



House of Commons
CANADA

Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage

CHPC • NUMBER 038 • 2nd SESSION • 39th PARLIAMENT

EVIDENCE

Tuesday, August 26, 2008

—
Chair

Mr. Gary Schellenberger

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• (1300)

[English]

The Chair (Mr. Gary Schellenberger (Perth—Wellington, CPC)): Welcome, everyone, on this lovely August afternoon. Not too often do we meet this early in the session, but this is a planning session today so that when we get back we can have things all set up, so that we can get right down to business once the House comes back in September. As I go forward, I guess I'm going to call the first meeting of the next session...well, I guess it's not. It's meeting 38 of the session we are already in.

Pursuant to Standing Order 106(4), a meeting has been requested by four members of the committee, and the subject is this: "We, the undersigned members of the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage, request that a committee meeting be called pursuant to Standing Order 106(4) to discuss the recent cancelling of federal cultural financial assistance programs."

Would someone like to speak to the motion?

Mr. Coderre.

[Translation]

Hon. Denis Coderre (Bourassa, Lib.): Unfortunately, Mr. Chair, this summer we have once more watched government cuts being made shamefully, not to say hypocritically and viciously. The industry affected is worth \$84.6 billion and provides more than a million jobs. The excuse these people gave us was that a complete review was being done. You do not cut funds in that way when you are conducting a review. You wait until it is done and the report has been submitted, you study the report, then you hold discussions and you negotiate with the partners affected by the cuts. After that, you make decisions. These cuts were savage.

[English]

Clearly, Mr. Chair, those cuts were.... The way they were acting when they were calling us, even the stakeholders were amazed, because first of all they learned it from the back door. They were not aware of what was going on; all they knew is that we were cutting the funds.

[Translation]

This is why we decided to agree to the Bloc Québécois' request for this meeting. I offer my appreciation and congratulations to the Bloc's new heritage critic, Mrs. DeBellefeuille. Why did we decide to attend this meeting? Because we wanted to show that Parliament is working, of course, and, above all, that we will not be party to major announcements being made at 5 o'clock on Fridays when journalists' deadlines are past. Perhaps we should remember that we

are in the age of round-the-clock information and that that kind of thing does not work.

But I am sure that the minister still will not be available. The rumour is that the Prime Minister is looking for an excuse to call an election. He is probably going to do so next Friday. Nevertheless, we want to show that this Parliament is working, that this is not a partisan committee, that we have worked well up to now and that we should continue to do our work.

Mr. Chair, we must come up with a list of witnesses today. The official opposition is certainly opposed to these cuts. A future Liberal government will not only arrange for these programs to be re-established, but it will also make it clear that, unlike the Conservative government, when we work with the cultural community, we are working with all Canadians, that we will not be narrow-minded, and certainly not dogmatic in our approach. For that, people are responsible. Ms. Verner, of course, should be here, but I have a nickname for her: "the number you have reached is no longer in service". Minister David Emerson should also be here. He needs to be aware that culture is important. Culture is the area where Canada's best ambassadors are to be found. Given the outrageous way in which the Trade Routes and PromArt programs were scrapped, I feel that he owes us an explanation.

Internationally, I have learned that cultural attachés in our embassies have had their budgets cut and that they are going to become little more than trade attachés. Perhaps we must say that Canada's influence is significant, and if the government does not believe in the Grands Ballets Canadiens or in culture in general, it should say so and stop making these shameful cuts. Earlier, I said that this is an \$84.6-billion-dollar industry. That is major. We have a Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage for a reason. We know that heritage is vital. Ministers Verner and Emerson must appear here.

In the aftermath of Bill C-10, it looks like phone calls are being made between departments and that everything is connected. I would really like to speak to Deputy Minister Jean-Pierre Blais so that he can explain to us how he makes his phone calls to members of the cultural community. I would also like Deputy Minister Judith Larocque to be here and for officials in international trade to come to speak to us. Most of all, given that Parliament is at the heart of our democracy and that we have a wonderful opportunity to play a role through our standing committees, I would like members of the cultural communities to come to this table to give us their point of view. In Montreal tomorrow, the cultural community is going to hold a huge demonstration organized by a grassroots coalition that has spontaneously come together. A similar demonstration is scheduled on the east coast, in western Canada and in Ontario. In a word, the cultural community is worried and Canadians are worried, and I think that it is our responsibility to make sure that Parliament deals with this issue. We are the people's representatives.

I want Parliament to work. I do not feel that it is likely that the ministers are going to make themselves available. They are surely going to claim that their schedules are too busy. I think that it is important to at least have this meeting today to dot every *i* and cross every *t*. The official opposition believes in culture and in our institutions. We do not believe that everything comes down to bank transactions. We are full partners.

We must also remember the history of culture in Canada and specifically in Quebec. Because of the establishment of Telefilm Canada, the NFB, the Canada Council, and organizations like them, our culture has spread and, specifically in Quebec, it has flourished. Exactly the same has happened in the other provinces. So I do not understand why the Conservative government is waging this campaign against the cultural community. For example, when there is...

•(1305)

[English]

what we call the F-word, they want to cut everything.

[Translation]

We are for freedom of expression and freedom of culture. We are going to work with all our partners, here at this table, to make sure that the witness list is as comprehensive as it can be, so that we can get answers to our questions. We want things to work. Usually, meetings take place when Parliament is in session, but given the urgency of the situation and the shameful way in which the government has gone about these cuts, this meeting must be held because extraordinary times call for extraordinary measures.

[English]

So we will be there and we will ask several questions. I think that as a start we need the minister who is in charge, the minister who made those cuts. Instead of having an excuse, everybody should be at the same place and we will ask all those questions to make sure they tell us—in front of us, honestly—that they don't believe in culture, and they're going to tell us why.

Thank you very much.

The Chair: Mr. Del Mastro.

Mr. Dean Del Mastro (Peterborough, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

That was a really interesting diatribe—unfortunately, not based whatsoever on fact. However, I would like to cover some of the facts.

I think it's important that this committee understand the difference between a cut and a reallocation. In the 1990s we saw cuts, and I'll outline the cuts. I invite Mr. Coderre to go to canadiantheatre.com, where you can pull up their section on funding. I'll just read what it says. It talks about what a cut is.

It says: "In 1992 a report was presented by the Standing Committee on Communications and Culture which stated that, 'funding in the cultural sector had failed to keep pace with inflation.' Expenditures were actually increasing within the system, but real money was decreasing." But it says: "In the 1995 budget"—a Liberal budget—"all bets were off. Arts funding was cut across the board: cultural infrastructure programs (-44%), multiculturalism projects (-71%), transfers to provinces for regional cultural development (-40%)." Those are cuts. That's what a cut is.

Now let's look at the record of this government. Spending in budget 2007-08.... I don't know if the Liberals read it; they didn't show up to vote on it. But in budget 2007-08, close to \$2.31 billion was invested in Canadian Heritage and arts and culture. That is an increase of 8%. For people who aren't good with math, that's a \$200 million increase over the last Liberal budget. That is an increase in spending in Canadian arts and culture. That's an increase in the investment made in Canadian artists. And we are seeing the benefits of that.

Mr. Chair, we can go across the board. We can look at Telefilm Canada, for example. For the film industry, \$700 million has been invested into this sector. For Telefilm it is \$84 million, and that's headquartered in Quebec. And 55% of that funding is spent in the province of Quebec—significant increases in that. For the National Film Board of Canada, headquartered in Quebec, again we're seeing significant investments made into that, \$72 million. There are the tax film credits, \$325 million; Canadian Television Fund, \$280 million; Canada Council for the Arts, \$13 million. That's just in the film industry alone.

We can go through all of this. We're seeing significant investments across the board in arts and culture in Canada. This government believes in the arts. I'm going to be attending the Toronto film festival. We see very significant developments going on there. We see the film industry in Canada blossoming under this government's investment.

This government has made it very clear that we support arts and culture. We have invested more than \$200 million more than the last Liberal government—more, Mr. Chair, not less. Any contention made by the opposition that this government is somehow cutting the heart out of arts and culture.... I invite them to look at 1995 and at who cut the heart out of arts and culture in this country. It was never a Conservative government. The Conservative government has only seen fit to invest in the arts and culture in this country. We will continue to do so.

I invite them to look at the independent research conducted by CanWest Global. Just last weekend they released the reports on that. We have increased the funding to arts and culture across the board, and to the CBC—the CBC, from whose budget the Liberal government saw fit in 1995 to remove \$400 million, so much money that the president of the CBC resigned. He felt he could no longer maintain the mandate of the CBC because the Liberal government didn't support it.

That's the truth. That's their record. Why we're here today I'm not sure.

Strategic reviews have to occur. Mr. Coderre would apparently keep funding every program in perpetuity. I guess that's the Liberal position—every program that's ever existed they will fund in perpetuity. How's he going to pay for it? His leader has already outlined \$62 billion in deficit that he'd spend immediately, a massive new carbon tax. I'd love to know how he's going to fund every single program that's ever existed. If we're not going to reallocate funds to make sure we are making the proper investments in areas where we will get results, where we can support artists, where we can support Canadian arts and culture and move that entire industry forward, continue to expand the Canadian footprint on the global map....

