



House of Commons
CANADA

Standing Committee on Official Languages

LANG • NUMBER 034 • 2nd SESSION • 39th PARLIAMENT

EVIDENCE

Tuesday, May 27, 2008

—
Chair

Mr. Steven Blaney

Also available on the Parliament of Canada Web Site at the following address:

<http://www.parl.gc.ca>

Standing Committee on Official Languages

Tuesday, May 27, 2008

• (0905)

[Translation]

The Chair (Mr. Steven Blaney (Lévis—Bellechasse, CPC)): Good morning everyone and welcome to the 34th meeting of the Standing Committee on Official Languages.

Before starting, I would like to emphasize a few points. First, I want to offer my personal thanks to those committee members who yesterday attended the reception held for the visit of the Finnish delegation. That reception was held in cooperation with the Commissioner of Official Languages, Mr. Graham Fraser. Finland is also in a situation of linguistic duality. The languages in its case are Swedish and Finnish. We'll no doubt have occasion to repeat the experience to familiarize ourselves with the bilingual situation of other countries.

This morning, for our study on the broadcast by the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation of the Canadian Songwriters' Hall of Fame Gala, we are pleased to have the President and Chief Executive Officer of the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, Mr. Hubert Lacroix, whom I welcome.

Colleagues, I remind you that the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation is subject to the Broadcasting Act, which clearly states that the corporation enjoys independence with regard to its programming.

Without further ado, I would invite Mr. Lacroix to make his presentation. Then we'll move on to questions. Mr. Lacroix, you're familiar enough with the committee's procedures, aren't you? Your presentation will be followed by questions asked by members from each of the parties.

Mr. Lacroix.

Mr. Hubert T. Lacroix (President and Chief Executive Officer, Canadian Broadcasting Corporation): Good morning.

Thank you very much. Mr. Chairman, members of the committee, I understand you would like to talk this morning about the mandate of CBC/Radio-Canada and the recent broadcast of the Canadian Songwriters' Gala on our airwaves.

I have been President and CEO of CBC/Radio-Canada for five months now and I can tell you I am keenly aware of our responsibility to serve French and English-speaking Canadians.

[English]

Sometimes we do this together through CBC/Radio-Canada joint projects. Sometimes we do it separately, finding ways to share parts

of one language culture with the other in a way that will resonate with the audience.

In the case of the Canadian songwriters gala, you've heard the details of how we tried to do this on our various platforms from Richard Stursberg. He also told you about other ways we promote francophone culture with English audiences. I can repeat or add to what Richard Stursberg told you with respect thereto, if you wish.

[Translation]

Some Canadians, including organizers of the Gala, disagreed with the decisions made by our programming teams for the Gala. Last month in fact, we agreed to allow the organizers to explore other broadcast options for next year's gala.

While disagreements are part of the reality of the hundreds of programming decisions we make every day, I can tell you that we have heard the concerns expressed. We recognize that we could have done a better job of reflecting the diversity of the performances in our television broadcast of the gala. And while these are programming decisions that are ours to make, these events have raised our level of awareness on these issues and I can tell you that we will do a better job with these kinds of broadcasts in the future.

I do not accept the judgment that, by our programming decisions in this one instance, the public broadcaster was not fulfilling its mandate. The mandate is very broad. So broad, in fact, that no one of our services can presume to be all things to all people, even less so within the space of a single broadcast. You have to look at the range of programs and services we offer. That is how we fulfil our mandate to Canadians.

In every programming decision we make, there will be some people who will believe we should have done something different. Sometimes even we will think so. We listen to the concerns of the Canadians we serve and we take those concerns into account in the choices we make for the future.

The Broadcasting Act is very broad about our mandate to Canadians but very clear about our programming independence. We will continue to work very hard with the resources we have to fulfil the trust Canadians have placed in us.

I will be pleased to answer your questions.

[English]

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Lacroix. We will now move on with the first round.

We will begin with Monsieur Denis Coderre.

[Translation]

Hon. Denis Coderre (Bourassa, Lib.): Good morning, Mr. Lacroix, and thank you for being here. I welcome the tone and respect of your speech, which contrasts with that your vice-president unfortunately made in his appearance last week.

I absolutely understand the notions of independence and programming. You can repeat them three, four, five or 20 times; the fact nevertheless remains that, as the representative of a public television network, your mandate is to show what Canada is.

We can hail the work you've done to broadcast *Les hauts et les bas de Sophie Paquin* in English. We could talk about Mitsou again and all kinds of events. I'm a CBC/Radio-Canada viewer. Nevertheless we're talking about a gala whose purpose is to celebrate our country's songwriters.

I would have liked to see the parliamentary secretary, who has let us down again today, because it is important to hear from the government's representative. He no doubt has a reason for not being here.

I didn't understand why that kind of cut had been made, nor why Mr. Stursberg told us that when people hear francophones on CBC, they change channels. You remember that, and I don't think I'm causing a problem by saying it. At a meeting of the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage, I asked you whether you changed channels when you heard an anglophone on Radio-Canada. The answer was obviously no.

We should therefore consider a number of questions. What was the reason for deleting the entire francophone component of that program? More specifically, for our television viewers, are there any studies on the subject? If your role is to bring together what has often been called the two solitudes, you have to do more than translate an event to show some sensitivity, for which I congratulate you. When a gala celebrates what our country represents, it is up to the CBC, even if Radio-Canada has refused to do so, to represent the two official languages, the two sides of the artistic field during that particular one-time event.

Are you aware of and sensitive to the concerns? We've talked about some good francophone artists. Can you guarantee us that we'll be able to see them next year? What do you intend to do, as president?

● (0910)

Mr. Hubert T. Lacroix: Mr. Coderre, there are two aspects to your question.

Mr. Richard Stursberg tried to explain to the committee that every Radio-Canada program has a specific mandate, whether it is a summary of the gala that we did, which was intended for an anglophone audience, or the program *Tout le monde en parle*, which is broadcast on Sunday evenings, which is intended more particularly for the Quebec audience, because that is its mandate. Every program has a mandate.

My notes and my appearance before the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage mentioned that gala organizers asked us to be released from the rights that we had to the radio and television

broadcasts of the gala next year. We obviously told them that we would not exercise our rights and that they could examine all options and come back to Radio-Canada or resort to any other form of broadcasting to decide the best way to promote their gala next year. Consequently, I have no idea about the organizers' decisions regarding next year's gala.

Hon. Denis Coderre: In that case, if CBC/Radio-Canada agrees to broadcast the gala... It was broadcast in full on the radio. We heard Claude Dubois, Raymond Lévesque and the others. It was good.

This is a special gala that represents all songwriters and paints a cultural picture of Canada. As president, will you commit to ensuring that the broadcast of the gala is not cut along linguistic lines?

Mr. Hubert T. Lacroix: Mr. Coderre, you're right: radio is a much better medium for promoting or broadcasting a gala of this kind. As you said, Radio Two broadcast the entire gala.

As for next year, I don't know what the gala organizers will come and tell us, but I repeat—and I said so this morning in my introduction—that we understood and saw certain things that we did in the context of that gala which could have been improved. We will learn the necessary lessons if they ever come back to us for a programming project.

