



House of Commons
CANADA

Standing Committee on Official Languages

LANG • NUMBER 003 • 3rd SESSION • 40th PARLIAMENT

EVIDENCE

Tuesday, March 16, 2010

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Chair

Mr. Steven Blaney

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• (0900)

[English]

The Chair (Mr. Steven Blaney (Lévis—Bellechasse, CPC)): Welcome, everybody, to the third meeting of the Standing Committee on Official Languages.

This morning, pursuant to Standing Order 108(3)(f), we will study support of the federal government to the francophone media.

[Translation]

This morning, we have the pleasure of welcoming the representatives of the written press and the media. Mr. Potié, Executive Director of the Association de la presse francophone, is with us this morning. He is accompanied by Ms. Geneviève Gazaille, Director of Communications and Government Relations. Welcome to the committee.

Also with us today is the Secretary General of the Alliance des radios communautaires du Canada, Mr. François Côté, who is accompanied by Mr. Simon Forgues, Development and Communications Officer.

First, I would ask you to give your opening presentation, and then we will go to the round of questioning.

Mr. Potié, the floor is yours.

Mr. Francis Potié (Executive Director, Association de la presse francophone): Thank you for the invitation.

As you know, the APF is an association representing French-language newspapers that work in official language minority communities. Our members are in nine provinces and two and a half territories. We were supposed to appear before the committee in December. The situation has changed somewhat since that time, but I will nonetheless take a few minutes to discuss the Canada Periodical Fund, which will come into force on April 1. I will then outline a number of issues that are linked to Internet development and a cross-Canada project involving a number of organizations that we are working on, namely, a performance evaluation of media in a minority situation.

I will begin with the Canada Periodical Fund. For some years now, the APF has been recommending to the government that the fund's predecessor have a component or a silo on official languages that takes into account the reality in our communities. Over the years, we felt that the government was listening, but in terms of concrete results, we did not necessarily see a program that provided better support to the newspapers that are members of our association.

As concerns the most recent program review, consultations began in February 2008. We participated actively in these consultations and, in our opinion, the results were very positive for the French-language press and the English-language newspaper in Quebec. In very concrete terms, what this means for the APF is that the number of members eligible for this program could increase from 13 to 17. The financial support provided is recurring and permanent. We are very encouraged by the changes made to the program, but I would just like to specify that I am referring here to the criteria. We will have to see about the actual implementation of the program. We have some new newspapers that have applied for the program and think they are eligible, but we will have to see whether they actually will be.

Next, in our recommendations to the department, we suggested a target of approximately 5% of the total budget envelope for official language minority publications. We don't know what the level of funding will be yet. This will be decided once the department knows how many publications it will have to subsidize with the money at its disposal.

There are two other things to monitor. The government pledged to replace the funding that Canada Post was withdrawing from the program. I believe that this is for the next two years. The amount is \$15 million per year and that is a concern for us for 2012-2013. From the viewpoint of the APF and its Quebec counterpart, as well as the entire publishing industry in Canada, this will be a concern for us.

There are two other interesting initiatives in the Canada Periodical Fund. One is called Collective Initiative and the other, Business Innovation. We do not yet know the details of the program, so I cannot really comment on the subject, but what I can say is that Collective Initiative is a fund that has been available to the APF for some years now. It has been very useful in starting up development projects for the French-language press. However, the details have not yet been made public.

I am now going to address something that is a growing concern for us, that is, Internet advertising. What we know is that, over the years, the Official Languages Act has been interpreted and applied to ensure that francophones in official language minority communities receive federal messages and advertising in the newspapers published in their language. However, with Internet advertising, things are not so clear.

• (0905)

The reports I have seen indicate that this advertising does not appear on the websites of community media. It does appear on search engines such as Google and Yahoo. So they simply bypass the websites of newspapers and probably also those of community radio stations. This is something that Treasury Board and the Department of Public Works should look at because this could have a very negative impact on our media. Like the rest of the country, we are obliged to make the transition to the Web. Obviously, the presence of federal advertising is essential to the development of this media.

How much time do I have left, Mr. Chair? Two minutes?

The Chair: You still have four minutes if you wish to use them, Mr. Potié.

Mr. Francis Potié: Fine.

Lastly, another project we're working on and that we find very important for the development of the APF and our Quebec anglophone counterpart concerns an on-going survey and marketing structure. We call it official language minority media performance evaluation. We have been working on it for some years now.

We have a financial commitment from the Official Languages Support Programs Branch and the Canada Magazine Fund, which ends on March 31.

For some time now, we have been working under the economic development initiative of Industry Canada. The progress is slow and it is difficult to obtain information on the procedure to follow to have access to this funding. It is complex and unclear. As far as I know, there are no mechanisms in place. There is a Canada-wide budget, but no forms or procedures to access it. This is something we are working on. We think that it will have an impact on the development and financial viability of our respective media, but we need other departments to get involved besides Canadian Heritage.

I will close with the following. As concerns the Canada Periodical Fund, we are encouraged by the review that has taken place, but we have yet to see what will result from this in tangible terms. Internet advertising is a growing concern and it is important that Industry Canada get involved in our project with the Alliance des radios communautaires du Canada and the QCNA.

The Chair: Very good. Thank you, Mr. Potié.

Mr. Côté, the floor is yours.

• (0910)

Mr. François Côté (Secretary General, Alliance des radios communautaires du Canada): Good morning, and thank you for having invited us to appear today.

Active nationally since 1991, the Alliance des radios communautaires du Canada has 31 active members in 9 provinces and 2 territories. We have 25 radio stations on the air and 6 that are being set up. In the current context, it is more important than ever that the Government of Canada implement concrete measures to provide recurring financial support to social economy businesses, especially community and campus radio stations, which play a vital role in the development and survival of numerous Canadian communities.

The positive impact of community radio stations on communities is such that it would be false to claim that the government should not be focusing thereon.

First, let me point out that campus and community radio stations play an important role in creating several hundred jobs across Canada.

In addition, by ensuring local advertisers widespread promotion of their activities, goods and services, community radio stations help curb the erosion of the economy and stop the flight of capital abroad.

Clearly, campus and community radio stations in Canada are not only major players in the economy of their respective regions, but also genuine talent incubators that, each year, spawn new careers in the communications sector.

Mr. Simon Forgues (Development and Communications Officer, Alliance des radios communautaires du Canada): In the definition of the CRTC, the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission, it is clearly stated that a community radio station "must be owned and controlled by a not-for-profit organization which provides for membership, management, operation and programming primarily by members of the community at large." So it goes without saying.

This is certainly one of the main reasons why so many Canadians volunteer for the stations so actively. I think you will be surprised at the figures we will be presenting to you later on.

However, it is not easy for small organizations like ours to provide both training and supervision of our volunteer and human resources without adequate and permanent funding, which unfortunately is not forthcoming right now. Our radios, much more than other stations, are the ones that foster the emergence of new musical and local talents by showcasing their works. Not one commercial radio station in Canada can boast that it broadcasts emerging talents the way campus and community radio stations do. Just listen to any private radio station and you will see that I am right.

Not all of our radio stations are the cornerstones of the social and community activity in their areas, because they do not all share the same markets or realities, but the fact remains that they must all make considerable and sometimes superhuman efforts to fulfil their broadcasting mandate which seeks to be both open and inclusive. If we are to offer effective coverage of local, community and social aspects, something that neither CBC/Radio-Canada nor private radio stations can or want to do, then it is essential that community and campus radio stations receive funding accordingly.

Regardless of what many people think and say, and despite all the good will of the public and private sectors—far be it from me to criticize them—they are not the ones who advertise social and community events or publicize vaccination clinics or children's services. This often falls to community media, and they need to continue to do so now and in the future.

Mr. François Côté: As concerns new media, in the space of less than a decade, cell phones with Internet access, embedded cameras, Wi-Fi connections and other technologies have become more and more common, and this has changed the communications and media sector in ways we never could have imagined. There is also satellite broadcasting, which has also contributed to the decline in the listening audience of over-the-air radio stations by becoming available even in our vehicles and our homes.

In the current context of globalization where major broadcasting players such as Astral and Standard, among others, are merging their activities in order to diversify their supply of products and compete with the phenomenal rise of new media, community radio stations, especially those in official language minority communities, are struggling to prevent the decline of their listening audience and must also fight pitched battles with the Internet, a medium which knows no boundaries or clear rules.

We feel it is important to point out that Canadians' interest in new media is largely due to the fact that it is interactive. Public participation in content is at the very heart of our radio stations' missions. We are also concerned by the operating expenses, and the cost of human resource training and research and development associated with these changes, and about the difficulty of raising enough revenue to offset the losses due to the change in strategy arising from the increased emphasis on new media.

Community and campus radio stations have less than \$75,000 per year to cover their broadcasting costs. Many stations do not have enough funding to purchase studio supplies, regularly upgrade programming and production software, provide adequate supervision to volunteers or broadcast quality local and regional news programs. And yet this is part of our mission.