That's what this government is about: getting results, supporting artists, and supporting the Canadian identity. And we're doing a heck of a job, Mr. Chair.

Thank you.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

• (1310)

The Chair: Thank you.

Ms. DeBellefeuille.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Claude DeBellefeuille (Beauharnois—Salaberry, BQ): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I am pleased to be sitting on this committee as the Bloc Québécois' new heritage critic. I thank my colleagues, including Mr. Coderre, for their cooperation and for allowing this important meeting to take place. I especially want to acknowledge Mr. Harris, with whom I sat on the Standing Committee on Natural Resources.

I am going to draw a parallel between the situation we are experiencing here and the one we experienced at the Committee on Natural Resources. The method is the same. We cannot accuse the Conservatives of changing their tune. Quite the opposite; when they came to power, they abolished a number of programs that they said were performing badly or were poorly conceived. They cancelled

energy efficiency programs simply to re-establish them a few months later under different names and with different criteria.

Now here they are, in the middle of the summer, with the Olympic Games going on, sneaking up behind artists and the cultural industry in Quebec and Canada to attack them. It is being done arbitrarily and crassly, unacceptably in our view. So today's working session is important, as is the need to prepare a witness list so that we can conduct a thorough study on the incomprehensible decision that the government has just made.

When I hear Mr. Del Mastro talk, I get the impression that he has not followed what has gone on in Quebec in the last two weeks. It is as if he had no knowledge of the hundreds of letters that I, as heritage critic, have received and that he too has likely received as a permanent member of this committee. I do not know if those here this afternoon are permanent members of the committee. We have received letters from all the great cultural associations in Quebec and in Canada, from artists, from musicians, from poets, from choreographers and from dancers. Every significant player in the cultural community has expressed anger and opposition.

And make no mistake, we are in touch with the interests of Quebecers. We in the Bloc Québécois want to be their representatives and stand up for them. The Conservative government seems to be out of touch with today's cultural values and interests. I am quite comfortable with the list of witnesses that Mr. Coderre proposes. I really hope that Minister Josée Verner will come to testify and provide us with explanations. We still cannot understand her reasons at all, in fact. We would really like to understand the criteria that the government used when it decided to abruptly cut these programs for the cultural community. A number of positive comments were there to be read on the website. There were no recommendations to abolish any of the programs.

And why are the so-called strategic evaluations confidential? You do not cut programs with no explanation other than they do not work. These particular cases are putting the cultural community in a situation that threatens the organization of cultural events in Quebec, in Canada and overseas. Of course you know that a dance company tour does not get organized the day before they leave; it is part of a program. These programs are worked out one or two years in advance. What is happening now is affecting the community's stability and organization, and that is unacceptable. This is a community that showcases Quebec and Canada at home and abroad.

We want to understand the reasons for the cuts, especially the PromArt and Trade Routes programs. I have made myself familiar with the list of organizations and artists affected by these measures. I do not know how giving \$1,500 to a poet can be considered a waste of money if it allows Quebec poetry to become better known in Europe or elsewhere in the world. These are small amounts, and for people who are only interested in figures, perhaps they seem insignificant and ineffective. But the total amount of money involved means that all artists will be penalized when it comes to promoting and expressing their art.

•(1315)

So, like my colleague Mr. Malo, I ask that this study be taken seriously because the community demands it. It is mobilizing as we speak and demanding answers from the government. As the opposition party that represents and stands up for the interests of Quebec, and specifically in this case the interests of artists and the cultural industry, we are going to demand that a number of witnesses appear, particularly Ms. Verner's deputy minister, Minister Verner, Mr. Emerson, all the officials who played a key role in the evaluations and, of course, the major players from many cultural organizations. I am thinking of the Association nationale des éditeurs de livres and of the Mouvement pour les arts et les lettres, to mention only two of Quebec's major organizations.

I have also noticed that several universities in Quebec are going to be affected by the cuts announced by the Conservatives. Behind the artistic expression of a cultural product, there is a whole research network. This allows Quebec and Canada to be in the forefront of knowledge on multimedia and other media, which allows the cultural community to flourish even more. Those universities will also surely be interested in coming to testify before our committee.

Those who know me—and I am specifically thinking of Mr. Harris—know that, as a member of Parliament, my first interest is the study, not playing party politics. My interest is in getting results and understanding a situation. This case really is about defending the interests of artists. Mr. Chair, I hope that our work will proceed calmly and collegially so that it is productive. It is my hope that it will result in the government being convinced to reverse its position and re-establish the programs that it has so cavalierly scrapped.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

•(1320)

[English]

The Chair: Ms. Nash.

Ms. Peggy Nash (Parkdale—High Park, NDP): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

I'm very pleased to be here today on behalf of the New Democratic Party. I come here this afternoon to bring the voice of artists from the city of Toronto.

I had a round table meeting with arts organizations this morning, and from that group of writers, producers, distributors, actors, various participants in the cultural sector, I want to say how devastating these cuts are to the arts community. There's no question that there were massive cuts during the 1990s, but I can tell you that these particular cuts that affect the commercialization and distribution of the arts, especially on the international scene, are absolutely devastating and ask us all this question: what image of Canada do we present, and do we care about Canada's international reputation when it comes to the arts? I can tell you that the groups I met with today were quite fearful that this is the tip of the iceberg and that there are more cuts to come, as difficult as these cuts are.

Mr. Del Mastro says that the Conservatives care about the arts. I'm sure they do care about arts and culture, but they care about the kind that they sanction. They want to be able to pick and choose and decide themselves who gets funded and who doesn't get funded. I

don't believe the government should determine which films get made, which writers get supported, or which arts organizations continue to survive. I believe in arm's-length funding for arts organizations, and I think that's our democratic tradition.

The message I want to convey from those I met with this morning and from the many artists I have spoken with—people who have e-mailed me, phoned me, or contacted me since these cuts were announced—is to communicate, first of all, that the arts matter to Canadians. They're a part of who we are as a country, they're part of our sovereignty, they're a key part of our economy—I know that in the city of Toronto they're a huge piece of our economy—and certainly they're an important part of a healthy democracy. What has been so offensive to people is not that there is a review of arts funding—there's no disagreement that periodically you evaluate and decide that some programs will not be continued—but it is the arbitrary fashion of these cuts, that they were done in secret, with no consultation, with no public review. I can tell you from the people I met with this morning that it felt very much like a silencing of their voices. I think it's very damaging, not only economically but to a thriving, healthy arts community.

I want to add my voice to say that we should have hearings and a good public consultation before any action is taken. If there's nothing secret here, if this is about good accountability, then it should have a good process, and that process needs to restore faith in an arm's-length funding process that's in line with a clear arts policy for Canada, which today we do not have.

There's talk about good management and putting more money into things. I want to caution that we will continue to have writers who write and people who do their best to make films and create other forms of art, but if no one knows about it, then we will not be successful.

•(1325)

You can look at hugely successful cases like the Cirque du Soleil. When Monsieur Laliberté was just starting out, if he hadn't had a bit of help at the front end when he was just beginning, he wouldn't be so successful at this point with the Cirque du Soleil. How many people are there like that who get that support, that funding, that help, that boost, at the beginning of their career, or even throughout their career, that helps them develop their cultural expression, which then we can present to our country and to the rest of the world? So this kind of funding is absolutely essential.

Again, I want to reaffirm the need for a strong public process. We should have hearings. We should hear from the arts community themselves, and we should hear why the government is targeting certain programs where the problems are and if there are perhaps changes that could be made as opposed to a complete cancellation. So I would argue that there should be hearings and no cuts until we've had these hearings, and that we reaffirm a clear process for arm's-length funding and a clear arts policy for Canada.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Van Kesteren.

Mr. Dave Van Kesteren (Chatham-Kent—Essex, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

This is a first for me, as I've never had the privilege of sitting on this committee. It's also the first for the security committee, which I was privileged to sit on yesterday.

I thank Mr. Del Mastro for his excellent presentation and for pointing out that this is nothing new. As a matter of fact, we've seen this in the past and we've actually seen cuts. This is not a cut; this is more redistribution.

When I received my briefs and looked at the material, the huge pile of paper, I couldn't agree more with Mr. Del Mastro and disagree more with Mr. Coderre. This government has spent an enormous amount of money and has, in a sense, reallocated some of these funds. I think what we're looking at today is more reaction by this government to invest in priorities, and not necessarily priorities that we feel are priorities, but priorities that come as a result of agencies that are more successful, that have reached their objectives, or that have high administration costs and poor performance. That's part of the function of any government. As I said, Mr. Del Mastro did an excellent job of pointing those things out.

