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**Chair**

**Mr. Guy Lauzon**

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## Standing Committee on Official Languages

Tuesday, June 20, 2006

• (0900)

[Translation]

**The Chair (Mr. Guy Lauzon (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry, CPC)):** Good morning. Today we will be discussing support for francophone minority media with our three witnesses, Ms. Lajoie, Mr. Paquin and Mr. Ouellette.

Mr. Ouellette, I believe you have some opening remarks to make, for approximately 10 minutes. The committee members will then ask their questions.

**Mr. Roger Ouellette (President, Alliance des radios communautaires du Canada):** Mr. Chairman, members of the committee, thank you.

The Alliance des radios communautaires du Canada currently has 30 members, including 21 stations on the air, three at the start up stage and six at the implementation stage. We are active in nine provinces and two territories. Our network has a potential audience of 450,000 listeners and employs 110 permanent staff. Another 1,000 active volunteers are involved in local radio on a daily basis.

Community radio stations are essential communication tools for the development and vitality of Canada's francophone and Acadian minority communities. Our community radio stations respond to our needs to have access to local information, to promote culture and local identity, and to protect and promote the French-language. They support the social and economic development of the communities they serve, contribute to social cohesion and encourage collective and individual involvement in local issues.

On March 24, 2004, a number of organizations representing the francophone and Acadian communities, including the ARC du Canada, appeared before the committee in response to the government of the day's decision to place a moratorium on media buys. That announcement was a serious blow to the francophone minority media and provoke a crisis that called the very survival of our media into question.

In May 2004, the committee submitted its report entitled *Impact of the Plan to Strengthen Management of Government of Canada Advertising on the Official-language Minority Media*. That report produced two recommendations. The first was that the Government of Canada should immediately set aside a minimum of 5.4 per cent of its media buys for the official language minority media. The second was that PWGSC should comply fully with the Official Languages Act and other requirements set out in the Communication's Policy of the Government of Canada. That same report mentioned that, and I quote:

[...] the committee is aware that it is not always easy to reach both language groups in all parts of the country in a perfectly equivalent way using the existing media. [...] The anglophone community in Quebec thus has access to a range of information sources containing Government of Canada advertising, while francophone minority communities do not.

The Government of Canada's response to the committee's May 2004 report was based on the fact that the measures that had been put into place since the report was submitted had made it possible to attain the committee's objectives and that a minimum level of media buys was not necessary. This finding was based on the statistics generated between June 1, 2004 — the date the moratorium was lifted — and February 10, 2005. This finding showed that 7.65 per cent of radio advertising have been directed to the official language minority media.

In fiscal year 2003-2004, the member stations of ARC du Canada had their best year in terms of media buys by the Government of Canada. On March 31, 2004, the year before the moratorium, 19 ARC du Canada's stations shared \$208,000 (gross). Starting the following year, the stations experienced a drastic draw in their advertising revenues, with a total, on March 31, 2005, of \$74,000 (gross), a 65 per cent drop. The past fiscal year was scarcely better, with a total, for 20 stations, of \$87,500 (gross). Had it not been for a media bias of almost \$30,000 by Elections Canada, the result would of been even more disappointing.

You will find that information in the annexes.

During our most recent annual general meeting, on June 1, 2 and 3, the delegates attended a PWGSC presentation entitled "Demystifying Advertising within the Government of Canada". You will find this document in the annex. We learn that since the management framework was established, the advertising process has had clearly defined steps. According to the information we were given, it takes over a year between the planning of a departmental advertising campaign and the dissemination of messages in the media. In addition to the departments, the Cabinet Operations Committee, Treasury Board, Privy Council Office and PWGSC are involved in this process. The effect of this long process is to discourage many departments from using conventional advertising to inform the public of policies, programs, services and other initiatives by the Government of Canada.

Over the past four years, federal government spending on advertising has declined dramatically. From \$111 million in 2002-2003, advertising expenses tallied no more than \$33 million (estimate) in 2005-2006. What is even more disturbing is that of \$71 million in advertising activities approved by Cabinet for 2005-2006, only \$33 million, including public notices, was carried out. According to our analysis, this performance is in part attributable to the long and complex process in the federal government's advertising management and accountability framework. It would be interesting to calculate the direct and indirect costs of the management and many controls, including the activities of the auditor general, in this area. Although we cannot say for certain, we would not be surprised if the costs were greater than those of the advertising itself, which is rather curious.

● (0905)

Section 30 of the Official Languages Act does not exclude the possibility of using different media for each language community in order to ensure effective communication with each individual in the language of his or her choice. This principle is particularly important to consider in those cases where the communication medium chosen for the majority language has no counterpart in the minority language community, or the equivalent medium is not an effective way to reach the official language minority community. The desired impact of the dissemination of the message should be equivalent in the majority and minority communities. This can mean using different media and at different frequencies. For example, if an ad is published five times in an English-language daily for the majority, it could be published more than once in a French-language weekly and also be broadcast on French-language radio to obtain an equivalent impact.

PWGSC acknowledged this concept of equivalence and, in April 2006, published a guide entitled "Advertising to Official Language Minority Communities: Best Practices in Government Advertising — Series No. 1". See the annex. While the practices described in this document could be a solution to the problem of under-use of minority community radio stations, this document is designed simply to provide information. For the moment, PWGSC has made this document available on its Internet site as a reference, where, in our opinion, it will have little impact, and in fact, none at all, on the advertising campaign planning habits of agencies and departments.

In addition to the specific obligations set out in sections 11 and 30 of the Official Languages Act, Part VII of the Act states that the federal government is committed to enhancing the vitality of Canada's francophone and anglophone minorities and supporting their development. Consequently, federal government institutions can undertake communication initiatives specific to the official language minorities without it being necessary to communicate them in the majority language. The changes made by S-3 strengthen the Official Languages Act in part by making it enforceable. Section 41 (2) states that:

41(2) Every federal institution has the duty to ensure that positive measures are taken for the implementation of the commitments under subsection (3).

The positive measures apply to all federal institutions with the obligation to act. In the aftermath of S-3, new official language regulations are required, and the scope of these regulations is clear

on the government's obligations in terms of communication and services — Part IV — and development of communities and promotion of linguistic duality — Part VII. One of the guiding principles of such regulations is to implement the principle of real equality, and by extension, the concept of equivalence.

With S-3, the departments and agencies must put the emphasis on innovative alternative service delivery methods and the regulations must be sufficiently flexible to encourage innovation. The regulations set the floor, not the ceiling.

In light of the preceding, the ARC du Canada proposes that the members of the committee make the principle of equivalence contained in the document "Advertising to Official Language Minority Communities: Best Practices in Government Advertising — Series No. 1" enforceable for any advertising campaign by departments and agencies of the Government of Canada.

Given the enforceability of the government's commitment to require federal institutions to ensure that positive measures are taken; given, furthermore, the government's obligations regarding communication, community development and the promotion of linguistic duality, and pursuant to the adoption of new regulations for the Official Languages Act with S-3, the Alliance des radios communautaires du Canada proposes that the members of the committee ask the Treasury Board to set aside \$500,000 annually to allow federal departments and agencies to meet their obligations. Each year, the ARC du Canada will target certain key departments and agencies to propose a promotional campaign on French-language minority community radio stations, designed to meet the Act's objectives. We suggest to the members of the committee that this \$500,000 investment by the Government of Canada not be subject to the advertising management framework but instead that a simple, transparent and accountable mechanism be set up with every department in order to ensure the best use of public funds.