Hon. Denis Coderre: More generally, Mr. Lacroix, you mentioned that every program has its own mandate. Even *Tout le monde en parle* has had anglophone guests; a kind of translation was provided and, in a way, that also reflected the diversity of Quebec and even of the world. As Radio-Canada has a mandate and is a public television network, and to the extent that we must celebrate that diversity, do you think that, in future, we must be more sensitive, regardless of the program, when it concerns that diversity, and that it must be, in a way, a forum to show what Canada is? Do you think there was a lack of sensitivity, that we are an isolated, unfortunate case and that, in future, you will ensure that francophones don't feel they are second-class citizens?

● (0915)

Mr. Hubert T. Lacroix: Mr. Coderre, far be it from me the idea that francophones are second-class citizens. I'm a francophone myself, and I don't consider myself a second-class citizen.

Should we be more sensitive? In my presentation, I told you what happened: the impact from the gala has increased our level of sensitivity to this kind of thing. I also told you that we would take the necessary steps to be even more sensitive to that kind of impact.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. Coderre.

We'll now continue with the Bloc Québécois representative, Mr. Richard Nadeau.

Mr. Richard Nadeau (Gatineau, BQ): Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Good morning, Mr. Lacroix.

First, do you think members of the House of Commons are justified in interfering in matters related to the programming of Radio-Canada and the CBC? Do you think that parliamentarians have gone too far with regard to the Hall of Fame Gala?

Mr. Hubert T. Lacroix: Mr. Nadeau, I will simply refer you to the respect that I know all parliamentarians have for the Broadcasting Act and the independence that CBC/Radio-Canada enjoys under that act. As the Chairman of the Official Languages Committee said at the outset, and as the Chair of the Canadian Heritage Committee has said, all individuals who interact with the representatives, the officers of our company who appear before those committees have always enjoyed parliamentarians' respect with regard to our programming.

Mr. Richard Nadeau: All right, thank you very much.

Do you think that the CBC—and I mean the CBC—should help do more to make francophone Quebec artists known across Canada?

Mr. Hubert T. Lacroix: I'm very pleased that you've raised that question because I have all kinds of information with me this morning. Part of that information was given to you by Richard Stursberg. We could forward it to you again and inform you that, in the past two years, the number of times that the CBC—the CBC alone—has presented francophones in the context of galas or programs from our transcultural fund or joint projects between the CBC and Radio-Canada. There's a long list of them. I don't know whether you want me to take your committee's time this morning to talk about it, but that information is available and we would be pleased to give it to you, Mr. Nadeau.

Mr. Richard Nadeau: So you think the CBC is doing a significant job in this field?

Mr. Hubert T. Lacroix: Absolutely.

Mr. Richard Nadeau: All right. With respect to the Hall of Fame Gala as such, the show that got a lot of coverage, do you think there were specific errors in the broadcasting of the 44-minute program after part of the show given by our artists was edited out? Do you think there were any errors that should not reoccur?

Mr. Hubert T. Lacroix: First, I remind you of the answer to the first question you asked me on the extent of the programming independence that we enjoy under the Broadcasting Act. Mr. Nadeau, that 44-minute summary was prepared by CBC programmers whose job it was, and which they did properly, to summarize the Hall of Fame Gala in 44 minutes for an anglophone audience. However, I would remind you that, in hindsight, as I told Mr. Coderre a moment ago, our institution confirms—and Richard Stursberg also wrote this himself—that we could have done better in the circumstances.

Mr. Richard Nadeau: I'd also like to hear what you have to say on another subject. Do you think that the presentation of artists singing in French would have lowered the interest of anglophone viewers watching CBC that evening?

Mr. Hubert T. Lacroix: Mr. Nadeau, the people who listened to Radio-Canada radio, which is in fact CBC radio, both Radio One, which presented a summary of it, and Radio Two, which broadcast it in full over three and a quarter hours, heard the francophone singers, heard the speeches of the individuals inducted into the Canadian Songwriters' Hall of Fame. It was also an evening during which Oscar Peterson and Paul Anka were celebrated.

Mr. Richard Nadeau: We were told that, if there had been francophones or artists singing in French, the CBC television

audience would not have been interested and might have changed channels because it was in French. Do you agree with that?

Mr. Hubert T. Lacroix: I repeat that the purpose of Richard Stursberg's speech was to explain to you that that program had a mandate, just as the main purpose of all other programs is to build bridges between anglophones and francophones. That was not the purpose of that program that evening.

Mr. Richard Nadeau: I repeat my question, which you haven't answered. Do you think that people would have changed channels because it was in French?

• (0920)

Mr. Hubert T. Lacroix: I answered that question, Mr. Nadeau. If it had been me, and what I was watching was interesting, I would not have changed channels.

Mr. Richard Nadeau: Do you think that if Radio-Canada had had that mandate and had excluded anglophone singers, the situation would have been the same?

Mr. Hubert T. Lacroix: That's a very hypothetical question, Mr. Nadeau, because, that evening, Radio-Canada chose not to broadcast the gala. Radio-Canada chooses to broadcast other galas. If you observe what's been done for a number of years, there are numerous galas. For example, Radio-Canada chooses to broadcast the Gala de l'ADISQ, the Gala des Olivier, the Soirée des Jutra and the Prix Gémeaux. When it makes its choices, it tries to present the greatest artisans and the best-known individuals to its francophone audience.

Mr. Richard Nadeau: As regards the mandate, whether it's that of Radio-Canada or that of the CBC, shouldn't you present culture in general across Canada? Perhaps we missed the boat that evening, didn't we?

Mr. Hubert T. Lacroix: You're absolutely right. And during the year, there are more than 200 occasions when we try to build that kind of bridge. You're also right in saying that we could have done better that evening.

Mr. Richard Nadeau: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Nadeau.

We'll go over to Mr. Godin.

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

Good morning, Mr. Lacroix.

What is Radio-Canada's real mandate?

Mr. Hubert T. Lacroix: Radio-Canada's mandate is very clear and stems from the act. Our obligation is to inform and entertain Canadians through essentially Canadian programming on the largest possible number of platforms in order to interest the largest possible number of Canadians.

Mr. Yvon Godin: You've often said that, if it were to be done over again... What would actually do, if you could go back in time?

Mr. Hubert T. Lacroix: We could have done things differently that evening. I'm not the program director, Mr. Godin. The people who have much greater expertise than I in editing this kind of event, which lasts three and a quarter hours and is cut down to 44 minutes, would be in a better position than I am to answer that. We could have done a better job to reflect the diverse nature of the performances.

Mr. Yvon Godin: I understand, but the vice-president of Radio-Canada clearly said that the audience was anglophone, that that was the target audience and that people would have changed channels. That's insulting; it hurts a little. I haven't just heard Johnny Cash on English-language television! You don't change channels every time you hear singers that I've liked. They're singers. We're not talking about presenting a film with subtitles; we're talking about someone who sings. When our aboriginal people sing, do people change channels? That's what hurts. If you recognize that, it's appreciated.

Mr. Hubert T. Lacroix: Mr. Chairman, I hope that's what you've understood from my remarks. Mr. Godin, I hope that's what you've understood as well.

Mr. Yvon Godin: It's unfortunate that someone says people will change channels because it's in a certain language. We're tired of hearing that. That doesn't promote the two official languages or our communities in our country.

You also talked about *Tout le monde en parle*. That's a program for Quebec. Is there one for the rest of Canada? That's why I was talking to you about the mandate.