I'm looking at some of the announcements that we've made in the past. In March 2008 there was money spent on Quebec's 400th anniversary. The government supported first peoples' heritage, language and culture. Much was done with our first nations, with almost \$700,000—the Inuit heritage fund, \$190,000; the Inuit culture of Nunavut, \$350,000, and I'm rounding off as it's actually more than that. The government announced funding for the Corporation de Développement Patrimonial Culturel et Touristique de Natashquan, \$182,000; the New France Festival, \$250,000. I can go on and on. These are just some of the funding announcements that we've made. There are 12 pages that prove a commitment by this government to continue in the important work of arts and culture.

We've done what we've said we would do as a government, and that is to be responsible in our mandate, to be sure that we continue to move forward to improve the works of the arts, and to make sure the money that is being spent is being spent in a wise and prudent way. It leads me to think, as I started to say in my opening remarks, that this is the second committee I've served on where our Prime Minister has laid out an olive branch basically to the opposition in saying that we absolutely must make Parliament work.

I've been very fortunate to serve on the industry committee, and that's actually the reason I'm here. It's going to gather on Wednesday. It's doing constructive work, work that parliamentarians are called upon and elected to do. This, to me, looks like just another example of the opposition's attempt to undermine what we're supposed to do as a government. I see a lot of useless time being spent. I would think that this particular committee would have much greater and important matters to study—things that the Canadian public would deem more necessary.

Again, I can go on and on about where we spend our money. The result is the same. As Mr. Del Mastro said, we have not decreased our spending; we've increased our spending. It appears to me that we're continuing on a path that we don't want to see happen.

● (1330)

So I'm a little disturbed about the direction and what the opposition is doing again. I would hope that in the discourse, the examples we bring forward, they could retract that and agree that the government has in actuality been very responsible with their spending practices, and we're going to continue to do so.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Scott.

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

Mr. Van Kesteren commented that people are afraid. Just the fact that he doesn't think this is a serious thing justifies some of the concern that is being expressed. In the arts community—and I'm talking about the broadest application of that, the people who organize the Harvest Jazz & Blues Festival in Fredericton or the East Coast Music Awards—they make travel money available to artists through these programs, and the papers in the region are full of comments about the damage this could do to those kinds of small-market festivals and artistic opportunities.

I think it's a legitimate subject for this committee to take up. Certainly no one who has called my office from the community, whether it was Fredericton, the Atlantic, or elsewhere in the country.... But I feel particularly responsible to Atlantic Canada because it is a big part of our economy, perhaps proportionally greater than any other part of the country on a per capita basis, and because it's small-market, they do take advantage of a lot of these programs. Both emerging artists, depending on where they come from within the region....

Ms. Nash mentioned that she'd had a round table. I have an ongoing arts advisory committee in my constituency. We meet very regularly, and to a person they're horrified. These are people from all political backgrounds and so on. They are suspicious, frankly, and I think it's no secret that these are born of an ideological disposition that is perhaps.... Funny enough, because generally speaking my view would be that the government doesn't believe in government enough, in this instance they believe in government too much, I think, in terms of having too much to say about what constitutes art, and having a disposition that would allow or cause some involvement to pick and choose. I think these things should be peer-reviewed, and that is one of the duties of most of these national programs, and that's one that has to be protected from any kind of censorship.

On the question of 1995, I think I'm the only one on this side who was here. Well, I think Dick was here in 1995, and he'll remember that Mr. Manning proposed a subamendment to the 1995 budget saying that we didn't cut fast enough or deep enough. So for people now to reflect on that 1995 budget in the way that happens regularly here simply is revisionist history. The reality is that I suspect that if Mr. Harris was in the House that day, he voted in support of that amendment to the budget, saying it didn't cut deep enough or fast enough—all of these things. So I would want that on the record, since I may be the only one here who remembers that, other than Dick.

Anyway, I think these are wrong-headed, and so does the artistic community in Atlantic Canada. They should be reconsidered. There should be a public discussion about this, because it is important, and we have to hear from the minister. I'd like to hear from the gentleman from the Prime Minister's Office who referred to PromArt, I think it was, as a boondoggle. I'd like that explained. Is that accurate? If so, does the government actually believe these programs have no value, that they would be referred to in that way? Or give him a chance to correct the record if it's not true. And if it is true, on what basis do people believe these programs are not good? It has not been a public debate, but it should be, and this is the committee that should be entertaining that debate.

• (1335)

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Harris.

Mr. Richard Harris (Cariboo—Prince George, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'm sure Mr. Scott will remember back in the nineties, when the Liberals were cutting their programs. Most certainly, as fast as they were cutting some programs, they were creating new ones. When we were calling for real net cuts to be made, the Liberals were basically doing a saw-off, and as they cut money in one program, they would start it up in a new one and increase taxes along the way to somehow try to pay for their indiscretions in managing the finances of the country.

I'm listening to the presenters, and in fact I do appreciate what some of the presenters, Madam DeBellefeuille and Ms. Nash, have to say. I know that in their hearts they're genuinely concerned about the arts. I know that in the parts of the country they come from the arts are certainly important, and they're advocates for those people who participate in the arts. I truly believe that in their presentations they mean everything they say.

With all due respect, while I understand their sincerity, when we took office this government committed to have a new way of managing the tax dollars of Canada, and of course strategic reviews are happening in every department, including this one. By contrast, realistically there will never be an opportunity for the Bloc to show Canadians how they can manage the tax dollars that come into Ottawa, and realistically, likely there will never be an opportunity for the NDP to show Canadians how they prudently manage tax dollars that come into the country. So from a sincerity point of view regarding what Madam DeBellefeuille and Ms. Nash are talking about, I certainly embrace that. From an accountability point of view, when we're talking about what things cost, I think their arguments

are a little unrealistic, because they don't have to balance the books and they never will have to.

On the other hand, we have the Liberals on the other side, who have a history of bad management of the tax dollars of this country. Mr. Coderre, bless his heart, always gives us good material. He talked about a radical 5 p.m. Friday announcement regarding the rationalization of some funding within Heritage Canada. As a matter of fact, it works out to about 2% of the total budget, 2.3% of \$40 million, to Canadian Heritage. Talk about radical announcements. At least we made them.

Coincidentally, regarding the \$40 million that's missing from the sponsorship fund, they didn't make the announcement that it was missing or misspent or given to their friends or put into the Liberal campaign coffers; they actually got caught. And isn't it coincidental that that was \$40 million as well? The \$40 million that they misspent, shifted off to secret bank accounts and coffers of their friends, was simply missing from the coffers of Canada, no longer able to be used to the benefit of Canadians and the arts and culture in this country because it wasn't there anymore. It was missing from the coffers of the government, so the government couldn't spend it. I think hypocrisy is the name of the game here.

• (1340)

I appreciate Mr. Coderre most times. The sad thing is that he was smack in the middle of that sponsorship program when the \$40 million went missing—smack in the middle of it—and now he sits here.

The Chair: Mr. Scarpaleggia, on a point of order.

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia (Lac-Saint-Louis, Lib.): I've sat on this committee with you, Mr. Chair, for a number of years, and you've never let the committee descend to this level. I think you should be proud of that record, but I would urge you to maintain that record.

The Chair: I was just thinking that it was getting quite personal.

I think we'll carry on. Are you just about finished, Mr. Harris? I think you have a bit more.

Mr. Richard Harris: Yes, I just thinking that the opposition are disregarding the commitment that the Conservative leader, our Prime Minister, made to Canadians, which was to do business in a new way, that we would be accountable and prudent in the way we managed the tax dollars of this country. And we're following through with that in the strategic reviews.

The affected programs we're talking about either (a) had met their original objectives; (b) had similar kinds of support and training available from other sources; or (c) were using funds to manage the program, such as with high operating costs, which is not prudent spending of taxpayers' dollars, instead of helping the artists as it was originally designed to do.

These program adjustments were part of a prudent fiscal management of the taxpayers' dollars and part of an overall strategic review that's happening, and should happen, in every single department of this government. And it will happen under the Conservative government and Prime Minister Harper. This is something Canadians asked for in 2006, when they elected the Conservative government, and that Prime Minister Harper and our government is delivering on.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Bélanger.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Mauril Bélanger (Ottawa—Vanier, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Unlike my colleagues opposite, I have sat on this committee for some time. I have some knowledge of the history of arts funding in this country by various governments. I have to say that I am presently less than impressed by what I hear. I fully support the list of witnesses that my colleague has presented. I feel that it would be very useful for this committee to deal with the matter because it arose so unexpectedly. We find out, in the middle of the summer, that the government is reducing or completely eliminating various programs, even though they have been evaluated and found to be very useful for a number of communities in the past.

I support the list, and I would even add the names of two people whose comments have appeared in the last two days in the local newspaper, the *Ottawa Citizen*. I am referring to Keith Spicer, a great, internationally-renowned Canadian who well understands how useful a flourishing culture is internationally, and to Michael Geist.

• (1345)

[*English*]

Michael Geist is a professor at the University of Ottawa, and his take is somewhat different from that of the artist community. His take is that one of the programs eliminated, the digitalization of our collections, is an extremely important thing. It affects our competitiveness and our ability to present ourselves and our cultural product abroad. Even though Canada was at one time leading in this effort, we're now falling behind. The European Community, for instance, is investing \$200 million to achieve some of that objective, whereas we're just nowhere anymore.