Community and campus radio stations can count on an average of only \$300,000 per year to carry out their mission. We will give you more detailed figures a little later. This is an average, but it breaks down to less than \$35 per hour of programming. This budget, which represents 11.5% of the average income of commercial FM radio stations, does not allow us to offer enough quality programming, support participation or carry out our mandate in terms of diverse viewpoints, the broadcasting of non-commercial cultural content or local content.

● (0915)

Mr. Simon Forgues: Ladies and gentlemen, it is clear that the current funding model has limits. First, fundraising campaigns have, to all intents and purposes, no potential for growth. There is only so much money that can be raised through bingo nights, fund matching and other such types of activities. We cannot ask a community to exceed its capacity. They are already stretched to the limit by a great many other organizations. We are non-profit organizations, and there are many others in the communities where our radio stations are located.

Advertising sales are also considerably limited because our stations cover markets or programming niches that private radio stations are not interested in because they are deemed to be unprofitable. So the growth potential for this revenue is limited. And yet community radio offers a diversity of voices and programs to the

public, which is why it is in the public interest. We firmly believe that it should thus have access to public funding.

The ARC du Canada, the ANREC/NCRA, that is the Association nationale des radios étudiantes et communautaires, and the Association des radiodiffuseurs communautaires du Québec, represent some 140 community and campus radio stations in Canada, with over 500 employees. I spoke earlier about our volunteers. Well, I'm not talking about 200 or 300 people who volunteer in community radio stations in Canada, I'm talking about 10,000 people. This means that the training and supervision of these volunteers falls squarely on the shoulders of our radio stations. It is for the very purpose of ensuring the development and sustainability of the third sector of radio broadcasting—because there are three sectors: public, private and community, as acknowledged by the CRTC—that these three associations created the Community Radio Fund of Canada. In order to carry out their responsibilities, we estimate that our radio stations should each have access to at least \$30,000 per year. So we're not asking for the moon. This would allow each station to have at least one permanent position.

Mr. François Côté: This is why, over the past little while, we have been working extra hard to urge the Government of Canada to make an annual investment of \$4.2 million in the Community Radio Fund of Canada. To date, only Astral Media has stepped up to the plate. It contributes to two programs administered by the Community Radio Fund of Canada. The fact is that we are not even talking about \$200,000 per year.

Other financial backers have also expressed their interest in contributing to the CRTC-imposed Canadian Content Development Program. However, let us not fool ourselves. Unless the Government of Canada provides recurrent funding, we fear that we will witness a worsening of the situation in our radios where the employees and volunteers will increasingly burn out.

To conclude, we are recommending that the Government of Canada allocate \$4.2 million per year to the Community Radio Fund of Canada to ensure the maintenance and development of community and campus radio in Canada. Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, gentlemen.

We will now begin our first round.

Mr. D'Amours.

● (0920)

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

First of all, I would like to thank you for coming here. My first question deals with community radio.

I am sure that you are already aware of the situation in my riding. I represent one-third of the community radio stations in New Brunswick. I am probably the MP with the largest number of community radios in the entire country. We must focus on the fact that our community radio is really the radio for the community. Indeed, they develop in small markets and—if we are focusing on the francophone—in areas where francophones are often fewer in number. This is also the only way for a community to have its voice heard. Private radio does not see any advantage in setting up in smaller communities if there is no way to turn a profit.

As for the questions you raised, it is obvious that community radio cannot depend on fundraising to guarantee its survival forever. As you mentioned earlier, volunteers are always being asked to do fundraising in order to cover operating costs and perhaps raise the money required in order to modernize infrastructure. When I talk about infrastructure, I am not just referring to buildings, but to the equipment as well.

You talked about the Community Radio Fund of Canada, but would it be accurate to say that the volunteers are going to wind up burning out and that the voice of certain communities may disappear because of the financial problems of these radio stations?

Mr. François Côté: The burnout has already started. Right now, this burnout is being experienced in the western part of the country in particular, but it is slowly moving east. Yes, we will reach a point where we will no longer have any volunteers for radio. In the communities, it is often the same individuals who sit on the boards for a variety of organizations and who do the volunteer work for many groups. At one point, they are being pulled in all directions and they are unable to give their time to the community radio stations. The government must pay close attention to the funding of our radio.

You mentioned New Brunswick, where we have some of our most successful radio stations. Our two most successful radio stations are located in New Brunswick. However, for most New Brunswick radio stations, we are talking about a double-minority situation. When I say double minority, that means that they are in a minority within a minority situation. These people find it difficult to make ends meet financially. Take, for example, the case of CJPN, in Fredericton, with scarcely one employee who has to move heaven and earth in order to make ends meet at the end of the month. This is no easy task. We have the same situation in Saint John, where the station has also gone through a few problems. We need at least one resource per radio and we need one permanent employee to look after operations.

Mr. Jean-Claude D'Amours: There is a need for volunteers. However, there has to be somebody who is able to train these volunteers. If we don't have this person, we would have a free-for-all. In the long run, we could go off in all directions but without achieving any results.

If I may, I would say the following. A few years ago, during my first term, namely, when we were in power, the Standing Committee on Official Languages adopted a resolution asking the federal government to allot a certain percentage of its advertising to minority groups. That also applied to the newspapers. We wanted to ensure that the federal government would guarantee a certain percentage. I recall that members representing community radio appeared before us and told us that if they at least had a guarantee that they would

obtain this percentage, that would provide them with a source of funding.

You talked about a \$4.2 million amount. If community radio and francophone media were guaranteed this percentage, that would be beneficial and it would enable you to eliminate certain obligations, such as fundraising activities and other similar events. So people could focus on their work.

● (0925)

Mr. Simon Forgues: There is an advantage for the government when community radio is established in the communities. When we announce job vacancies that have been advertised by the local employment insurance office, the government stands to gain because someone may eventually find a job and pack a lunch to go to work every morning. When we announce early childhood education or vaccination clinics, and our radios do not bill the local organizations, we are already doing work for the government. Indeed, if we were to benefit more from this advertising support, it would be profitable.

Mr. Jean-Claude D'Amours: To conclude, I would like to say something more about available job offers. In my region, private companies and private radio stations now charge companies for advertising job vacancies whereas the community radio stations continue to provide this service free of charge. This service enables the population to be aware of job opportunities and there is no obligation to pay in order to find out if there are any available jobs.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. D'Amours.

We will now give the floor to Mr. Nadeau.

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

First of all, Mr. Chair, I would like to say hello to Chantale, who is now working for the Office of the Official Languages Commissioner. She is Mr. Godin's former colleague. I just wanted to say hello to her.

I would also like to welcome Ms. Gazaille, Mr. Potié, Mr. Côté and Mr. Forgues, and I say hats off to you for the work you do in French-language communities in Canada. You are part of an important network, namely the social and community fabric..., you work against assimilation and for the development of communities.

Having lived in Saskatchewan and having also worked in community radio, I understand how important the community aspect is. Indeed, without the support of the APF, the Association de la presse francophone, and ARC, the Association des radios communautaires, communities would not hear their own voices in this large province where they live. Since the majority of Canada's population is anglophone, these communities are not covered by the media. I would therefore like to underscore the significant contribution that you make.

I am also aware of the fact that essentially, this work is done by volunteers. Does Radio-Huronie still exist in Penetanguishene? I know that it was facing difficulties at one point. It is up to volunteers to look after all of the broadcasting, from A to Z. And as for the newspapers, the provincial correspondents—*L'Eau vive* comes to mind—who often come from all regions of Saskatchewan, are not paid, but must, through their work, reflect the community. It is extremely important that the federal government be aware of that. I know that it is aware, but it must recognize the importance of this work. We are talking about the social fabric. It is what reflects the communities... enables them to see themselves in this great progression... to see all of the reality of their regions.

I would like to ask all colleagues some questions about the interdepartmental aspect, with respect to the resources and support that it is possible to obtain from the federal government. Because we are at the federal level, here. I know that you are also working with provincial, local and municipal authorities, that you have even established relationships amongst yourselves and undertake joint initiatives for your mutual benefit.

Could you talk to us about the interdepartmental side, about other federal departments? You mentioned Industry Canada earlier; Canadian Heritage is not the only department that must reflect official language communities. There is part VII of the Official Languages Act which says that communities must be consulted in order to promote their development.

I will turn the floor over to you. Perhaps, Mr. Potié, Ms. Gazaille and Mr. Côté, you could tell us about the support you need from us in this matter.

Mr. Francis Potié: We call on the various departments as often as we can. Obviously, there is the difficulty that arises from the fact that these are always special projects. Special projects do have some advantages, but there is also a disadvantage: not all development activities begin on April 1 and finish by March 31, requiring no further attention.

There is one thing that we would like to see become a thing of the past as far as the interdepartmental aspect is concerned. Sometimes, we are told by the other departments to contact Canadian Heritage for assistance since our content is francophone, and this is not the type of thing that they do. For example, this is more or less the response we were getting at one point with respect to the economic development initiative. We feel that this response runs completely counter to part VII of the Official Languages Act and every government directive that has been issued since the early 1980s, unless I am mistaken.

