, as you must expect, precisely because of the profile of this public broadcaster that must both please and not displease at the same time, while playing to an audience that is extremely broad and diversified on the basis of identity, origin and gender.

Now I'm going to ask you a question and I expect a simple answer. Apart from the women factor, which will have to be seriously considered in redefining the mandate, as we speak, is the mandate, as defined theoretically on paper, satisfactory from your perspective?

Mr. Marc Grégoire: I think so. The CBC/Radio-Canada's mandate, as defined on paper, which states that it must be a leader with regard to Canadian values, is still valid, in our opinion. It can be improved, but, simply stated, I would say yes.

Mr. Maka Kotto: All right.

Mr. Legault?

Mr. Raymond Legault: I think it could even be broadened, that is to say refined even further in the details. Having regard to new technologies, there are ways of being even more representative. I think the new technologies can help target CBC/Radio-Canada's mandate even more.

We were talking about regional productions. I think there would be a way to improve it and for it to be an even more faithful reflection of all the various regions, the various communities in Canada. We don't have a lot of programs from the High North and the Inuit. Perhaps if there were productions, we could see what that reality is as well. Today's technological resources make it possible to do that much more easily and readily. I'm thinking of all there is right now on WebTV, which is a form of democratization. We could put that in the service... Perhaps it would be much easier for people to produce something that could eventually be made available and broadcast to Canada as a whole, of course, but could also enable each community to see itself reflected in its own television, under the big Radio-Canada umbrella.

Mr. Maka Kotto: Mr. Legault, in your brief, you talk about the apprehension over the review of CBC/Radio-Canada's mandate. Can you tell us more about that?

Mr. Raymond Legault: Good Lord! The issues are major right now. In fact, I think it's very much an economic issue. Everything is a matter of balance. What we are apprehensive about is that Radio-Canada's mandate has changed as a result of economic issues. I am more familiar with the Quebec situation.

General-interest television has of course lost viewers, even though the number of viewers is still large. Advertising revenues have declined and, in my opinion, will continue to do so. This isn't just a problem with general-interest television networks, it will also be a problem concerning specialty channels, because people increasingly have digital recorders and cut out commercials. People who do on-air advertising will increasingly opt for other media or other ways of doing advertising. So there is a risk that advertising revenues will decline, not only for general-interest television networks, but also for specialty channels, in favour of other media, perhaps more the Internet, hence the need for any broadcaster, whether public or private, to look as well to the Internet, to specialty channels, to ensure it has a multiple-stream revenue base.

In the circumstances, what we fear is that there is always a link. We've seen the turnaround at Radio-Canada. There used to be a lot less advertising time, choices were... Now a lot of choices are economically viable choices. By that I don't mean that a high-quality program doesn't necessarily have an audience, but sometimes there is a direct link. Programs, high-cost series have been cut because revenues were not sufficient. That's our fear. We fear that economic logic will put enormous pressure on Radio-Canada. Pressure has already been applied, at the Canadian Television Fund, among others, where it is considered unsatisfactory, in any case by the private broadcasters, that Radio-Canada can receive 37% of the Canadian Television Fund's budget. It is pressures of this kind that make us fear and dread that pressure will ultimately change CBC/Radio-Canada's mandate. That's our fear about that, and that's what we dread.

• (1510)

Mr. Maka Kotto: And you hope that doesn't happen.

Mr. Raymond Legault: No, definitely not. We think that's important.

I'm going to add something else. In the conditions it sets for artists, particularly in its in-house productions, Radio-Canada is a leader, an example to follow. When production shifted from Radio-Canada to independent producers, for artists, actors, performers, that marked a very distinct decline in their working conditions in general. I don't know what the situation is for writers, but, for us, there was a very big difference relative to what existed before and with regard to quality, with regard to the time that we had to produce a television program when Radio-Canada did the production and broadcast the programs. That changed a great deal when we went toward independent production, where people wanted to make all that profitable.

I'm not sure of the cost that independent production represents in the equation relative to what existed before, because a lot of tax credits are granted for independent producers; a lot of money is invested in that.

That's a minor comment somewhat related to the question Mr. Scarpaleggia referred to earlier.

Mr. Maka Kotto: In your brief, you also talked about the need to regulate the new media sector through the CRTC.

Including the Internet?

Mr. Raymond Legault: Yes.

Mr. Maka Kotto: You know the position of the new CRTC president on that.

Mr. Raymond Legault: We received the decision, in any case.

Mr. Maka Kotto: You think that's a necessity, that's important, fundamental.

Mr. Raymond Legault: We're going to have increasing problems in that regard. Even the Americans find that downloads... Even U.S. copyright is dealing with the lack of regulation on the Internet. Whether it's copyright or other rights, it's the same thing. This is an opportunity for all Canadians to download without paying a cost. We saw this with Sonar. When we ask that the CRTC be regulated, I would say that even the private broadcasters will need that. Otherwise, revenues will dry up. And if there's no more revenue, there will be no more production. There will have to be models in that area. The Paramount people have already said that things could not continue this way. They even stopped doing film premieres in Montreal, precisely because they were afraid of piracy. So all that has to be taken into account. We saw that with Napster in the United States.