So these two I would add as possible witnesses to the list of those mentioned by my colleague and others. I think it's important that we hear them.

I want to pick up on what my colleagues across the way have said—that this is a reallocation. This confirms that all of these are programs that have been cut. They're not denying it, but there are questions that arise from it. What are we reallocating to? What criteria are we using? Is this a program that's going to be created? I know Madame Verner alluded to it after she was asked by a number of people, for a number of days, what was going on. She said, "There's something else coming." I think it would be important for the artistic community of this country to have an input into whatever is being concocted.

He also went into the budget. That's interesting. I want to come at this from a slightly different angle. He accused a colleague of mine of wanting to fund programs in perpetuity. Because they exist, he said, we want to fund them in perpetuity. I say no to that. However, once Parliament has approved, through the budget or estimates, the spending for certain programs, then one would expect that those programs would go forward. So I would like to ask this committee whether there is an abuse of executive authority here.

We've seen this in the past. Programs exist, whether by parliamentary appropriation, by law, like the Law Reform Commission, or by agreement with third parties, as with the volunteer organizations, and this government comes along and by executive fiat cancels whole programs, agreements, funding of legally instituted organizations. Is there an abuse of executive authority in cutting programs once they have been approved by Parliament? I think this is a very serious question. I think parliamentarians and Canadians would want a bit more insight into this. If this is the case, then the government can cancel any program without doing any evaluation whatsoever. If the programs exist, parliamentarians of all parties should have a chance to look at the evaluations. If the government can cancel any program that has been approved by Parliament through estimates or in the budget, then where does it stop?

I think this is a very serious question. I suspect we're bordering— if we're not already over the line—on abuse of executive authority in cancelling programs that have been approved and for which the spending has been approved by the Parliament of Canada. I would ask our research staff to suggest a number of readings on this or witnesses who could help us to explore this question. I think Canadians are getting a taste of what the executive authority of this government means to programs of Canada and to the future orientation of our country.

Thank you.

• (1350)

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Malo.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Malo (Verchères—Les Patriotes, BQ): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

This study that the committee is preparing to undertake is very important because, given the comments we have heard since the minister's announcement this summer, we see that it deals with questions that have not been answered. So I feel that the list of witnesses proposed a little earlier, including, of course, people from the department and the two ministers involved, would certainly provide answers. That is what we want.

We have heard the minister's explanations for some time, but we are having trouble understanding the answers she is providing. Clearly, this study is important, if only to find out about the timing of the announcement. Why in the middle of the summer? Was the study on the relevance of the programs finished in the middle of July? That hardly sounds plausible to me. Why decide to make this announcement when people were on holiday at the cottage, when their attention was elsewhere and they were not up to speed on current affairs. The only reason is to try and slide the issue through and move as quickly as possible to something else. I think that we have to get that question answered.

The minister and the members opposite say that funds will be reallocated. We would like answers about that too. Where will they be reallocated? The only thing we know at the moment is that cuts have been made. We are told that there will be money for international promotion. But this is a small and vulnerable community and, when cuts are made, people need to be quickly reassured. There was either too much haste, or the other possibility is that money is going to be reallocated into other areas that the government prefers. We have seen this government's liking for military spending. Is the money that we would like to see go to culture going to be diverted to other areas of government activity?

Earlier, Mr. Harris even seemed to say that these expenditures were unnecessary. So the Conservative government manages finances by cutting useless expenses. He seems to be telling us that the programs affected by these cuts were useless. Is that not contradicting his colleague who said the government is firmly committed to culture and has a strong involvement in it? They are trying to have it both ways again. So perhaps this study will provide us with some clarifications. If artists and the cultural industry were as clear that the Conservative government is committed to promoting and enhancing culture, they would certainly not be organizing a demonstration tomorrow. If they were as convinced that the Conservatives were passionate defenders of culture, I feel that they would not be afraid at all and that they would be waiting like good little artists for the cuts to be reallocated to other parts of the cultural community.

Mr. Van Kesteren said that this committee should be doing other things than discussing cultural programs. If that does not clearly mean that, in his view, the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage should not concern itself with culture, I do not know what it means. It worries me and I am sure that it also worries Mrs. DeBellefeuille, the Bloc Québécois' heritage critic. I think that we should start this study very quickly and begin hearing from witnesses so that we can bring some clarity to the Conservatives' intentions on cultural matters. It is important.

• (1355)

[English]

The Chair: Mr. Del Mastro.

Mr. Dean Del Mastro: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I suppose I'll make a bit of a suggestion once I get to the end, but I want to address a few things that have been said since I spoke.

Mr. Coderre indicated that he doesn't believe a program should ever be reviewed, and he would fund every program into perpetuity. We heard Mr. Bélanger say that reviewing any programs and failing to ever make reallocations of funds is an abuse of executive authority. What a misdirected, misguided government that would be if you could never take a look at a program.

We live in a changing world, where the way the arts are promoted and perceived...in fact, what is considered art today may be quite different at some point in the future. The government must be able to make adjustments. We have to make sure we're being effective. As I indicated before, making reallocations, focusing government, and ensuring that we are getting results and being very proactive on the file doesn't mean we're reducing funding. We've already indicated that we're increasing funding substantially.

Mr. Scott mentioned festivals and the importance of festivals. We agree, and that's why we added \$30 million for summer festivals. That's supporting festivals right across this country, including in Atlantic Canada and, I'm certain, the riding of Mr. Scott. This government made that investment because we know that the promotion of arts and giving entertainers a stage so they can put their talent in front of an audience is so important and crucial to the advancement of Canadian arts. That's why we made that very investment. I know that in ridings throughout the Maritimes, Ontario, Quebec, and the west, that specific investment is yielding real results.

We invested \$110 million in Quebec's 400th anniversary this summer, and what a tremendous investment that was. I had the opportunity to take in some of the celebrations in Quebec, and the celebration of the founding of Quebec City. It's interesting that today we have the Bloc Québécois here making very clear statements that federal government investments made in Quebec are so crucial for the Quebec arts industry, and I couldn't agree more. I think the investments being made by the national government are really producing tremendous results in Quebec and right across Canada. I'm glad to see that the Bloc Québécois is here making that very clear statement of support, that the substantial investment of more than \$2.3 billion that our government is making is having a profound impact.

I also enjoyed listening to what Ms. Nash had to say. She talked about commercialization and distribution. She talked to artists and producers. We have to take a look at a number of things.

The Chair: We have a point of order.

[Translation]

Mrs. Claude DeBellefeuille: My apologies for interrupting Mr. Del Mastro, but since I speak only French, I miss half of what he is saying when he speaks quickly. The interpreter has difficulty keeping up with him. When it is my turn to speak, I go slowly so that he can understand me. He uses the interpretation as well, because he may not understand the French. I am just asking him to slow down a little.

[English]

The Chair: Okay. Please slow down a little.

Mr. Dean Del Mastro: I have so many good things to say. I'll try to slow down a little. I apologize.

Ms. Nash talked about artists, producers, commercialization, distribution, and so forth. I want to talk a little about Bill C-61 and how this government has moved to protect artists and conceptual property rights—to protect artists so they get value for their goods. That's something our government has moved forward on. Although the previous government signed on years and years ago to protect artists, they abdicated that responsibility and did nothing about it. We are moving on that, and I would suggest—

Hon. Denis Coderre: On a point of order, Mr. Chair, the employee of the month of the PMO should know that this is not about Bill C-61. This is about cuts to programs. It's specific. We don't have the legislation on Bill C-61, so I think he's out of order.

Mr. Dean Del Mastro: This is a debate, so that's not a point of order.

The Chair: I think it is debate, so that can be mentioned. We're talking about copyright, and this committee has dealt with copyright before. In any of the meetings I was at, copyright was very important to many artists. So we'll continue.

Don't use the name of the bill.

• (1400)

Mr. Dean Del Mastro: Thank you.

Of course when I speak about copyrights and protecting the products of artists against theft really, obviously that's support for the arts. That's what we're talking about here. We're talking about how we support arts, promote arts, and ultimately this government's support for arts and culture. I understood that's what we were here to talk about today. Certainly copyright protection is critically important to our arts and culture sectors in Canada. That's why our government feels very passionately that we need to protect and balance that.

As I indicated, Mr. Chair, we have a great story to tell on this. The last thing I would want to do is attempt to run and hide from that story. I'd be happy to hear from witnesses. I've got a lot of witnesses I'd like to call, because a lot of people have been the beneficiaries of this government's investments into the arts. Frankly, as I said, we've got a great story to tell on this.

Ms. Nash indicated she'd like to hear some witnesses; I'd like to hear them as well. I'd be very happy to hear from the minister, because again I think we have a great story to tell. We've made an awful lot of key investments. We continue to move this file forward, and we are reaching broader audiences than Canadian artists have ever reached before. Canadian artists are expanding their footprint globally. We see more and more Canadian artists making a very substantial impact on the world stage. Furthermore, I believe we also have a reawakening of Canadian pride in this country, and that's because key investments are allowing artists to reach Canadians in a very profound way. I'm very proud of that.

