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## **Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage**

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**EVIDENCE**

**Tuesday, October 25, 2016**



**Chair**

**The Honourable Hedy Fry**



## Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage

Tuesday, October 25, 2016

•(1100)

[English]

**The Chair (Hon. Hedy Fry (Vancouver Centre, Lib.)):** I call the meeting to order.

Good morning, everyone.

Pursuant to a motion brought by Mr. Pierre Nantel, we are now going to have two hours with the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation. They are going to talk to us about their vision, their hopes, and their plans for the CBC.

Good morning and welcome, Monsieur Lacroix, Monsieur Lalonde, and Ms. Conway.

The usual way of presenting, although this is slightly different, is that we have 10 minutes for a presentation. After that there is a whole interactive question-and-answer period. In this instance we will suspend after Mr. Lacroix has shown a small video he is presenting as part of his presentation, in order for us to do some special programming that we're going to be seeing. Then we will come back again and finish the presentation.

Just so that everyone who is paying attention is very clear, that is what we're going to be doing.

We will begin.

[Translation]

**Mr. Hubert T. Lacroix (President and Chief Executive Officer, Canadian Broadcasting Corporation):** Thank you, Madam Chair.

Thank you for inviting me to speak to you about the government's reinvestment in public broadcasting. Heather Conway, Louis Lalonde and I have met with you before, so I'm very happy to see you and the committee members again.

[English]

Before I begin, let me offer just a word about the devices in front of you. They are virtual reality headsets. We've brought them here because they are an important part of a series of town halls that we have just launched in four communities to discuss the issue of missing and murdered indigenous women. I wanted you to see for yourselves what this technology means to the way we tell stories. I'll talk more about that in a moment.

The past few months have provided some remarkable examples of what public broadcasting can do.

In August we helped Canadians share a truly Canadian moment, the final concert of The Tragically Hip in Kingston, Ontario. Almost

12 million Canadians gathered together in backyards, town squares, bars, parks, and public places. In all, there were more than 190 community viewing parties here and all around the world. One Canadian actually told us that they listened to the concert on their phone while sitting in their car in Hawaii. Bringing Canadians together the way we did that night is exactly what the public broadcaster should do.

[Translation]

There were also the Olympics and Paralympics in Rio de Janeiro. Who can forget the emotions we all felt when Penny Oleksiak—who the whole world now calls her Penny—won the bronze, the silver, another bronze, and finally, the gold. This 16-year-old swimmer alone won more medals than any other Canadian athlete in the history of the Summer Olympics. And how can we forget that friendly rivalry between André de Grasse and Usain Bolt, or the resilience of wrestler Erica Wiebe, winning gold after having failed to qualify for the 2012 Games, the world championships, and, last year, the Pan-Am games.

Thirty-two million people joined us in celebrating those moments—that's more than 91% of the population. And 10.1 million Canadians tuned in to our more than 700 hours of Paralympic coverage. Rio 2016 was the most watched Summer Olympics in Canadian history. We got more than 229 million total page views and nearly 37 million video views on our websites and Olympic apps. In addition, the public found a new way to experience the Games: for the first time, virtual reality allowed Canadians to immerse themselves into the action.

•(1105)

[English]

It's actually impressive technology, but we believe it can be so much more.

Many of you know about the leadership role that CBC/Radio-Canada has taken on the issue of missing and murdered indigenous women. CBC Radio's *The Current* is actually hosting a series of town halls on this subject to help people better understand this issue.

When they walk into the town hall, they first experience this story in virtual reality. It puts them on the side of Highway 16, the infamous Highway of Tears in northern British Columbia, the place where a number of indigenous women have been murdered or gone missing. This virtual reality documentary, a first for CBC, can be downloaded from our website.

The reaction to this presentation has been nothing short of incredible. In Prince George earlier this month, 200 people came out to experience it. Their town hall was then broadcast on *The Current*. Here is a bit of what they thought about it.

[Video presentation]

Madam Chair, with your permission, I would like to take a couple of minutes to let you experience it for yourself. Some of our staff are here to help you set it up. It's only four minutes long.

• (1110)

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

We will suspend, but I want to ask you not to keep your mikes open. Keep your mikes closed, please. In front of you, there is a transcript in French, because the virtual reality is in English only.

I will ask you to sit, as some people feel quite fragile when they are watching things. You think you are going to fall on your face, especially when you are above a certain level, and the chances are you just might, so please sit while you are doing this.

We will suspend, and everyone can start connecting to the virtual reality.

**Mr. Hubert T. Lacroix:** We have some people who will help you and the members with the equipment.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

• (1110)

\_\_\_\_\_ (Pause) \_\_\_\_\_

• (1115)

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Please continue, Mr. Lacroix.

**Mr. Hubert T. Lacroix:** Thank you.

We believe this is what a public broadcaster should be doing: use whatever tools we can, together with great journalism and spectacular storytelling, to deepen Canadians' understanding, to help engage them in a conversation about important issues.

[Translation]

That is what our 2020 Strategy has been about.

Our transformation to become more digital, more local, and more Canadian has been challenging at times, but the main disruptions are now behind us, and our work is showing results.

We see it in the way Canadians now engage with us and each other on mobile devices, social networks, television and radio. We continue to transform our regional stations across the country to make them more open, multi-platform environments. Halifax, Matane, Moncton and Sudbury are the most recent ones. We are providing more local content, more often and to more Canadians on every device they use.

Over 16 million Canadians now use our digital platforms each month—that's three million more in the last year alone. You know that our goal is to reach 18 million people by the year 2020. This is helping us build closer connections with Canadians.

We're not the only ones in the midst of a transformation. Last month, we hosted PBI 2016 in Montréal, a gathering of 60 public broadcasters from 52 countries around the world. It's clear that we're all facing the same challenges, but it's also clear that CBC/Radio-Canada is further ahead than many, and has taken a leadership role in this digital shift.

The government's reinvestment, announced in its 2016 budget, is helping us with this transformation. We are very grateful for that support. It's the first new investment in public broadcasting in over a decade. It represents an important vote of confidence in CBC/Radio-Canada, the value of our content, and our vision of the future.

When the government announced its reinvestment, it asked us to develop an accountability plan. We will be sharing that plan with Canadians soon, but first, let me tell you what we've been doing. It's worth bearing in mind that the government has promised us \$75 million this year, and \$150 million in the coming years.

Here's what we're already doing with that investment.