It is important that the francophone press and all of our organizations not be tied strictly to an official languages program and that we be integrated into other support programs.

• (0930)

Mr. François Côté: As far as we are concerned, the other departments always tell us that they do not have anything set aside for radio, that there are no existing programs for radio and that we do not fit in anywhere but that Canadian Heritage has an Official Languages Support Program, the OLSP. We are always referred to the OLSP.

We have not been able to accomplish very much with respect to the interdepartmental aspect. At one point, we had to deal with Industry Canada with respect to computer purchases and our website at the beginning, but after that, the program disappeared. Since then, it has been fairly difficult from the interdepartmental point of view. We are always turned away because we represent minority official language media. It is always suggested that we go to Canadian Heritage.

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

We will continue with Mr. Godin.

Mr. Yvon Godin (Acadie—Bathurst, NDP): Good morning to you all. I apologize for being late, but the plane did not travel very fast from Bathurst to Ottawa, this morning. That is why I am late.

Ms. Monique Guay (Rivière-du-Nord, BQ): Did you make a parachute jump?

Mr. Yvon Godin: I parachuted.

Mr. Potié, I missed the beginning of your presentation on funding and on whether or not you are satisfied that this money will be or already is allocated.

Mr. Francis Potié: Do you want me to respond?

Mr. Yvon Godin: Yes, please.

Mr. Francis Potié: I said that as far as the Canada Periodical Fund review is concerned, we did get the basic amount we wanted to receive. There is a range of eligibility criteria that are more flexible and tailored to the reality of the official language publication market. People have submitted their applications, but have yet to receive a reply. Nevertheless, a greater number of publications should be eligible for this program. Not all publications are covered as yet, but more so than before.

Did I answer your question?

Mr. Yvon Godin: Yes, but I was referring to the funds that are supposed to be available as of April 1.

Mr. Francis Potié: We are hoping that this is the case. I would however like to comment on that matter.

Mr. Yvon Godin: I sent a letter to the minister on January 25.

Mr. Francis Potié: That is something.

Mr. Yvon Godin: That is exactly what I requested. I received an answer on February 26.

Mr. Francis Potié: Yes, this is obviously a concern. I would simply like to explain how this works.

Mr. Yvon Godin: Please do.

Mr. Francis Potié: Under the Publications and Newspaper Support Program, the money used to be transferred every week from Canadian Heritage to Canada Post. The purpose was to reduce postage for newspaper delivery. Now, the money will be given directly by Canadian Heritage to the newspaper at the beginning of the year, which is all right. We tried to really focus on this issue in our dealings with the department and that is one of the reasons why we wrote you.

I am not saying that this is going to happen, but the government is sometimes late in issuing cheques. If the cheque is late by one, two or three months, it will have an impact on the newspaper's cashflow, which is very important. If we take the case of the newspaper *Le Voyageur* for instance, we are talking about \$12,000 or \$15,000 per month. Sometimes we have to pay bills totalling \$12,000 or \$15,000 per month. Not all of the companies are financially solid and have enough cashflow to make ends meet. That is our concern and we are not the only ones who are worried.

The program in principle is good, but if the funds allocated by the government arrive late, starting April 1, many newspapers will have cashflow problems.

• (0935)

Mr. Yvon Godin: So we are not out of the woods yet, and time will tell.

Mr. Francis Potié: We are being told that the money will be there.

Mr. Yvon Godin: The response is good, but now we have to wait and see. Is that right?

Mr. Francis Potié: That's it.

Mr. Yvon Godin: You represent the Association de la presse francophone. Does your organization only represent the community sector?

Mr. Francis Potié: No, we have newspapers that are—

Mr. Yvon Godin: Private newspapers?

Mr. Francis Potié: Private newspapers. We are talking about not-for-profit organizations that are run solely by volunteers, and we do have one member that is a large company.

Mr. Yvon Godin: Is the *L'Acadie Nouvelle* a member?

Mr. Francis Potié: *L'Acadie Nouvelle* is not a member.

Mr. Yvon Godin: It is not a member.

Mr. Francis Potié: We have just changed our criteria and now accept dailies. We used to only accept weeklies. We are in transition.

Mr. Yvon Godin: It may have every reason in the world to become a member in order to get some help. By that I mean that the war with the Irvings is not an easy one in New Brunswick, when it comes to the written press. The Irving company owns 17 newspapers.

Mr. Francis Potié: Yes.

Mr. Yvon Godin: But that has nothing to do with the concentration of the press. There are 17 newspapers and one francophone newspaper, *L'Acadie Nouvelle*.

Are there any discussions with newspapers like that?

Mr. Francis Potié: Discussions with the Irving company?

Mr. Yvon Godin: No, with the *L'Acadie Nouvelle* newspaper. The Irving company can take very good care of itself.

Mr. Francis Potié: Yes. We have had some discussions with the *L'Acadie Nouvelle* newspaper. I think that the request will be made.

Mr. Yvon Godin: I will come back to the issue of community radio later on. I will not forget you.

The Chair: Pardon me for interrupting you, Mr. Godin, but your time is already up. You can have the floor during your next round.

We will continue with Mr. Weston.

Mr. John Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country, CPC): Ladies and gentlemen, thank you for being with us today. I am a member for British Columbia, and as a member of the committee, it is the first time that I have had an opportunity to put a question to witnesses.

I am particularly pleased to be able to commend you on your work. I am very proud of the French language and its development in British Columbia. All three of my children attend a school with French immersion. I think that, more and more, French is a language that everyone wants to speak, even in British Columbia where, traditionally, very few people used to speak it.

I just attended the opening of the Paralympic Games. I was surprised by the quantity of French during the ceremonies. It was a magnificent performance and we heard a lot of French. This brings me to my first question.

Can you tell us about the Franco Medias 2010 Project, which was held during the Olympic and Paralympic Games in Vancouver? I believe that at least 23 journalists were able to participate in this project, which was a resounding success.

What are your thoughts?

Mr. François Côté: The Franco Medias Project was an unmitigated success. It was a remarkable project both for the communities and for the participants. It was an extraordinary experience for the participants who, likely for the only time in their lives, were able to attend the Olympic Games and report on them in a different manner. They covered the sporting events, but it was much more than that. They were able to participate in the everyday life of British Columbians, street artists, and really everything that had to do with the French language in the province. That's what they talked about, as well as about the various francophone communities throughout the world. So it was an absolutely remarkable success, for our radio stations, the APF newspapers and the participants on site.

Mr. John Weston: Mr. Potié, what do you think?

Mr. Francis Potié: I would say the same. According to feedback from the participants, the on-site coordinators and our members, the whole thing was a resounding success. As concerns the written press, there were over 200 articles written by young journalists. Many young people who participated in the Franco Medias Project are now making connections with newspapers in order to carry out internships or get more involved with our association. We feel that this type of project should be conducted again in future.

• (0940)

Mr. John Weston: I think that this project also greatly encouraged anglophones to hear French being spoken.

Mr. Francis Potié: Yes.

Mr. John Weston: Are there any lessons to be learned from this experience?

Mr. Francis Potié: We have done many things, but this was the first time that we sent journalists to the Olympic Games. According to our in-house evaluation, if we were to do it again, we would change certain things. I believe that we need to be in contact with our youth, because they are the future of our media and our communities. For our communities, the vitality and relevance of our media depend largely on that. We have concerns with regard to the development of the capacity of our newspapers. When we refer to new technologies, it's not just about playing with gadgets. We need to think of our readers. Our communities must have the resources they need for this.

In terms of developing French language and culture, this is a situation that we have always had to deal with. Radio stations began going on air in the 1930s. In Saskatchewan, in the 1950s, francophone communities raised funds to set up a radio station. We're always 20 or 25 years behind. In such conditions, we lose people and this has an effect on assimilation and young people's sense of identity.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. Weston, for your first intervention on our committee.

We will begin our second round with Mr. Bélanger.

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

Ladies and gentlemen, good morning. My first question goes to Ms. Gazaille. We haven't heard from you yet, so now is the time. Could you give us the list of the 17 members of the APF?

Ms. Geneviève Gazaille (Director of Communications and Government Relations, Association de la presse francophone): I don't think that I can name all of them. In fact, there are 24, not 17. For example, there is *Le Nord* in Hearst, *L'Eau vive* in Saskatchewan, *Le Franco* in Alberta, and *La Liberté* in Manitoba. There is also *La Voix acadienne* and *Le Moniteur acadien*, and I could go on.

Hon. Mauril Bélanger: Could you please send us the list?

Ms. Geneviève Gazaille: No problem, we can do that. I can perhaps give you a copy, I may have one with me.

Hon. Mauril Bélanger: I subscribe to some of your weekly newspapers. Is it possible to subscribe via Internet?