As I said, I look forward to having people in to talk about these key investments made by this government, the 8% increase we've made into arts and culture. I'd invite people to come in so we can talk about how this is benefiting them.

And obviously the support we've had from the Bloc Québécois in getting our first two budgets passed so we could deal with the fiscal imbalance and flow more money to artists to support Quebec and the support we had from the Liberals on the last budget has enabled us to be able to make these key investments.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Scarpaleggia.

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

I think it's a question of credibility. It's not credible for a Prime Minister and for this member opposite, Mr. Del Mastro, to suggest over and over that their legislation was successfully passed through the parliamentary session that ended in June and then, three months later, when Parliament is not sitting, to say that Parliament is dysfunctional and we have to ditch a piece of legislation that was implemented by this government.

So I think it's about credibility. But let me get back to the question of the arts. That's also a matter of credibility. You will recall that over the years the party opposite and its predecessor, the Reform Party, frequently made a point of calling for withdrawal of the federal government from the arts sector. You will recall that it was in the party platform of some of the members opposite that the CBC should be privatized, that it should be sold. When they saw that this didn't fly with the Canadian public, they compromised and said that only CBC Television should be sold and we would keep CBC Radio. Then, when they saw that didn't fly, they said they would lay off the CBC for a while but they wouldn't pay much heed to the report that this committee worked so hard on and released in June or May.

So it's a question of credibility. I'm glad my colleague Andy Scott took the time to travel from Fredericton to be here today and share his corporate memory with us. I'm pleased he reminded us that when the Liberal government had to deal with the massive deficit—\$42 billion—left by a previous Conservative government, the party opposite thought we were moving too slow on arts cuts. I didn't know that, and I thank the member for bringing it up.

Mr. Del Mastro said that life is about change, that the world is always changing. I thank him for that platitude. I've heard it said that the government loves heritage—it's living art that it's afraid of, because that can be subversive. We've seen the government's reaction with Bill C-10.

Juxtaposed with all of these previous statements is a kind of Orwellian dialogue. They strike a “stand up for Canada” pose, while devolving as much as possible. There used to be a time when an MP like me could promote a municipal infrastructure project at the federal level. The federal government had some say as a third party in these expenditure plans. But the federal government is washing its hands of that and not taking its responsibility.

So we stand up for Canada while we devolve responsibility. We say, in that typical Orwellian fashion, that dismantling a program is not a cut. We're just redistributing. If we're redistributing, let's see what we're redistributing towards. Yes, festivals are important. Absolutely, they're important. We remember that the opposition was pushing the government hard to fund festivals in Quebec and elsewhere. They're important, but so is sending artists abroad who represent the cutting edge in art. That's important too.

• (1405)

But I remember that when we were in government, every time a contingent of artists went abroad the Conservative opposition was quite upset. It was a wasteful expenditure. How dare we send artists abroad, maybe put them up in a hotel, and let them visit a Canadian embassy somewhere. That was a scandal at the time. I sat on the government operations committee and watched the Conservative Party attack attempts to send artists abroad to showcase Canada. It wasn't a good idea then. Today they say, "Well, we're not so against touring programs", yet they cut them.

I remember, Mr. Chair—and I believe you were an elected member then—when we dealt with the second phase of copyright reform. I wasn't a member myself; I was an assistant to the chair of the committee at the time, you will recall. The Conservative Party wasn't in favour of neighbouring rights, if I recall correctly. The big push at the time was to bring in neighbouring rights so the royalties would flow not only to creators or writers of music, but performers. I remember that the Conservative opposition was against that.

Speaking of copyright, as we all know, the Conservative government is committed to seeing that bill dealt with in the industry committee, not in the committee that is most concerned about arts and culture in this Parliament.

The Chair: I have to interrupt for one minute.

• (1410)

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: Go ahead, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: I think the copyright report that went in was unanimous.

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: I remember there was a lot of kicking and screaming before we got to that unanimous report.

Hon. Denis Coderre: That's the debate.

The Chair: There's been a lot of kicking and screaming here today too.

Hon. Denis Coderre: Nothing is going to be unanimous today.

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: So I think it's a question of credibility. We've noticed some patterns, and that's why the artistic community is very wary and rightfully upset about the government's recent decisions.

If we're going to talk about redistributing expenses, I'd like to see what the government has in mind. Are we going to take moneys from small but effective programs and lump them into spectacles that are meant to showcase the government's values? I don't know where we're going with this, but to just announce that we're going to cut and then speak vaguely of redistribution is a little misleading.

I'll stop on that point.

The Chair: I have four more speakers on the list. I think we've banged back and forth on everyone here pretty well today.

I'll hear from the four speakers who are on the list, and at the end of that I'm going to make a suggestion.

Mr. Coderre.

[Translation]

Hon. Denis Coderre: Mr. Chair, I could respond in a personal way to my friend Dick Harris, but I will simply say to him that his sticks and stones do not concern me in the slightest. What concerns me greatly is that the cultural community is dying at the moment. A Conservative government means the death of Canadian cinema, not just Quebec cinema.

[English]

It's not a Quebec thing.

And by the way, for the record,

[Translation]

the \$100 million to celebrate the 400th anniversary of Quebec City did not come from the Conservatives. The contribution had already been announced. The colour of the ribbon around it may have changed, but it came from the Liberals.

[English]

Mr. Dean Del Mastro: Whatever.

Mr. Denis Coderre: It's not "whatever"; it's taxpayers' money, by the way.

Programs like Trade Routes and PromArt are vital. They are tools we're providing to our embassies so they can help the cultural sector and help Canada itself to expand.

[Translation]

When Robert Lepage goes to London for the premiere of *The Far Side of the Moon*, when he is recognized by Peter Gabriel with extraordinary cultural and economic implications, we are almost dealing with an essential service. There are a host of examples, such as *The 7 Fingers*, the *Cirque Éloïze* and the *Royal Winnipeg Ballet*. I do not know if the B Team over there is at all familiar with these programs, but make no mistake, this is an essential service. A Liberal government will ensure that culture has the tools it needs to become known and promoted around the world.

[English]

Capacity building is important. When we're talking about sustainability projects, when we're cutting 347 organizations, and when we're cutting six major cities outside Quebec, it's a Canadian thing, not just a Quebec thing. It's national.

Do you know what it means? It means that not only in the big centres but also in every region of the country, those people who were counting on the Government of Canada as a full partner have had their trust compromised. It's not just a matter of transaction and money; it's dealing with a full partner. Culture is for every Canadian citizen and we're all part of it.

So if we're cutting those programs, it has nothing to do with reallocation or re-evaluation. It's all about inquisition. That's the main problem. We can talk about money, but I want to talk about governments. I want to talk about the importance of programs with the government as a full partner. It's the same thing with CBC and all those institutions. That's why it's important to discuss not only the accountability and what they've done with the money, but also what was behind it.

[Translation]

Mr. Chair, when we see the Conservative Party media notes explaining in partisan terms that one of the reasons for the cancellation of the PromArt program is that Mr. Lewis is left-leaning and that a person is described as a *general radical*, we realize that this is beginning to look like the film *Guilty by Suspicion*. I have already asked Minister Verner: "You are not turning into Duplessis, are you?" but now we are going to have to ask Prime Minister Harper:

• (1415)

[English]

"McCarthy, get out of there." We have a major problem. This is not the kind of Canada I want to live in. I don't want to be a minister—and I've been one of them—who would cut the money because I don't like a person or because I don't feel he's thinking like me. That's what it's all about. Every time you see the F-word, we should cut it? And then what? This is a major problem.

Committee work is not just about accountability. It's about what kind of Canada you want to live in. Government has to be accountable and tell us clearly what was behind this. We have the spin doctor from PMO talking about a boondoggle. So investing in culture is a boondoggle?

[Translation]

Some programs must be kept. We always conduct reviews, but we are not savages. We have to work collaboratively with organizations. The Institut national de l'image et du son, INIS, located in Montreal, is an exceptional organization that is now 12 or 15 years old. Frédéric Ouellet writes the excellent TV series *Grande Ourse* on Radio-Canada. Other producers from the Institut have proudly shown how rich our Quebec culture is, just as it is all across Canada.

They are going to say that they cut the funds because there was no return on investment. The Heritage minister, who we all thought had disappeared, took six days to look us in the eye and tell us that the programs had been cut because there was no return on investment and their objectives had not been achieved. For INIS, this is 25% of their budget. I cannot say whether the minister lied, but she did not tell the truth, and that is serious.

So we are calling the minister, and we want her to explain how these things work and why her communications director, Dominic Gosselin, first says that the money taken from PromArt is going to go to the Olympic Torch Relay, then says that this is not true on Joane Prince's radio show on Radio-Canada. Is someone in this government going to level with us? Does this mean that, with this so-called reallocation, which is nothing but smoke and mirrors, they are going to try to play sport and culture off against each other when both are part of

[English]

what I call and what we should call the Canadian fabric of this country.