• (0910)

Our minority French-language community radio stations have suffered, and continue to suffer, the fallout from the sponsorship scandal. There's no need to remind you that at no point was advertising enmeshed in this scandal. As we have shown, following the moratorium on the federal government advertising in 2004, the revenues from government of Canada media buys from our radio stations fell continuously, to a negligible amount. The majority of our member radio stations operate in remote regions or within very small communities. As a result, it becomes practically impossible to sell local advertising and the revenues from federal government advertising become a significant source of income. Many of our radio stations are experiencing hard, and indeed alarming, times and have to be propped up by francophone associations. The amendments introduced by S-3 oblige the government of Canada to take positive measures; that is exactly what the two proposals we are submitting to you today are. It is up to you, members of the Standing Committee on Official Languages, to act accordingly.

Thank you for your attention and your concern. We are now ready to hear your questions.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, Mr. Ouellette.

We will start the first round with Mr. Murphy.

**Mr. Brian Murphy (Moncton—Riverview—Dieppe, Lib.):** Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Thank you, Mr. Ouellette. If I understood correctly, you would like us to recommend that Treasury Board set aside \$500,000 to promote Bill S-3 within federal departments. I understand your point, but from what I have noted in the House of Commons, given our financial situation, the president of Treasury Board will be considering the possibility of cutting \$1 billion over the summer, at his chalet I imagine. That is not very encouraging for you, but I do support your association.

I would like to know if, during or after the election campaign, any of the three of you had a conversation, read articles or received promises from the government with respect to the government support for the ARC or Bill S-3. That is my first question.

My second question is on your 2005-2006 report in which you talk about the social economy. I am not sure I understand those words. Does that mean the same thing as promoting Bill S-3? Perhaps the meanings are different, but could you explain that to me? Thank you.

• (0915)

**Mr. Roger Ouellette:** I will begin and then my colleagues can follow up.

Almost all the political parties, and even some members from a certain political party which did not feel it was appropriate to vote in favour of Bill S-3, made the decision before the election campaign to make the bill a priority and to vote in support of it.

Given that the bill is a priority for members of Parliament and given that there is the political will in the House, if the President of Treasury Board must make budget cuts, he should do them somewhere else because we have already suffered enough cuts. The numbers show that there has been an erosion of our income

from the federal government. There is a firm will within all political parties — or the majority of them — to ensure that Bill S-3 will be voted on by the House. That political will has to be reflected in funding. Otherwise it is nothing but lip service.

Under the previous government, there was funding set aside in order to support the social economy. Discussions took place with the provinces. For various reasons, there was an agreement with Quebec, some things happened with Ontario, but that is all. We began discussions, negotiations and consultations with the previous government, specifically with the parliamentary secretary to the Industry Canada minister, Ms. Bakopanos, who was responsible for this file.

Community radio stations are designated as non-profit cooperative organizations or as non-profit organizations. In that capacity, they contribute to the social economy. They support the development of communities and are social economy businesses. We also wanted to be designated as such so that if there were federal funds set aside for the social economy, then our members would be able to benefit from that. Our approach is to focus on the various programs of the federal government and to ensure that our organizations benefit from them.

In answer to your question, there is no connection between the social economy and official languages.

**Mr. Pablo Rodriguez (Honoré-Mercier, Lib.):** During the last Parliament, the first thing I did as chairman was to table the report. The government then announced its position on its investments in the media. If my memory serves me well, its position was that these investments were sufficient.

What has changed since the government's response to the report?

**Mr. Serge Paquin (Secretary General, Alliance des radios communautaires du Canada):** The new stringency surrounding media buys has resulted in a radical decline in conventional departmental advertising. It is somewhat strange to see that, out of a total budget of \$71 million, only \$33 million were spent. That is clearly indicative of the fact that the current accountability process is overly lengthy and burdensome. It discourages departments and agencies from advertising. They instead instigate alternative initiatives, because, as I am sure you would agree, it is fairly rare for budgets not to be spent in government.

As far less money is being spent, there has been an overall reduction in media buys. Coupled with this decline, is the fact that we are a small group with only 20 stations outside of Quebec. As a result, we do not have access to BBM ratings, and advertising planning agencies do not know who we are, we are not on their radar screen. This means that they do not automatically include us in their advertising campaigns.

That is why we believe that the guide, although on the right track and entirely laudable, has made no impact thus far. If an advertising campaign is run on television, equivalency cannot be attained even if the ads are also run in newspapers and minority language community radio stations.

We would therefore ask that the guide be adhered to for each and every advertising campaign.

• (0920)

**The Chair:** Thank you.

**Ms. Béatrice Lajoie (Chargee for National Development, Alliance des radios communautaires du Canada):** Allow me to add something briefly. When we are talking about asking Treasury Board for money, we are referring to media buys. In the context of today's discussion, we are only talking about the advertising budget. We are not asking for funding from another envelope.

Secondly, I would like to point out that we were already experiencing difficulties in getting a share of the advertising budget before the sponsorship scandal. Now, the situation is even worse. We are only asking for a share of the advertising budget, we are not asking for money from elsewhere.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Ms. Lajoie.

Ms. Barbot.

**Mrs. Vivian Barbot (Papineau, BQ):** Good morning. Thank you for your presentation.

In your presentation, you reported that, according to the communications policy of the Government of Canada, the anglophone community in Quebec has access to a range of information sources containing Government of Canada advertising, while francophone minority communities do not.

That is obvious, it goes without saying.

Firstly, I would like to speak about the notion of equivalency, which I find interesting in this context, especially in light of your remarks that we must put the emphasis on innovative alternative service delivery methods and sufficiently flexible regulations. Implicit in this, is the notion of fairness, which is essentially what we are trying to promote in Quebec.

However, when it comes to solutions, English-language minority communities are placed on equal footing with their French-language counterparts. Therefore, even if you are trying to defend the interests of French-speakers outside of Quebec, your proposed solutions, as you know, would also apply to English-speakers in Quebec.

Have you given any thought to that? What would you suggest?

**Mr. Serge Paquin:** We have no difficulty with the notion of Quebec's English-language community benefiting from an equivalency-based system. That is a fact and it is stated in the committee's report: It is far more difficult to reach the French-language community. Obviously, it is because of geographical and demographic factors.

Everybody agrees that the majority of English-speakers in Quebec live in Montreal. Around 95 per cent, if not more, of Quebec's English-speakers live in the greater Montreal region. They have access to newspapers, radio stations, TV channels. Living in Montreal means that they have access to media, BBM ratings, and conventional advertising. Good for them! They might get a little more money, although I would find it surprising if they did, because they already have excellent service.

However, it is an altogether different story for French-speakers. We are scattered all across the country, in remote areas that are difficult to reach. Although, I would have to say that it is also

difficult to reach French-speakers in Toronto, because there is no real French district.

In short, we have no difficulty with the equivalency principle applying equally to English-language and French-language communities. I have no problem with improving services for English-language communities, although I get the impression that they are already doing well for themselves.

• (0925)

**Mrs. Vivian Barbot:** The point that I was trying to make was that they will, inevitably, be given more resources. That is where the notion of fairness comes into play. Adding resources to a community that is already well established and has everything that it needs...

Obviously, I fully understand the necessity for you to have more resources. However, can we as Quebeckers really ask that additional funds be given to a network that is already flourishing?

**Mr. Serge Paquin:** By adopting Bill S-3, the government decided to introduce positive measures. However, thus far, the exact nature of these positive measures has not yet been defined.

A positive measure that we are suggesting here is the notion of equivalency. You asked whether the principle will apply, if it is felt that the English-language community is already well served and well informed. My answer would be that it may not be necessary; it may be felt that the English-language community is already very well informed. If not, and a little more is done for the English-language community — good for them! Implementing positive measures in keeping with the spirit of Bill S-3.

We therefore have no difficulty with the notion of equivalency, even when it is applied to the majority group. It is not a crime to do more to help the English-language community. Indeed, it would simply be an example of a positive measure and thus in keeping with the positive spirit of the act. At least that is our interpretation of the legislation, and we therefore have no problem with this notion. We have absolutely no objection to the English-language community enjoying even more benefits under an equivalency-based system.