Ms. Geneviève Gazaille: We have a website, francopresse.ca, which is the news site of the APF. In Ottawa, we have a full-time journalist, Danny Joncas, who reports on national issues.

Hon. Mauril Bélanger: Is he here this morning?

Ms. Geneviève Gazaille: I don't think he's here, but I do believe he is listening to us. He adds content to our site every day. There is a cartoon each week. Members can also contribute when they so desire. Each member is also free to add any content they wish. You can access this site any time and see the content there.

Hon. Mauril Bélanger: Is it possible to subscribe electronically to some or all of the newspapers that are members of your association?

Mr. Francis Potié: Readers can subscribe to some of them and receive them in PDF format. Another newspaper has an agreement with a company in England. Believe it or not, we are in a data base,

but it is not possible to receive the full version of all the newspapers via the Internet.

Hon. Mauril Bélanger: Can you tell me which 17 members, according to what you said this morning, meet the criteria for the Canada Periodical Fund?

• (0945)

Mr. Francis Potié: Do you want us to give you the list?

Hon. Mauril Bélanger: The number of newspapers rose from 13 to 17. What are the four new newspapers?

Mr. Francis Potié: There are three papers in Southwestern Ontario: *Le Métropolitain*, *Le Régional* and *L'Action* which is in London-Sarnia. There are two other new ones, *L'Aurore boréale* in the Yukon and *L'Aquilon* in the Northwest Territories. One is withdrawing because they have changed their method of distribution. They moved from subscriptions with door-to-door delivery and the newspapers... This does not meet the program criteria.

Hon. Mauril Bélanger: Mr. Chairman, I am wondering if it would not be in the interest of the committee to have someone come who could give us very specific information on the Canada Periodical Fund, as far as francophone and anglophone minority media are concerned, including both print and radio. This is what I would like to see, and I think it would be very useful for such people to appear.

As for radio and print, do you have any statistics on the amount of advertising you have been allocated over the last two or three fiscal years? I imagine that that is how you work, by fiscal year.

Mr. François Côté: Are you talking about government advertising?

Hon. Mauril Bélanger: Yes, I am referring to the Government of Canada, including all departments and agencies.

Mr. François Côté: Last year, national radio advertising was \$450,000. This year, it will be close to \$485,000.

Hon. Mauril Bélanger: Is it distributed by radio station or do you purchase it and redistribute it yourselves?

Mr. François Côté: It is purchased by our national advertising company, which redistributes the money to radio stations according to certain financial criteria, and according to the market size of course.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Bélanger.

Hon. Mauril Bélanger: Thank you.

The Chair: We will now continue with Mr. Nadeau.

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

I would just like to know if we, as legislators and federal members of Parliament, can help you out in certain areas? There are short-, medium- and long-term projects.

Are there some things that you would like to let us know about so that we could work alongside you to help get things going for particular projects or applications? It could concern requests or perhaps suggestions of solutions that would allow the radio and print sectors to become even stronger in their connections to the community and to be more leading-edge media in light of the competition and the realities you are facing.

Mr. Simon Forgues: We can say the following: we are often provided with tools, but in a sense, we are not allowed to use them. At one point in time, there was a program called Franccommunauté virtuelle which was set up to help develop Internet sites.

However, it did not last. Once the websites were up and running, there was no way to contribute to them. A website cannot just function on a prayer. It needs content. It's as if I offered to give you a car tomorrow morning, but I did not give you any gas to make it run. It wouldn't move. This is the kind of thing that often happens to us.

Mr. François Côté: Currently, the APOL, which is there for community radio stations, pays 50% of the equipment start-up costs for the station. Afterwards, there is no more. We provide half of the tools, and following that, we tell people to fend for themselves. However, things are not so simple. That is why we need ongoing funding that will finally give us the help we need to function day to day. Currently, we are unable to do so.

• (0950)

Mr. Francis Potié: Generally speaking, the Canada Periodical Fund sets out exceptions that take into account the realities of the communities. This should underpin a lot of the actions taken by different departments. That is what part VII of the Official Languages Act encourages the government to do.

More specifically, our members are very concerned with the transition to new technologies. The francophone media has a very strong presence and performance on the Web. To add to what Simon was saying, there has already been a Web development program that had many shortcomings. It was only focused on development. Franccommunauté was really concerned with major technology development projects but it had no ongoing support.

In reality, less spectacular but more sustained support is what the industry would like to have to evolve. According to our members and the APF, that is really what would help us deal with the challenges and market changes that we are now experiencing.

The Chair: Mr. Nadeau, you have one minute left.

Mr. Richard Nadeau: Can you tell us about the various partnerships you are currently working on to demonstrate that you are looking for solutions, through the media or other partners, to ensure that you will be better heard by governments and in a better position to answer to your clientele?

Mr. Francis Potié: I will talk about two cases.

Often, when we have to react to requests for consultations from governments, we talk to the people at the Alliance des radios communautaires du Canada. At the APF, we speak to our anglophone counterpart in Quebec. We ask these people how they see the issue. We usually agree. We have more or less the same concerns. If that is not the case, there are no hard feelings.

Currently—and this has been the case for several years—we are working with the Alliance des radios communautaires du Canada and the QCNA on a major project that involves doing surveys on reading rates and audiences in 80 markets in Canada, and working together to market official language community media. We are working together. We are rather proud of our level of cooperation, but we would like the government to be more receptive, particularly Industry Canada.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Nadeau.

Are you talking about cooperation or convergence, Mr. Potié?

Mr. Francis Potié: Both.

The Chair: We will now go to Ms. Glover.

Mrs. Shelly Glover (Saint Boniface, CPC): I would like to say good morning and to welcome all of the witnesses.

I would like to take a moment to celebrate with you. In fact, it is really thanks to your organizations that my children and I were able to learn to speak French properly. I was born anglophone, but community radio stations in Manitoba helped me enormously. It really is thanks to you that we were able to live in French, discover artists, French theatre, etc. Continue your wonderful work.

As Mr. Nadeau said, this is something our government became involved in so that we could support it. I would really like to know how we can help you. This morning's discussion is of great assistance to me. I am really pleased to hear you talking about the APF, Mr. Potié. I recognize the January 25 press release from Ms. Sylviane Lanthier, president of the APF. She states the following: [...] the APF is confident that the measures provided under the CPF will adequately meet the needs of its members, of francophone community newspapers across the country [...]

This really is a favourable reference to the new program. I thank you for it. If you could pass along my appreciation to Ms. Lanthier, that would be nice.

Moreover, Sophie Gaulin, from *La Liberté*, spoke to me about the Canada Periodical Fund. She was also very impressed by the changes. In Manitoba, *La Liberté* is really the only newspaper published in French. It is therefore of the utmost importance that our minority communities have access to the news in French. Please carry on your work in that regard as well.

Mr. Forgues, you talked about audience ratings and I believe you said you had statistics on that subject. We did not however give you the opportunity to share them with us.

• (0955)

Mr. Simon Forgues: I do not recall having spoken of our audience rating.

Mrs. Shelly Glover: Are you aware of them?

Mr. Simon Forgues: In a province like New Brunswick, one measure of audience loyalty to our community radio stations, in comparison with the CBC, allows us to see that more or less 110,000 people listen to our community radio stations whereas 4,000 people—and perhaps I am exaggerating—spend time every week listening to the CBC. That gives you an indication of the loyalty of the audience to community radio stations and to what degree they encourage them.

Mr. François Côté: I would like to add that that is why we work with the APF and the QCNA. In fact, we would like a study to be done on the ratings of our radio stations across Canada.

Mrs. Shelly Glover: Fine.

Mr. François Côté: That is why this project is so important.

Mrs. Shelly Glover: You mentioned the CBC. I would like to know if you are competing against conventional radio stations like the CBC.

Mr. Simon Forgues: No. Our radio stations have no competition. The ARC's radio stations in Canada are situated in minority language communities. There are of course no other private French radio stations that exist where ours are.

Moreover, we cannot consider the CBC as a competitor. Their mandate and ours are quite different. We have never questioned the relevance of the CBC. That is not the issue. It serves the interests of Canadians very well as a beacon of Canadian culture and by informing people across the country. However, our radio stations are at the local level.

For example, CBC Manitoba is not exactly the place where you would find social discussion boards and things of that nature, compared to CKXL Envol 91 in Saint-Boniface. The mandate is completely different. For all practical purposes, competition does not exist in French for our community radio stations.

Mrs. Shelly Glover: Are there problems in terms of advertising revenues?

Mr. François Côté: Locally?

Mrs. Shelly Glover: Yes.

Mr. François Côté: Yes, it is rather difficult. Situations vary in our New Brunswick stations, for example. In some markets where radio is really number one, advertising is not a problem at all.

However, in a market like Saint John, Moncton or Fredericton, it is a bit more difficult because of the number of radio stations in the market. If you are the only one, it is a bit easier. CKXL is having difficulty in Winnipeg and Saint-Boniface because there are so many radio stations in the market. It isn't limited just to radio stations, but also newspapers, bulletin boards, and everything surrounding advertising. It is highly competitive and very difficult to get advertising—

Mrs. Shelly Glover: I understand.