[Translation]

This makes no sense. Is the goal to divide and conquer? I invite my colleagues opposite to go and see the wonderful film *Cinema Paradiso*. It is not a Canadian film, but we can appreciate it anyway because our culture is so open. It won an Oscar, unfortunately at the expense of *The Decline of the American Empire*. You know the outstanding Denys Arcand, you know Denise Robert. There was a priest in the film. Philippe Noiret played the projectionist. The priest would watch the films in the morning. Why did he watch? He had his little bell...

[English]

Mr. Dean Del Mastro: Mr. Chair, procedurally we can continue on this all day. If Mr. Coderre has some suggestions he'd like to make as to where the committee might go next, I'd encourage him to do that.

I didn't come to hear film reviews, although I'd gladly talk to you about what films you feel I should or should not watch during my free time. We can do that after committee. But perhaps you could point it to where you'd like the committee to go, Mr. Coderre.

[Translation]

Hon. Denis Coderre: Mr. Chair...

[English]

The Chair: There was some raillery that went on over here before, and I called on a point of order. I'm going to ask the same respect back.

Hon. Denis Coderre: I'm so respectful that I'm going to continue my story, because it's an important one. It's about inquisition. It's about the way you're acting in the government against the film industry, which is worth \$5.4 billion and creates 126,400 jobs from coast to coast to coast.

[Translation]

In *Cinema Paradiso*, the priest is watching a film with a couple kissing. He rings his bell to ask the projectionist to cut the film because he considers it pornographic.

• (1420)

[English]

Is that the kind of country you want to live in? This is what it's all about, inquisition. And that's why it's important, Mr. Chair, to have a gathering here with all the witnesses, including the Minister of Canadian Heritage, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, and all those deputy ministers we spoke about.

[Translation]

We could mention a number of people, not just from Quebec. There are organizations like the Canada Council for the Arts, that brings people together right across the country. We can cast our net widely.

I will end there. They tried to slip this by us this summer. They thought that, because of the Olympic Games, people would not be paying attention to it. It is important to hold this meeting and to call appropriate witnesses in order to finally see the Conservative in their true colours.

[English]

The Chair: Could we speed it up a little bit?

Ms. DeBellefeuille.

[Translation]

Mrs. Claude DeBellefeuille: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I am going to add my two cents worth to Mr. Coderre's comments. When I listen to the people opposite, I see once more that they are light years away from Quebec values and cultural identity. They understand nothing about Quebec. As I listen to Mr. Del Mastro and Mr. Harris once more today, it confirms for me the feeling that a number of Quebecers have that the Conservatives are not at all in tune with Quebec.

Mr. Del Mastro tells me that Canadians are proud of his government's decisions. I tell him that Quebecers are not at all proud. They have shown their dissatisfaction and their anger. Your first decisions were to abolish status of women programs and the Court Challenges program. Now you are going after artists. For me, the Conservative government is like a bulldozer crushing and trampling everything that it does not like. I find that quite disgusting.

Let me shed a slightly different light on what Mr. Harris said about superfluous costs. Is he aware that Amy Belling, from British Columbia, received \$1,300 from the PromArt program?

[English]

Mr. Richard Harris: On a point of order, Mr. Chair, with all due respect to Madame DeBellefeuille, I never in my presentation just earlier referred to any of this spending as superfluous. I very distinctly referred to these programs as programs that either had met their original objectives, had similar kinds of support and training available from other sources, or were using funds to manage the programs where there were extremely high over-budget operating costs.

I believe that every arts program is important, of course, as we all do. It's important to the Canadian culture and it's important to Canadian values. However, there are certain realistic tests that every program has to pass, and that's what this strategic review was designed for. So I believe the word "superfluous", with all due respect, Madame DeBellefeuille, is not appropriate to describe my comments.

[Translation]

Mrs. Claude DeBellefeuille: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I am going to continue along the same lines. There are artists like Amy Belling from British Columbia who received \$1,300 from the PromArt program so that she could present her short film at a festival in Rotterdam. That is not what I call a grant or assistance that was out of line. She probably used it to pay for her plane ticket so that she could promote her creative efforts and bring honour to her province and her country.

Let us not forget the importance of these programs in the regions. I mentioned the regions of Quebec, regions that I know well. In Abitibi-Témiscamingue, various international festivals, like the guitar festival or the Festival de musique émergente, for example, receive money to bring foreign buyers to Canada to see the products which they can then distribute in their countries.

Let us talk numbers. There was \$15,000 to bring foreign buyers to Montreal for the 25th International Festival of Films on Art. We are told that the money was probably badly managed or badly spent. But we can use this exact example to show that, with \$15,000, producers of documentaries on art can not only have their work seen, but can also sell them so that they are seen around the world. This is an economic engine and we often forget to say so.

In regions like Saguenay or Abitibi-Témiscamingue, festivals accessed these funds to bring in foreign buyers. The Académie Baroque de Montréal received \$10,000 for six concerts in Germany and for a Mozart concert in Milan. Mr. Van Kesteren can count the pages of grants awarded by his government—he got to 12—but I can count my list too. My list has more than 30 pages, full of the names of artists and companies that will not be able to get government assistance to show, sell or promote their creations around the world.

In conclusion, I sincerely hope that we will be able to undertake a thorough study that will allow us to ask meaningful questions of the government. We want to find out why, having been elected on a platform of transparency, their strategic analysis is confidential, why it is secret if it is so valuable, and if there are good reasons for cutting programs. The government should be transparent in bringing forward the facts, so that we can judge for ourselves.

The artistic community and the cultural industry has now been thrust into a period of instability and intolerable vulnerability. If you have made the cuts in order to reallocate, I really have to ask what you are waiting for in order to reassure this community. I hope that this study will provide answers to the many questions that have been asked since this discussion began.

Mr. Chair, I look forward to your suggestion.

• (1425)

[English]

The Chair: I have two more speakers: first, Ms. Nash, and then Mr. Bélanger.

Ms. Peggy Nash: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Having met this morning with some of the leading arts organizations in Toronto, I want to reiterate how devastating the artist organizations and individual artists are saying these cuts are for the arts in Canada. That's the clear message the arts organizations have given to me. These cuts are devastating for them. These cuts are attacking the launch pad for many artists, directors, producers, and writers. It will hobble their production, and they will not be able to continue with their work.

I'm told that a U.S. film production, for example, will spend a third of its money on the actual production, a third on marketing, and a third on distribution and promotion. You can't have one without the other two. If you make something, you have to market, promote, and distribute it. That's what in many cases is being attacked here.

For example, I know of a festival in Toronto every year that is extremely popular: the Contact Photography Festival. Photographers will continue to take photographs, but they won't be able to get them to the public through this kind of festival without the funding they have been receiving. They won't be able to sell their work. They won't be able to continue.

The other message they conveyed to me was a clear lack of trust in the process, that these cuts were made in a secretive way without consultation, without justification. It has left them mistrustful, fearful, and apprehensive about what might be coming in the future. There is real concern that this government might be picking and choosing which artists they're supporting. I suggest that in a democracy that's a very dangerous situation. The Prime Minister should not be the one to decide which artists' voices get heard. That's not appropriate, and it is not the kind of authority we want our government to have.

Based on all the reactions that have been heard in public and today at this committee, I want to say as clearly as I can that we should have hearings to review this process and that the hearings should be held as quickly as possible. I think September 2, right after Labour Day, would be an appropriate time. Let's not waste time. Let's get at it right away.

Others have suggested that the relevant ministers and department staff be invited so they can clarify the determinant in the cuts they made, so there can be an examination of the process they undertook. Then, clearly what we need to do is hear from the artists themselves and the arts organizations. There needs to be a full public review and a transparent process. Until that happens, there should be no cuts. There should be a moratorium on any cuts to these programs.

•(1430)

I think the first thing that should come out of this meeting is these hearings. I think the second thing that should come out of this meeting today is a clear indication, from every parliamentarian on this committee, that we stand with artists, that we value their work. They're an important part of our country and our democracy, and we value their work. We appreciate their work. We need to work to restore the trust that has been broken, and the way that trust will be restored is by the establishment of a clear arm's-length process for arts funding. I hope we can come out of this meeting today with those two measures adopted—immediate hearings together with a reaffirmation of our support for the arts. I'm talking about all arts, a full democratic process for support of the arts.

The Chair: Thank you.

Finally, Mr. Bélanger.

Hon. Mauril Bélanger: You say that with glee, Mr. Chairman.

Ms. Nash, I agree that we should do this early. Why wait till next week? We can start this week, even.

Mr. Chairman, I would suggest that if you schedule some meetings we might want to have them where they can be televised, because I think there is a great deal of interest in this matter.

On the matter of copyright, I agree with Mr. Del Mastro. It is an important issue. I had the privilege of being on the first round back in the late 1990s. I was involved with copyright. It seemed to be

important to the government. Once they were elected, they said that they would bring in legislation in the spring of 2006. That was put off to before Christmas of that year. Then it became June 2007, and then December 2007. At that point the government actually gave notice of legislation, which sat there until June 2008.