• (1515)

Mr. Maka Kotto: That will require more consultation work. This is a major issue, but one that, incidentally, is related to the emerging technologies Radio-Canada is discussing. I understand the allusion in your brief.

I'm talking about funding sources because that's a very important component. For the moment, you only have one, and that is the state, Parliament. That source is proving to be insufficient, in view of the cuts that were made in the early 1990s and that have not been restored. This is also funding that has not been indexed. People almost unanimously talk about the need to increase financial support for CBC/Radio-Canada.

Mr. Grégoire, in your brief, you talked about the idea of giving the CBC/Radio-Canada access to a subscriber fee from the cable companies. Can you elaborate on that subject?

Mr. Marc Grégoire: We think it is quite absurd that a double standard is applied to special interest and specialty channels. Specialty television was vulnerable at first. So extremely particular conditions were created to enable those channels to establish themselves in the television universe. Today, specialty channels—you and I both saw the reports of the companies, Astral Media, which is very prominent in Quebec—make a lot of profits and remit quite little in terms of production licences. As I said earlier, it's in the order of perhaps 10% or 15%.

So as Mr. Legault said, with advertising declining as a secondary source of funding, we thought it was at least logical that part of the fees paid to DHT and cable providers should be remitted to CBC/Radio-Canada, because the value of CBC/Radio-Canada raises the value of the bundle offered by Vidéotron, Cogeco and Bell ExpressVu. It was said that part of that money should go back to CBC/Radio-Canada, of course, but provided part of that new fee was required to be put back into priority programs and especially into dramas in order to make the wheels go round.

You talked about the Internet earlier. We agree on that: nothing is free. If writing, acting and directing were free, I don't see why people would do that, unless they were gentlemen artists. That makes no sense. It is necessary, of course, to legislate the Internet, to make it so our conventional structures with those people are reproduced in one way or another, since the only way for an artist to earn a living is to get paid for the work he does. If he is not paid, I don't see why he wouldn't be a taxi driver or something else. So it's the death of creation and of a general culture if a society cannot support its artists.

The Internet changes nothing in the situation other than... There used to be large forges, horses and people highly equipped with nails and horseshoes. Today, they no longer exist: we sell tires. You can have the most beautiful forge in the world, which would be the old television, if no one watches it; you have to take the path of culture in order to express yourself.

Mr. Maka Kotto: Thank you.

[English]

The Chair: We're pretty close to the end. I was just jotting down a couple of things. There was mention made that Paramount and other movie people for a long time have said that Canada is the biggest pirated movie maker. I find their decision not to make early releases of American films, whether those be in Montreal, Toronto, or anywhere else in Canada.... As we've gone across the country and we've talked about the CBC, we've talked about the influence of the Americans on us. Why should we be worried about whether we have an early release here of an American film, when we don't want that to really be the thing that...? I think it is a great idea that they not make the early releases here. Maybe if the pirating still goes on, it isn't necessarily our fault, but at the same time, those people who don't want to be influenced by the Americans will only have to wait a little bit longer to be influenced, because the movie will come here sometime. I think that might be a tremendous opportunity for some of our Canadian products maybe to get on the screen.

It's just a comment.

I have totally enjoyed your presentations, and thank you for your candid answers. Thank you to our panel for their questions.

We'll recess for just a few minutes. Thank you.

- _____ (Pause) _____
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- (1525)

The Chair: The gavel officially starts the meeting.

Again, welcome to our meeting here this afternoon, the 65th meeting of the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage.

You are the third presenters this afternoon. It's a nice warm day, and I'm enjoying this lovely room. We've had some tremendous presentations today, and I know we're looking forward to yours.

We have, from Sports-Québec, Raymond Côté and Michelle Gendron. From Maliseet Nation Radio Inc., we have Mr. Tim Paul and Christopher Collrin. Welcome, folks.

I will go to Sports-Québec first for your presentation. If we can keep the presentations relatively short, it will give us all an opportunity to ask some questions. Thank you.

Go ahead, sir.

[Translation]

Mr. Raymond Côté (President, Sports-Québec): Since you've received the brief, I'm going to address its content briefly.

Sports-Québec is a private corporation that represents 64 federations and 17 regional sports and recreation units. It is important for us to remind you that we are not a government organization, but rather a private corporation that reaches 800,000 members, Quebecers, 60,000 coaches and 400,000 volunteers.

This issue is a particular interest and challenge for us. Current investments in sport are minimal. No major and significant investment is currently being made in sport, and that has an impact. It leads us to solicit private businesses. However, those businesses are increasingly raising their requirements. As there is a lot of competition, more choices are being offered to them. That increases their requirements even more, and it is difficult to meet them. Since investment is minimal, we are required to seek new funding in order to finance ourselves. The expectations and requirements of our clientele, whether they be grassroots participants, beginners or high-level athletes, are great, which puts pressure on the system as a whole.

The needs of businesses are greater as well. Since they have a number of choices, they demand that we offer them a lot of benefits. They say they need visibility and want the money invested in us to be profitable. In the past, we had much more significant relations with Radio-Canada. The corporation offered certain services free of charge. It has not only stopped its subsidies and support in the area of visibility, it has simply withdrawn from the sector. For example, it is absent, or virtually absent, from the Quebec Games and Canada Games and national and international championships.