Mr. François Côté: —without ratings to prove how many are listening to you.

Mrs. Shelly Glover: Yes.

Mr. François Côté: It becomes a problem.

Mrs. Shelly Glover: Yes. I like the idea of cooperating on that. Is my time up already?

The Chair: Yes, Ms. Glover. We will now go to Mr. Godin.

Mr. Yvon Godin: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

You mentioned Radio-Canada. Could you explain the figures of 4,000 and 110,000 people?

Mr. Simon Forgues: Those figures come from a study conducted by the Government of New Brunswick at the time.

Mr. Yvon Godin: They are for New Brunswick. They are not for all of Canada.

Mr. Simon Forgues: No.

• (1000)

Mr. Yvon Godin: In the evening, Radio-Canada virtually turns into a Montreal community radio station; it is not my province's station.

Mr. Simon Forgues: It is a bit like that. As regards Radio-Canada, for francophone communities, especially minority ones in the country, the service offered is not at all a reflection of the community.

Mr. Yvon Godin: I agree with you. The coverage is national.

Mr. Simon Forgues: For example, when we hear people—

Mr. Yvon Godin: Back home, at 8:00 p.m. on CKRO, we listen to Cayouche.

Mr. Simon Forgues: That's right. In Quebec, for example, if that is what it's like for someone in Rimouski who complains that all there is is coverage of Montreal, imagine what it's like for someone who is even farther from Montreal, someone who lives in Saskatchewan or Manitoba. It is even more striking.

Mr. Yvon Godin: I see. You cannot compare the two. It is not the same kind of radio.

Mr. Simon Forgues: No.

Mr. Yvon Godin: What happens when the CRTC sets broadcasting conditions?

Mr. Simon Forgues: Having said that, you cannot compare the mandate, or the funding.

Mr. Yvon Godin: It is a public broadcaster.

Mr. Simon Forgues: Our charm—

Mr. Yvon Godin: We can't forget that. We have a public broadcaster, Radio-Canada. I don't hide my support for it.

Mr. Simon Forgues: Yes.

Mr. Yvon Godin: I can't see community radio taking over for Radio-Canada.

Mr. Simon Forgues: Not at all, no.

Mr. Yvon Godin: It is a national public broadcaster that we must support and be proud of.

Mr. François Côté: Yes.

Mr. Yvon Godin: Community radio is different.

Mr. Simon Forgues: Precisely. Each one has its own mandate.

Mr. Yvon Godin: Community radio was not created to replace Radio-Canada.

Mr. François Côté: No.

Mr. Yvon Godin: It is local radio for the regions, with a good mandate.

Mr. François Côté: Yes.

Mr. Yvon Godin: So people can see themselves in it.

Mr. François Côté: Yes.

Mr. Yvon Godin: There is a big difference between the two. If we wanted to support a single community radio station across Canada, it would perhaps receive the same funding as Radio-Canada. It's not the same thing. We must make a distinction between the two.

Are you at an advantage or disadvantage when it comes to CRTC requirements for music, programs and news? Would you like to see changes made?

Mr. François Côté: We would clearly like to see some changes. That is why we undertook a review of the Community Radio and Campus Radio policy in January, before the CRTC. Essentially, we asked the CRTC to ease the rules, because we feel existing rules are too restrictive for our radio stations given the limited resources we have. Ultimately, we are being asked to do a lot more with considerably less than private radio stations and Radio-Canada. We asked them to ease the rules.

Mr. Yvon Godin: May I ask what kind of measures you asked for?

Mr. François Côté: Yes, they involved music, among other things. The CRTC has asked us to limit our pop or rock music to 80%. The rest, in other words 20%, up until now was made up of 12% country music, and 8% music from category 3, which includes jazz and blues. We are compelled to do that. We acknowledge that our mandate is somewhat different or complementary to the other sectors. We said that we accept the 80% limit but that we would like to be free to do as we see fit with the remaining 20%.

The current standard is not representative of communities. If people in Pokemouche want to listen to Cayouche for the remaining 20% of the time, it should be their right to do so. We should not impose jazz or blues on them, when the community does not want that. That is one of the measures we asked for.

Mr. Yvon Godin: There is also Wilfred, Jean-François Breau, and Annie Blanchard.

Mr. François Côté: Yes, there are so many of them.

Mr. Yvon Godin: You are asking for greater freedom just for the 20%. You are not asking for measures to be relaxed in terms of community services.

Mr. François Côté: It's just for music.

Mr. Yvon Godin: Just for music.

Mr. François Côté: That is correct.

Mr. Yvon Godin: You are not questioning the fact that the CRTC has told you that because you are a community radio station, you have a certain role to play in the community. For example, community radio has a much greater presence, in my view, during festivals, and so on. It has nothing to do with that. What does the CRTC say about that?

Mr. François Côté: Community involvement is part of our mandate. Unfortunately, not all stations, like CKRO, have the resources to do that. Some stations only have one employee. That person can't do everything, in addition to making representations before committees.

●(1005)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Godin, for allowing us to discover artists like Cayouche. You will have to help me discover them.

I have a question for Mr. Côté or Mr. Forgues. Your community radio stations are in minority communities, but they are nonetheless community radio stations.

Do you collaborate with English-language community radio stations or French radio stations in Quebec?

Mr. François Côté: There is some collaboration, but at the national level, we do a lot of work with the National Campus and Community Radio Association Inc., which represents anglophone campus and community radio stations and with the Association des radiodiffuseurs communautaires du Québec. Now, we always represent our sector together. In the past, it was somewhat divided, but now we always work together. There is some collaboration, I am thinking namely of a station in the Magdalen Islands which provides programming to our station in Chéticamp. However there is not much among the stations themselves.

The Chair: All right, thank you very much.

Mr. D'Amours, are you ready?

Mr. Jean-Claude D'Amours: Ms. Zarac has not had a turn yet.

The Chair: Ms. Zarac, you have the floor to lead off the third round.

Mrs. Lise Zarac (LaSalle—Émard, Lib.): Good morning Madam, and gentlemen. Thank you for being with us today.

In a country that calls itself bilingual, I think the existence of what you represent is very important. We have heard evidence that you provide support for bilingualism. That is very important. You need the means to continue to exist. We wanted to meet with you today to ensure precisely that, that you do have the means to continue.

I have a question for Mr. Potié. You said you were very satisfied with the consultations that took place in February 2008. You talked about an increase from 13 to 17 members. However, I am not sure that has been done.

Are you still waiting, or has it been done? Do you have the funding you need for the increase?

Mr. Francis Potié: How could I put it? When we look at the criteria and the exceptions put in place for official languages publications, and when we call federal officials to see if we have understood what a clause meant, we must conclude that the number has gone from 13 to 17. I picked up the phone and I called the members in question. I told them that in my view, they were now eligible for the program. They put in an application. The government is currently processing all of the applications. I may well come back in a few weeks and say that it doesn't make sense, but I think we are expecting—

Mrs. Lise Zarac: That is all I wanted to verify with you.

Mr. Francis Potié: I think that we are expecting—

Mrs. Lise Zarac: When will you receive the answers?

Mr. Francis Potié: It will have to be over the next few weeks, because it begins on April 1.

Mrs. Lise Zarac: That's rather soon, isn't it?

May we ask you to send a written confirmation to our chair if you receive it? That is very important.

Mr. Francis Potié: All right.

Mrs. Lise Zarac: You also talked about 2012-2013, which is not that far down the road. It may be somewhat long term, but you quickly talked about concerns you had for the period following 2012-2013. I would like you to elaborate on that. What are your concerns?

Mr. Francis Potié: I want to start by taking a step back. The new Canada Magazine Fund replaces several programs, including the Publications Assistance Program, which represented approximately \$44 million per year, provided by the Department of Canadian Heritage, and approximately \$15 million from the Canada Post Corporation. A few years ago, the Canada Post Corporation indicated that it was no longer interested in participating in the program and providing \$15 million. The government asked—I imagine it didn't ask, but it told—Canada Post to continue contributing the money for two years, to allow for reorganization.

Following that two-year period, in budget 2008 I believe, the federal government announced that it would replace the \$15 million per year that Canada Post had withdrawn. I think that it will run until the end of 2011-2012. Given deficit reduction and other measures, we are concerned about what will happen to the 25% of this program two years from now.

Mrs. Lise Zarac: So you are unsure if you will continue to receive \$15 million.

Mr. Francis Potié: There is still no commitment to that effect. The commitment was for two years. Beyond that, we will have to wait and see.

Mrs. Lise Zarac: Does that jeopardize the distribution of weeklies?

Mr. Francis Potié: There are currently about 1,000 publications in Canada sharing the \$72 million under this program. If we were to remove \$15 million, there will be another review and there will clearly be losers.