• (1120)

[English]

We are creating new programs around Canada's 150th anniversary, programs like *Becoming Canadian*, a digital-first project celebrating the people who choose Canada as their new home.

[Translation]

We also created the program *La grande traversée*.

[English]

This has 10 people recreating the 1745 voyage from France to Quebec in a sailing replica.

This summer we created a new national radio show, *Out in The Open*, with Piya Chattopadhyay.

We started filming a six-part television drama, *Alias Grace*, based on the book by Margaret Atwood, in partnership with Netflix—a first for us.

We were able to protect funding for the one-hour indigenous radio program, *Unreserved*, with Rosanna Deerchild.

We created a new one-hour Canadian youth soccer drama, *21 Thunder*, which will be airing next summer.

We started work on a new radio station in London, Ontario, previously suspended because of budget cuts.

[Translation]

We created additional digital content for ICI Tou.tv and seven additional programs for Vero.tv, the new web TV channel on ICI Tou.tv EXTRA.

We've launched a new project called Next Generation—a space to experiment with new ways of enriching and sharing news and current affairs content, to be created and managed by millennials, talking to millennial

We created five additional one-hour episodes of the popular Maritimes television talk-talk show *Méchante soirée*, produced in Moncton.

We've added 15 hours of new weekday evening content on ICI Radio-Canada Première, replacing reruns.

[English]

This is just a sample. We will be reporting to Canadians on our progress on this and on all of our goals through our corporate plan and annual reports.

We're very proud of what we've been able to do to support Canadian culture. We believe a strong public broadcaster is at the heart of a strong cultural ecosystem. We look forward to showing Canadians what we can do with a reinvestment in public broadcasting.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much.

We begin. I want to introduce Monsieur Nantel, whose motion has allowed us to do this two-hour session.

We'll start now with a seven-minute question-and-answer session. The seven minutes include both the questions and the answers.

We begin with Monsieur Breton.

• (1125)

[Translation]

**Mr. Pierre Breton (Shefford, Lib.):** Thank you, Madam Chair.

Thank you, Mr. Lacroix. I also thank Ms. Conway and Ms. Lalande for being with us this morning.

In your presentation, you covered several subjects, some of which are very important. The government is very proud of its reinvestment in CBC/Radio-Canada, an institution we strongly believe in. You spoke of \$75 in investments this year, and \$150 million for the next four years.

My question is about local content.

How will the money be invested to benefit our communities across the country? It's an important element of our study, and we appreciate having you with us to talk about it. How will you be able to measure whether there's been an increase in local content in the short-term and medium-term?

**Mr. Hubert T. Lacroix:** As you know, Mr. Breton, our 2020 plan had three priorities.

One of them was to add local content. We understand that Canadians are asking for this. They are constantly repeating that they want to understand their communities better and connect their communities with the challenges facing the provinces, Canada, and ultimately, the entire world.

By listening to Canadians, we've also worked to ensure that we can measure how the new regional sites—because much of the investment is in digital—attract their interest.

I will let Louis Lalande explain how the CBC invests this money in the regions. After that, Heather Conway will let you know how we support that priority.

**Mr. Louis Lalande (Executive Vice-President, French Services, Canadian Broadcasting Corporation):** Thank you, Mr. Lacroix.

Plan 2020 has three components.

The first is to provide support for the digital shift that is under way, especially with respect to local news. In the consultations that the CBC regularly holds throughout the country, we noticed that local news is an issue Canadians regularly raise. They are asking for local news, seven days a week, and not just in the morning, noon or evening. Accordingly, we must expand this content, and that's what we've done in Plan 2020, and are continuously strengthening. To ensure this objective is achieved as it should be, part of the money will be allocated to this content.

The second component is in line with the second wish expressed during the consultations. Although news is important, the CBC needs to reflect other dimensions of life in communities, especially in the regions. Therefore, this second component is to offer programming options on the radio, on TV and on digital platforms, to broaden audiences' areas of interest.

The third and last component is to ensure that, for the major national initiatives, there are representatives throughout the country presenting national issues that emerge from the regions. This is why we have national correspondents in all the country's major regions. They ensure that regional issues are better reflected in our programming as a whole, in news, on the radio and in digital formats.

[English]

**Mr. Hubert T. Lacroix:** Heather, what would you add on the CBC side with respect to reinvestment in the regions?

**Ms. Heather Conway (Executive Vice-President, English Services, Canadian Broadcasting Corporation):** It would be roughly the same level of priorities as Louis. The 2020 plan did call for a digital-first approach in local programming, and we continue to invest in that. We continue to invest in providing people with 18 hours a day of constantly updated information locally.

Like Louis, we are also looking at the role that CBC plays in our communities as a catalyst for having the conversations that people want to have in their communities, with initiatives like Matt Galloway doing a series on carding in Toronto, or issues like missing and murdered indigenous women, or talking about issues of importance to specific communities and having CBC act as either the catalyst for creating a town hall or having the conversation and inviting people in to do a panel—those kinds of initiatives.

We will also be looking to increase our investment in non-news programming over the coming years, because again, as Louis said, people do want to see their communities reflected and see what's happening in their culture scene, in the arts scene, and in other parts of their communities.

You will also know that in particular we had a program to extend CBC radio stations into communities that did not have them and had expressed an interest in them. The first one of those that we announced was for London, Ontario, and we are proceeding with that. We have selected a space, and it's a public library space that we'll be sharing, again in order to ensure we're a place where the community can gather. We'll hope to do more of that.

• (1130)

[Translation]

**Mr. Pierre Breton:** Thank you.

It goes without saying that we have to talk money at this meeting.

There's an element that comes back often. You're undoubtedly aware that advertising revenues have nearly been halved over the last two or three years. They've dropped from \$500 million to \$250 million. One can assume the Internet reduced these revenues. That's what I suspect, and you'll be able to confirm it to us.

How will the Corporation counter the effects of declining ad revenues? The money involved is substantial.

**Mr. Hubert T. Lacroix:** You are well aware of the challenges our public broadcaster is facing. Specifically, and this is happening to all other conventional television broadcasters, our advertising revenues are migrating to other platforms—primarily digital ones—and our business models are feeling the impact.

Faced with these challenges, we have reinvented CBC/Radio-Canada to prioritize digital. Our websites, radio and television are being reinvented around the new priorities, which enables us to reduce our costs, be even more efficient, and use our existing digital platforms to counter the revenue reduction. We're doing our part to maximize the value of our content.