Mr. Hubert T. Lacroix: Yes.

Mr. Yvon Godin: We also see that programs broadcast in the Atlantic region don't go any further than Madawaska. As for the National Hockey League or the program *Tout le monde en parle*, why is that reserved for Quebec? Isn't Radio-Canada a national television network?

Mr. Hubert T. Lacroix: Mr. Godin, I'm pleased to answer that question because, once again, that's related to the mandate of each of the programs. The people who program them or who have expertise in that field appeal to an audience, in this case a francophone audience. The program's mandate is to target a fundamentally Québécois audience. And that's not a hidden agenda. On the contrary, it's very clear. Other programs build bridges across Canada. They focus, for example, on agriculture or entertainment. In many cases, the mandate does not simply focus on one specific region or audience.

• (0925)

Mr. Yvon Godin: They invite people from France on *Tout le monde en parle*, but they don't invite a lot from elsewhere in Canada. And yet we're talking about Radio-Canada.

Mr. Hubert T. Lacroix: Mr. Godin, I hear you and I can tell you that the number of people taking part in our programs properly reflects news and current affairs, so that all Canadians are interested in a program such as *Tout le monde en parle*. However, the mandate is essentially regional. We have a lot of programs whose mandates—

Mr. Yvon Godin: We're talking about mandates, and I'm thinking about our singer from Quebec who went to Toronto. I watch the national news and I think it almost solely reflects the reality in Montreal. At one time, your company was called Radio-Canada; then it was called Radio-Québec, and now it could virtually be called

Radio-Montréal. Let's be frank: the national news doesn't concern other regions than Quebec.

Mr. Hubert T. Lacroix: Mr. Godin, what you're telling me is interesting. When I go to Quebec City, people tell me that Montreal is the centre of attraction. When I go to the Gaspé Peninsula, they tell me that Quebec City is the problem, that everything is related to that city. In western Canada, everyone tells me about Toronto. North of Winnipeg, everyone tells that Winnipeg is the problem. What I'm fundamentally telling you is that there is a perception related to the place where you live.

Mr. Yvon Godin: When you go to Montreal, do people talk to you about Montreal or the Gaspé Peninsula?

Mr. Hubert T. Lacroix: They talk about Montreal, but they are very interested in watching news that concerns all of Quebec and Canada.

Mr. Yvon Godin: Let's go back to the events that are the reason why you are here today. The program that was limited to 44 minutes could have reflected Canada better.

Mr. Hubert T. Lacroix: You're absolutely right, and, once again, I repeat that we could have done a much better job that evening by reflecting the diversity of all artistic performances that we heard at that event.

Mr. Yvon Godin: We'll see what it's like next year.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. Godin.

Now we'll continue with Mr. Denis Lebel.

Mr. Denis Lebel (Roberval—Lac-Saint-Jean, CPC): Good morning, Mr. Lacroix. Thank you for your presentation, which has put us in the right frame of mind to deal with your appearance here this morning.

For me, this sorts out perceptions. We're contemplating the future with a great deal of interest. Our role is to promote our country's official languages and to ensure they are well respected.

You mentioned a number of times that it would be possible to do better in the future. However, when Mr. Stursberg appeared, I asked him whether that was a business decision. His answer was sort of yes and sort of no, then, on the subject of funding and money, he made it clear that that was not the case, that it was simply a matter of programming.

Talking about programming, you just addressed the fact that there is the francophone side, with Radio-Canada, and the CBC. As regards the matching of the various galas broadcast, I think it would be sensible to plan how to manage the matter in future with regard to official languages. When people are invited to a gala of this kind, it is very important to promote them, regardless of the language they speak.

You threw the ball back into the court of the Hall of Fame Gala people, who are thinking about it for the moment. But what do you know to date about next year's gala?

Mr. Hubert T. Lacroix: I know absolutely nothing about it, Mr. Lebel. We allowed gala organizers to think about how they would like to organize the event next year. We are open to a proposal from them that will enable us to work with them again and to meet both their objectives and our own. For the moment, however, I have no idea of their intentions with regard to the 2008-2009 Hall of Fame Gala.

Mr. Denis Lebel: For how many years has the francophone part been removed from the Hall of Fame Gala, Mr. Lacroix?

Mr. Hubert T. Lacroix: I believe it's been three years.

• (0930)

Mr. Denis Lebel: Considering that there weren't any financial aspects to that decision and that it was really a programming decision, I would like you to repeat to me what you think justified that choice of programming.

Mr. Hubert T. Lacroix: As Mr. Stursberg said before you, the objective was to prepare a program for an essentially anglophone audience. That's why the 44 minutes focused mainly on Oscar Peterson and Paul Anka, in view of the Mr. Peterson's death and Mr. Anka's induction. The 40 minutes therefore targeted the anglophone market. That was the mandate of that program. The organizers were moreover aware of that. It isn't as though we surprised them by putting that kind of program together.

Mr. Denis Lebel: You said a number of times that you were aware you could have done better. From what I heard, you don't know what next year's gala will consist of or whether it will be produced by your corporation.

If that's the case, considering that you want to do better, what would it be possible to do?

Mr. Hubert T. Lacroix: Mr. Lebel, I don't know what the format of next year's gala will be, and I don't even know whether it will be handed over to us. If the organizers want to submit another project to us, we'll be pleased to consider it. However, I take this opportunity to repeat that we are aware of the importance of reflecting the diversity of the performance at an event of this kind.

Mr. Denis Lebel: Thank you. I'll close by recalling that the Broadcasting Act states that Radio-Canada must contribute to shared national consciousness and identity. There is linguistic duality, in this case involving the two official languages. I congratulate you on the work that has been done and urge you to continue ensuring that the official languages have a greater impact across our country.

Mr. Hubert T. Lacroix: Thank you, Mr. Lebel.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Lebel.

We'll now begin our second round with Mr. Pablo Rodriguez.

Mr. Pablo Rodriguez (Honoré-Mercier, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Good morning, Mr. Lacroix.

The Canadian Songwriters' Hall of Fame submitted a brief to the Standing Committee on Official Languages. I don't know whether you read it. I had the opportunity to read it yesterday and the day before. There seemed to be some contradictions between the Hall of Fame's position and that of CBC/Radio-Canada.

One gets the impression from the brief that, in the past three years, the Hall of Fame has emphasized the importance of reflecting linguistic duality, that is English and French, but, on every occasion, the idea was rejected by CBC/Radio-Canada. The brief states, on one page, that Martin Duchesne, who was a member of the Hall of Fame, resigned because he criticized it for having sold its soul to the devil. The devil in question is apparently CBC/Radio-Canada.

What do you say about that?

Mr. Hubert T. Lacroix: With all due respect, Mr. Rodriguez, I don't think we're the devil. That sentence could mean that it had sold its soul to its board of directors, which chose to conduct a transaction that doesn't seem to suit Mr. Duchesne. Since neither you nor I were in the room, I wouldn't want to lend Mr. Duchesne any diabolical intentions or anything else of that kind related to hell.

Having said that, I also read the brief dated May 9, 2008, which is here before me. It reflects the conversations between CBC/Radio-Canada and the gala's organizers. The message that we've tried to send gala organizers over the years was that television wasn't the best medium for this kind of event. The concept of a gala that lasts three and quarter hours is very static. We suggested—and I believe we were right in doing so—broadcasting the gala on Radio Two and a summary on Radio One. That's also reflected in the brief that you read.