**The Chair:** You have two and a half minutes, Ms. Brunelle.

**Ms. Paule Brunelle (Trois-Rivières, BQ):** I would like us to turn our attention to another issue, the social economy. If I understood you correctly, you want to be considered as a social economy enterprise. However, to have such a status, a business has to put something back into the community. It has to provide social benefits to the people in the community, be it in terms of mentoring, or skills development, etc.

Are you in a position to do that?

**Mr. Roger Ouellette:** We have been working on gaining social economy enterprise status for the past year, and we meet all of the criteria. Allow me to provide some examples as to how our community radio stations are active in the social economy and the field of community development. I was the CEO of a very successful community radio station in Shediac called Radio Beauséjour; I am sure Mr. Godin is familiar with it. Radio Beauséjour regularly organizes fundraisers to help, amongst others, shelters for women who are victims of domestic violence, etc. We always raise between \$130,000 and \$140,000. The money goes directly to firefighters, for example, or to other groups. All of that should be taken into consideration.

I believe that community radio stations in the north of the province are also doing the same. All members representing a riding that has a community radio station know full well the role these radio stations play in the socio-economic development of the regions they serve. We fully meet the definition of a social economy enterprise.

Community radio is often the voice of the community. For example, it is community radio that can reach the French-speaker in Toronto. In other words, community radio allows everybody, be it women or young people, to speak out on any subject, be it culture or the economy. It is the voice of the people. When you look at all that they do, I do not see how community radio stations could not be considered as social economy enterprises. Without wishing to be arrogant, I would even say that we are leading the way in the social economy.

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

The next question will be from Mr. Godin.

**Mr. Yvon Godin (Acadie—Bathurst, NDP):** Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Ms. Lajoie, Mr. Ouellette, Mr. Paquin, it is a pleasure to have you here.

Firstly, I would like to thank you for believing in community radio. I would also like to congratulate you for the good work that you do. I believe that community radio has a role to play in our communities. Mr. Ouellette, you were right to say that it is the voice of the people. It is not a corporate entity, it belongs to the community. I enjoy listening to community radio when I am in my car in the evening. The volunteers do a good job and their work allows them to learn the tools of the trade. For some, it is a springboard to the next step. Community radio stations participate in community life, particularly in festivals. They also help the private sector through the advertisements that they run for stores.

That being said, the last time you appeared before our committee, you expressed concern about restrictions to the sponsorship program. I recall that the Auditor General said that it was not a matter of putting an end to the program, but, rather, putting an end to abusing the program. This should not affect communities, as they have a need for sponsorship.

Let us now turn back to your presentation. You spoke about millions and millions of dollars. You said that of \$71 million only \$33 million had been spent, yet you are only asking for \$500,000. Is \$500,000 enough? What are you going to be able to do with \$500,000?

• (0930)

**Mr. Roger Ouellette:** Well, sir, if you would like to give us more...

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** On reading the figures that you have given us, I do not understand why you are only asking for \$500,000.

**Mr. Roger Ouellette:** That is to say...

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** Firstly, I would like you to tell us how budget cutbacks have affected community radio. What will the \$500,000 allow you to do?

**Mr. Roger Ouellette:** Mr. Godin, I will give you a few examples. After the sponsorship's scandal, Radio Fredericton, in New Brunswick, experienced a significant reduction in its federal sponsorships. It has been struggling ever since. That radio station almost closed its doors at least twice. Members of Parliament from New Brunswick were made aware of this problem, especially Mr. Scott, the member for Fredericton.

We feel the problem is quite complex. There appears to be money; \$71 million has been mentioned. In my opinion, there should be more. However, federal organizations are not even spending what is available. That is rather surprising. We are trying to understand why. Perhaps it is because of the monitoring mechanisms. I don't know very many departments that do not spend all their program money.

The auditor general said that there had to be an end to the sponsorships' scandal and that the government had to get its house in order, but she did not suggest that we kill the goose with the golden eggs. I think that currently we're strangling that goose. As I mentioned, I believe in accountability and in auditing. However we have to be reasonable. I think it would be interesting to request — you can do this but we can't — a study that would consider the costs associated with this process, that is, how much is spent, and why it is that, in the end, there is \$71 million available. Thirty one million dollars has been spent and \$20 to \$25 million are spent on an audit.

I think that some serious questions have to be asked. We need auditing and we need to avoid scandals, but we cannot suffocate development and initiative. That is my first response to your question. We need more money for government advertising and rules that will ensure that the money can be spent. That will have an impact.

Five hundred thousand dollars is a modest amount; obviously we can ask for more. However, it should be clear that community radio stations do not want to restrict themselves to one source of funding alone. I think it is important to protect the independence of radio stations. You mentioned volunteers. If you were to quantify, in dollars, all the work carried out by volunteers in community radio stations throughout the country, you would be talking about millions of dollars. The volunteers are there, that does not pose a problem. Depending on their market, the radio stations that can, will obtain advertising income. We did it in your riding and in others.

However there are many other small radio stations that cannot pay for BBM surveys. Why is that? BBM surveys are only carried out in English in anglophone markets. In Montreal, there are surveys in English and in French but that is all. There are no BBM surveys undertaken within francophone markets outside Quebec. That is the reality. The small radio stations do not count. That is why there have to be other sources of funding. We think that government advertising is a good source of funding but it should not be the only source. The ingredients for the best recipe for community radio stations are volunteers, federal government advertising, bingo and fundraising campaigns.

• (0935)

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** Mr. Chairman, I cannot stay for much longer because I have to go to the House of Commons.

If that's the case, then we need to know if the money is spent on auditing or not spent at all. I think that our committee could ask Treasury Board to come and answer that. If there is money, then it should be used for the purposes it was allocated for and not only for audits. As the auditor general said, we don't want to eliminate all programs because some of these programs are good, but there has to be monitoring. We cannot just do an audit and then lose the money because of that audit. I think that would be an even greater scandal than the sponsorship scandal.

**The Chair:** Thank you for your suggestion. Your time is up. We will move on to Ms. Boucher.

**Mrs. Sylvie Boucher (Beauport—Limoilou, CPC):** There is no doubting the fact that you are looking for money. Budgets have been cut. I understand that you have been negatively affected by the sponsorship scandal. Funding is, of course, important; as a community radio organization, have you found any other way to make the public sit up and take notice?

I am currently touring francophone communities outside Quebec. I have just returned from Newfoundland, where there is a rather exceptional system. I met with a number of people in New Brunswick. Advertising revenue is available from any number of sources. This is something that I understand quite well, because I have community radio stations in my neighbourhood. They are extremely important, they help the entire community.

Apart from providing funding, is there any other way that the government can help you to make yourselves known as francophone community radio stations operating in a minority environment?

**Mr. Roger Ouellette:** Well, since you are asking for our opinion, I will take this opportunity to deal with some points that are not in our document. I am afraid that, once again, they deal with money, but that is beside the point.

Not too long ago, we appeared before the CRTC to ask the commission to create a fund for Canadian community radio. Yesterday, we met with the Deputy Minister of Heritage Canada to discuss the request and ask that a committee be struck to examine the issue.

Federal governments in industrialized nations, such as France, Australia, or even the United States, all provide programs to help their community radio organizations. That applies to all G7 countries, except Canada. We think that a fund should be

created. When we quoted a figure of \$500,000, we were told that our request was too modest, and that the amount would not meet our requirements. So, we thought that an \$18-million fund would be a good starting point. Even then, we were told that it was not very much money. Nevertheless, we would like to start with \$18 million.

We explained to the CRTC that we wanted part of the funding to come from the profit generated by private radio. During the 1990s, the industry warned that it was on the brink of bankruptcy and was being smothered by regulations. So, a committee was struck, and it recommended that the CRTC loosen up the rules.