In our view, Radio-Canada has responsibilities as a Crown corporation. With regard to healthy living habits, it can be said that sport is a major solution. In that sense, the role played by Radio-Canada is really inadequate.

In our brief, we've emphasized certain specific moments. In 2002, Radio-Canada terminated the program *Les jeux sont faits*. In 2003, the televised sports news program was removed from the network, to which we reacted strongly. That was a major loss, in view of the fact that it was broadcast on the Radio-Canada national network. In 2005, the weekly magazine *Adrénaline* was also removed from the airwaves, and a single daily 30-minute program, *Au-dessus de la mêlée*, was broadcast. However, it is almost entirely devoted to professional sports. Lastly, in 2005, Radio-Canada did not win the rights to broadcast the Vancouver Games. And yet this is an event that will be held in Canada. For us, this is a significant loss and will have a significant effect.

We will have to watch the English-language network in order to see our own athletes. It makes you wonder. The amount of air time devoted to federated sport is constantly declining, and, where that is not the case, fees are levied. This situation is becoming difficult, even untenable, for organizations at our level. Non-profit organizations must secure funding, but that is becoming all the more difficult in view of needs and expectations.

With regard to Radio-Canada's mandate, we are going to focus on subparagraphs 3(1)(m)(ii), 4 and 7, on which we have some comments to make. We feel that sport is part of the culture of a country. When we say culture, we naturally think of the arts. For us, sport has the same meaning within the culture of a country. In this area, Radio-Canada is not really playing its role. It is not active enough in the area of federated sport.

•(1530)

When we say amateur sport, we're talking about federated sports, that is to say those attached to federated organizations. They are given little coverage in Radio-Canada's programming schedule. There is indeed a gap. This is not a comparison between the CBC and Radio-Canada, but rather an observation. There is really a world of difference between the amount of time devoted to sport on CBC and that devoted to sport on Radio-Canada. In this regard, certain aspects of the mandate are not being met, if we're talking about Anglophone and Francophone presentations. We think that sport, for all Francophones outside Quebec, is given insignificant or no coverage. The information that we have comes from communities to which we provide services across Canada.

I'm coming to the recommendations because I think this is an important aspect. We recommend that the legislative mandate of Radio-Canada/CBC include the responsibility to contribute to the promotion of healthy living habits and federated sport. We want it on the record, recognized and specifically stated that Radio-Canada has a responsibility toward Francophones, including those outside Quebec.

We recommend that all revenue generated by coverage of the Olympics and professional sport be systematically reinvested in the production of programs promoting healthy living habits and federated sport.

We also recommend that Radio-Canada establish partnerships with other broadcasters. That has been done. Let's take the example of RDS. As it is always a matter of costs, we think it is possible for the corporation to be active and intervene in a manner consistent with its financial means.

We recommend that a genuine sports service be established at Radio-Canada. We know about the pooling of resources and technologies. Federated sport has more of a presence on the Internet, but is virtually absent from radio and television. We think that the integration and introduction of a genuine sports team at Radio-Canada would be an advantage and that it would result in maximum use of the skills of all journalists. That is being done and that should be done in the field of sport.

We recommend that sports programming be dedicated to federated sport and provided by Radio-Canada on the conventional and specialty networks. For example, we know perfectly well that not

everyone in Montreal has cable. Consequently, the Première Chaîne must really be able to reach those people.

We recommend that Radio-Canada contribute to promoting federated sport by producing and broadcasting sports news programs divided fairly between federated and professional sport. We would like the corporation to return to prime time news broadcasts. They appear on the specialty networks such as RDI, of the Radio-Canada station itself, and reach the conventional network. There's little coverage of, or few references to, federated sport.

We recommend that Radio-Canada produce and broadcast promotional material on improved physical fitness for Canadians: advertising spots, special programs, regular series, specialty magazines, use of inspiring sports models, highlighting our athletes. When you want to change the culture and the ways in which the people as a whole do things, you present them with known and recognized models.

Lastly, we recommend that programming for children and youth include segments popularizing healthy living habits. We must take advantage of these programs, which are aimed specifically at youths, to broadcast messages concerning healthy living habits.

We think that, by touching all these elements, Radio-Canada will truly play its role as a national general-interest corporation for Quebec and Canada.

•(1535)

[English]

The Chair: Thank you.

Who will be our next presenter?

Chris, go ahead, sir.

Mr. Christopher Collrin (Research Director, Maliseet Nation Radio Inc.): I am here today with Tim Paul, who is president of Maliseet Nation Radio Inc. I have been working with Tim for the last couple of years to expand the radio station throughout New Brunswick and Atlantic Canada.

I want to thank the committee for this opportunity to present.

I'll just give a quick overview of our few-minute presentation today, which will be to bring out the main points of the brief we presented. We will first talk about the mandate of CBC/Radio-Canada as it relates to first nations people of Canada; second, give a bit of background on Heritage Canada's response to the need for the revitalization of first nation languages in Canada; and finally, talk about Maliseet Nation Radio Inc.'s network, which we are attempting to establish to speak to the need to revitalize first nations languages.