• (0935)

Mr. Pablo Rodriguez: You can obviously see a lot of things in that, but what I retain, because it interested me a great deal, is that the Canadian Songwriters' Hall of Fame would really have wanted to go further and present francophone artists. As we didn't hear from the people from the Canadian Songwriters' Hall of Fame, we didn't get their point of view.

I think that's feasible. I spoke with the ADISQ people—because I was in the room—who explained to me that, when ADISQ broadcast its show, even though it was essentially francophone, artists like Simple Plan were able to speak in English and that was possible in that context.

Another contradiction emerges from a reading of the brief. CBC/Radio-Canada seems to say that the francophone artists were warned that they would be edited out. However, people like Mr. Dubois seemed to contradict that.

Do francophone artists know they'll be edited out when they agree to appear?

Mr. Hubert T. Lacroix: Those are important details that I unfortunately don't know because that takes place on the spot, between the people who organize the gala and the people who perform that evening.

Mr. Pablo Rodriguez: As a Quebecker who believes in Canada, I unfortunately get the impression that this situation and others help maintain the two solitudes. Anglophones have their things and francophones have theirs. We expect a little more from our national broadcaster. That's perhaps what disappointed many people on the committee, those who believe in Canada and who would like to do more for Canada and linguistic duality. People say "francophone" and they think "Quebec", but it must also be understood that there are roughly one million francophones outside Quebec. Those people too would have liked to see the performances of francophone artists at the gala.

The Chair: Thank you.

Would you like to make a comment?

Mr. Hubert T. Lacroix: I'll read it quickly.

You're right, Mr. Rodriguez. CBC/Radio-Canada's mandate is really to build bridges. You've heard that expression from me a number of times in all kinds of forums. In the information he gave you, Mr. Stursberg talked about 200 hours of programming. A lot of our projects have been developed to reflect the two cultures, and we aren't at all embarrassed by the work we do. On the contrary, we feel our contribution is very good. But people only take into account that evening, about which we've already admitted that we could have done a better job of reflecting the diversity of performances, and they say that we aren't carrying out our mandate. That's where I differ. You have to consider what we do as a whole.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Lacroix.

Thank you, Mr. Rodriguez.

We'll now go over to the government side and Mr. Daniel Petit.

Mr. Daniel Petit (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Good morning, Mr. Lacroix.

When your vice-president came here, the questions were specific. They concerned what's called the Hall of Fame Gala and the fact that a group of francophone artists were excluded from its televised version. I'm summing it up in a few words.

What led us to ask a question is that Mr. Stursberg suggested that he was very familiar with the viewing habits of Toronto anglophones. He thought that, if the program contained French, anglophones would change channels. That made startled us a little. It was a bit painful to hear that answer.

I would like to address something more specific for the future with you. It may not just be the future of the Hall of Fame that is concerned. It may be all programs of that kind that can be programmed by your network. I'm going to repeat to you something that everyone knows. In Quebec, galas are what oil is to Alberta. We export our galas, our festivals and our artists around the world. Business is business. When I see that you don't promote Quebec artists in Toronto, that shocks me. That's business for us. That's the recognition of what we are and what we can offer the other provinces.

I don't know whether you were here at that time, and have no fear, I'm not suggesting you had any intention. I understand that Radio-

Canada and the CBC are the same company. You are the president of both networks. When you give an order, you give the order to both entities, not to one, then the other. When you agreed to work on the Hall of Fame, did you know—and this question also comes from my colleague, that it wasn't a business decision, but a programming decision? Did you know at the time that francophones wouldn't be part of the televised show? I'm not talking about Radio One and Radio Two. Did you know that, or did it come as a surprise, like when we read it in the newspapers the next morning? I don't have that answer. Did you know in advance that there wouldn't be any francophones on television and that their performances would be edited out that time?

• (0940)

Mr. Hubert T. Lacroix: Since the format of that program has been the same for three years, the only answer I can give you is yes.

Mr. Daniel Petit: So you did know that the francophones would not be in the televised show. I am naturally not suggesting you had any bad intentions, don't fear that. I'm especially trying to clarify a situation. Were there any submissions by your corporation? You have a mandate to carry out. Did you say you were rejecting the project because you had a duty to build a bridge between the two cultures or another type of duty? That's part of your mandate. It isn't the Hall of Fame that's important: the Hall of Fame isn't Canada. It's you who represent us, in the duality. Did you tell the Hall of Fame that we couldn't accept that project, that it didn't make any sense? You knew that the francophones would be excluded from it.

Mr. Hubert T. Lacroix: Mr. Petit, if that were the case and no francophones were presented on CBC's airwaves in any program whatever, I would agree with you and I would understand why you were angry. However, that's not at all the case.

To go back to the Hall of Fame, Mr. Stursberg told you—once again, I would be pleased to give you all the information—the number of occasions and programs between 2006 and 2008 when the CBC presented French Canadian artists on the screen, on CBC television. That said, the format of that program is determined by independent programmers with whom we work and who edit the 44 minutes for us. The format was discussed and accepted with the organizers. No one was surprised with the way those 44 minutes were developed. However, I repeat once again, we recognize—and I do first of all—that we could have done a better job of reflecting the diversity of the performances that evening.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Thank you, Mr. Petit.

Mr. Daniel Petit: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Thank you, Mr. Lacroix.

The Chair: We'll continue with Mr. Raymond Gravel.

Mr. Raymond Gravel (Repentigny, BQ): Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Lacroix, thank you for being here.

You're also head of Radio-Canada's French network, aren't you?

Mr. Hubert T. Lacroix: That's correct, unless my responsibilities were changed this morning; sometimes that happens quickly.

Mr. Raymond Gravel: Why didn't the French network want to present the gala?

Mr. Hubert T. Lacroix: That's a good question. The French network makes programming choices. In past years, the French network decided to give priority to events like the Gala de l'ADISQ, the Gala des Olivier, the Soirée des Jutra and the Prix Gémeaux. A large number of galas are available every year. Our programmers choose those they think will most interest the people who watch them. It's a programming decision.

● (0945)

Mr. Raymond Gravel: It's very simple.

Personally, do you understand Claude Dubois' frustration?

Mr. Hubert T. Lacroix: I understand it, absolutely.

Mr. Raymond Gravel: Conversely, would it be thinkable to present a similar gala in Quebec, on Radio-Canada, excluding all anglophones from the west? Would we have seen the same reaction?

Mr. Hubert T. Lacroix: That's really a hypothetical question, Mr. Gravel. It's hard for me to answer it.

Mr. Raymond Gravel: A little earlier, you talked about perceptions. I got the impression I was listening to Mr. Bouchard of the Bouchard-Taylor Commission, who talks about a crisis of perceptions. I don't think it's just that. When Mr. Stursberg appeared before us, I saw arrogance, condescension and conceit. I even told him that was why I was a sovereigntist. And one in two Quebecers is as well. I don't think it's simply a matter of perception. When francophones feel excluded, their reaction may not be provoked just by perceptions.

Earlier you didn't give my colleague a clear answer. Mr. Stursberg told us that, based on his experience and market studies, anglophones don't like to watch anything in French. Are you aware of those market studies? Were any market studies conducted on the anglophone viewership of, for example, francophone songs?