• (1010)

Mrs. Lise Zarac: Are there any negotiations currently underway on—

Mr. Francis Potié: No, we have focused on the program review since 2008, and we have devoted all of our efforts to explaining our view that there needs to be a specific program for official languages publications. Once we have finished that, we are going to argue in favour of a renewed commitment from the government.

Mrs. Lise Zarac: What will happen if there is no continuity?

Mr. Francis Potié: If that were the case, 25% of the funds would disappear. If you look at a paper the size of *La Liberté*, for example, that would represent a shortfall of \$30,000 or \$35,000, if the cuts were imposed proportionally on all papers participating in the program.

Mrs. Lise Zarac: Would some weeklies disappear completely?

Mr. Francis Potié: Yes, because they are walking a tightrope. Of course some weeklies are in a better position than others, but many

use all available money to operate. If an amount were to disappear suddenly, overnight, it could have disastrous consequences.

Mrs. Lise Zarac: Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Zarac.

We will now go to Ms. Boucher.

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher (Beauport—Limoilou, CPC): Good morning, and welcome to our committee.

This is very interesting. We are learning a lot.

I have several questions, but I'm going to start, first and foremost, with ARC du Canada. Earlier on, you talked about funding you received from the Government of Canada, compared with individual stations.

Are you asking the government to fund individual stations in addition to the amount that goes to the ARC? I would like an explanation, because it was not clear to me.

Mr. François Côté: I am unsure if you are talking about the community radio program as part of the Official Languages Support Programs—

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: Yes, that is what I mean.

Mr. François Côté: In that case, we are looking at a program worth \$500,000 per year. Its purpose is to help stations start up, so that they can purchase equipment.

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: All right.

Mr. François Côté: The funds are for capital assets. However, there is nothing to fund existing radio stations.

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: What amount are you looking for for each individual station?

Mr. François Côté: We are looking at \$30,000.

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: On a yearly basis?

Mr. François Côté: Yes.

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: How many stations are there in total?

Mr. François Côté: There are 140 community and campus radio stations in Canada. As regards ARC du Canada, 25 stations are on the air but we have 31 active members.

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: You have 31 members, thank you.

The other question is more general. As is often the case in community circles, you said there are always the TLMs, as we say in Quebec, the "*toujours les mêmes*", that is to say, always the same people volunteering in the community.

Whether it be as part of the APF or ARC, do you have trouble recruiting and retaining high-quality people? I imagine that it must be increasingly difficult in community circles.

Apart from funding, what could we help you do to recruit quality people and maintain these jobs? What kind of ideas could you give us?

Mr. François Côté: Basically, as we told the CRTC, ARC du Canada radio stations are a training group for private and public broadcasters.

The problem is that we cannot compete with them when it comes to salaries. If we could offer our hosts \$50,000 like they do in the private sector, it would be easier to keep them.

What's more, at a certain point, young people want to evolve and move on. Of course they take their classes in Hearst, in northern Ontario, for example, and then go to the national capital, followed by a trip to Montreal. That is the path they take.

• (1015)

Mr. Simon Forgues: I am a prime example. When I started as a host in the 1990s, it was at CINN-FM in Hearst, Ontario.

Two years later, an opportunity opened up at Radio Énergie in Abitibi. Of course I jumped at the opportunity, given the possibilities it opened up for me. I wasn't repudiating the radio station I had come from. The pay was better, the benefits were better, and so were the tools for the job. More often than not, private radio stations have better equipment, vehicles for the station, clothing is provided, and things of that nature. That's an advantage for young people who are in the private sector and something they do not have at community radio stations.

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: The best idea, apart from the money, is to try to find a way, as you explained, to retain young people. However, community radio is a training ground where people really learn about the field.

Mr. François Côté: The situation is different in New Brunswick, because the retention rate is nevertheless quite high compared to the rest of Canada.

Elsewhere in Canada, I think that retention remains a problem, because young people want to complete their classes and move on.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Ms. Boucher.

We will go on to Ms. Guay.

Ms. Monique Guay: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you, ladies and gentlemen.

For my part, I am concerned to learn that you are always playing catch-up and facing insecurity. I think community radio stations are very important.

I had an opportunity to spend my vacation in Lamèque in my neighbour Yvon's riding. I was interviewed there by a young radio journalist. I realize that it is extremely important in the region, but they are so overwhelmed. A single person does everything. I don't think that you are asking for the moon, but you are asking for the bare minimum.

When you made your requests, were you well received? If not, can we do something to help you, to move things along, to advance matters more quickly?

Mr. François Côté: Until we get the results of the review of the Community and Campus Radio Policy, we will have some difficulties. As regards the review, we asked that a portion of the money for developing Canadian content, that the private sector pays to the CRTC, be put into the Community Radio Fund of Canada. We are talking about approximately \$2.5 million per year that could ultimately be shared by the country's 140 community radio stations. Clearly, that will not be enough.

That is why we are asking the Canadian government to provide \$4.2 million. That will ultimately help us and enable us to have perhaps about \$50,000 per year for each radio station. With \$50,000, as you saw by visiting the radio station, a lot can be done. It's amazing what can be done with \$50,000. But of course that will never be enough.

If we truly want to fulfil our mandate, we will need a lot more than that. However, obtaining that will at least be a start for us. Subsequently, we will be able to grow and go farther, but we have to start somewhere.

Ms. Monique Guay: You can also look for some advertising.

Mr. Simon Forgues: Yes. If at least we have one permanent position in each of our radio stations, this person...

The problem is that we always have to look for funding, to sell advertising and things like that. So long as you are working just to keep your head above water—

• (1020)

Ms. Monique Guay: —you cannot do it.

Mr. Simon Forgues: —you cannot train volunteers, you cannot provide support for the volunteers, you cannot take the time to set up a good program schedule.

Radio stations are already having trouble keeping their heads above water, and now they are being asked to start looking for funds and things like that.

We are not asking for the impossible; we want a permanent position that can provide a foundation. Thus, we can start building something concrete.

Ms. Monique Guay: You said that there were 140 stations, and that with \$30,000 each, this would be enough. For what period of time did you request that? Do you want it to be recurrent?

Mr. François Côté: We are asking for recurrent funding. That is what we need.

Ms. Monique Guay: Thus, you hope to receive \$4.2 million every year.

Mr. François Côté: We hope to start the year without having to go out and get this money from the community.

Ms. Monique Guay: On top of all that.

Mr. François Côté: Yes, that is it.

Ms. Monique Guay: So that afterward, you can afford to advertise or to get sponsors, people who can buy advertising space.

Mr. François Côté: Yes, exactly.

Ms. Monique Guay: This would make life easier for you and you could hire more staff.

The young man who interviewed me had to run all over the place. It was unbelievable. He was alone on the job. He had to cover a vast territory in that region of Canada. As it was summer, there were many summer festivals. He had to be all over the place because they did not have the staff they needed.

Mr. François Côté: Our stations are in a predicament; there is not enough staff.

Ms. Monique Guay: Is it the same everywhere?

Mr. François Côté: It is the same everywhere.

Mr. Simon Forgues: Yes, they all have to drag a ball and chain called basic funding. That is exactly what we want for the Fonds canadien de la radio communautaire.

If you are wearing a ball and chain, how can you run all over the place to sell things like bingo cards, raffle-tickets, etc.?

Ms. Monique Guay: I am glad that I did not get hit with that ball.

I hope that you will keep us abreast of the results of your request. Our committee would be interested to see what happens with that.

Mr. François Côté: All right.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Guay.

Let me just come back to a point that you, the people from radio, raised this morning. You said that the CRTC imposed certain constraints. You said that it was easier to broadcast blues or jazz in New Brunswick than to broadcast folk music or Cayouche. Please tell me more about the context.

Mr. François Côté: Currently, when the CRTC grants you a licence, you are only allowed to broadcast 80% pop music, 12% country music and the remaining 8% belongs to the third category which includes blues, jazz or—

Mr. Simon Forgues: Classical music.

Mr. François Côté: —classical music or religious music. Thus, you have to broadcast music that belongs to this 8% category. There is no choice.

We asked the CRTC to let us choose the music—other than pop music—that corresponds to the 20% portion. We want to decide what our community wants to hear.

Basically, people from our community told us that they were not very interested in jazz. On the other hand, they told us that if we played country music, they would be very happy. Thus, we asked the CRTC for a little flexibility.

The Chair: Thank you.

Let us begin our fourth round table. Some committee members said that they wanted to put questions. Let us begin with Mr. Généreux.

Mr. Bernard Généreux (Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, CPC): Good morning, everyone, thank you for being here.

I would like to come back to the issue of the \$30,000. Among your 140 members, you have campus radio stations in universities and CEGEPs, I imagine. Do you want them to be treated in the same way as all the other community radio stations? For example, we know that there are 150,000 listeners in New Brunswick, but we also know that a campus radio attracts far fewer listeners. Are you asking for an equal amount that would be the same for everyone?