To begin, the mandate of CBC/Radio-Canada, as set out in paragraphs 3(1)(l) and 3(1)(m) of the Broadcasting Act of February 1991, does not appear to deal in any significant way with serving the broadcasting needs of Canada's first nations people. The mandate deals specifically with the particular needs of English and French linguistic minorities; however, it does not address the nearly 61 first nation languages currently used within Canada, including several that are listed as endangered, based upon the findings of the Heritage Canada task force report on aboriginal languages and cultures of June 2005.

Maliseet Nation Radio Inc. believes it is imperative that the mandate of CBC/Radio-Canada be expanded to include the different needs and circumstances of various commonly spoken languages of the first nations people across Canada and to include specific reference to the needs of Canada's first nations people.

These needs include, but should not be limited to, issues of language instruction, mother tongue programming, and programming related to culture, heritage, history, and intergenerational transmission. The CBC mandate needs to be expanded to deal with these issues directly and/or indirectly, possibly through sharing of resources and infrastructure and/or via a public-private partnership.

In an effort to respond to the current lack of first nations radio content, Maliseet Nation Radio Inc., MNRI, has created and operates a successful first nations radio broadcasting model that reflects the express needs identified in the 2005 task force report on aboriginal languages and cultures. This radio station is dedicated to first nation language instruction as well as programming related to those issues I mentioned above: culture, heritage, history, and intergenerational transmission.

Based on the recommendations of the task force report and the success of MNRI's operating model, MNRI has developed a strategy that would see the establishment of an Atlantic aboriginal radio network, referred to hereafter as Wabanaki Voices East, possibly as a precursor to a national network, in an effort to bring the first nations' message to all first nations people.

I would like to give some background now on the developments within Heritage Canada relating to the revitalization and perpetuation of first nations mother tongue languages.

In December 2002, the Minister of Canadian Heritage announced that Canada would establish an aboriginal languages and culture centre as part of the commitment in the 2002 Speech from the Throne to help preserve, revitalize, and promote first nations, Inuit, and Métis languages and cultures. In early 2003, the minister took the next step by creating the task force on aboriginal languages and culture as a body whose advice would help set the direction for this new initiative. In June 2005, the task force published its report. In February 2007, Maliseet Nation Radio Inc., operating as CKTP-FM, developed a concept paper for the establishment of Wabanaki Voices East, a first nations radio network dedicated, as I mentioned, to first nations mother tongue programming and language instruction.

That concept paper arose from the success of Maliseet Nation Radio Inc., the network model, and as a response to the main points and recommendations within the task force report of June 2005. This task force report articulates a number of needs, priorities, and

objectives with respect to the revitalization, preservation, and perpetuation of first nation, Métis, and Inuit languages and cultures, and offers some strategies with which to achieve these most noble goals and objectives.

- (1540)

The Wabanaki Voices East radio network is guided by the recommendations of the task force report and provides, in my opinion, a cost-effective and efficient means of speaking to many of the recommendations of the task force report, which, without such a network of first nations radio stations, would be virtually impossible, if not cost-prohibitive.

I'd like to conclude with some main points from the task force report to illustrate how Wabanaki Voices East speaks directly to the revitalization and perpetuation of first nation languages. You have these in your brief, but I wanted to highlight three or four.

First, the diversity of first nation, Inuit, and Métis language vitality ranges from flourishing to critically endangered. Even languages with a large number of speakers may be flourishing in some regions or communities and be in a critical state in others. The studies and surveys give a multi-dimensional picture of first nation, Inuit, and Métis languages. Some are spoken by only a few elders, others by tens of thousands. Large language groups such as the Cree, Ojibway, and Inuktitut are viable, having at least 25,000 speakers ranging from the young to the elderly. However, all languages, including those considered viable, are losing ground and considered endangered.

The Wabanaki Voices East network allows for the strategic placement of its stations and repeaters. So that's the model—a station where the programming is developed and broadcast from, with a number of repeaters on the various reserves that are in need of that language instruction and that can enjoy the cultural and mother tongue programming.

These stations can be set up, and the interesting thing is that you can set up the station where the language is viable and, through the repeater, actually broadcast to those areas of the region where the language might be endangered. So you can specifically target the endangered language groups with your programming.

Another point I want to mention is that the focus of language conservation and revitalization efforts must shift from formal institutions to communities, families, and social networks. This is a recommendation of the task force report. Of course, the network accomplishes this by creating programming by the people, for the people.

What we do is we go on to the reserve, we find the language experts, and we utilize institutions—in our situation, the Mi'kmaq-Maliseet Institute at the University of New Brunswick—to work on the development of language curricula to speak to the various levels of language vitality. Think of it as a grade one language lesson for an area of the region where the language is endangered, and perhaps as grade four or grade five language instruction, so more sophisticated, for areas where the language is being spoken with much more fluency.

There are a couple of more points. Another recommendation of the task force report is that elders emphasize that language, culture, spiritual values, and the first nation, Inuit, and Métis sense of identity are inseparable concepts. I would agree that the language is critical to any culture. When the language is lost, the culture is lost, and when the culture is lost, the people are basically lost. They've lost the very roots of their existence. When we lose our language and our culture, we've lost the roots of who we are.

The network enlists the involvement of language experts in each community to design and develop language instruction and programs. Such persons are by their nature already sensitive to this connection between the language and the spirit of who the people are.