Mr. Hubert T. Lacroix: I'm not aware of any studies of that kind. If there are any, our programmers no doubt are.

I'm going to quote you one or two figures on the number of times francophones have appeared on CBC television. Between 2006 and 2008, 43 galas were broadcast, 17 of which presented 42 French Canadians, personalities of all kinds. Radio makes a significant contribution as well: 90 francophone artists were presented on CBC radio and television on our transcultural programs. I can give you that information. I think I told Mr. Nadeau that. We'll be pleased to give you the figures showing the importance the public broadcaster attaches to the idea of building bridges and showing each of the two cultures how the other functions and its major talents.

Mr. Raymond Gravel: Even if all that is true, that doesn't prevent the fact that the francophone part was completely removed from the gala that was presented on CBC's airwaves. That's what's frustrating for francophones, not only in Quebec, but across the country. World class francophone artists were there and they were simply edited out. That's frustrating. I don't think that kind of thing should be repeated. Earlier you said that's the way it had been for three years. It will no doubt be that way next year as well. So tell the francophones that their performances will be edited out, and they won't appear at that gala. What's the point of going?

Mr. Hubert T. Lacroix: Mr. Gravel, with regard to next year's gala, I repeat that its organizers have asked us that they be able to consider all the options available to them in order to review the broadcast of that event. We've agreed to drop our exclusive radio and television broadcasting rights so they can think about the platform and the way they want to organize it for next year. I currently have no idea what they will want to do with this event.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Gravel.

We'll now finish the second round with Mr. Godin.

Mr. Yvon Godin: Mr. Lacroix, we could have done without the comment that CBC television considers that French content doesn't suit its public. These comments are the most frustrating for me, rather than the fact that the person sang or didn't sing. It's the language used that hurts.

● (0950)

Mr. Hubert T. Lacroix: Mr. Godin, we have to go back to the mandates of the programs. Mr. Stursberg tried to tell you that the mandate of that program concerned a specific anglophone audience. The way the program, the 44-minute summary, was constructed really takes that mandate into account.

Mr. Yvon Godin: Explain to us what you mean by a specific audience. No one wanted to hear a French song?

Mr. Hubert T. Lacroix: Mr. Godin, that's not quite what I was trying to explain to you.

Mr. Yvon Godin: You're virtually telling me the same thing as the other person.

Mr. Hubert T. Lacroix: No. I'm trying to tell you that each program has a mandate. For example, if a program's mandate is clearly to present francophone artists to the anglophone audience, I'm convinced that we'll adequately deliver that kind of program. I'm simply repeating that that wasn't the purpose of the 44-minute summary of the gala. The people who took part in that gala were not surprised because they had full knowledge of the program's format.

Once again, we understood that that kind of program had consequences. We've learned from those consequences, and if we continue to broadcast that kind of gala, Mr. Godin, we'll be more sensitive to the diversity of the individuals presented.

Mr. Yvon Godin: Since you're here, I'd like to ask you another question, Mr. Lacroix. Are the members of the board of directors appointed by the government?

Mr. Hubert T. Lacroix: Yes, absolutely.

Mr. Yvon Godin: Earlier Mr. Lebel said that the two official languages must be respected. I'm saying that in my words, but that's roughly what he said. Were you surprised that the last two members of the board of directors, if I'm not mistaken, were anglophones?

Mr. Hubert T. Lacroix: Our board of directors is balanced from a linguistic perspective.

Mr. Yvon Godin: Yes, but I believe it is a francophone from New Brunswick who has just completed his term.

Mr. Hubert T. Lacroix: Not entirely.

Mr. Yvon Godin: They've replaced him with two.

Mr. Hubert T. Lacroix: Yes, but before that, Mr. Rémi Racine joined our board of directors, and he's a francophone.

Mr. Yvon Godin: Where does he come from?

Mr. Hubert T. Lacroix: He comes from Montreal. He's been sitting on our board of directors for about four months. It is common practice to balance a board of directors with the best experts from all corners of the country.

Mr. Yvon Godin: Have francophones from outside Quebec been appointed to the board?

Mr. Hubert T. Lacroix: I would have to review the board of directors. I can answer that question if you want me to take the time to think of each of the 12 directors. I can tell you that we have two open positions at this time.

Mr. Yvon Godin: You have two open positions?

Mr. Hubert T. Lacroix: Yes, two positions are open. The government is working with the chairman of our board of directors to fill those two positions. I'm convinced that the people who are appointed to our board will be of the same quality as those currently sitting on it.

Mr. Yvon Godin: I'm not talking about the quality of the members of the board of directors. They must obviously be of high quality. Instead I'm talking about the representation of the diversity of our country. If the board of director discusses what goes on everywhere, it is important that francophones who are appointed to it come from all regions of the country, not just from Quebec, even though there are six million francophones there. As I like point out, it is Radio-Canada.

Mr. Hubert T. Lacroix: I am very, very proud to work at Radio-Canada because our board of directors is diversified: it consists of high-quality people from the Northwest Territories, Calgary, Vancouver, Montreal, Toronto and the Maritimes. Our board speaks and works in both official languages. Frankly, I am happy to be able to work with the board on a day-to-day basis.

Mr. Yvon Godin: Is it important—

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Godin. You'll have a chance to continue later.

We'll move on to Mr. Jean-Claude D'Amours.

Mr. Jean-Claude D'Amours (Madawaska—Restigouche, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Lacroix, thank you for being here.

Some of your comments intrigued me a little. The situation of the Canadian Songwriters' Hall of Fame is not a new one: everyone is familiar with it. You talk about program choices. Everyone knew that there wouldn't just be anglophones at the Canadian Songwriters' Hall of Fame Gala, but that there would also be francophones. Knowing that, you had a certain responsibility. You had to be watchful of that situation, to be watchful of needs.

Perhaps Radio-Canada refused, but when the CBC made the decision to present the Canadian Songwriters' Hall of Fame Gala, it did so in knowledge of the facts. The CBC knew that anglophone

and francophone artists would appear on stage. It is therefore somewhat odd to try to set that aside. CBC representatives knew what kind of projects they were embarking upon. They knew it from the outset. The fact that they knew that is a bit saddening.

You talked about greater awareness and said that you understood. Those are the terms you used a little earlier. You say you understood; that seems clear in your mind. It isn't a recent fact: there should be a certain sensitivity to bilingualism within CBC/Radio-Canada.

Since you've understood so well, why is it so complicated to confirm that if the Canadian Songwriters' Hall of Fame Gala is broadcast on CBC next year, there will be francophone artists on stage and on television?

I'm just using your words, Mr. Lacroix. When someone has understood so well, that means he acknowledges his mistakes and is deciding to rectify matters. You could guarantee us today that, if there are francophone artists on stage, they'll be presented on the CBC.

Furthermore, I would like to emphasize where the entire crisis the last time occurred. Your anglophone vice-president came and told us that, because an artist is francophone and not that well known, he is less attractive from the standpoint of CBC's business and will not be shown because people will change channels.

That kind of reaction is odd. I was watching the program *Dieu merci!*. As if by chance—

• (0955)

Mr. Hubert T. Lacroix: Did you say *Dieu merci!*?

Mr. Jean-Claude D'Amours: It's a program back home. It's a program broadcast on the other channel, which isn't produced by CBC/Radio-Canada or by the federal government. Anglophone artists appear on it. And yet the network is completely francophone. Those people take the time to do that and feel that, even if their audience is almost solely francophone, it is important to show these things. CBC/Radio-Canada does not appear to be able to do the same thing.