And you know how well private radio stations are doing today. This year, their surplus will be in the millions, or even the hundreds of millions. All we are asking for is a meager \$5 million — because we are not very greedy — that would go from these huge profits into a fund for Canadian community radio. We would also like to see contributions come from Heritage Canada, as well as from other sources, including foundations.

Community radio stations don't want to be dependent on the federal government. They don't want to survive from month to month on a government handout. That is not the case. They have multiple sources of funding, including bingos, fundraising, community dinners, the sale of local advertising, and federal and provincial government summer employment programs. These funding sources provide community radio stations with the basic resources that they require to fulfill their community development mandate.

When stations are forced to close, or when a crisis becomes permanent, as was the case in Fredericton, what do the volunteers do? They try to save the station. However, while that is happening, the station cannot really serve the community. Therefore, in answer to your question, I would say that it is not only a matter of dollars and cents. Nevertheless, money is sometime the sinews of war.

After all, the federal government invested \$138 million in the Canadian television fund, with an aim to produce Canadian programming. We must not forget that community radio stations produce 80,000 hours of Canadian content programming every year. Television has a fund, and that is great, because it allows Canada to affirm its cultural sovereignty and produce Canadian programs.

We believe that community radio is already doing that and deserves a helping hand. Its role is not that of private radio. Our artists complain because private stations only play the top 10 hits. The same selections are played over and over again. Who helps emerging artists to find their way onto the top ten hit list? Community radio stations. They play a key role in the development of our Canadian artists.



Under CRTC regulations, private radio stations must contribute part of their profits to a fund intended to develop Canadian talent. That's wonderful! However, we believe that we also contribute to the development of Canadian talent and that part of the profit should be invested in a fund for community radio. That would be the right thing to do.

I have just given you an overview of the situation. We would very much appreciate your support.

● (0940)

**Mr. Serge Paquin:** I would like to provide a few details on our proposal for a community radio fund. We are trying to raise \$18 million. This fund would benefit the country's 140 community radio stations, including campus stations, Quebec community radio stations, as well as all of the stations in French and English Canada. We have joined forces in a coalition with the National Campus and Community Radio Association, the Association des radiodiffuseurs communautaires du Québec, and the ARC du Canada, with a name to requesting the funding.

**The Chair:** You have 45 seconds remaining, Ms. Boucher.

**Mr. Roger Ouellette:** I will forward the documentation on this file.

**Mr. Luc Harvey (Louis-Hébert, CPC):** Does the amount related to advertising depend on the size of the community, or the number of listeners? Is that how you come up with your figures?

**Ms. Béatrice Lajoie:** With respect to our advertising budget, the departments must have Treasury Board's approval for the ads that they buy. Departments are often looking for community outreach opportunities to promote Bill S-3. With \$500,000, we will be able to help the departments accomplish this task.

**Mr. Luc Harvey:** That isn't what I was asking. You mentioned 5.4 per cent. Is that figure based on the size of the local population, or on the number of listeners?

**Ms. Béatrice Lajoie:** No. A government public service campaign usually last about three weeks and cost around \$50,000. We allocate \$50,000 per department with a potential of about 10 departments. That is how we proceeded.

**Mr. Serge Paquin:** We also used the rate cards, which relates to your question about the audience numbers. The smaller stations have lower rates than the larger ones. The small stations charge a minimum of \$15 per 30 seconds while the larger ones can charge up to \$40. That is how it works. The rate card is based on the audience rating.

**The Chair:** Your time is up, Mr. Harvey. We will begin the second round.

Mr. Rodriguez.

**Mr. Pablo Rodriguez:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I'd like to come back to the question raised by Mr. Harvey because I am having a hard time understanding. Is the \$500,000 a fixed amount, or is it a percentage? Is it an amount that you have established?

**Mr. Serge Paquin:** It is what we are suggesting. It is not based on any percentage. If it were divided by 21 community radio stations, each one would receive about \$24,000.

● (0945)

**Mr. Pablo Rodriguez:** I understand. It seems a little random. There might be other ways to do it.

**Mr. Serge Paquin:** Yes. We are working on that now. The calculation is not based on any scientific or statistical method.

**Mr. Pablo Rodriguez:** For example, within S-3, could there not be some type of regulation stipulating that 5 per cent of the funds be allocated to community radio every year? That would seem more solid, easier to justify and less random than recurring amounts of \$500,000, \$600,000 or \$300,000. That would represent part of the government's effort to promote community radio.

**Ms. Béatrice Lajoie:** We have been asking for a percentage-based formula for seven years now, and for seven years now, we have been given 101 reasons why it would not work. When we ask about the percentage, we are told that we receive more than 5 per cent. The last time, the committee had asked for 5.4 per cent. The request was denied because we apparently were receiving more than that. The response takes into account all of the French-language community radio stations. We are lost in this percentage.

**Mr. Pablo Rodriguez:** There could be a regulation within S-3 that would apply specifically to French-language radio stations outside Quebec.

**Ms. Béatrice Lajoie:** I agree wholeheartedly.

**Mr. Serge Paquin:** If it is easy and provides the same results, then we don't have a problem with it. We are not looking for 5 per cent of \$60 million or \$70 million of a comprehensive advertising budget, that is not our aim. Whatever the number is, we would agree to having a percentage-based formula.

**Mr. Pablo Rodriguez:** Year in year out, what percentage of your revenue comes from the private sector as compared to the government contributions?

**Mr. Serge Paquin:** About 65 per cent of the radio revenue comes from local advertising, 5 to 10 per cent from national advertising and the rest, about 30 per cent, comes from fundraising. Operations subsidies are practically non-existent. Only one radio station currently benefits from a Canada-Community agreement and receives a given amount. That is the station in Mr. Simard's riding. It is the only station to have access to a government fund under the Canada-Community agreement. That is an exception. None of the other radio stations is subsidized, except for small subsidies granted under the summer employment program.

With respect to the Canada-Community agreements, the community sets the priorities. Other than that, the profile is generally the same: an amount equivalent to 65 per cent of the revenue comes from advertising.

**Mr. Pablo Rodriguez:** Do you also run ads for provincial governments?

**Mr. Serge Paquin:** Yes. In some provinces, the amount is much lower, but in Ontario, the percentage is quite high. New Brunswick provides a small amount. That is part of the funding diversification that we spoke of earlier. Without that, community radio stations could not survive.

**Mr. Pablo Rodriguez:** But no province allocates a certain percentage for community radio.

**Mr. Serge Paquin:** Quebec has a policy whereby 4 per cent of the province's media buys must go to community media.

**Mr. Pablo Rodriguez:** That is interesting.

**Mr. Serge Paquin:** It was introduced about 12 or 15 years ago, when Mr. Parizeau was the premier. Even with this 4 per cent policy, and despite supporting statistics, community radio stations and media in Quebec do not obtain that amount, because it is a difficult concept for the planning agencies to grasp. We don't yet have the visibility. They take into account the BBM surveys, the high ratings, the mass media, and we are ignored.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Paquin and Mr. Rodriguez.

You have five minutes, Mr. Harvey.

**Mr. Luc Harvey:** Pablo asked a question about the percentage. I would like to know how much it costs to operate a radio station?

**Mr. Serge Paquin:** It costs about as much to operate a community station as it does to operate a private station, but there is absolutely no comparison to a government station, which is on another level altogether. In our stations, the same person can be a technician, a host, a researcher and a producer.

• (0950)

**Mr. Luc Harvey:** I have worked in television...

**Mr. Serge Paquin:** You must not forget that there are always minimal costs, regardless of where the station is located. There is no way around it; you have to pay for your electricity, your transmitter, telephone service, etc.

There are, of course, large radio stations. For example, some stations have penetrated the market, such as Radio Beauséjour, which has 18 full-time employees. However, some stations don't even have one half of a full-time position.

I would estimate that it costs at least \$100,000 per year, but once again, it is all relative. Your question is very vague, because you have a small station with a small radio, a small transmitter, low operating costs and a small facility.