The main objective of our efforts is to constantly offer Canadians the services they say they want. On both the CBC and Radio-Canada sides, we stay in touch with our audiences and take account of what they ask us through our various consultations. The goal is to deliver our services to our Canadian viewers and listeners in the best way possible.

[English]

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, Monsieur Breton.

Now we go to Mr. Van Loan and Mr. Maguire, who will be sharing their time.

**Hon. Peter Van Loan (York—Simcoe, CPC):** Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

There are some critics of the CBC who say that it fails to be and should become more of a genuine public broadcaster. When they say this, they mean that it should focus more on things like Canadian art, music and performances by Canadian performers, Canadian films and theatre, and programs of a documentary nature that would focus on things like Canadian geography and Canadian history.

Their suggestion is that the CBC should try less to emulate mainstream broadcasters, that news is not a comfortable fit for a publicly subsidized broadcaster, and that sitcoms and dramas that seek to compete with private sector broadcasters are not really a genuine fit for a public broadcaster.

What is your response to those critics?

**Mr. Hubert T. Lacroix:** I'll have Heather tell you about how she has, in the time she has been with us, reinvented the arts piece in what you described, and how that fits in the overall mandate of CBC.

**Ms. Heather Conway:** Thanks, Hubert.

We have invested in arts programming. We have created a number of digital arts properties. We have also invested in documentary programming with a program called *Firsthand*. We continue to support programs such as *The Nature of Things*, which is documentary programming that often focuses on wilderness and the wonder of Canada's geography and history.

I do believe that public broadcasters have a mandate that is different from other broadcasters. I would also argue, however, that comedy is a deeply cultural product. There is a Canadian sense of humour, and Canadians like to see it reflected on the CBC. There are very few places for political satire or shows like *Kim's Convenience*, which, we hope, is a new hit for us—it's doing very well so far—and *Baroness von Sketch*, an all-female comedy troupe.

Comedies and dramas are places where Canadians can see what Canadian creators have to offer, and if it's not the public broadcaster, there really isn't a lot of space on the private sector broadcasters' schedules in prime time for any of that.

• (1135)

**Hon. Peter Van Loan:** Another set of critics, some of whom we've had here, have said that it is inappropriate for a public broadcaster, whose public subsidy is premised on the notion of limited bandwidth—and you have a space there—to use that public subsidy to compete on the Web.

These critics were specifically referring to news broadcasting, where you are collecting both advertising and public subsidy and competing with other news outlets, which say they are having real trouble surviving in making that transition.

What is your response to those critics? We've heard from many of them here, from all ends of the marketplace.

**Mr. Hubert T. Lacroix:** I think we have to remember what the mandate is. The mandate is to provide Canadians with a wide range of programming that informs, enlightens, and entertains. In 2016, Canadians expect us to deliver on that mandate on whichever device they're watching, at whatever time they're watching, and in whatever environment they're living.

We don't think that we compete. We seek to service Canadians with the dollars that we receive from government in this mixed model of funding that we have, which right now has us going after some commercial revenues, including advertising revenues, to make all of these services available to Canadians. There is nothing in the act or in our mandate that prevents us from delivering these services to Canadians in the most effective way—on the contrary.

**The Chair:** Mr. Maguire, go ahead.

**Mr. Larry Maguire (Brandon—Souris, CPC):** Thank you, Madam Chair.

Thank you very much for your presentation.

Last time I was here, I asked a question about getting a breakdown in writing from you of the CBC employees who are directly involved, on a day-to-day basis, in creating, writing, producing, and editing some of the local news. I was informed that CBC wouldn't supply that information to the committee.

As we are trying to map out the gaps in local news currently found in Canada, it makes it very difficult to do that if we don't know where the employee footprint of CBC is. I just wonder whether you would assist our committee and task your organization to provide that breakdown of how many CBC employees are directly involved in local news, broken down by media platform and by province.

**Mr. Hubert T. Lacroix:** I'll ask Louis and Heather to chime in, in a second.

We don't think that way. We'd be happy to tell you how many employees we have in each of the places of business of CBC/Radio-Canada; that's an easy one. However, we don't segregate these platforms in that way. There is no such thing, in 2016, as one of our journalists being assigned only to a particular platform or to a particular kind of news. Everybody participates in the delivery of the information. As you've seen us do now, we refresh our web pages eight to 12 times an hour. We try to push out information that is relevant to Canadians on a regular basis as that information happens.

The concept that we have these broken-down silos in CBC/Radio-Canada is a thing of the past. That is not the way we do our business every day. It's not the way we deliver the news to Canadians, and it's not the approach that we take in our business.

Heather and Louis, do you want to add to that?

**Ms. Heather Conway:** I think that's a fair statement. I do appreciate that every community—and we do hear from them—wants more. Everybody wants more local news. Everybody wants more coverage of their issues and their community. We have to make choices with the resources we have.

In particular for eastern Ontario, if that's the area of concern you're particularly interested in, I think that as we bring London on board as a radio and a digital station, that will free up some resources to focus more on eastern Ontario, on the Kingston-Peterborough area, but it's always going to be a set of choices.

Of course, events of the day drive how you allocate those resources. Is there something newsworthy happening here? Is there something more newsworthy happening over there? It's often just a series of choices that aren't something that we particularly focus on. It's something that our editorial teams and assignment teams focus on.

• (1140)

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

We'll go to Mr. Nantel for the Democrats.

[Translation]

**Mr. Pierre Nantel (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, NDP):** Thank you, Madam Chair.

I thank all three of you for being with us today. You know how much of a Radio-Canada fan I am, and how happy I am to see that the current government has decided to give you some breathing room so you can continue fulfilling your important mandate. I want to note that when I arrived here earlier today, I congratulated Ms. Conway for her imitative on *The Secret Path*, which aired Sunday evening on the CBC, and for the efforts you made to bring us the last Tragically Hip performance in Kingston. That was an example of turning on a dime for events that are meaningful for Canadian culture.

You've shown us this morning that you're on board for new technologies like virtual reality, and you should be proud of that. It has indeed been an overwhelming change. It was wise to showcase the CBC as a brand that brings new technologies to communities so we can understand Canadian realities better.

Branding is also about credibility. Bernard Derome continues to say that journalism at the CBC is a proud tradition that will never go out of style. You've established credibility. Members of my staff reminded me that, curiously, one of the most credible sources for the Société Générale in Paris is the Radio-Canada news site, because of its objectivity, and the serious work that is done there.