I'd like to hear your answers.

Mr. Hubert T. Lacroix: Mr. D'Amours, there are a lot of aspects to your comments and questions. Allow me to try to answer them.

A little earlier, I said that the reactions to the gala broadcast made us even more aware of the issue of the format of that program. As regards next year, Mr. D'Amours, I have no idea of what they will do. I don't know whether they'll come back and see us. Once again, that's a really hypothetical question.

As for *Dieu merci!*, it was with a bit of a grin that I asked you to say what that program was about because everyone knows that TVA produced it. I won't comment on TVA's programming or about the advantages, the good and bad things done in it.

All that to say that the mandate of CBC/Radio-Canada is very clear. Much of our programming reflects the two cultures. It seems that this event has led you to believe that we are straying from our mandate, and that troubles me a little. With respect to that program, we have repeatedly said—and I repeat it again this morning—that we could have done a better job, could have better reflected the diversity of that event. However, please consider the big picture, CBC/Radio-Canada's programming as a whole. I can assure you that we are complying with our mandate as a public broadcaster in spectacular fashion.

● (1000)

The Chair: We've taken note of your comments. Thank you, Mr. Lacroix.

We'll now go to Mr. Nadeau.

Mr. Richard Nadeau: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Lacroix, when gala producers come and meet with you, can you tell them that their project is promising, but that you would like—and I'm talking about the Hall of Fame Gala here—a quarter of the programming included in the number of minutes allocated, for example, to be reserved for French-language singers and song-writers. Can you make a change of that kind?

Mr. Hubert T. Lacroix: Mr. Chairman, Mr. Nadeau, I'm not involved in the details of the negotiations between the people responsible for the programming and the Radio-Canada people. I couldn't tell you how things like that work. I simply know that, in the case of the gala, it was an independent producer, not CBC/Radio-Canada, who delivered the 44 minutes to us.

Mr. Richard Nadeau: All right, but I think you must show some leadership as a public television network. You could tell your staff responsible for negotiating contracts with people who set up galas that you want to see a certain percentage of programming reflecting the talent as a whole, both that of the Quebec nation and that of the Canadian nation, whether it's broadcast on the CBC or Radio-Canada.

Wouldn't that be a positive solution to the problem that we experienced and that we're still debating because we don't know what's being prepared for next year?

Mr. Hubert T. Lacroix: As I explained to Mr. Godin and Mr. Gravel earlier, CBC/Radio-Canada selects the galas based on what interests the audience most. However, when we look at the gala ratings from previous years, we increasingly realize that television isn't a medium that suits galas. That's why I don't know what kind of format will be adopted for galas in future.

Whatever the case may be, as I've already said a number of times this morning, we could have done a better job to reflect the diversity of the performances at that event, and we realize that television isn't the best medium for a gala of this kind.

Mr. Richard Nadeau: All right. Mr. President of Radio-Canada, in the case of a gala that is supposed to be a pan-Canadian Hall of Fame, I suggest that you establish that kind of criteria so that the event reflects the Brayons, the Acadians, the Fransaskois and all of the critical mass constituted by the francophone artists of Quebec. I think that's important.

Mr. Stursberg returned a number of times to the ratings issue, and I'd like to go back to that as well. In the case of a gala that is supposed to be pan-Canadian and the purpose of which is to congratulate our artists and to pay tribute to them, what counts the most: being able to pay tribute to them or ratings?

Mr. Hubert T. Lacroix: For it to be possible to promote artists, people have to watch the galas. If no one watches them, that means we're not doing our job to promote those artists who appear on television. This involves a combination of content, medium and audience. These are programming decisions. Our programming people are highly competent. They make these kinds of decisions every day. Do those decisions suit everyone? Obviously not. Some are not pleased with them, but when you make a choice, there are consequences. That's inevitable.

● (1005)

The Chair: That's also the case of the chairman who has to interrupt the discussion.

Thank you, Mr. Nadeau.

We'll now continue with Mr. Chong.

Hon. Michael Chong (Wellington—Halton Hills, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Thank you for your testimony, Mr. Lacroix.

[*English*]

I have a comment and a question.

My comment is that it seems to me that the English-speaking portion of CBC/Radio-Canada has done a pretty good job in the last number of years in meeting its mandate with respect to highlighting the diversity within Canada. As an avid CBC listener in the Toronto area, whether it be CBC radio or CBC TV, I've noticed in the last five or six years a substantive change in the face of the corporation and in the style of programming, which is good. I think it reflects the changing demographics in many parts of the country.

One area, though, in which I don't see a lot of presence on the English-speaking side of the corporation, in terms of its mandate, is the portion of the mandate that speaks to promoting the linguistic duality of the country. In reverse, I think the opposite is true for the French-speaking portion of Radio-Canada/CBC. It seems to me it is obviously meeting its mandate for highlighting the linguistic duality of the country, but in some respects it is not as aggressive or strong on the promotion of the ever-changing, ever-increasing diversity of our country.

I just make that as a comment.

What I want to focus on in terms of your views is that it seems to me you have many challenges in trying to meet your mandate as a corporation. You have the mandate to linguistic duality. You have the mandate to highlight the country's diversity. You have the mandate to promote a national sense of identity in this country. These are very difficult mandates to meet with limited resources. Obviously you don't have unlimited resources and you have to try to juggle these things around.

I noted in the recent committee report produced out of this committee that we fund your corporation about \$33 per capita. Could you tell this committee how that number has fluctuated in the last number of decades in terms of the per capita amount, both in nominal and real terms? If you don't have that, obviously I understand. I'm just asking you right now, so if you don't have them, perhaps you could supply the committee with those numbers.

The second part of that question is could you tell us what other public broadcasters are doing around the world in terms of their funding per capita and how much money they receive to meet their respective mandates?

Mr. Hubert T. Lacroix: Thank you, Mr. Chong.

I'm happy to hear you are an avid user of our services and listener to our programs. Thank you for that. I hope that doesn't change.

Thank you for bringing up this aspect of our lives, which is an important one. This report you referred to speaks about \$33 per capita, and the report of the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage even suggests we increase it to \$40. There is the funding part, but there's also the MOU part, the memorandum of understanding part, which for me is the key part and the key recommendation coming out of this report. It's not only about dollars. It's about what CBC/Radio-Canada can provide as services and how we can link our services to the priorities of the government and Parliament, as it sees its national broadcaster grow into the 21st century.

On resources, we haven't seen an increase to our base budget since 1973. In constant dollars, if you look at the portion from 1995 to 2004, that means about \$150 million less every year. Some of our funds, allocations coming from government, are not indexed to inflation. Every year that is a \$25-million hole we have to fill before we start at base zero.

In terms of comparing us to the public broadcasters of the world, we are one of the lowest-funded national public broadcasters in the industrialized world. I don't have the statistics offhand, but I can give you these statistics.

All that is to say that we have a whole bunch of services in an environment that is changing. A lot of people enjoy comparing us to the BBC, for example. The BBC has four times our budget, an \$8-billion budget. That gives you an idea. It broadcasts in one language, not two, and in one time zone. We broadcast in five time zones.

When you take all that into consideration, this is a very important challenge.