• (1545)

My final point is that the task force report emphasized that there was a consensus on the need for a community-driven revitalization strategy based on community commitment to identify priorities and develop and carry out plans that would involve all age groups.

What we've done at Maliseet Nation Radio Inc. with CKTP, our FM station, is to require each participant in the network to broadcast a minimum of six hours a day of first nations content, which will include a minimum of 10 hours per week of mother tongue language instruction. This will ensure that the project will have a community-driven revitalization strategy.

So our recommendation to this committee is that the federal government and/or the CBC consider the possibility of a public-private partnership to pilot the development of a first nations radio network throughout Atlantic Canada and ultimately throughout all of Canada.

Thank you very much.

The Chair: Thank you for that presentation.

We'll go to Mr. Scarpaleggia first.

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: Thank you very much. That was very interesting on both counts.

Could you give us a bit of a refresher as to the CBC radio's and CBC television's current involvement with first nations? There's CBC North, I think it is. What is the aboriginal presence or connection to CBC radio and TV at the moment?

Mr. Tim Paul (President, Maliseet Nation Radio Inc.): I believe they're mandated to provide a certain percentage of aboriginal content. They're doing some of it, but on a site-specific basis, for Maliseet people for instance, it's hard to get the language programs mixed with all the other programs that are involved with CBC. It's a big corporation. You just have Maliseets and Mi'kmaq in the Maritimes, and for various reasons they aren't getting much air time with CBC. They have no language programs there. There aren't any cultural activities on CBC. They do the odd news story, and that kind of thing, but that's it.

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: They do the odd news story in a first nations language?

• (1550)

Mr. Tim Paul: No.

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: Is the CBC Radio or TV anywhere in Canada broadcasting in first nation languages?

Mr. Tim Paul: I believe they are up north.

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: In northern Quebec or the Northwest Territories?

Mr. Tim Paul: The Northwest Territories. I don't know the complete aspect of it, because we're dealing with the Maritimes.

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: So essentially it sounds as though CBC TV and CBC Radio are not really serving first nations communities (a) in their language or (b) even in English or French. You seem to be saying that this is a forgotten—excuse the word—market, if you will.

Mr. Tim Paul: Exactly.

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: And you're suggesting that we have to find a way to bring that community into the CBC. You seem to be recognizing that maybe with the financial constraints that CBC has at the moment, it can't build, for the moment anyway, a third radio system or a third television network. So you're suggesting a private-public partnership with the CBC, starting with your community.

Am I essentially understanding correctly?

Mr. Tim Paul: Exactly.

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: It's very interesting, because we had other groups come, not native groups but community radio people. They seemed to be suggesting the same sort of thing for different communities. So you raise an interesting point.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Côté, you talked about sport on television, but you made a distinction between professional sport, which is well covered by the private networks, and federated amateur sport. Is that correct?

Mr. Raymond Côté: Yes, that's correct.

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: There is virtually no amateur sport on television now?

Mr. Raymond Côté: There is very little on Radio-Canada.

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: And on the other channels?

Mr. Raymond Côté: On the other channels, on RDS, for example, they get significant coverage. They work with us, during the Quebec Games, among others, and on certain occasions, like the Gala Sports-Québec. So there is collaborative effort. Moreover, RDS took over from Radio-Canada when it withdrew, because the Quebec Games were already being produced in cooperation with the corporation, at its expense.

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: What about the other private channels, like TVA, TQS?

Mr. Raymond Côté: There's little coverage by TVA. They've opted to cover professional sport, but in a different way as well. There is very little federated sport, amateur sport.

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: Do you think there is room on Radio-Canada's programming schedule right now to go beyond professional sport? Is there still professional sport on Radio-Canada? Obviously, hockey is now on RDS.

Mr. Raymond Côté: There's still a little. Let's say it's coming back slowly. We can think of the Impact matches that are presented, which is entirely new. We've learned that boxing is coming back as well. But things are nevertheless very limited with regard to sport.

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: If you were the king of Radio-Canada and you had to establish the programming schedule, have you thought of what would have to be moved in order to include amateur sport?

Mr. Raymond Côté: We're aware of the costs and of what that represents, but we also know that a corporation like Radio-Canada has a responsibility that it must bear. We've named a few for you, including the promotion of physical activity. When you think of the problems of obesity, excess weight and inactivity, there is a responsibility there for Radio-Canada, but also for Canadian society.

Canadian society has little control over private broadcasters. They are supported by private financing. From the moment we talk about public funding, I think we have to identify major targets for Canadian and Quebec society. So, in that sense, we have to go back to coverage of federated sport in order to present the models we have as often as possible, in the best context and at the lowest possible cost.

Just think of people like Alexandre Despatie, the swimmers, and so on. We're currently creating the Centre for Excellence in Aquatic Sports in Montreal, where we've brought four sports together. There is no coverage of this, and yet this is a major event; this is a special situation in Canada. We would like these events to be covered.