I think your work, and your ability to renew yourselves, are very inspiring. What you have just told us about your consultations with the Canadian public is exemplary. I hope your efforts will eventually be compatible with the efforts the government has undertaken in relation to the's consultations. I have mentioned many times that I find they lack collegiality, are very discreet and, frankly, very selective as to what ends up being heard. I find that unfortunate, and I hope you will get the opportunity to participate.

You've been talking to us about Strategy 2020, which, if my memory serves, was developed around 2013-2014. A lot of things have changed in that regard. The reinvestments are probably the most positive thing for you.

With respect to your real estate strategy, are there any changes to mention? For example, could you please update us about the Front Street headquarters in Toronto?

**Mr. Hubert T. Lacroix:** Well, sir, as part of our overall operations at CBC/Radio-Canada, each of our properties in Canada is constantly reassessed to determine whether we're as efficient as possible, whether we have too many square feet, and whether we can make the environment more collegial and geared more toward a multi-platform approach for the crews who work there.

As for Toronto, several years ago, we examined what we could do with the building, and how the financing was carried out. At the moment, there would be no benefit to trying to sell the building or generate profits from it.

Our continued strategy for the Toronto building is to add tenants in an effort to lower the costs per square foot.

**Mr. Pierre Nantel:** For Montreal, all kinds of scenarios were discussed. I have two questions for you on the subject, and Mr. Lalande will undoubtedly be able to answer the first.

There has been talk of bringing Radio-Canada closer to the Quartier des spectacles, the performing arts district, if only via a window. Should this be seen as an expression of interest in more frequent live performances?

Also, could you update us about the issue of the Maison de Radio-Canada headquarters in Montreal?

**Mr. Hubert T. Lacroix:** With respect to the Maison de Radio-Canada—and Mr. Lalande should be able to complete my remarks in a moment—our expectations about the process are as follows. In the last phase, two consortia were retained for the Maison de Radio-Canada. We've announced that we'll be moving roughly 800 metres east, to the intersection of Papineau Street and René-Lévesque Boulevard, and that we're seeking to sell the remaining land in order to improve the cost of the project. We await the conclusion of these proposals by the end of the year, and, at this stage, we have no reason to doubt that we will finally achieve a resolution in this matter, which has been with us for more than 15 years.

Would you like to add anything on the subject, Mr. Lalande?

• (1145)

**Mr. Louis Lalande:** I can just specify that the two proposals currently under study are really captivating. They truly meet our wish to be a stimulating place that strengthens the creativity of the future, not the creativity of the past. Naturally, this will encompass all the live performance dynamics. That's important to us. As you mentioned, my colleague's initiative in relation to The Tragically Hip concert is really inspirational, and we can see how attached Canadians are to their icons. Our role is to ensure we can offer every opportunity for such events to take place. The projects for the new Maison de Radio-Canada will respond to all this in a remarkable way.

**Mr. Pierre Nantel:** I will be somewhat bold, and ask you the following question.

You've stressed the search for tenants for the Front Street property. I realize that real estate markets differ a great deal, and Montreal's is quite different as well. Do your plans include a wish for the purchaser of the building to look for tenants tied to the telecommunications sector? I have in mind the Centre de l'information, which cost a fortune and was built fairly recently. I understand that certain investments were made 20 years ago, when it was felt this would be sure to guarantee sustainability. Can the Centre de l'information be recuperated in some way?

**Mr. Louis Lalande:** As Mr. Lacroix said, there are two processes under way: the development of the new Maison de Radio-Canada, and the transfer of the building and land. When the transaction with the purchaser is completed—there are finalists for this part as well—we will see what the purchaser's plans are. For the moment, however, we must not intervene in the proponent's plans.

**Mr. Pierre Nantel:** Very well.

In the process that began in 2014, there was talk of a potential loss of 1,500 jobs. Has the horizon changed for CBC employees?

**Mr. Hubert T. Lacroix:** You're referring to the number of people affected under our 2020 transformation plan. The cuts and the choices we made for the English network are now complete. Right now, we're trying to improve our knowledge, people and

technologies, and the rest of it, to achieve the objectives we set in our 2020 transformation plan. On the Radio-Canada side, the choices made to achieve the budget-balancing objectives are nearly finished. All the people and divisions that need to contribute have been identified.

Mr. Lalande, do you have anything to add on the subject?

**Mr. Louis Lalande:** No. All of it is ongoing.

[English]

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Sorry, Mr. Nantel. We've gone a little over time there.

Now we'll hear from the Liberals again. Mr. Vandal, go ahead.

[Translation]

**Mr. Dan Vandal (Saint Boniface—Saint Vital, Lib.):** Thank you, Madam Chair.

I thank the witnesses for their remarks.

[English]

I think this is an exciting time. Congratulations for your fine work on the Olympics and The Tragically Hip's *Secret Path* show. It was very impressive. I'm proud to be a supporter of the \$675 million, I believe, in new money that will be going to CBC/Radio-Canada in the next five years.

But I have one problem.

[Translation]

There is a problem involving French radio. Last summer, in the very year that your funding was increased by \$75 million annually, we learned the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation would be eliminating all regional programming broadcast in the noon hour in Western Canada. For many years, in my riding, the *Midi Plus* program aired local content out of Saint-Boniface. Now, the broadcast is from Montreal.

Moreover, in Manitoba, a radio program called *L'heure de pointe*, which airs when people are on their way home, was cut short by an hour. As for television, we used to have 90 minutes of local programming, but that was reduced to 60.

How does the current situation for French-language programming in Manitoba constitute greater openness toward local news for our communities?

• (1150)

**Mr. Louis Lalande:** There have indeed been changes to the noon hour radio schedules, for a very simple reason. In francophone markets, particularly regional ones, the number of people listening to radio shows during the noon hour declined considerably. I must specify that there have been no job losses. The plan developed in collaboration with all the regional stations was intended to identify the best ways to increase the value of our news and our existing programming where the listener base is improving.



Morning shows are experiencing growth in all the francophone markets. Afternoon programs have been strengthened as well, and our digital presence has been significantly enhanced. In the case of Winnipeg, it's quite remarkable. It's during the consultations in Winnipeg that Franco-Manitobans expressed the strongest desire for a Radio-Canada local presence in the digital media arena. We developed that component right after that.

This did have impacts. As the situation improved on the digital side, audience levels for the noon-hour radio shows predictably decreased. Let me however assure you that, as I was saying earlier, we intend to increase Radio-Canada's profile on many kinds of content other than news bulletins, in order to better reflect the interests of all Western communities.