• (1010)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Chong.

At this point in time, we have been through three rounds. I am wondering if some other members are willing to talk. Mr. Coderre has indicated he is willing to talk.

Mr. Coderre, are you willing to go for a fourth round?

[*Translation*]

Do you want a fourth round?

Mr. Yvon Godin: I didn't speak in the third round.

The Chair: Pardon me, I forgot you, Mr. Godin. This is the third round. Then I'd like to address one issue. I'd like to speak, like Mr. Coderre. We could do an overview.

Mr. Yvon Godin: I'm still on my third round.

The Chair: Absolutely, Mr. Godin, and I'll give it to you immediately.

Mr. Yvon Godin: You acknowledge that you made a mistake!

Mr. Lacroix, the person I referred to a little earlier was Mr. Clarence LeBreton, who was the representative of the francophones.

Mr. Hubert T. Lacroix: Yes, he was a director at CBC/Radio-Canada.

Mr. Yvon Godin: Then he was replaced. By whom? Was it someone from elsewhere in the country, a francophone? I think it's important to have these francophone voices on the board of directors.

Mr. Hubert T. Lacroix: Mr. LeBreton was unfortunately replaced before I arrived, and I don't exactly know which person filled which seat on the board of CBC/Radio-Canada, but I'll be pleased to inquire and to forward that information to you.

Mr. Yvon Godin: Please.

You talked about programmers a little earlier. Where do they come from? Is the programming decided in Montreal and Toronto?

Mr. Hubert T. Lacroix: There are programmers in a large number of our sites, because we don't just do national programming; we also do regional programming. People are part of the programming process in each of CBC/Radio-Canada's centres, but the two biggest programming centres are in Toronto and Montreal.

Mr. Yvon Godin: I made that comment because I'm keen on this. Mr. Dubois may not be pleased with me this morning, because I said that the fact the CBC didn't present him wasn't the end of the world. It's not the end of the world that not a single francophone sang on CBC. I think it's even more difficult when Radio-Canada doesn't broadcast francophones across the country. You say it's a matter of perception; I would tell you it's the contrary. When we talk about *Tout le monde en parle, Et Dieu créa...Laflaque*, that's for Quebec. We could name a number. I don't know many programs that represent the entire country, whereas you sometimes see pan-Canadian programming on the CBC. You see people from Vancouver, Halifax, Fredericton, everywhere. With respect to Radio-Canada, I feel perhaps like my friends from Quebec. I really feel like a francophone outside Quebec. I'm not the only one who feels that way.

Mr. Hubert T. Lacroix: Mr. Godin, there are 55 months left in my five-year term. I hope to be able to change your perception of Radio-Canada's service delivery.

Mr. Yvon Godin: You know, Mr. Lacroix, we had the news on RDI for an hour back home. Now it's put on here and there and we no longer even see it. That's the decision that was made. Before that, we complained that they cut the news of RDI de l'Atlantique, for example, in favour of any old news from Quebec. Now they can't cut it because we don't have any news at all. We can't complain about that anymore. I just want to pass on the message from the Atlantic to you, because I'm not the only person who feels this way.

Mr. Hubert T. Lacroix: I don't have much to add to your comment, but it's duly noted, Mr. Godin.

Mr. Yvon Godin: I'm encouraged to see that you have 55 months left and that you want to change my perception. I'm happy to hear that.

Mr. Hubert T. Lacroix: I hope to be able to change your perception during those 55 months. If you invite me back two months before the end of my term, in five years, and you are still a member of the Standing Committee on Official Languages, I hope you'll ask me the question again or that you'll tell me whether I've managed to change your perception or not.

Mr. Yvon Godin: For example, the program *Belle-Baie* is seen across the country.

Mr. Hubert T. Lacroix: You see, that's a good example.

Mr. Yvon Godin: You see, that means that there is talent elsewhere.

Mr. Hubert T. Lacroix: There's talent everywhere in Canada.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Godin.

That completes our third round. We'll now go to a few questions. Mr. Coderre and Mr. Lebel have expressed the wish to speak, and I would also like to reserve a period of questions for myself.

Mr. Coderre, go ahead.

•(1015)

Hon. Denis Coderre: Mr. Lacroix, I've been listening to you from the outset, and I must congratulate you for doing a good job of managing this crisis for your vice-president. However, I find it sad that, in 2008, the president of CBC/Radio-Canada has come to tell us that you're more sensitive now and that you're going to act differently in future. That's like a bus driver who tells people to move back. We need a guarantee, not for you to tell us that you'll be more sensitive from now on. Ordinary people expect to get that respect and dignity. I would like you to make a greater commitment. You acknowledged that there was a problem and that it would not reoccur.

You said that independent producers had edited those 44 minutes. When he appeared before the committee, Mr. Stursberg said that it was an editorial. He said he had dealt with the programming and had viewed the 44 minutes. He is the vice-president, and responsibility moves up the line to the boss, that is to say you. You may have missed it this time. Mr. Stursberg said that programming has an editorial side, that is to say that it includes an element of subjectivity. Mr. Stursberg stretched the facts a little, or he wasn't the one who did it, but he assumed it. I assume that, if he assumed it as vice-president, he has a role to play and that can go as far as the president's office.

Can you ensure that, from this moment on, without interfering in programming, we won't be required, in 2008, to make people aware of the importance of respecting linguistic duality?

I can understand why my colleagues say that the regions must be represented. Roch Voisine isn't a Quebecker; he comes from New Brunswick. We hear him and we see him. There's also 1755, Hart Rouge and the others. Even if you have a one-time mandate for a one-time program...

I'm a friend of CBC/Radio-Canada. I agree that we should fund public television, but, if every time we doubt that linguistic duality is being respected, we have to summon... I'd like us to obtain firmer commitments in that direction. I'm fed up with being told that people don't know Claude Dubois and they'll change channels. He's someone who has left his mark on his era and is still leaving his mark on the singing world. A gala like this one makes it so that, even if it's true on the radio, that's fine; I see no difficulty in that. It would be interesting to know the ratings for that gala.

You're saying almost in a veiled way that this won't be on television next year. As a friend of CBC/Radio-Canada, I need a firmer commitment. It's more a question of commitment to linguistic duality than an issue of sensitivity or lack of sensitivity. That's the minimum we should expect.

Mr. Hubert T. Lacroix: Thank you for your comments, Mr. Coderre.

First of all, I'm the boss. It falls on my desk, it stops at my desk, and I accept full responsibility for it. That moreover is what Richard Stursberg did in working with the independent producers. He took responsibility for the gala. You're right: it comes back to me. Accountability is no problem for me and it's part of my work. That's obvious.

The rating is 298,000 persons, but I don't have that information broken down by province.

You say we must make a commitment to respect linguistic duality. Mr. Coderre, I told you this morning that there had to be greater awareness. I didn't tell you that we weren't sensitive to this kind of thing. An event like a gala increases sensitivity. I can assure you that we will broadcast this kind of event better in future. I moreover said that in my opening address.

I know the content of the act. Under that act, programming should "strive to be of equivalent quality in English and in French" and "be in English and in French, reflecting the different needs and circumstances" of Canadians across the country.

•(1020)

Hon. Denis Coderre: You know that CBC/Radio-Canada has enemies. When it comes to funding and justifying amounts, help us help you. That's what I wanted to tell you.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Coderre.