**Mr. Luc Harvey:** I understand all of that.

**Mr. Serge Paquin:** It is not easy to answer your question, but there are basic operating costs.

**Mr. Luc Harvey:** But it helps us to decide. We have to know how much we are working with.

If I give \$500,000 to 20 radio stations, each one would get \$25,000, which is, say, 25 per cent of their budget.

**Mr. Serge Paquin:** On average, yes.

**Ms. Béatrice Lajoie:** That would help to pay for one employee.

**Mr. Serge Paquin:** It would almost be enough, because they don't make very much.

**Mr. Luc Harvey:** On that we can agree.

I would like to refer to page 2 of your brief, where you say that funding should relate to demographic considerations. In other words, your problem is that you don't know how many listeners you have.

Is that it?

**Mr. Serge Paquin:** It depends.

**Ms. Béatrice Lajoie:** Some stations do know, because some of them subscribe to BBM surveys.

**Mr. Luc Harvey:** Why could the calculations not be based on the number of listeners rather than on the population?

**Ms. Béatrice Lajoie:** We tried to do that.

**Mr. Serge Paquin:** Currently, three radio stations are members of BBM and the ratings are extremely high. The radio station in Shediac, even though this is a bilingual area, has a rating of 54 per cent amongst francophones, which isn't peanuts. In Moncton, that radio station is the one that is the most listened to in the south-eastern region of New Brunswick. Radio Péninsule, Mr. Godin's radio station, has a rating of approximately 70 per cent.

However, those radio stations that are not members of BBM have to do their own surveys. That is impossible if you consider that a survey can cost anywhere between \$25,000 and \$30,000. When a radio station has a \$150,000 budget, the cost of a survey can take up a fourth of its total spending.

For example, in Chéticamp, 98 per cent of the people listen to the community radio station. That is the only radio station that is listened to everywhere. You don't need to do a survey to find that out. All you have to do is go there, ask questions and go into people's homes in order to see that everyone listens to the community radio station.

However, it is a fact that if we don't have any numbers to give to the planning agencies, then we won't be included in any planning, which is unfortunate.

We are therefore suggesting that the principle of equivalence be used systematically for all campaigns, media, community newspapers, community radio stations, in order to keep the minority public informed.

**Ms. Béatrice Lajoie:** Our radio stations broadcast in various regions where, unfortunately, there are many illiterate people. Therefore, many people will listen to the radio in order to get information about what is happening in their community, rather than read the newspaper. Those are the people we reach and that is why our penetration level is so high.

**Mr. Luc Harvey:** A yearly budget of \$71 million for advertising was mentioned. You are saying that \$35 million is being spent. Does that mean that \$36 million are spent on administration, or is that money...

**Mr. Serge Paquin:** No. We said that in 2005-2006, Treasury Board approved a \$71-million budget for advertising. Over the course of that same year, only \$33 million was spent. Therefore, about \$40 million went back to Treasury Board or was used for something else.

**Mr. Luc Harvey:** So it wasn't spent on administration costs...

**Mr. Serge Paquin:** There are actually four committees, four stages involved in the campaign-approval process. It takes one year to approve that advertising, which is very discouraging for everyone. How much do all those committees cost, how much does it cost to ensure accountability and transparency with respect to the \$33 million? It would not be surprising to find out that approximately the same amount is spent on ensuring that there is accountability. There are limits to transparency and accountability. If it ends up costing more than the program itself, then that's a little ridiculous.

**Ms. Béatrice Lajoie:** The \$71 million includes everything, that is, planning, agencies, and so on. It doesn't only include the advertising costs. For example, a \$50,000 campaign might have cost a \$150,000 before it reaches us.

• (0955)

**The Chair:** Thank you, Ms. Lajoie.

Mr. Harvey, your questions are very interesting but unfortunately your time is up.

Ms. Brunelle, you have the floor.

**Ms. Paule Brunelle:** First, I want to congratulate you on the work you have done to preserve the language. Also your comments on literacy are critical.

There seems to be a lot of movement at the CRTC. At one time, radio was said to be dead. However, there is a great deal of movement. In fact, Corus has absorbed a number of stations. There seems to be many new radio stations.

Where are you in relation to this? We are talking about market shares. Are you experiencing particular difficulties finding sponsors? Has your market shrunk? Have I hit pay dirt? Does that make sense to you?

**Mr. Roger Ouellette:** We worked closely with the *Association des radiodiffuseurs communautaires du Québec* in preparing our brief for the CRTC and during our meeting with the Deputy Minister of Heritage Canada. Our colleague from this association produced an interesting table — I don't have it here, but we can send it to you — which shows that community radio stations make up 20 per cent of francophone radio stations, but only 1 per cent of revenues. There is a major imbalance between major networks and independent stations. Advertising revenues are concentrated within the major networks.

During the 1990s, private-sector commercial radio stations were making noise, saying that they were about to disappear and that regulations needed to be relaxed. The CRTC did so. As a result, the press and radio stations in Canada are now concentrated. For all practical purposes, there are four major radio networks, and the concentration is continuing.

Community radio stations in Quebec are falling through the cracks somewhat, if I dare say so. We fill the space that commercial radio stations are ignoring. Someone asked if we are competing with commercial radio stations. The document presented, about the situation in Quebec, shows clearly that the vast majority of community radio stations are not competing with the commercial sector. As evidence, they are earning only 1 per cent of revenues, although they represent 20 per cent of all stations. Consequently, we

need to find alternatives for community radio stations since they are unable to obtain funding based only on commercial advertising. Revenues are not sufficient. That is why the federal government's contribution to our revenue stream is important to us.

Furthermore, independent radio stations, particularly community radio stations broadcast local news. I invite you to try and get local news from the major radio networks. They play songs by the same 10 artists and repeat the same news from Montreal.

**Ms. Paule Brunelle:** You are one hundred per cent correct. Television shows were often done in Trois-Rivières, in my riding, and we lost them due to a concentration of the press. As a result, jobs and the regional aspect were lost. The situation is even worst in francophone communities throughout the country.

**Ms. Béatrice Lajoie:** I want to add to your question. My job is to meet with people from the departments to lobby them and explain who we are. At the time, I had met with representatives of Communication Canada, and I was told that they knew who we were but not where to put us, because we were different. We are a radio network but, at the same time, we are a not-for-profit organization. We reach the community; our station represents communities. We get lost among the major players. They don't really know what to do with us. Not because they didn't want to help us, but because they didn't have any solution. Consequently, we are trying to find one with you. That is why we are here.

• (1000)

**The Chair:** Thank you, Ms. Brunelle. Your time is up. There will be a third and final five-minute round. Then we will go in camera to discuss committee business.

Mr. Simard.

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

Welcome to our guests. I apologize for not getting here sooner.

I want to talk about the solution, because that is why we are here. It was no coincidence that the committee proposed 5.4 per cent. There was a precedent. This was done with film producers. For example, Productions Rivard, a producer from our region, and producers in Ottawa and the Maritimes were not getting their fair share of funding. They were getting only 7 p. 100, when their share should have been between 11 per cent or 12 per cent. So we proposed 12 per cent, and I think that it was ultimately set at 10 per cent.

If we talk to those producers today, we find that they are delighted with this solution. It has worked very well. We have tried to do the same thing with community radio stations, but it didn't necessarily work.

You feel that this solution still has merit. However, when I went to your annual meeting three weeks ago in Winnipeg, I met a participant from France who represented some several hundred community radio stations. He had another solution under which private radio stations set aside a certain amount of money for community radio stations.

If you had to choose between these two solutions, which one would you prefer? They are two different things, are they not?

**Mr. Serge Paquin:** We proposed creating a fund that would be funded in part by the surplus generated by private radio stations. To this end, we may be in agreement with the proposal put forward by the *Association des radiodiffuseurs communautaires du Québec* to the effect that the ten largest networks, including Astral Media, Corus, etc., provide \$5 million, because they are making a lot of money, due to mergers.