I should also remind you that an important cultural program continues to be produced in Winnipeg. These initiatives will ensure Westerners a significant presence on all our platforms.

**Mr. Dan Vandal:** If I understand correctly, surveys have shown that people who listened to noon-hour radio programs no longer do so.

**Mr. Louis Lalande:** Yes, there's been a major decline in the number of listeners during the noon hour.

**Mr. Dan Vandal:** When did you do these surveys?

**Mr. Louis Lalande:** The use of digital platforms has grown, especially during the noon slot. It's constantly being said that media consumption is evolving. We can clearly see what's declining and what's increasing. Therefore, we continue to adjust so we can offer the best service possible.

**Mr. Dan Vandal:** Could you talk to us about the reduction of airtime for the *L'heure de pointe* radio program, and the fact that local television programming has been reduced by 30 minutes per week?

**Mr. Louis Lalande:** It's the same principle. People said they prefer having more resources to create a half-hour of cohesive content, rather than having spread-out resources which result in the need to transplant reports from Montreal and several other places. They said they wanted the focus to be on a solid half-hour of news that better reflects the interests of each of the communities we serve, including Winnipeg, and that does it well.

**Mr. Dan Vandal:** Franco-Manitoban communities are spread out almost throughout the province. Several people have no access to Internet service or a reliable cellular connection that would enable them to listen to Internet programming. You're putting more of your eggs in the digital basket, but how will you ensure that minority francophone communities are well served?

• (1155)

**Mr. Louis Lalande:** Each time we have the opportunity to send this message to other decision-makers, we do it. I'm very much aware of this situation. I travel enough to realize certain communities don't have access to the most optimal Internet service. We remind the various decision-makers of this, because it's a very important communication method nowadays.

Digital infrastructure is not within the CBC's purview, but we take advantage of each opportunity to emphasize the situation. For example, a few years ago, we told the CRTC that developments

involving digital technology need to take the access issue into account.

**Mr. Dan Vandal:** Okay.

[English]

**The Chair:** Thank you.

**Mr. Dan Vandal:** Do I have more time?

**The Chair:** No. You've reached seven minutes.

[Translation]

**Mr. Dan Vandal:** I'd like to come back to the airtime cuts. What do I tell my fellow citizens...

[English]

**The Chair:** Dan, I said you've ended your seven minutes.

**Mr. Dan Vandal:** Oh, you did; Sorry.

**The Chair:** That's okay.

**Mr. Dan Vandal:** Thank you. *La prochaine fois.*

**The Chair:** We'll now go to our second round. This is a five-minute round.

We will begin with Mr. Waugh.

**Mr. Kevin Waugh (Saskatoon—Grasswood, CPC):** Thank you.

I don't have to tell you that you're the envy of the broadcasting industry. The private broadcasters in this country do more with less. They're looking upon the model of the CBC with envy because you got \$675 million. You didn't have a business plan, yet you had \$675 million given to you. Then you had to scurry and get your business plan together.

I take it your business plan to digital will absorb most of the \$675 million, then? I take it that's where you're going? I see that Robyn Urbach has been hired from the *National Post*. You're hiring other high-profile people to work on your digital plan.

When the government gave you the \$675 million, is that when you started the game plan for five years?

**Mr. Hubert T. Lacroix:** You know that I will not agree with the comment you just made, sir, that we had no business plan. The 2020 plan had been there for a long time.

**Mr. Kevin Waugh:** But not with money attached to it.

**Mr. Hubert T. Lacroix:** Yes, because what we did with this was we actually said in our 2020 plan what our objective is for the public broadcaster. The connections we were making with Canadians, as we saw them, gave us feedback about what they wanted from the public broadcaster. That was more local content, more digital content, and more Canadian content.

When the dollars came to support us and to give us the breathing room that we no longer had as we were trying to transform this leading institution, the most important leading institution in the cultural sector in this country, the locomotive for so many more people who actually work in our industry, well, we were able to say thank you. We're going to do more Canadian content and we're going to actually reinvest where Canadians asked us to reinvest, because we had to cut because of the environment we were in. We actually went full speed ahead in the digital space, because that's where Canadians are and that's where they expect us to be.

**Mr. Kevin Waugh:** But when you developed the 2020 plan, you didn't know you were going to get any more money, because you were developing that in 2014. Right?

**Mr. Hubert T. Lacroix:** Absolutely.

**Mr. Kevin Waugh:** So you didn't have a number out of the air for

**Mr. Hubert T. Lacroix:** No, but we actually knew, sir, exactly what we had to cut and we knew exactly what we wanted to do should dollars be involved.

We actually met, in the context of the campaign that led to the 2015 elections, with all the parties. We explained what we wanted to do. We sat down with the Liberal Party. We sat down with the NDP. Actually, the only government that didn't want to sit down with us was the Conservative Party. It was to listen to what we wanted the public broadcaster to be. Based on that, I can assure you that we knew exactly, if a reinvestment was going to come, what we wanted to do with the dollars.

**Mr. Kevin Waugh:** The reinvestment, then, of \$675 million over five years: is it enough, is it too much, or what is it?

**Mr. Hubert T. Lacroix:** This reinvestment allows us—let's remember it's \$75 million this year and \$150 million for the next year—to have some breathing room and deliver the 2020 plan, or some of the initiatives we have in the 2020 plan. It allows us to react to the cuts we had to make, and it's a reinvestment in the right direction.

•(1200)

**Mr. Kevin Waugh:** I would argue that the private guys have been cutting as much as you, if not more.

**Mr. Hubert T. Lacroix:** I don't think that we have the same objectives in mind.

The mandate we have is to deliver Canadian content to Canadians in prime time, which the privates don't have as an objective. They have a different business model, and that, sir, is okay. We are very proud of the Canadian content that we put in prime time on our programming schedules. We are very proud of our initiatives on the missing and murdered indigenous women. We're very proud of some of the digital environments we are going to create to be able to speak to our millennials as they are waking up to news. They are very interested in news.

I was very surprised that some of the witnesses who were in front of you said that millennials are not interested in news. We absolutely don't agree with that statement.

**Mr. Kevin Waugh:** Will you reinvest in Saturday nights?

You lost *Hockey Night in Canada*. That was part of your ad revenue loss. *Hockey Night in Canada* probably funded a lot of your news over the years. We always knew that, especially in the playoffs when news was pre-empted.