As regards newscasts, if we don't keep people regularly informed and support their interests, we lose a significant amount of influence, particularly since the information is readily available. In Quebec, we've put in place an organization called Sportcom, which is an amateur sport communications agency. All the information is known. The athletes, coaches and organizations can reach the network 24 hours a day, seven days a week. So if we want to spread information, we don't necessarily have to have people on the spot; we can use what already exists. Collaborative efforts with RDS, among others, will be possible. That is another way of using public funds in an appropriate manner.

• (1555)

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: Thank you.

[English]

The Chair: Before we go to Mr. Angus, I'd just like to say that we did hold some hearings in Yellowknife. Just to clarify—Mr. Scarpaleggia wasn't there—CBC North does a fair bit; they're trying to deal with some of the language problems they have in that area. In the Yukon and the Northwest Territories and around James Bay and northern Quebec, they not only do English and French, but they work in eight Inuit and aboriginal languages. They did say they cover about half of the country with a very sparse population, and they even work a wee bit in partnership with some local aboriginal stations. There was one place where they helped with a transmitter tower to make things work.

I know there is nothing in New Brunswick, but they do have that in place right now in the north, so they are trying to work on some of that.

That is just a little explanation.

Mr. Angus.

Mr. Charlie Angus: [*Member speaks in Cree*]

I know a little Cree from my work on the James Bay coast. Our communities are dependent, absolutely dependent, on Wawatay Radio. They connect the Cree communities over a 1,000-kilometre radius in my riding, and they allow them to speak to each other; they allow them to participate as a larger community, particularly with the families who have moved to our biggest centre, which is Timmins. I'm very interested in the role that aboriginal radio plays in the protection of language with the development of community.

You speak of the need to restore language. I know Wawatay focuses mostly on Cree in northeastern Ontario and Oji-Cree in northwestern Quebec. I have worked in aboriginal communities in Quebec where some of the language has been lost, and the language on the radio station would tend to be English, but it still played the role of bringing people together and allowing them to hear and talk....

Are you going to be exclusively focused on language, or is this also a way of allowing all the communities within your territory to participate with each other, whether they speak English or...?

Mr. Christopher Collrin: It's a good question.

A big part of the network is just that, networking and providing a voice for first nations people. Although the network will be dedicated to first nations language instruction and mother tongue programming, a big part of its activity will be just to provide that link, as you've mentioned, which is so important, not only to share information but to create community, to bring people together, and to share important information as it relates to first nations issues. For example, there could be English programming going out on the national network at some point that all the languages would be interested in hearing in English if it relates to some general concern for first nations people.

• (1600)

Mr. Charlie Angus: Right now you have a central radio station that is operating and you're looking to add the transmitters to connect the others to it.

Mr. Tim Paul: Exactly. We want to put repeaters around all the other communities. We're in the city of Fredericton, and we do broadcast other programs, for the simple reason that we have to have advertising to operate. It would be very difficult if we had nothing but aboriginal language on there. You'd never get the advertising. We have other big radio corporations with 99% of the advertising budgets around our area, and we don't get funded by anybody else, so we have to put entertainment on that non-aboriginals will listen to so we can get non-aboriginal advertising. We have to operate by advertising, and that's where we have our difficulties. We're just barely making it through because we're competing with big corporation radio stations that have huge advertising dollars, and we just can't compete on that level.

There are only 4,500 Maliseet left on earth, and probably only 2% of them can speak their language right now. The majority of them had that pretty well beat out of them in the schools a few years back, and the language is completely dying. Our language is one of the languages they are saying in the next 20 years is going to be completely gone if we don't do something about it.

Mr. Charlie Angus: We have a very similar situation with the Algonquin Nation. I worked with the Algonquin Nation for a number of years in Quebec. We had a radio station in the Lake Temiskaming region. It was not able to compete for broadcasting advertising because they kept the signal short. I always felt that a lot of non-natives would enjoy the programming, because it was a lot more fun. But they couldn't compete, so they were very hampered in their ability...and yet we had 10 communities spread across the Abitibi region, down to La Vérendrye Park, that were unable to speak to each other, probably 8,000 people spread out.

Is this basically a similar situation? Do you have communities spread out over a large territory?

Mr. Tim Paul: Yes, they are all over the place.

We'd like not only to educate our own people; we also want to educate the non-aboriginals within our communities and the surrounding areas who are listening to us—about why we have treaty rights, for instance, or why we do certain things. It is important for non-aboriginals to understand that concept. They don't hear that on CBC; they hear it from us. When a Supreme Court ruling comes down, people want to know why and what happened. We can tell that story from our perspective.

Mr. Charlie Angus: We had presentations in Manitoba of the northern Manitoba aboriginal radio network, which seemed to me to be extremely successful. In fact, it had replaced private broadcasting in certain areas for native and non-native because of the kind of programming they were doing, and they were being heard across a vast territory.

Have you looked at other models to emulate or to get ideas from? Are you in conversation with various organizations?

Mr. Tim Paul: We're pretty much just doing it on our own. We've been doing it right from scratch. I got a personal loan from my bank. We went to the federal government and all the federal agencies, and nobody would give us a penny toward starting up the radio station. I took a personal loan out at the bank to do this. That was a little over three years ago, and I brought it to the point where we have it today without any government help.

Mr. Christopher Collrin: We are aware of the Manitoba situation, but at this stage we're just trying to get the network moving. Certainly we'll be consulting with those successful networks across the country once we get our own foundation in place and begin to build the network. Then we'll be looking at other models to see what has worked. We'll be following best practices and even consulting with those network managers who have been successful.