Of course, it's not being referred to this committee; it's being referred to the industry committee. It's not even being referred to committee before second reading, so it further delays the process. Now the Prime Minister is apparently going to seek dissolution of this Parliament. That shows the importance that this government has attached to copyright, with all due respect.

Mr. Del Mastro also seemed to suggest that I don't believe government has a right to review programs. Absolutely not. I've never said that. I believe government has not only a right but a duty to review programs. It must do so, and do so in every department. I have no objection to that. Not only do I have no objections, I encourage that behaviour.

But here's where he and I part company. The executive government, once it has done these reviews, is accountable to Parliament. In our country we have a responsible government. People forget that the word "responsible" here doesn't mean what he's suggesting. It means that government has a responsibility to the House, to Parliament. It is responsible to Parliament. For the government to have decisions made in Parliament about programs, about the funding of programs and spending authorized by Parliament, and then to turn around and cut those programs unilaterally, without sharing any evaluation, could very likely be an abuse of Parliament. That's what I object to.

Then we're talking about reallocation. If you're going to reallocate money, you need to seek Parliament's approval. We live in a parliamentary system, but this government seems to want to avoid Parliament like the plague. Well, it's too bad that they're in a minority situation in Parliament. That's the reality and they have to face up to it. They cannot just go ahead and, by executive fiat, undo what Parliament does.

I repeat, I hope our staff give us some suggested readings on this. I think we're nearing an area of abuse of executive authority, to the detriment of the artists. We should not support only artists we like. That's the problem here, the underlying situation. It's not because Conservatives approve or disapprove of a program or of certain artists, as the Prime Minister's press secretary insinuated, that decisions of cutting or not cutting programs, funding or not funding programs, should be made. Unfortunately, this seems to be the case now.

Every Canadian should be wary of this. That's what's at stake here. I think we have a serious responsibility, as a functioning committee of Parliament, to undertake this matter, and I think that Canadians expect no less.

•(1435)

The Chair: Thank you.

I'll take one question from each party.

Mr. Dean Del Mastro: I'd like to put forward a motion.

The Chair: I'm going to make a suggestion first, Mr. Del Mastro, seeing that we have bantered back and forth and been very political here today. Coming from Stratford, Ontario, I know that artists are very important. In terms of artists per capita, Stratford is probably one of the greatest regions in the country. I'm very supportive of artists.

What I suggest this committee do is that each party put together a list of witnesses and that it be given to my clerk within seven days. At that particular time, the list will be set and distributed.

That's my suggestion. It might not be fast enough for some people, but I think there are two things that we have to do here. Number one is getting the list to the clerk. The clerk has to make sure the witnesses are available and can be here. In all fairness to my clerk, no matter what political things we want to do here, I want my clerk to have time to put together a proper list.

I'm not going to be a dictator, but at the same time I'm not going to spend another 20 minutes trying to banter back and forth. So my suggestion—and I'd like it to be unanimous—is that a list be put together by each party, and that we get each list to my clerk within seven days, and that from point we will get the list of witnesses together and see it when we come for the meeting.

I'll take one question from each party.

Mr. Coderre.

Hon. Denis Coderre: Mr. Chair, I support it in principle, but my concern is that I think seven days is a bit too long. I propose that we provide lists by Friday; I would be ready by Friday to provide a list. If we provided a list by Friday, you would have time to work. We all know that we have a caucus for two or three days the next week and we will have time to be full participants.

Since everybody agreed to have those witnesses, I think that providing a list on Friday would be okay. So we agree in principle, but if all the parties say, okay, by Friday we will provide our list, I think it would be appropriate.

•(1440)

The Chair: The Bloc.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Claude DeBellefeuille: Mr. Chair, this matter is important enough for us to ask all parties to make an extra effort and to submit their lists by Friday so that we can hear from the witnesses as quickly as possible. The matter is on the minds of a number of players in the community; I am sure that the clerk will find that people are readily available.

[*English*]

The Chair: Ms. Nash.

Ms. Peggy Nash: We'll have our list by Friday.

I just have a question. Are you anticipating having a day for hearings? That would be important in order to be able to advise the witnesses.

The Chair: When the list is put together, or once I have the list and it's circulated, we'll address that. I think we can put a couple of dates in as quickly as we can after that list is suggested and approved.

Ms. Peggy Nash: As a supplementary question, if I could, are you entertaining the possibility of hearings prior to the resumption of the House?

The Chair: Again, I can make that decision. Our meeting here today was brought forward by four people; four people can demand a meeting. Once the list is out, then I'll address that when it comes. If there are four people in the opposition who suggest a date, bring that motion forward and I will set the meeting in the required time.

Mr. Del Mastro.

Mr. Dean Del Mastro: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

As I indicated, we would welcome hearings into this. We'd also like to invite witnesses. We can meet the Friday deadline, and certainly if the Liberals can't be here next week, we would be happy to be here the following week. As I indicated, we welcome hearings into this. We have a great story to tell.

The Chair: It's agreed that the list be in by Friday. On Friday we get the list. Can the clerk's office circulate the list quickly on Friday?

Mr. Jean-François Pagé (Procedural Clerk, Table Research Branch, House of Commons): Yes.

Hon. Mauril Bélanger: So the list will be in by Friday noon?

The Chair: Yes, the list will be in by Friday noon. Hopefully the list can be out by Friday afternoon.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Claude DeBellefeuille: Mr. Chair, have we decided that we are going to hold our first meeting on September 2?

[*English*]

The Chair: I'll make that decision when the list is finalized. When everyone is happy with the list of witnesses, I'll set a date. If people don't like that date, they can request a meeting and I will put that meeting together.

Hon. Denis Coderre: As a point of clarification or information, I'd like to ask the clerk a question.

[*Translation*]

Procedurally, given that a list has already been established, that means that, if we are not satisfied with the Chair's suggested date for the next meeting, four signatures are enough to get a specific date.

Mr. Jean-François Pagé: You have to have a meeting to discuss dates. In this case, you have discussed the abolition of a program and there were no witnesses. The same principles apply. You can plan dates by having a meeting. Under Standing Order 106(4), witnesses cannot be called. So it all depends how the request is drafted.

Hon. Denis Coderre: The only way to make sure that we can have a meeting on September 2 is to ask for it immediately.

Mr. Jean-François Pagé: Yes, you need five business days notice.

•(1445)

[English]

Hon. Denis Coderre: And we agree here that if the minister will probably not be available, for all the right reasons—I'm trying not to be sarcastic—if we have artists and they are ready, and trust me, they will be ready, we can have that meeting on September 2, right?

Mr. Jean-François Pagé: Right.

The Chair: All those in favour of having the meeting on September 2?

Mr. Dean Del Mastro: Is there a motion on the floor?

The Chair: There was a motion made by Mr. Coderre.

Mr. Dean Del Mastro: Can we hear the motion? It was that if they would agree and if there's a motion—

Hon. Denis Coderre: That was the question.

Mr. Dean Del Mastro: Yes, we're voting on a question.

Hon. Denis Coderre: That was the question. You asked for a motion, and I put a motion.

[Translation]

I move that, regardless of the availability of the minister, we hold a meeting, with witnesses, on the matter that the committee has just discussed.

[English]

The Chair: The only way I think I can take a motion is the unanimous—

Hon. Mauril Bélanger: No, Mr. Chair, not on a procedural motion,

Hon. Denis Coderre: It's procedure, Mr. Chair.

Hon. Mauril Bélanger: Only on a substantive motion.

The Chair: Okay. Then the motion has been made by Mr. Coderre that our next meeting be held on September 2—

Hon. Mauril Bélanger: With witnesses, preferably the minister.

The Chair: —with witnesses.

All those in favour?

Mr. Dean Del Mastro: I'd like to make an amendment to that, if I could.

Hon. Denis Coderre: The chair asked “All those in favour?” I don't see why we have an amendment.

The Chair: I did ask, “All those in favour?”

Mr. Dean Del Mastro: Okay, that's fine. I was just going offer to extend that to the fourth, September 2 to September 4. But if you just want to have it September 2, I guess it's September 2.

The Chair: Is September 2 a Tuesday?

Some hon. members: Yes.

The Chair: Okay, that's the day after Labour Day.

Mr. Richard Harris: Mr. Chairman, I just have a question. The clerk is going to get the list by Friday, and it's a long weekend. September 2 is the Tuesday. So when am I going to get the list? I live in Prince George, B.C. When am I going to get the list? Would I get it on Tuesday?

Mr. Jean-François Pagé: It depends on when I get it. As soon as I get it, I will send it to all members, but—

Mr. Richard Harris: But don't you have to clarify, from the list, who is actually going to be coming?

Mr. Jean-François Pagé: I will phone the witnesses as soon as I have names.

Mr. Richard Harris: But if you don't finish that on Friday, that means I don't get the list of witnesses who will be attending until Tuesday.

Mr. Jean-François Pagé: No, we have the list of the people you want to hear, but I'm going to call the list that's going to be submitted by members. So I will phone them and make sure they can come on September 2 or September 4.