On Saturday nights, instead of seeing five NHL games, one of them on your channel—or two, because you do the early game and then you do the night game—will you put Canadian culture back instead of taking this product from Rogers television?

**Mr. Hubert T. Lacroix:** In the context of the hockey contract, let us remember a few things.

First off, like CTV, like Bell, CBC was surprised by a decision that all of the hockey went to Rogers, on a national basis and on playoffs, for \$5.2 billion for 12 years. That's water under the bridge. Obviously, though, we lost the advertising revenue that came with that—

**Mr. Kevin Waugh:** How much advertising did you lose?

**Mr. Hubert T. Lacroix:** Just a second, please.

We lost the advertising revenue, but then we also reduced the costs accordingly.

We didn't make money. I've said this in front of this committee before: we did not make money with the six-year contract that ended in 2014 when Rogers rebid. When you say that it funded a whole bunch of things, I would like to remind you of something I've said here before: we did not make money with the hockey contract. However, it was an important locomotive in the context of what Canadians wanted to see, and it allowed us to bundle other shows when we went to advertisers to support the programming schedules for Canadian content in prime time.

I'll let Heather perhaps talk to you about what could be when this agreement with Rogers ends, what is in the plans, or what Saturday night could look like.

**Ms. Heather Conway:** I would love to have Saturday night for Canadian culture. Canadian feature films, in fact, would be—

**Mr. Kevin Waugh:** You will have that opportunity.

**Ms. Heather Conway:** I will have the opportunity.

It always rankles me when I hear people say we lost hockey. When I talk to staff and audiences and Canadians about it, I always say there was no scenario where CBC was going to pay \$5 billion to mostly U.S.-based billionaires. That was never going to happen.

**Mr. Kevin Waugh:** That's right.

Thank you.

**Ms. Heather Conway:** To suggest we lost hockey, like we screwed up somehow, is actually not a fair characterization. The cost of professional sports rights is through the roof. It's not a great use of taxpayers' money, and that's by and large why we are out of the big, expensive professional sports rights.

**Mr. Kevin Waugh:** Yes.

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

That's it, Mr. Waugh.

We will go to Mr. O'Regan.

**Mr. Seamus O'Regan (St. John's South—Mount Pearl, Lib.):** Thank you, Madam Chair.

Thank you to all three of you for appearing in front of the committee.

As you know, this is a new government in place. We've made a significant commitment to you, as the shareholder, but we also want a significant rethink of all of our cultural institutions and important institutions like the CBC. As the minister has said before, everything is on the table, and there will be a fundamental reshaping, I think, of cultural institutions in this country in the coming years, so your appearance here is important and your responses are important.

I grew up in Goose Bay, Labrador, and I'm happy to say that my first employer was the CBC. At the age of 10, I was working for a morning show called *Anybody Home?* on Saturday mornings. I was bemused that anybody would be listening to radio instead of watching Saturday morning cartoons, but it does bring home the point—and it's relevant even today—that there are a lot of people in small, rural, and northern parts of this country who do rely upon radio.

To say that people are in the digital space is true, but it is not for everybody, and it is not for a significant and very important part of our population, those who are rural. While I understand that the infrastructure is not your responsibility, the mandate of making sure those people are serviced in local news is, I think, a part of your mandate.

• (1205)

**Ms. Heather Conway:** I would agree.

**Mr. Seamus O'Regan:** To my point, everything we have heard in the past number of weeks.... I only have a few minutes, so let me summarize and say that local news is in crisis. In terms of local news, areas that aren't sexy or are a little more remote are starving for local information.

I keep coming back to a phrase I've heard repeated by, I think, each of you and that I think will be our northern star in the next year or two: if not the public broadcaster, who? I think that's a very important point, because it does translate to *The Tragically Hip*, which was a fantastic broadcast and a great concert, but it also translates to the not-so-sexy but incredibly important work in northern and rural communities in this country.

**Ms. Heather Conway:** I want to make it very clear that it is not a burden to the CBC or Radio-Canada to be in local communities and to be providing local services, enhancing local services, and expanding our footprint where we can. The issue has been one of resources.

The challenge for all media companies, I think, is to manage this balance between continuing with the traditional television and radio infrastructure, which is expensive and has heavy infrastructure requirements, and meeting Canadians where they are, which is, in increasing numbers, around digital platforms.

What you're hearing, and what you have been hearing from people in the sector, is that we are challenged to pay for an entirely digital service and movement while continuing to invest in the traditional and legacy media infrastructure we have. It's not that we want—

**Mr. Seamus O'Regan:** To interject, Ms. Conway, the problem is what we've heard from a number of fledgling news providers, one of which called you an “uber-predator”.

What he meant is that there is a very small amount of online advertising that's available for these fledgling news sources. There's that, and then, coupled with your new foray into opinion.... Those aren't really things people are starving for nationally. We're getting a lot of opinion pieces, yet we have a finite number of dollars going to them.

If I could, I'll just bring up the BBC example, because it's important, and I only have a few moments. The BBC is pouring £8 million into paying for 150 new local journalists who will be used to feed content into local newspapers and local radio stations, because they understand that there is a democracy gap and that there aren't enough reporters in the field in this new online universe we live in who are covering property issues and covering water and sewer.

As we heard said by even the creator of *The Wire* on HBO, a former journalist himself, the next few years could be a politician's dream. I think what he meant by that was that they could be years where corrupt politicians on the ground could take advantage of less and less scrutiny on local issues.

The BBC, first of all, doesn't take any online advertising, but that's part of a much broader mandate. Second, it's using new money in order to get local presence to feed into its structure. I think that's at least a creative way of going about this. I'm wondering if there is anything you could say to that. Is the CBC planning on doing anything on that level that may be able to help us bridge that democracy gap at a local level?

**Ms. Heather Conway:** There are an enormous number of things that you've talked about in that statement. I'm going to try to tackle a few of them.

The BBC doesn't take online advertising because the BBC doesn't take advertising.

• (1210)

**Mr. Seamus O'Regan:** I understand.

**Ms. Heather Conway:** The BBC is also funded at nine times our level. What the BBC can undertake versus what we can undertake, even with an injection, is very, very different.

The CBC has always been an opinion. I would argue that *Cross Country Checkup* is an opinion show. I would argue that all of our point-of-view documentary is opinion. We used to have a show called *Commentary*, on which people read opinion over the radio. Opinion is not new for the CBC.