Mr. François Côté: This is the case because it is difficult to tell whether a campus radio station only has 2,000 listeners. Let us take Iqaluit for example, with its 600 francophone residents. The radio station has 400 listeners. Are we going to draw a distinction? No, because to us, this radio station is just as important, if not more so,

because it has even less personnel and fewer resources. Therefore, they need our help much more than does a station with 170,000 listeners.

Mr. Bernard Généreux: So there is no distinction.

Mr. François Côté: No, everyone needs help. We do not have enough to fulfil our mandate.

Mr. Bernard Généreux: Now let me address everyone in general. Earlier, we discussed young people and new media, such as Internet. I feel that we did not say much about the new realities of today. That must certainly have some kind of impact on you.

Do you see opportunities rather than threats in what you see coming over the coming years? For example, how many members did the ARC have when it was created, and how many does it have today? How many members will you have in 10 years from now, if we take into account the current threats and opportunities?

• (1025)

Mr. François Côté: In fact, this will create possibilities that we did not have previously. On the other hand, this is very threatening to us. You need adequate resources to make the leap into the new media. If we had the resources, it could be an opportunity; if not, it would be a constraint, which could ultimately be harmful to us.

In Canada, the ARC began with very few members, less than 10. Today, we have 31 members. Will we have more? If we have 35 members in 10 years from now, we will be satisfied because we will have covered more or less all the communities.

Mr. Bernard Généreux: Very well. I understand that there has been expansion over time, despite financial constraints, volunteers, exhaustion, etc.

Mr. François Côté: Yes.

Mr. Bernard Généreux: I have volunteered for various organizations. I was the chair of a community-based media organization in my region until last November 1. I am therefore well aware of the reality of community media organizations and the difficulty of obtaining money through advertising. It is not easy to get national advertising. It takes a great deal of effort to get access to that money. With the few resources we have, we often miss out. We do not have sufficient means. I am aware of some of your realities.

Are you in a position to tell us what the audience ratings are for community radio stations in general? Are people aware of their ratings in their respective sectors?

Mr. François Côté: Unfortunately not, apart from one or two stations who subscribe to the BBM polling organization. It is very expensive. That is why only one or two are subscribers. The others are not. We do not therefore have real results. I recall a ratings survey carried out in Ontario a few years back. Such surveys have to be carried out at least once or twice a year in order to truly have a good idea of the audience rating.

Currently, we only have the numbers for two stations. As far as the other stations are concerned, we have a general idea, but we do not know the exact audience numbers in the various markets.

Mr. Bernard Généreux: Young people most often follow a path in order to make their way in this world. You have done so, Mr. Forgues, working for a community radio station and moving on to another level later on.

If we can go out and find additional funding, I see an opportunity in this reality to act to affect new media and our youth. In my opinion, this is potentially a new opening we should consider. I do not know what you think of that. If we have additional requests to make of the government, I think it must be done taking new realities into consideration. These new realities today are a reflection of the greater and greater popularity of new media. If we want to help young people familiarize themselves with them through community radio stations, could this also be another way of obtaining additional funding?

Mr. François Côté: It certainly could be one way of doing so. However, it is all well and good to invest in new media and in youth, but if the main resource is not the station, there is no point in investing there.

The Chair: I agree.

Mr. François Côté: We need a permanent staff member in order to explore those areas.

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

I now give the floor to Mr. D'Amours.

Mr. Jean-Claude D'Amours: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Côté, earlier on you raised the issue of small markets. You mentioned Fredericton and Saint John, among others. There are also other realities. Take the example of one of the three radio stations at home, that is CFJU, in the Saint-Quentin and Kedgwick region. The truth is that it is a very good community station, but the population is not there to support it. There are not enough people to help meet this station's needs without difficulty.

Even in areas that are 99.99% francophone, there are community radio stations that are currently having difficulties or will in the future because of certain realities. They can only sell a limited amount of advertising to local businesses. If they want to continue to serve the community, they have to be able to help it.

Other than this radio station in our region, private stations that are setting up in the area come from Quebec and they cover a huge territory. In fact, I do not know how they manage to cover such a broad territory. This does not reflect the reality of Saint-Quentin and of Kedgwick. Absolutely not.

• (1030)

Mr. François Côté: This station is meeting a community need. Communities need their own stations. I could give you the example of Rivière-la-Paix, in Alberta.

Rivière-la-Paix has the same problem, that is to say that the community does not have a big enough population to allow the station to survive. On the other hand, if the community did not have this station, the rate of assimilation would be incredible. We have to move much more quickly. A radio station does not put an end to assimilation, but it does delay it. That is part of our mandate. That is why we are telling you we need help. Some of our stations do not have a market that would allow a station to survive thanks to

advertising. On the other hand, if we had other resources, that would allow a certain stability for the radio station.

Mr. Jean-Claude D'Amours: I would like to say something regarding an answer you gave earlier on. It is all well and good to focus on new media, but if we lose all the ground that we have actually gained, we will end up with nothing—as someone from my area already mentioned. That is what the result would be and we will find ourselves in the red. Instead of making progress, we will have destroyed what we already had in order to move in a new direction. It is not at all useful. The current mandate is important and we have to continue working towards its achievement.

Mr. Potié, you had some concern regarding the sum of \$15 million that was sent from Canada Post to Canadian Heritage. If I were in your shoes, I would be more than concerned.

Over the last few years, we have had bad experiences. Everything having to do with the community sector or with the community has had to face certain shattering realities. Take the literacy program that was cut or the announcement yesterday regarding the funds for community access to the Internet or to provide training to people. That was cut. Everything is tied to the community.

There is a reality as far as your weeklies and your members are concerned. When funds are reallocated elsewhere, I have grave concerns because of what we have experienced over the last few years. In two years' time, the reality could well be that our funding will quite simply disappear for reasons *x*, *y* or *z*, be it for reasons of managing the economy or managing the federal budget. When this money was at Canada Post, it was up to Canada Post to take the \$15 million and reduce the costs of the newspapers.

These are all community newspapers. There are no Irving empires that have any business there. They are all community newspapers that could disappear.

As Ms. Glover mentioned earlier, what applies to community radio stations also applies to community newspapers, such as *La Liberté* of Saint-Boniface. That is the truth. One of my nieces writes regularly for *La Liberté*. If that paper ceases to exist because of a lack of funding preventing distribution, the domino effect is to increase assimilation at an exponential rate. When we take money from one place while telling the other that they're no longer obliged to give because it will be taken care of in future, it is quite worrisome. Your initial concern should be much greater if you look at what has happened over the last few years.

If this program were to disappear completely, how many of your newspapers would continue to exist?

The Chair: Mr. Potié.

Mr. Francis Potié: If the program disappears completely, I cannot tell you how many will not find a way to adapt, but clearly several of them will not survive.

Mr. Jean-Claude D'Amours: Some will fold and some will remain.

Mr. Francis Potié: We are projecting into the future, but clearly some will disappear and others will have to make draconian changes to their community coverage, the number of pages, the number of copies they distribute. Efforts would surely be made, because communities can show great creativity in efforts to ensure that they will have the services and institutions they need, but there would certainly be a very detrimental effect.

•(1035)

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. D'Amours.

We will continue with Mr. Godin.

Mr. Yvon Godin: Which department was asked for the \$4.2 million for radio and when?

Mr. François Côté: This has not yet been done. We asked for a meeting with Minister Moore. We are still waiting.

Mr. Yvon Godin: When did you make the request of Minister Moore?

Mr. François Côté: The first time was a year and a half ago. We asked again last year, in November. We finally received an acknowledgement of the request stating that we would get a meeting later on.

We believe that government officials will await the results of the Community and Campus Radio Policy review before doing anything else. That is why we are telling ourselves that it will take some time.

Mr. Yvon Godin: With all due respect, it seems to me that organizing a meeting does not take a year and a half. Thank you for your answer.

As far as the ratio of 20% of musical content is concerned, have you filed an application with the CRTC?

Mr. François Côté: Yes, applications were filed with the CRTC when we appeared regarding the review.

Mr. Yvon Godin: When did that take place?

Mr. François Côté: It was in January, but we do not necessarily expect to see the new policy before the fall. It is a rather long process.

Mr. Yvon Godin: Yes, but the request was made.

Mr. François Côté: Yes, we made several requests, including approximately a dozen requests for more flexibility.

Mr. Yvon Godin: I want to stop there, unless you can think of anything else you would like to say or about which we have not asked any questions. Sometimes witnesses leave thinking to themselves that they would very much have liked being asked certain questions. Are there any that we did not ask you?

Mr. François Côté: In answer to the question as to whether or not radio stations will die if we do not get funding, I would say yes, indeed, radio stations will disappear and it will be in major markets.

Mr. Yvon Godin: In terms of print media, you said the same thing earlier on to Mr. D'Amours.

Mr. Francis Potié: If support is cut, whether it is from federal advertising or subsidies from the Canada Periodical Fund, newspapers will definitely go out of business.