Yesterday, we met with the deputy minister of Heritage Canada, Ms. LaRocque, to ask her to strike a committee to study the future of community radio broadcasting in Canada, including francophone and anglophone community radio stations. We are seriously considering having the government inject approximately \$10 million into the fund, even if we asked for \$18 million, just as it is investing in television through the Canadian Television Fund. If they invest in television, why not invest in radio?

The order-in-council stipulates that cable and satellite distributors must allocate a portion of their gross revenues to the Canadian Television Fund. This does not apply to private radio stations. The CRTC has been asked to make private radio stations contribute to the fund. Last year, the government invested nearly \$140 million in the Canadian Television Fund, for the production of Canadian shows. We produce 80,000 hours of Canadian programming, and we get nothing. We are one of the rare industrialized countries not to provide support to community radio.

We are proposing that the federal government provides funding through a community radio fund or initiatives by which we would get a portion of unspent advertising budgets. We are not talking about new money. We are simply asking to get a percentage of this budget in order to promote Bill S-3 or the Official Languages Act. These are different initiatives, but have to knock on a number of doors, because the CRTC will have trouble telling the private sector to set aside \$5 million, and the government will hesitate to invest \$10 million in our fund.

**Hon. Raymond Simard:** That is what I was going to say. It seems to me that the CRTC option is much more difficult to achieve. Rather, the committee could indicate clearly to the government that it wants 5.4 per cent of the funds to be set aside. That would be simpler for us. In addition, that recommendation is justifiable, given that there is a precedent.

This committee should take another look at this option and ensure that it is clearly 5.4 per cent that we're dealing with and not the diluted percentage that we're speaking about here.

•(1005)

**The Chair:** Mr. Simard, I am sorry but your time is up.

Ms. Barbot.

**Mrs. Vivian Barbot:** I'm going to speak to you about a system that may interest you.

Generally speaking, community groups are dealing with a problem — and I imagine that this is your case as well — that is to say, that people are not really aware of the effort made by the population to support community radio. They have a vague idea, but they do not know precisely how many people are involved.

I noticed, in the case of certain community groups, that after having seen the financial report, auditors agreed to add the number of volunteer hours carried out in the form of a note, while specifying what that work represented in terms of money. By doing that, they make sure that funders do not get the impression that these groups are begging for funding for operations. They see that people have already done their part and that it is fair for the government to provide a contribution. I do not know if you find the idea interesting, but I must say that for myself, in similar cases that I have seen, I have been able to have a better idea of the real work being done and the participation of people from the community.

You also talked about the cost of auditing. Your recent answers lead me to believe that it is not included in the \$71 million. Am I right?

**A voice:** No.

**Ms. Vivian Barbot:** So, the \$71 million has not been fully spent. You are telling us that that is due to the slowness of procedures. Given that some of your needs have not been met, do you have more specific measures to recommend so that that money is spent?

**Mr. Serge Paquin:** As you heard in our presentation, there is a whole range of committees that intervene, whether it be Treasury Board, Privy Council, the cabinet, the departments themselves or the Department of Public Works. There is an accreditation process. The committees meet to approve campaigns. One committee will refer the matter to another committee, which then approves what the other committee approved previously and so on. That process mobilizes public servants, politicians and many other people. It ends up generating enormous costs, and we haven't even yet added the cost of auditing. In Public Works, that type of expenditure, especially in the area of advertising, is given a great deal of scrutiny. The Auditor General dedicates a lot of resources to audit a \$33 million expenditure. We suspect that it costs several million dollars.

If our hypothesis that it costs 25 or \$30 million, or even more, to ensure accountability in all of that is correct, then we could say that those measures are rather excessive. We therefore recommend that Treasury Board take concrete steps and grant us \$500,000. We would use a simple, effective and transparent process that we would be responsible for, and that would allow us to avoid going through four committees, three agencies, and so on.

When it comes to ad campaigns, the departments get discouraged. In fact, they have to wait a year or more between the time they decide to plan that campaign and the time at which it is broadcast over the television or on radio. People must therefore decide what their department's priority will be and what programs they will want to emphasize a year later. That discourages them.

**Ms. Béatrice Lajoie:** I would like to comment on that. As Mr. Simard and Mr. Rodriguez have said, even if we still used the process, having a percentage set aside solely for us in the short term would at least have the benefit of providing us with some funding. That would not preclude us from eventually studying the process. It is not essential that we settle that problem today.

**Mrs. Vivian Barbot:** One solution could be to have an auditing process over a number of years instead of redoing an audit every year. More long-term planning would perhaps yield the same results and reassure people, even more so since the auditing process required now is very thorough.

•(1010)

**Ms. Béatrice Lajoie:** We must make sure that we receive ongoing funding.

**Mr. Serge Paquin:** We need to limit the number of levels of government. As you saw, there were three or four committees to approve the same thing. At one point...

**Mr. Roger Ouellette:** The federal government, its departments and its programs are less and less heard and less and less visible in communities. Money is being spent, but the process is such that we're not the ones spending it. As a result, people in communities are hearing less and less about you, MPs and the federal government. And that's essentially what this means. People are not informed.

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

I will now give the floor to Mr. Lemieux. He may ask one last question.

**Mr. Pierre Lemieux (Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, CPC):** Spending by the federal government has decreased in the past four years. In 2005-2006, this was because of the elections. Prior to the elections, people were wondering whether or not there would be elections. Departments were also asking themselves questions. They were wondering whether it was worth the effort to continue with such and such a program, or whether it would be approved or not. This anxiety began in November and continued on through December, January and February, because the government did not start to sit until April.

That is probably why there was only \$33 million in spending.

**Ms. Béatrice Lajoie:** We had the same problem six or seven years ago, even before the sponsorship scandal.

The only time it worked was when we went knocking on the door of what was then Communication Canada. We asked for equal treatment. Departments were running three-week ad campaigns on all radio stations, including Mix-Media and others. Three weeks later, they ran the same campaign, but only on our radio stations. So they had set aside \$500,000 and were using that money to redo the campaign on our radio stations to get greater visibility. In addition, that is the only year that radio stations received approximately \$200,000 in ad placements.

Yes, there were problems because of the sponsorship scandal; yes, there were the elections and the minority government, but the problems were there before.

We're still here. I have been fighting for seven years to say that there's a problem. There's a very simple solution. We have to simply agree to implement it.

**Mr. Steven Blaney (Lévis—Bellechasse, CPC):** Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I would like to thank you for coming to meet with us. You help to promote linguistic duality, which is one of the objectives of our committee.

You spoke about social economy. Community radios are also a vital tool for regional development. It's important. In my riding, we have Radio Bellechasse.

You recommended solutions and we examined them. You spoke about the percentage of funding that must be dedicated to minority-language community radios. You want to make this document binding, but I pointed out that it does not mention percentages. You are also recommending short-circuiting the entire process by suggesting that a distinct 500,000 dollar amount be set aside directly for you. That is what this is about, I believe.

You also drew attention to other aspects that were raised by various people. Sylvie asked a question about a fund for all community radio stations. That is one possible solution, but it goes a bit beyond the mandate of our committee. Other committees will be able to examine it further.

To summarize, by making this document binding, you will have more control over the budgets of departmental bodies.

**Mr. Serge Paquin:** It has been proven — and the committee has said so — that it is more difficult to reach minority communities, namely French-speaking communities outside of Quebec. It is much more difficult to target them, to inform them of all the programs and services provided by the government.

With respect to the idea of equivalency, when a firm prepares a promotion campaign on television, for example an ad by the Department of Health, the firm is hired to do advertising for television, nothing more. In its planning, there is no talk about including newspapers, radio or other forms of media; it's television only, nothing more.