The Chair: Thank you for that.

Mr. Malo.

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Malo (Verchères—Les Patriotes, BQ): Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Ladies and gentlemen, welcome.

Mr. Côté, you said something very interesting in your presentation, that sport was a form of expression that was part of the culture of a country, in other words, an element that was used to forge the collective identity. It is interesting that you recall that here, but we can see that Canadians know it already, since the CBC covers a lot of sport. In fact, it covers a lot more than Radio-Canada. You said that, in the past few years, the proportion of programs on sport, federated sport among others, appearing on Radio-Canada had declined quite significantly. Today there are virtually none.

In your first recommendation, you suggest that Radio-Canada be given an additional mandate including a responsibility to contribute to the proportion of federated sport and healthy living habits. When we talk about instilling healthy living habits, we know that federated sport is indeed an important tool. Given that Radio-Canada's present mandate enables it to find ways of not covering sport, you've decided to include a much more restrictive criterion that would require it to do so. I find that recommendation very interesting and I congratulate you for it.

As regards my question, I'd like to know whether someone at Radio-Canada told you at some point that sport was no longer really important and that the corporation intended to quietly withdraw from all that. How did things happen?

•(1605)

Ms. Michelle Gendron (Coordinator, Sports-Québec): What they tell us is more the contrary, that is to say that federated sport is going to be reincluded and that new programming will be created. But we're still waiting for that, and that's what's a bit unfortunate. In our brief, we specifically state everything we've lost over the years, not only on television, but also on Radio-Canada radio. We don't want to take anyone's place: we want to take back a role that we consider important in the promotion of healthy living habits, the promotion of important aspects of federated sport in Quebec and the athletes who excel, more particularly Francophone athletes. They are the ones suffering from a lack of visibility and promotion to Francophones. The brief serves to show that.

Every time we meet Radio-Canada people—and Raymond has done that on a number of occasions—they tell us they intend to reininclude certain aspects and recommend that we take a look at the next round of programming. However, they are still at the intentions stage. When we analyze the program *Au-dessus de la mêlée*, the only remaining magazine, we say to ourselves that, in the context of that magazine, they could talk about us, about the highlights of high-performance athletes and the major achievements in federated sport. Instead they talk over and over about hockey and again and again about professional hockey. We think that important aspects of sport can have an emulation effect on Canadians. We don't want to usurp anyone else's place, but rather to take back our own.

Mr. Luc Malo: How were the previous cuts justified to you? What reasons were you given?

Mr. Raymond Côté: Nothing was justified. It's more subtle than that. Federated sport, of course, doesn't sell and isn't profitable. It's not for no reason that TVA and TQS aren't involved: it's not profitable for sponsors. When you don't believe in it, it's so easy not to cover it, not to talk about it and gradually not to go to it. You see in the few bits of information we've given you that the withdrawal has been gradual. A program was replaced. The introduction of *Au-dessus de la mêlée* is fantastic; it concerns sport. But it doesn't replace the newscast. They don't talk about federated sport on it; they mainly talk about professional sport, particularly hockey or boxing, because it sells more. That's the path they've taken.

So there has to be a will, a belief or an obligation for Radio-Canada to carry out a mandate that concerns federated sport. That is why we have recommendations that are much more specific concerning healthy living habits. There are mandates that are identified when there are specific revenues coming from sport. We have nothing against professional sports coverage, but let's use that to support federated sport. In that respect, I think we're reflecting a will and a desire to be part of a culture that is a culture of sport.

• (1610)

Ms. Michelle Gendron: At the same time, we've noticed, in Radio-Canada's annual reports, that the Olympic Games coverage was profitable in terms of advertising revenues. We see that advertising revenues on the Anglophone and Francophone sides are significant. They are generated by the Olympic Games, which are in the field of federated sport. We're saying—and this is one of our recommendations—that we have proof that federated sports events can be profitable for Radio-Canada, that we have proof that partnerships can be established with other broadcasters, again by Radio-Canada. The Olympic Games proved that. We say to ourselves that this model can be used in other driving-force events in federated sport. On the other hand, a portion of those revenues, since they are significant, should be reinvested in the promotion of federated sport and healthy living habits. So we're starting with a profitable model, a win-win model. Radio-Canada unfortunately lost the right to cover the Vancouver Olympic Games, and we are convinced that it will be in the running again for the rights to cover the next Olympic Games.

Mr. Luc Malo: Talking about the Olympic Games, could you tell me about the consequences of Radio-Canada losing the broadcast of the Games for Francophone athletes and the Francophone audience?

Ms. Michelle Gendron: Among other things, *Adrenaline* was a program that made it possible to introduce Olympic athletes who were going to represent us at future Olympic Games. We learned about their environment, we watched them in their competitions, we followed their performances. That program was completely dedicated to Olympic sports; it no longer exists. And yet the half-hour time slot has been occupied by a daily program, *Au-dessus de la mêlée*, which now tells us about professional sport. We've been deprived of a promotional forum. That promotional forum was recurring. It was there all season long and thus made it possible, between two Olympic Games, to follow the careers of our Olympians and to create those emulation models that are important for us with regard to businesses. When we approached a business, it knew that we could regularly talk about athletes who were distinguishing themselves in federated sport. We no longer have that forum. The same fact has been observed on radio. The loss of

programs also followed this apprehension that we had of losing coverage of the Olympic Games. We clearly see that the withdrawal is now almost total.