Mr. Richard Harris: But likely I would not know whether there are witnesses actually coming until some time Tuesday morning. Now, if there is a meeting that day, how do I jump on a plane and get from B.C. to Ottawa to attend a meeting on Tuesday? I mean, it's fine for you; you live in Gatineau or Hull and you just drive across the bridge and you're here. Denis is an hour and a half away, or an hour at the maximum.

Hon. Mauril Bélanger: How do you deduce that I live in Gatineau or Hull? I represent Ottawa—Vanier, sir.

Mr. Richard Harris: Oh, okay, you're even closer. So it's easy for you.

The Chair: In all fairness, could we change it to September 3 and take a happy medium? We voted on September 2, but could there be a friendly amendment that we put it to September 3 to at least give people a chance to get back?

Hon. Denis Coderre: Mr. Chair, the reason I said September 2 and September 4 is that on September 3 and on the morning of September 4, we can't manage it. We have a national caucus in Winnipeg; the Liberal Party has its own caucus. So on September 2 it would be feasible, as long as you have the list and you manage it. That's why we say that if everything is in order, we can have that meeting on September 2.

The Chair: That'll be confirmed, then, by the clerk on Friday afternoon.

•(1450)

Mr. Richard Harris: Well, I don't agree with that. With all due respect, Mr. Coderre is somehow indicating that if it's convenient for the Liberal members of the committee, then it's fine. If it's not convenient for them on September 3 and September 4, well, then it's not okay to meet on those days, but September 2—because it may be convenient for them, but not convenient for someone like me who lives in B.C.—is okay. I don't understand that kind of logic.

Hon. Denis Coderre: The logic is simple, because as members of the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage, we usually have our meetings on Tuesdays and Thursdays. It would fit; it would be perfect. We consider that it's like business as usual.

Now, you've been replacing somebody. Maybe somebody from the Conservative caucus could be available too. We'll miss you, but if you can't come, you can have somebody come who can decide very strongly—

Mr. Richard Harris: Mr. Chairman, the member may or may not know if I've requested to serve on this committee during these committee meetings. So he's making an assumption that because I'm not a regular member of this committee, I would not be at the next meeting.

The Chair: I understand. We're getting into some bantering again and I know we're playing a little bit of a chess game.

I had made a suggestion that was probably one of the most feasible suggestions and would have sufficed for everyone. The Liberal Party does have a caucus next week, and usually when there is a caucus we do not hold committee meetings. At the same time, some of our people have to come all the way from Vancouver on a holiday weekend. I know this is a very important issue to so many people, but just maybe around this table we can have a little civility here today, a little bit of respect for each other, and maybe go back to what I had suggested before. Hopefully we can put something together.

I know we've already voted on having it on September 2. The only thing I can say we will do—

Mr. Richard Harris: We haven't voted yet.

Mr. Dean Del Mastro: Mr. Chair, we had a question that they've stuck their hand up on, but we haven't had a vote.

The Chair: Okay, so we haven't had a vote.

I haven't been writing down all the various things. I know that we voted on a question and things, but all I'm wondering is if we can come to a consensus to make this work for everyone.

Mr. Coderre.

Hon. Denis Coderre: My only concern with your statement is that you said we were lacking respect. We all have respect for each other, so I don't know where it's coming from.

What I would propose, though, is that since the Liberals will be ready, the NDP would be ready, I'm sure, and the Bloc, and my colleague from the Conservative Party....

[*Translation*]

So instead of submitting the list by Friday at noon, we can do so by Thursday at noon.

[*English*]

It's the same thing in principle. We're tabling our witness list for Thursday at noon. I know everybody is ready; I am. You'll have an extra day to organize yourself so that on Friday you'll be okay and we can manage to have that gathering on September 2.

The Chair: Mr. Del Mastro, and then Mr. Harris. Mr. Harris, I think you had your hand up first.

• (1455)

Mr. Dean Del Mastro: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'm sorry, Dick. You go ahead. I'll go next.

Mr. Richard Harris: Thank you.

Notwithstanding what Mr. Coderre has asked us to embrace, the fact remains that regarding September 2, which I think is Tuesday of next week, for me the logistics are that I have to go back to my

riding. I have functions there as a member of Parliament, as these members have. Some live much closer to Ottawa than I do. I had intended to be on this committee during these hearings and I would ask Mr. Coderre to respect the fact that I live about 2,500 air miles away from here, which translates to about eight hours of travel, and it's simply impossible for me to get back here on Tuesday and, by suggestion, the following week. Since there will be a number of different witnesses coming, it likely would mean that if we were to meet on Tuesday then we'd meet on Friday. I'd have to fly here for Tuesday, fly back to my riding, and come back on Friday. Why don't we set something that would be convenient to everyone?

I know it would be if we were to schedule the week of September 9, for example, and schedule multiple meetings throughout the whole week, since it appears that there'll be a lot of witnesses. That would give us all time to make arrangements to be here for the entire week. We could have two meetings a day, if we wanted, and get it all done. Why not? Before the election.

The Chair: Mr. Del Mastro and then Mr. Malo.

Mr. Dean Del Mastro: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Chair, the committee did pass a motion with respect to witnesses. We did have a vote on that. We did pass a motion that we would have our witnesses in by Friday. My understanding is that it has been tailored to Friday at noon. That is a motion that the committee has passed, and I would expect that everyone can abide by that. It was passed unanimously.

The Chair: We didn't have a motion on the deadline; it was agreed.

Mr. Dean Del Mastro: It was agreed by everyone around the table that we would submit our witness list by Friday, if folks are intent on meeting next week.

Now, I am sensitive to what Mr. Harris is saying. The Liberals members across the table knew to book the days of next week off because they had a caucus scheduled, so they didn't make commitments in their ridings. I know I personally am scheduled to make a presentation before city council, for example, on September 2. I am a member of this committee, and I have a number of other commitments that I'd made on the second. I have commitments on the third; I have commitments on the fourth. These are all commitments I've made in my riding.

I would suggest it's certainly reasonable to look to the middle of next week, if members are so intent that this is so important. As I said, I think we have a great story to tell, and I'm happy both to talk about what the government's investments have been and to look forward to what the benefits of those investments will yield in the future. I'm happy to do that. If we want to look toward the middle of next week, as I said, I am sympathetic to Mr. Harris. We've had an awful lot of committee meetings here this summer—I've been a part of many of them—and I do think it's a bit of an imposition on members to ask them to come here.

I was actually going to suggest, Mr. Chair, that you might look at a date somewhere between the second and fourth, or the second to the fourth, recognizing of course that there would be logistical difficulties, frankly, getting a list in and getting people here through a long weekend. The cost of getting people here through a long weekend and the cost of staying in hotels on a long weekend is more. I think we should look at how quickly we can pull it together.

Listen, if Mr. Dion could even find time to make a phone call to the Prime Minister, these guys might not be panicking so much, but apparently his time is precious and our time is not. That said, as I said, we have nothing to hide, but I think the chair should be given the latitude, if it's next week, to set dates that logistically work for the people who we're looking to have here.

The Chair: Mr. Malo.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Malo: Mr. Chair, I have a very quick question for the clerk. I recall that we voted for a meeting to be held on September 2. There was a vote and it was agreed to.

Mr. Jean-François Pagé: Well, it was mentioned, but it was not presented in the form of a motion. As I understand it, the idea was put forward, but there was a little confusion.

Mr. Luc Malo: But we voted; we put our hands up.

[*English*]

The Chair: I think it was voted on a question, on a suggestion. It wasn't a formal motion. If we want to make that formal motion, then we can vote on it. My whole thing is that this meeting is about to be over and our two hours are up. We have said that the clerk will receive the list. We will then set the meeting after we get the list.

A point of order.

• (1500)

Hon. Denis Coderre: Mr. Chair, what I propose is this. We agree that on Friday at noon you have a list. We would be ready, in our case, to be there on the second. So I would suggest, because we want a meeting, that if there is a vote we will win. I would propose respectfully then that we decide it's for sure that we have a meeting next week, and considering the list, you'll be able to convey that we have a meeting next week.

Mr. Dean Del Mastro: Mr. Chair, you can't make an amendment on a point of order, first of all, and of course, secondly, we're not opposing that meetings be held as soon as possible.

Hon. Denis Coderre: I was addressing the chair and I'm expecting the chair, not Mr. Del Mastro, to discuss—

The Chair: My suggestion then is that the lists get sent to the clerk. The clerk will get the lists, and we'll see if we can put a meeting together on the Tuesday. If it's feasible, if we can get witnesses for the Tuesday, if we can make it happen, that's when we will make it happen.

Mr. Harris is going to be just like me; we're going to have problems. Someone else might have to chair the meeting, because I might not be able to be here myself.

Hon. Denis Coderre: The only thing I want to stress is that we want a meeting next week. We will be there to be helpful, to make sure we can have one on the second.

The Chair: If we can, we'll put it.

The meeting is adjourned.

Published under the authority of the Speaker of the House of Commons

Publié en conformité de l'autorité du Président de la Chambre des communes

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