How many francophones outside Quebec have access to television and listen to programs in French? It's hard to know. So these people don't have that information.

So we are proposing that the firm be obligated to use most of its budget for its television campaign, but that it systematically ad, in each of its add campaigns, a small portion of its budget for placing ads in community newspapers and on community radio. Even by doing that, they will not end up with the same level of media coverage, but they will come closer to equivalency.

In this way, we will obtain a portion of the budget that will be justified and that will be used to inform people of whatever the government wants to inform them. A quarter on an eighth of a page will be purchased in a French-language newspaper and, for a week, a quarter of a page in the *Globe and Mail*. Anglophones will have seen the information five times; francophones, half a time. That is what we're talking about when we say equivalency: systematically including official language minority media in all campaigns.

•(1015)

**Ms. Béatrice Lajoie:** That is by and large what Communication Canada had done with the \$500,000 that was set aside. When there was a campaign, it would also run the campaign through you, to make sure that there was a bit more...

**Mr. Serge Paquin:** ...visibility.

**Mr. Steven Blaney:** For you, the \$500,000 was an effective way to increase the overall percentage of the federal government's envelope dedicated to advertising.

**Mr. Serge Paquin:** That's right. Those are all proposals aimed at helping us improve our situation.

**Mr. Roger Ouellette:** If you want to put a percentage in the document, that's not a problem.

**The Chair:** I received requests from some committee members for a fourth round of two minutes. Is that acceptable to all members?

**Mr. Pablo Rodriguez:** Thirty seconds will be enough for me. I simply want to know whether satellite radio has an impact on you or whether you foresee one.

**Mr. Serge Paquin:** A very small impact. We are local stations. The stations are very grounded in their communities. They've been successful because they meet a real need for local information. The impact until now has been minimal. It's important to understand that satellite radio may draw listeners away, but not money, because those radios do not sell advertising.

**Hon. Raymond Simard:** I also have a last question to ask. Most of the community radio stations that I know are in the west. There's always talk of instability. It's unbelievable: we don't know whether they are going to continue to run from one year to the next. The 5.4 per cent solution, in the case of a year where only half of the funds have been advanced, still creates instability.

It seems to me that a combination of a basic fund, \$500,000 for example, plus the percentage that you are suggesting, may perhaps be a solution to the problem. Where I come from, every year the survival of the community radio and other forms of media is called into question. So I would recommend a basic fund so that you know that you can survive, and then that we base ourselves on a percentage to ensure not only the development but the survival of community radio stations.

**Mr. Roger Ouellette:** Precisely. That's another part of the solution. In my view, we need to have a number of parts to the solution.

**Mr. Pierre Lemieux:** You made a presentation to the CRTC on funding for community radio. What was its reaction?

**Mr. Roger Ouellette:** I went to the CRTC a few times. When we go there, we are asked questions such as the ones that you asked us this morning. So I find it interesting. It's usually a good sign. If they don't ask us questions, it's a bad sign. So we were asked a lot of questions for roughly 40 minutes.

What's even more interesting is that before our appearance, the commissioners asked a lot of questions to other stakeholders about our case, including private broadcasters. In my view, this is even more interesting because it means that the commissioners thoroughly read through our arguments and that they wanted to hear the opinion of other stakeholders with respect to our request.

We do not know what the CRTC will decide, but we found it encouraging that CRTC representatives put questions to other stakeholders about our initiative and that we were asked a lot of questions as well.

However, it's an independent organization, as you know. We expect a reply in January 2007. We are cautiously optimistic, but we

are not putting all our eggs in the same basket. That is why we are here this morning to discuss other initiatives.

• (1020)

**The Chair:** Ms. Barbot.

**Mrs. Vivian Barbot:** What type of integration do you have in the school network?

**Mr. Roger Ouellette:** I'm going to give you some very concrete examples. A number of our community radio stations are located in community centres or schools. For example, a new radio station has just opened in Saint-Jean. The station is located in the school. The studios are on the inside, an antenna on the outside. It is the same at the community centre in Fredericton. So, there is a connection.

Our community radio stations in New Brunswick, where I'm from, have reached an agreement with the schools in order to create radio stations for students in the schools. In our opinion, this is a solid foundation for recruiting future volunteers for community radio. So, we are working together. We think that this is extremely important, particularly in minority-language regions, to have very close structural ties between community radio projects, on air-community radio stations and schools and communities. We believe this is an intrinsic part of the whole.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

I want to take this opportunity to ask you a question as committee chair.

The community radio station in my riding is experiencing great difficulties. I heard this morning that there is a community radio station in New Brunswick with 18 employees.

If you obtain additional funding, where will you spend it: on stations such as the one in my region, or improving the larger stations?

**Mr. Serge Paquin:** We are working on behalf of all the members of our alliance. Obviously, if our efforts today and our future efforts bear fruit, all radio stations will benefit. Ideally, those most in need would benefit, but we have to be responsible when purchasing advertising with rate cards. We can't say that we're going to increase the rate for a small radio station experiencing difficulties.

Four programs are being proposed. However, with regard to the funding, for example, it is clear that preference will be given to the neediest. The stations that are better off, with 18 employees and sales of \$1.8 million, will probably have very limited access to this fund. That is why we want to create the fund: to develop the small stations and improve on their weaknesses. Here, we're talking about advertising placement. These stations will benefit, obviously it is the rates that are at issue; we don't have a choice.

**The Chair:** Thank you for your answer, and I want to thank all the witnesses for appearing before the committee this morning.

I also want to thank the committee members.

The meeting is suspended for a short two-minute break.

• (1023)

(Pause)

• (1028)

**The Chair:** We have a notice of motion from Ms. Barbot.

Ms. Barbot, do you want to read your motion?

**Mrs. Vivian Barbot:** The motion reads as follows:

That the Standing Committee on Official Languages give an official apology to His Excellency Mr. Abdou Diouf, about the treatment which he received upon his arrival in Canada and that the Committee report to the House recommending that the Government do the same.

**The Chair:** Are there any questions or comments?

Mr. Harvey.

**Mr. Luc Harvey:** Ms. Barbot, my wife is originally from the Caribbean, as are you.

**Mrs. Vivian Barbot:** I am delighted to hear that.

**Mr. Luc Harvey:** If there was any doubt in my mind that this was a racist gesture or something negative toward Mr. Diouf—

**Mrs. Vivian Barbot:** Mr. Chairman, I have a question of privilege. I do not understand the intervention. It was never a question of racism. I do not understand why Mr. Harvey is making this allegation.

**Mr. Luc Harvey:** Ms. Barbot, allow me to complete my thought and you will understand. I am in no way suggesting that you were guilty of racism. That is not it at all. I merely said that if I had thought that the welcome given Mr. Diouf had been reprehensible—some people have claimed that what happened to Mr. Diouf was racially motivated, and I am not saying that you said that—I would be the first one to support your motion.

After the fact, I took the time to meet with several ambassadors who had also received their president, prime minister or representative during the Francophonie Summit in Saint-Boniface, and I was told a number of things.

There are two possibilities. I suggest we invite one of the ambassadors responsible for receiving dignitaries to explain to us that it had been highly recommended that all the dignitaries come through the Montreal Airport, first because it is a francophone airport and, second, because people at that airport had been informed of the event taking place in Saint-Boniface. Mr. Diouf made the decision to transit through Toronto and he advised no one of this.

This is something that was not reported in the newspapers and not communicated to the public in general. I am not even asking you to believe me. If everyone is in agreement, I am prepared to invite an ambassador who received a dignitary to come to explain that to us, so that we can understand that, ultimately, Mr. Diouf did not receive an improper welcome, given the situation. He simply failed to follow the directives he had been sent.

If I help you, you have to help me. Mr. Diouf failed to take the recommended route. He decided to transit through Toronto rather than Montreal, rather than what he had been asked to do. When I heard this, I felt that it was important, and that is why I am taking the time to explain it to everyone. But I am not necessarily asking you to believe me.