Mr. Luc Malo: So would you be prepared to say that there were sponsors who were ready to help athletes go as far as the highest Olympic levels and that those sponsors withdrew because they had less coverage?

Ms. Michelle Gendron: It is harder to solicit them.

Mr. Raymond Côté: We couldn't speak that precisely because we obviously aren't in Radio-Canada's shoes. However, we know that we can pick a few stars among the young developing athletes. But they aren't the only ones in federated sport. The others are less visible, less seen; they're covered less. That's less appealing for viewers. If we want to make a program on federated sports, sponsors will wonder exactly who it will reach. So it becomes a very narrow clientele.

When you think about a culture, you have to understand that that doesn't refer solely to the elite. The culture presents a reality, that is to say the reality of young people who are engaged on a path to achieve athletic excellence.

The program *Adrenaline* covered all of that network, or all of those top athletes. When coverage is limited to a few individuals, the market becomes much thinner, and sponsors feel that, unless some of them are given coverage, they won't take part. That represents a loss for us.

A will is needed, a requirement for an organization like Radio-Canada to present sport as an element of culture, thus in its reality in the field, in what it is every day or regularly, not just when international championships are covered. That is the reality that should be presented and that should reach people. When you see athletes grow up, you take a greater interest in them and you follow them. On the other hand, when you only see them once or when such and such a sports personality is not being exploited, that doesn't have a major impact. That's the case of the Olympic Games. You see the athletes for 15 days, then they disappear and reappear four years later. We would like Radio-Canada's mandate to be demanding in that regard and to be present constantly and on a daily basis.

The newscast is a good example, magazines as well. There can also be advertising presentations in which important elements for Canadian society are recalled. There are 1,001 ways of doing it. That definitely involves certain amounts of money. I think that the only network that we can influence or require something of is Radio-Canada, since the others are private networks, and so, unless we have money to finance them, it's impossible.

It's hard to get away from that.

• (1615)

[English]

The Chair: Thank you.

Do you want one small question?

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Malo: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Among our youths or younger children, that is to say those in whom we must instill healthy living habits, because a sedentary lifestyle has been established, did you see a difference in practice, in the field, between the time when the program *Les Héros du samedi* was broadcast on television and the moment they stopped broadcasting that type of program?

Mr. Raymond Côté: We are obviously less sensitive to what we don't see. However, we know that there are reactions following international championships or Olympic Games. Just think of the 1976 Olympic Games: tens and tens of Nadia Comanecis were born. In 2005, we had the aquatic championships: registration soared. If we cover a speed skating competition, what do you see in the clubs? An increase in registration for that discipline.

If we don't see or we don't cover a sport, we definitely lose significant impact. Seeing it frequently has an effect on practice and participation. Youths see it and identify with models. We regularly hear youths say they discovered a sport by seeing so and so play it. It is becoming extremely important to see athletes regularly. We can't rely on sponsorships to present these kinds of images. This responsibility belongs to a corporation like Radio-Canada.

Ms. Michelle Gendron: Since we now have to turn to the specialty channels to secure that kind of visibility, that puts significant financial constraints on us. When Radio-Canada was at our events, we didn't have any costs. Now we have to pay to be on television.

Yes, RDS covers us well, but we have to pay. When we solicit our sponsors, when we go looking for money for federated sport, we use part of the money we collect for television promotion. That used to be a service that was given to us. Consequently, all the money could go to organizing events, developing sport and supporting athletes. Now we also have to ensure there is promotion by paying for it.

Mr. Luc Malo: That point is very interesting.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you for those presentations. I must say that aboriginal peoples getting their radio and television broadcasts out is a topic dear to my heart.

Sports are also very close to my heart. I played softball, fastball, and a little bit of baseball, hockey, and football when I was in high school. About three weeks from tonight, at around this same time, I have the honour to throw out the first pitch in a fastball game between Team Canada and Team Australia. It will be played in my little hometown of Sebringville, Ontario. If you have an opportunity to come, that would be great.

I played slow-pitch up until about five years ago. I should have kept playing; I have gotten a little bit out of shape since then.

Ms. Michelle Gendron: It's never too late to start again.

The Chair: Yes, never too late.

Mr. Charlie Angus: Mr. Chair, I have to intervene here.

I had the honour to throw out the first pitch at the national Little League championship in Timmins last year. However, before I threw the pitch, they had to give everybody in the crowd catchers' masks.

Voices: Oh, oh!

The Chair: Well, I have to do this underhand, so I'm going to start practising this weekend.

I must say what a tremendous meeting we had last night and again today, and what great witnesses you've been. All of your presentations were great and meaningful.

I thank all my committee for being here. We had other people here today, but they had to catch flights and leave a little early. I thank everyone for staying and for the great questions.

I also thank all our staff and our crew who were here today.

Have a great weekend. May we come up with a great report.

With that, the meeting is adjourned.

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