I think it's important, again, for the CBC to be the place where people have important conversations, including community conversations and national conversations.

It's not something that we pursue. As Neil Macdonald noted in one of his analysis columns, when he writes about indigenous issues, his readership is guaranteed to drop, but he doesn't stop writing about it. He's not in the click business; he's in the public broadcasting business.

Our focus on issues that matter and on the role of the public broadcaster is deeply, deeply important to us. Where we can be in those communities, we will be. We're absolutely committed to it. We don't want to lessen our participation in any local news initiative. We're not trying to compete with the private sector. That's not our motive. Our motive is always how to best service Canadians where they are. What are they asking us to do? What do they want from us? It's the Canadian response to our content that drives our agenda.

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

Thank you very much.

I go to Mr. Maguire and Mr. Waugh, who are sharing their time again.

**Mr. Larry Maguire:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

I want to follow up. I kind of ran out of time there last time.

Our study is about local news. It's about how we get news into rural and remote areas. I guess I'll ask the question that I did before, for a bit of a breakdown by province of the staffing and that sort of thing, just to get a handle on how that local news is produced and how you disseminate it out into those areas.

Can you expand on the means by which you would hope to do that with the new funding that's available there as well?

**Mr. Hubert T. Lacroix:** I thought that we had established for you, sir, that the way we deliver the news, the way the two media lines are looking for the information and the stories, the way that we make sure that these live on different platforms—these activities are not broken down per person, per platform. These numbers are not numbers that are available.

What we do, though, is that we look for, on a daily basis, ways for the network to benefit from what's happening in a particular region. I'll go back to Fort McMurray and the way that our Edmonton station covered Fort McMurray, being supported by Vancouver and Calgary and the whole of the network and not only allowing Canadians to understand what was going on in that particular part of northern Alberta but also helping the people of northern Alberta. We were the only ones with vital information for people in Fort McMurray.

This is the way that we actually deliver news. This is the way that we cover events of this kind. It's not about three people, two people, or nine people. It's about the strength of the public broadcaster and allowing all of its newspaper—its news people—you see how much we've been influenced by some of the questions—to deliver information to Canadians.

**Mr. Kevin Waugh:** Right; you're taking from the newspaper, as I mentioned.

I'm going to give you some credit, because you could see where the industry was going, I think, long before some of the private people did.

However, I've seen \$3.6 million spent in the last seven months by this government on Facebook when your revenues are down, drastically. Can you make any money off digital when you see the Facebooks, the Googles, and so on in the United States taking money from Canada? I see your revenues, and I don't see digital making the money.

**Mr. Hubert T. Lacroix:** I'm happy to see that you recognize that. Twenty years ago we were just about the first ones to go into digital. All the information was available to everybody around us, and we saw that. We also saw Canadians being interested in it, we saw where the audiences were going, and we started the conversations. We have been in this digital world for a very long time, so this is not new.

Are we making money off digital? If any person in this media industry knew or was able to monetize perfectly all of the efforts in trying to do this, aside from the Googles of the world and the media giants who are... Facebook, Google, and YouTube are all media companies. They are not simply technology companies. What we're trying to do is make sure we monetize this as we go forward.

Do we have the secret of the sauce right now? No, we don't.

• (1215)

**Mr. Kevin Waugh:** How do you compete against these American giants?

**Mr. Hubert T. Lacroix:** We don't compete against the American giants. We have a mandate to deliver to Canadians the best possible Canadian content and to make sure that the lights shine on Canadian artists in prime time. We are able, through all of our platforms, to tell you what's going on in the world through our journalists, who are stationed in really crazy places in the world and who are trying to give you a perspective of not only what's going on there, but how that affects Canada and Canadians in their daily lives.

Whether it's a conversation about climate change or whether it's a conversation about what's going on in different places of the country affected by the oil crisis, this is what we do. We don't wake up in the morning trying to compete against Google—

**Mr. Kevin Waugh:** You do, because you're just—

**Mr. Hubert T. Lacroix:** —but we are interested in the quality of the Canadian content—and I think that's where Heather wants to go—that is created to face actually being invested in by the Netflixes of the world.

**Ms. Heather Conway:** Where I want to go is around the challenge that's presented by the global technology companies, and I would argue that in the form of Facebook and Google in particular, they are primarily technology companies and not media companies. These are both companies we partner with to distribute content.

The challenge that has occurred for the newspaper industry is that the search function—the search for my local shoemaker or repairer or whatever it might be—has virtually replaced all the classified advertising in newspapers. Their bread and butter was the classified ads. That was never the bread and butter of broadcasters, really. Newspapers have been hit particularly hard, I think, by the advent of these kinds of companies that are coming in. As you have rightly pointed out—and I say this as a good partner to them—they take from the market, but they do not contribute a lot to the Canadian market.

**Mr. Kevin Waugh:** Do you pay fees to them? You say that you partner with Facebook and Google.

**Ms. Heather Conway:** We do pay fees to them. We have CBC Facebook pages, and we participate in Facebook Live. They are one of the largest distributors of content, and Canadians use them in the millions. When we want to share our content, Facebook is one of the ways that we do it.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Ms. Conway, and thank you, Mr. Waugh.

I will go to Mr. Samson.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Darrell Samson (Sackville—Preston—Chezzetcook, Lib.):** Thank you, Madam Chair.

My heartfelt thanks to the witnesses for being with us today. It will help us submit a report to the House that will reflect the positions expressed by the people who have appeared before us. You play an important role in that regard.

I have three questions.

Firstly, as you mentioned, the communications sector has changed dramatically. What is your plan to compete, directly or indirectly, with Netflix and CraveTV? What's your strategy to compete with them or be present in that environment? We know consumers are turning toward these stations.

**Mr. Hubert T. Lacroix:** I'm going to ask Mr. Lalande and Ms. Conway to answer that question, because the anglophone environment is characterized by programs broadcast in prime time. They are often the CBC's barometer of reference when comparisons are made between the CBC's series, and Netflix series.

• (1220)

**Mr. Louis Lalande:** In the francophone market, we launched the Tou.tv platform several years ago. It's worth noting that Tou.tv was launched before Netflix. We spoke about the risks CBC and Radio-Canada need to take regularly. Tou.tv is a very good example of that. We have truly introduced a way to catch up on programming that uses something different from a recorder. It's a very accessible platform that we've developed. It's certainly one of the main ways for francophones to consume television content at this time.