We can quite simply invite the Ambassador of Togo to come and explain it to us, since there had been an information session three weeks earlier in order to ensure, once again, that everything would run smoothly.

● (1030)

**Mr. Peter Julian (Burnaby—New Westminster, NDP):** Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I do not see the relevancy of Mr. Harvey's intervention. It is normal for this committee to consider such matters. I think that the motion is quite well written. It is important for the committee to vote on this motion, and I hope that it will receive the support of all members of the committee.

**The Chair:** Mr. Simard.

**Hon. Raymond Simard:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

I understand what Mr. Harvey is saying. Nonetheless, I want to clarify that I was the one who raised this question in the House. This conference was held in my region. As I said in a previous meeting, I had the opportunity to meet the Senegalese Foreign Affairs Minister. Members of his entourage, and not Mr. Diouf, were the ones who demanded an apology from Canadian authorities. Mr. Diouf was truly treated badly. I was told what happened.

Even if he was supposed to arrive in Montreal, what happened is unforgivable. Our airports, be it in Montreal or Toronto, are supposed to provide bilingual services. When we invite a dignitary of that calibre, we must ensure that he gets the treatment he deserves.

I assured the Senegalese Foreign Affairs Minister that this committee would do the right thing. I would have preferred that the motion ask the Prime Minister apologize. We know that it was a mistake. The Prime Minister and the minister responsible for official languages certainly did not plan to have Mr. Diouf subjected to such treatment upon his arrival. However, I cannot understand why no one has apologized to him. This is completely irresponsible. The Prime Minister should have done so in the House of Commons. It would have taken no more than three seconds. He has been asked on numerous occasions to do so, but he has refused each time. I am quite prepared to apologize as a member of the official languages committee, but I don't think that this is enough.

Mr. Diouf was President of Senegal for 17 or 19 years. He is respected throughout the world. Thanks to him, Senegal has become one of the most advanced countries in Africa. It is entirely unacceptable to have treated him this way.

Thank you.

● (1035)

**The Chair:** Mr. Blaney.

**Mr. Steven Blaney:** I will be brief since much has already been said about this matter.

When Ms. Verner appeared before the committee to talk about this matter, she gave us an explanation. I appreciate the fact that some members of the committee wanted to meet with her before considering the motion. I personally am satisfied with the explanation provided by Ms. Verner. I think that it would be useless to reopen a wound that is healing. In my opinion, the appropriate action was taken.

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

Ms. Boucher.

**Mrs. Sylvie Boucher:** As Steven said, things that are now in the past are continually being revived. Mr. Diouf himself wrote a letter. Mr. Harper and Ms. Verner spoke to the individual concerned. The situation is clear. I don't know why we are rehashing something that happened a month ago. An apology was made; Mr. Harper said in the House that he had spoken to the person in question and that that person had expressed satisfaction. So why rehash it? We need to move on. Since the individuals concerned are in agreement, it would be a sign of respect for Mr. Diouf if people stopped making an issue out of this.

Mr. Harper and Ms. Verner communicated with Mr. Diouf. We received information from Ms. Verner and other dignitaries who went to Saint-Boniface. They told us how everything worked. This situation makes me more uncomfortable than anything else.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Ms. Barbot.

**Mrs. Vivian Barbot:** Contrary to what the member just said, no apology was made. Even though it has been said and resaid, I must insist on the fact that the Government of Senegal has demanded that we do so. I was there. The Senegalese ambassador demanded an apology. I spoke to him. That is the situation.

I will have to see these people again within the framework of the Francophonie. Having this swept under the rug like this is extremely embarrassing, to say the least. I think it is very important for the committee to do this. We are directly involved in this situation.

I waited to meet with the minister before introducing my motion, which has been ready since June 13. You will remember that I asked for a more in-depth explanation. But we did not get anything. I think that the motion is still timely, unfortunately, and that the only way to move forward is to vote on it.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Ms. Barbot.

Mr. Rodriguez.

**Mr. Pablo Rodriguez:** Ms. Barbot said what I wanted to say. If I understand correctly, the motion was prepared earlier. You are asking us to wait until we hear from the minister. Ms. Barbot is not satisfied with the minister's explanation, and she is officially tabling her motion. That is why we are at this point today.

**The Chair:** Does anyone else wish to speak?

Mr. Lemieux.

**Mr. Pierre Lemieux:** I don't believe that the government received a complaint from the Senegalese minister. Someone told you that, but perhaps it was a personal opinion. If it was serious, why didn't they ask one of our ministers who was there? Ms. Verner spoke with the delegation, and everything was fine. I think that this is important. Like Ms. Boucher said, everything was fine in the opinion of Mr. Diouf, who sent our government a letter saying that he had received a proper welcome. Why would he write such a letter if this were not true?

• (1040)

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Mr. Murphy.

**Mr. Brian Murphy:** I was mayor of the City of Moncton when we hosted the Francophonie Summit and 50 heads of state. We made mistakes and we apologized. With regard to Mr. Diouf, it's not about explanations or mistakes, it's about an official apology. If the small City of Moncton was able to do it, the Government of Canada should have the decency to make an official apology.

**The Chair:** Ms. Barbot.

**Mrs. Vivian Barbot:** For your information, Senegal made a written official request — you can consult the minutes of the meeting — in which it asks the Government of Canada to make an official apology.

**The Chair:** Mr. Simard.

**Hon. Raymond Simard:** Similarly, the Foreign Affairs Minister of Senegal even spoke at the conference in front of Minister Verner and the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mr. MacKay. He was extremely direct in asking Canada to apologize. Mr. Diouf said in his letter that he was satisfied with the treatment he had received. The minister suggested to me that Mr. Diouf was satisfied with the reception he had received from the Franco-Manitobans, but not with how he was received in Toronto, I can assure you. We must distinguish between the two.

I am extremely proud of the francophone community in Manitoba. This gentleman was well received. Mr. Diouf was nice enough to say that he had been well received by us. However, if we were to ask him how he was received in Toronto, I don't think his answer would be the same. Today we are not talking about how he was received in Manitoba, but rather how he was received when he arrived in Canada.

**Mr. Luc Harvey:** I took a look at the official document on Courtesy and Accelerated Customs Clearance — Entry Privilege, which is not six months or a year old. This is an official manual on protocol and all related practices. What I'm saying is in there. I didn't make it up. A stopover and a final destination are two very different things. That is the starting point.

We were never afraid of supporting a motion, be it from the Liberals or the Bloc members. We support anything based on common sense and we are here to work together. I think that we are ??? around this issue. I am not making anything up, this is a real document.

I took the time to personally meet with the ambassadors. They told me there was no need for an apology. I didn't ask the Senegalese Ambassador this question, but rather individuals outside the embassy. They told me that there was no need to apologize.

This is an official Canadian government document on procedure, how to proceed, etc. If you want to adopt the motion we cannot stop you. I am trying to wear my peacekeeper's hat and tell you that there is logic and reason and that this is the situation.

**The Chair:** Mr. Lemieux.

**M. Pierre Lemieux:** No, thank you.

**The Chair:** Ms. Brunelle.

**Ms. Paule Brunelle:** The situation is certainly quite serious. The minister told us that a report had been produced. However, when I asked her to table it, she told me that it didn't exist. Finally, there is some dissatisfaction with the minister's answers.



In my opinion, this is not a partisan issue. There is no harm in apologizing, because this helps to maintain good diplomatic relations. Furthermore, it would be a good way to put an end to this matter once and for all, so that we can stop talking about it.

I think that it is important that we be able to adopt this motion with complete equanimity.

●(1045)

**The Chair:** That concludes the comments. We will proceed with the vote.

(Motion agreed to)

**The Chair:** The meeting is adjourned.

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