I would also like to ask you a question, Mr. Lacroix. I'd like to go back to the brief that was presented by the Canadian Songwriters' Hall of Fame. That group wants to promote Canadian artists, whether they are English- or French- speaking, across the country. It went and knocked on your door in order to associate with you. We saw that this morning: CBC/Radio-Canada has a mandate to promote linguistic duality. Normally that should be a perfect marriage.

However, this morning we hear that we're coming to a divorce instead, to the point where the officials of the Canadian Songwriters' Hall of Fame say they may look for another broadcaster. This event was broadcast on the English network, but how is it that it wasn't broadcast in its entirety, in both official languages and on both networks? That's precisely your mandate. If I put myself in the shoes of a francophone viewer who sees the list of artists present, there were Patrick Bruel, Claude Dubois, of course, but there were Florence K. and Isabelle Boulay as well. I think you could easily get several hundreds of thousands of viewers in Quebec alone.

How is it that we've come to this point here this morning? There was a trigger factor. I was listening to you this morning. You said that ultimately you were going to wait and see if the Canadian Songwriters' Hall of Fame came to you. Why isn't the CBC more proactive? The Canadian Songwriters' Hall of Fame has a gala that is a perfect fit with your mandate, which is to make anglophone artists known to the francophone audience and vice versa. However, you say instead that you are going to wait. It may go and see others; it may turn to the private sector.

I believe the two linguistic communities may lose a very good product. I would like to hear your comments on that.

Mr. Hubert T. Lacroix: Mr. Chairman, I've had these conversations with the people on our team since the coverage of this impact. There is one point that I've talked about, I don't remember with which member: we increasingly realize that television may not be the best possible medium for an event that lasts three and a quarter hours. In their brief, the Hall of Fame told you—and this is still the case this year—that we asked Hall of Fame representatives whether we could change the format, whether we could consider another way of broadcasting three hours and 15 minutes. They talked about two hours; we talked about different things. It's really important for us that, if we want to carry out our mandate, there be people who watch this gala. However, we have evidence that these galas, especially those of three hours and 15 minutes, do not enable us to promote our artists. There are all kinds of other platforms for doing that.

The Chair: One thing is certain: I know there are galas, such as the ADISQ gala, which lasts a good long time and has good ratings. I'm sure that gala format can be very popular. Thank you, Mr. Lacroix.

Mr. Petit or Mr. Lebel would like to speak in order to wrap up.

Mr. Denis Lebel: Mr. Lacroix, you've been around for five months, and I was here a few months before you. You know you have 55 months left in your mandate. I'm sure the people opposite will organize things so that mine is shorter, but I expect to be here to ask you questions in a number of months.

Having said that, I am pleased with what I've heard this morning, Mr. Lacroix. The sensitivity you show to the country's two official languages means, I think, that you are aware of their importance and that you are going to support us in your mandate.

After the gala, were there any discussions between your organization and the Canadian Songwriters' Hall of Fame? I know the ball is back in its court and that it's making some choices. Have you given it any advice or recommendations for the gala's future?

Mr. Hubert T. Lacroix: I understood from the conversations with our vice-president of the English service that there have been format suggestions, but that the discussions are not very advanced and that it was up to gala organizers to consider how they wanted to approach the broadcaster they chose or the projects they want to present to the various broadcasters for their gala next year.

• (1025)

Mr. Denis Lebel: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Mr. Petit.

Mr. Daniel Petit: With your permission, I have a question to ask and a comment to make.

I don't want to see you all here before the Standing Committee on Official Languages every year answering questions from the representatives of the government or opposition. The message we're trying to send you is simple. Do you know what it took in the Province of Quebec for it to decide to redo all the roads? An overpass had to collapse. That caused such a shock wave that they're repairing all roads in Quebec. I've never seen so many work sites since that event occurred.

What we're telling you is that the Hall of Fame program caused a shock wave in our corner of the world. Perhaps at some point Radio-Canada and the CBC should sit down together and clarify something in order to prevent problems of this kind from reoccurring. I don't want to see you back here every month; I'm sure you have other things to do. You have 55 months to carry out your mandate.

You must try to find a solution, but not just in terms of sensitivity. You're a lawyer. Perhaps I'd like it to be not merely a question of sensitivity in your future regulations, but a reality. That's what's important. Otherwise the same problem will reappear.

Earlier you heard the comments of Mr. Gravel and Mr. Nadeau. They told you that situations like that made them become what they are. If we are to save the country, you can at least help us. That's the comment I wanted to pass on to you. It's not just for the fun of it that we've asked you to appear: it's because there has been a shock wave.

Mr. Hubert T. Lacroix: Mr. Petit, I'm convinced you have something else to do than to see me, but it was a pleasure for me to meet you this morning.

As for the act and our obligations, the Broadcasting Act is very clear on the balance, the importance of English and French in our programming. Given my background as a lawyer, I can assure you that I understand that issue very well.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Lacroix. We were pleased to have you as well. I believe that Mr. Rodriguez would like to make a brief closing remark.

Mr. Pablo Rodriguez: Something made me smile. I know that you attach considerable importance to the two official languages. You've shown that, Mr. Lacroix. The fact remains that the French version of your document—and I'm sure you noted this in reading it—states: “[...] dans le cadre de ce seul événement de nous faire dévier de notre mandat. Ce mandat est très large.” It's simply that we often see this kind of error.

Mr. Hubert T. Lacroix: I admit that it happened this morning when I was making certain changes to the document. The version I'm working on is bilingual because I want my opening remarks to reflect the two official languages. You're right. If there are typographical errors in the document, I accept full responsibility for them.

The Chair: Thank you for that clarification, Mr. Rodriguez.

We'll now close this morning's meeting. Mr. Lacroix, on behalf of committee members, I thank you for debating our concerns in a spirit of dialogue. We wish you well for the rest of your term.

Thank committee members. We'll see each other again next Thursday for the study of the Canadian Coast Guard. I would simply like to mention to you that, next Monday, we'll have the version of the report on our study of the Canada-Community Agreements.

Hon. Denis Coderre: Mr. Chairman, people from Fisheries and Oceans and National Defence would like to be present, but, for the moment, we should only talk to those from the Coast Guard. I don't want there to be 25 witnesses on Thursday. Pardon the pun: I don't want to drag in any red herrings.

The Chair: The Canadian Coast Guard people will be present, and the role of the other witnesses will be to round out the information if there are questions related to Coast Guard rescue activities.

Hon. Denis Coderre: Thank you very much.

The Chair: Thank you.

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

**Also available on the Parliament of Canada Web Site at the following address:
Aussi disponible sur le site Web du Parlement du Canada à l'adresse suivante :
<http://www.parl.gc.ca>**

The Speaker of the House hereby grants permission to reproduce this document, in whole or in part, for use in schools and for other purposes such as private study, research, criticism, review or newspaper summary. Any commercial or other use or reproduction of this publication requires the express prior written authorization of the Speaker of the House of Commons.

Le Président de la Chambre des communes accorde, par la présente, l'autorisation de reproduire la totalité ou une partie de ce document à des fins éducatives et à des fins d'étude privée, de recherche, de critique, de compte rendu ou en vue d'en préparer un résumé de journal. Toute reproduction de ce document à des fins commerciales ou autres nécessite l'obtention au préalable d'une autorisation écrite du Président.