The most appropriate solution in our eyes would be that the departments develop their own programs. Right now, we are talking

about the interdepartmental aspect. Normally, we should be asking what the criteria would be that are best adapted to the realities in our communities. In that way, when we speak to officials from the various departments, we would less often be told to go and consult Canadian Heritage, because we are talking about official languages. That is what should form the basis for all of the support programs for the various sectors of community development.

Mr. Yvon Godin: Unless I am mistaken, are some of them passing the buck?

Mr. Francis Potié: Yes, that has always been the case.

Mr. Yvon Godin: What will you recommend then? That a single department be responsible for it?

Mr. Francis Potié: No. That the officials from each department, when they are developing a program, ask themselves what is best for official languages, what is best for official languages development—

Mr. Yvon Godin: They should be responsible for programs—

Mr. Francis Potié: Rather than send us an answer expressing their regret because we do not meet the standards, we do not have this or that, we do not meet their criteria, they should be wondering how they can tailor their programs in order to meet requirements.

Mr. Yvon Godin: As an MP for the NDP, I would like to congratulate you for all the work that you do. Keep going. We really do need you.

Earlier I was somewhat critical of the Irvings. In all honesty—I am blunt about this and I am sure that they are going to read the blues and all that—it really upsets me that, in one province, 17 newspapers belong to one individual alone. In my opinion, this is anti-democratic. We should be launching an inquiry into this issue. I do not want to reserve my criticism for the Irvings alone. The same thing applies to Quebecor. And before that, there was the *National Post*, and that other individual who acted the same. I feel that this is completely anti-democratic.

We need you. Continue working. We are here to represent you and to help you when you need it. You said that it takes a year and a half in order to get a meeting: we will try to shorten this timeline.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Godin. We will continue with Mr. Nadeau.

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

Conrad Black was also the owner of all of Saskatchewan's newspapers and he is now in the dungeon. I did not say "in London", I said "in the dungeon". Well he could be in London, but that is another matter.

That said, there is this issue of the \$15 million from Canada Post that have been redirected. This matter concerns me. Indeed, we did a study here a very long time ago. You know what the problem is. You have to submit your application for funding to the federal government. You have to meet certain deadlines, which only makes sense, but the deadlines for the federal government are very elastic, and at one point, the money is not forthcoming, or if it does arrive, it comes after the activities have taken place, or were supposed to have taken place, or before the shop has shut down. So that is the problem.

I am very interested in something that Minister Moore said. The federal government, regardless of who is in power, should have some follow-up process for these applications, based somewhat on the Canada Post model. When you mail a package somewhere, you have a code. You can call Canada Post and ask where the package is. The same thing applies to FedEx and other companies. You can find out where the package is in the process. At any rate, I would make that suggestion to you. The minister raised the matter. He is open to the idea. This is a door that is open and which is interesting. Ask for this. Demand it.

We also made a demand in our report, so that this money would arrive. We are not talking about luxury; this is a process that is at times vital and it is very important.

My first question earlier pertained to the interdepartmental aspect, and I will conclude with that. I recall back in 1998 or 1999, Paul-André Baril was working at the Fédération des communautés francophones et acadienne and he was responsible for the interdepartmental file. His job was to ensure that the federal government was made aware of the fact that its job was to meet requirements by involving all of the departments, agencies and Crown corporations and to satisfy the requirements of the franco-Canadian and anglo-Quebec communities, because this issue went beyond the language of teaching. We had programs with the OLEP.

Today I am saddened to learn that, in many respects, the federal government played a game by providing money for studies, but that when all is said and done—and we are going back some ways in time, to 1998 and 1999—there are no more results today than there were when you made these requests. You live in the world of communications and, indeed, other departments should be involved. You also live in the world of commerce, industry, markets, airwaves, you have dealings with the CRTC, etc.

You need to press the matter once again, along with my colleagues here. This is an extremely important element. Being an anglo-Quebecker, an Acadian, or a franco-Saskatchewanian does not mean that you are to be served by one department alone, Canadian Heritage. You should be served by all departments, just as an anglophone or francophone from the majority is served. This is a serious problem, and for me, a sovereignist—

An honourable member: Oh yes?

Mr. Richard Nadeau: Oh yes, I should tell you that. By the way, his member card should be arriving by mail soon. I am talking about the membership card for the Bloc, of course.

This is one of the factors that leads to assimilation. The federal government is not doing what it should to fight against this assimilation, aside from giving speeches. Assimilation is a terrible cancer in our communities, causing French to disappear from one census to the next. And you, you are here in order to provide solutions, but you are not given the tools you need.

I will conclude with those remarks. I do not know whether you have anything you wish to say about the interdepartmental issue or anything else. I will turn the floor over to you.

• (1040)

The Chair: You have left them with 15 seconds.

Mr. Richard Nadeau: How generous of me!

Mr. Francis Potié: The interdepartmental aspect is the foundation for our development. The OLSPB remains important.

I will go back to the example given by François. Regardless of where he goes knocking, there is never any funding for radio. In our case, for our development survey and marketing project, we were told to knock on the door of Canadian Heritage. That makes it difficult to achieve any progress.

• (1045)

The Chair: Thank you very much. That completes our fourth round. Two members have expressed a desire to make an intervention. Would you like to have a formal fifth round, are simply have shorter rounds?

So I will give the floor to these members. Mr. Bélanger would like to add something, and then Ms. O'Neill-Gordon would like to intervene.

Hon. Mauril Bélanger: I am going to ask my question, although you may have to send us the information later on.

First of all, does Canadian content apply to community radio, and if so, in what percentage?

Mr. François Côté: We have to provide the same percentage.

Hon. Mauril Bélanger: Thank you.

As far as the OLSP is concerned, Mr. Chair, I would like to make a request of our researchers. Could they uncover, for the last few years—they can use their judgment—how much money has been spent on community radio under this program?

There is an issue I would like to come back to later on: would it be appropriate to look at changing the criteria for the way the money is used under this program, such as the example given by Mr. Généreux with respect to the Internet? I know that there may be some threats involved, but perhaps there are some opportunities? Could we use the OLSP funding or consider using the program to indeed improve the quality of the equipment or modernize the equipment in our community radio stations?

Does ARC or APF have TFO as a partner? TFO is the franco-Ontarian television station that is broadcast in Ontario, Quebec, Manitoba and New Brunswick.

I would like to make a comment about Canada Post. Are we witnessing some type of purge that is going on in order to prepare for the privatization of Canada Post? This type of decision to send \$15 million to the Department of Canadian Heritage would be in line with such a vision.

Finally, let's talk about the interdepartmental aspect. I believe that the legislator understood the need and amended the act in 2005, supported, at that time, by the opposition which is now in government. Unless I am mistaken, there is no evidence that the departments and agencies are all, without exception, subject to part VII of the act. Meaning that they have an obligation to provide follow-up, directly, and not to send everything over to the Department of Canadian Heritage. What I'm seeing is that we are not giving life and voice to this new Official Languages Act. That strengthens our desire, as a committee, to delve into this issue more closely.

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

[English]

Now I will turn to Ms. O'Neill-Gordon.

Mrs. Tilly O'Neill-Gordon (Miramichi, CPC): Good morning, and welcome. It's great to have you here with us today.

You spoke of the many new technologies and different means of communication that are now being used. We are all very much aware of that. We're all very much aware of how we turn to the Internet, probably, before turning on our local radio stations. Yet many of us still appreciate the local radio station.

I'm just wondering whether you feel you have the support of your communities and whether the relationship between the radio and the community is still a good one.

[Translation]

Mr. François Côté: Absolutely, because a community radio station is first and foremost the station of that community. It is not just the station of one or two individuals; it is the entire community's radio station. It is the community that chooses to have a station.

So our radio stations are deeply rooted in our communities, and this symbiotic relationship grows more and more each year. It takes on more and more importance.

[English]

Mrs. Tilly O'Neill-Gordon: Do you think more work should be done with the community in order to better sensitize the population to the community radio?

[Translation]

Mr. François Côté: When a decision is made to start up a community radio station, it involves an extraordinary effort of mobilization and awareness raising within the community, with regard to what a community radio station is and how it will serve the community. I don't know whether it is important to educate people even more. I would say that has already been done.

• (1050)

[English]

Mrs. Tilly O'Neill-Gordon: Coming from Miramichi, coming from New Brunswick, a bilingual province, I certainly know and appreciate that the work you do is very valuable. When you meet with our minister Mr. Moore, you will see that he feels the same way. Our government certainly appreciates the valuable work that you do.

Thank you.

Mr. François Côté: Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. O'Neill-Gordon.

[Translation]

This morning, you received unanimous support from all members of the committee for the work that you do with regard to both written press and the media. I would say, somewhat more descriptively, that you are the canaries in our linguistic coal mines. So we encourage you to speak out loud and clear on behalf of minority languages. I join the other committee members in congratulating you.

Thank you very much.

(The meeting is adjourned).

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