It's also a very interesting platform that enables young creators to develop new formats, especially in the drama segment. Tou.tv has been winning awards in all the international creation festivals, with what we call new writing. The platform enables young people to develop new formats, such as short formats in the drama segment.

Tou.tv is certainly an important element of our strategy, and it helps us achieve our main objective to stay in contact with Canadians by offering them meaningful, Canadian and original products and content, whether it be drama programming or news. That's the main challenge. I am not using the word "compete" here, because that's not our obligation.

The combined pressure on us with respect to francophone content is inevitably very difficult to absorb because anglophone content is gaining an ever-increasing foothold. We have the additional duty not only to produce French-language content, but also to ensure that it's distributed and seen. Tou.tv is one initiative in that regard.

[*English*]

**Mr. Hubert T. Lacroix:** I'm going to ask Heather to talk to you now about how we see this, for example, in the context of this reinvestment, how these dollars go to Canadian content and help us create content that Canadians want to watch in an environment where we are bumping into series invested in by the HBOs and the Netflixes of the world.

**Ms. Heather Conway:** Thanks, Hubert.

I don't think you can overstate the seriousness of the competition presented by the Netflixes, the Amazon Primes, the Hulu.

There were 400 new hours of English-language drama created in the last year, and 50% of it will fail. It's a level of investment that is staggering. I think most of you know the investment that Netflix makes in its series. For two seasons of *House of Cards*, the investment is \$100 million. That's roughly the budget of English-language non-news for an entire year, and Netflix is spending that for one series. Our ability to compete with that and our need for investment in Canadian content and Canadian creators is enormous.

When we partner with those companies, as we are on *Alias Grace*—a great Canadian writer, Sarah Polley, is producing and writing the series, and it has a great Canadian broadcaster in CBC—the investment is about \$30 million. That is something that is almost unprecedented for us in terms of the volume of dollars. If we hope to be able to compete with that kind of content, that's what we're going to have to be able to do.

As Louis says, we're going to have to invest more and more in a CBC player so that people can access that content in the way that they want to when they want to. It requires a huge investment in digital infrastructure and technology. You want to be able to provide people with the kind of viewing experience that they've become used to from the Netflixes of the world, to say, "If you liked this, you'll probably like that." You need to be able to gather information about how people watch, what they binge watch, what they like.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Darrell Samson:** Sorry for interrupting, but my time is limited.

Well, \$675 million is certainly a major investment. I'd like to know a bit more about the action plan. Perhaps there is one, and you can summarize it for me in sixty seconds. There is talk of digital content, cultural content, Canadian content, rural communities and minorities. Those are five major themes I've noted. But I haven't heard much about minorities and culture. Mr. Lalande, how will this money be used to inject more life into those aspects?

I just gave you a concrete example. During the most recent federal election, I was the only francophone Acadian MP from Nova Scotia. I told Radio-Canada that I was going to get elected, and asked them to come do reports on the subject. No journalists from Radio-Canada showed up during the election campaign—not even on election day. However, a journalist travelled two hours to cover the province's anglophone candidates. I was very disappointed. What's more, I had to email Radio-Canada twice to ask them to pronounce my family name the French way, not the English way. This despite the fact that I had given nearly a thousand interviews to Radio-Canada over the preceding 11 years.

• (1225)

**Mr. Hubert T. Lacroix:** I know you made this remark to Michel Cormier when he appeared before this committee. I also know that Mr. Cormier, who is from your part of the country, apologized for it. He told everyone that the Samson family has very deep and extensive roots in Acadia. I reiterate Mr. Cormier's apology regarding the pronunciation of your name.

I will now let Mr. Lalande tell you how the invested funds will make a difference in your daily environment.

**Mr. Darrell Samson:** Thank you.

[English]

**The Chair:** I'm sorry, Mr. Lalande. We'll have to move on, because we are going into a third round.

**Mr. Darrell Samson:** Madam Chair, if he doesn't answer throughout the session, maybe he can send it in writing.

**The Chair:** He may have a chance in the next round. We have another round. If we fill out all the parties that want to speak in that round, we may actually be able to do a four-minute round.

We're starting with Mr. Nantel.

[Translation]

**Mr. Pierre Nantel:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

I think that Mr. Samson wants a written apology.

**Mr. Louis Lalande:** It's a promise.

**Mr. Pierre Nantel:** Mr. Lacroix, you told us that the Liberal government has asked you for an accountability process. You said it was forthcoming. You have long asked for an operating line of credit, and I imagine you will get it, or you have it, because the \$75-million envelope—which everyone is talking about and calling enormous—is in reality an increase of each Canadian's contribution from \$29 to \$34. As far as I know, you have been asking for a \$40 contribution per person per year for a long time. That amount strikes me as very reasonable, provided it's well spent.

As far as I know, you haven't received the \$75 million yet. We have just had a vote and you might receive the funds within the next two weeks. You mentioned that the money will be used to fund new projects, including Canada 150. I imagine the funds will be used to test concepts that will be used for new productions. We are already hearing the difference with programs aired in the evening, including Rebecca Makonnen's program, which is part of a new slate.

I'd like to come back to the subject you were addressing when you were interrupted, namely, the upcoming cuts on the francophone

side. You said there could be major job losses. Has that situation changed with the injection of new funds, which I hope you will receive shortly?

**Mr. Louis Lalande:** The evolution is that everything that needed to be announced has been announced. It's now time for the implementation. The positive side is that new expertise is coming to Radio-Canada, and it's extremely stimulating. This new expertise will help us finish what we've undertaken and move forward with our shift. Here is an example.

**Mr. Pierre Nantel:** Will there be further job cuts?

**Mr. Louis Lalande:** Yes, the announced job cuts will be made, for all kinds of reasons, such as the end of *L'Auberge du chien noir*, a program that has aired for 13 years. Filming is expecting to end in a few weeks. Therefore—

**Mr. Pierre Nantel:** Will a lot of jobs be terminated?

**Mr. Louis Lalande:** Twenty to 30 jobs.

**Mr. Pierre Nantel:** You're saying 20 to 30 jobs.

**Mr. Louis Lalande:** It's not hundreds.

**Mr. Pierre Nantel:** Our thoughts are with the people who will be losing their jobs.

Please continue.

**Mr. Louis Lalande:** In my view, new hires are where the biggest emphasis should be placed. A bit earlier, Mr. Lacroix spoke about the Next Generation project, a space to experiment and develop a new form of journalism. So the positions will be filled by young people whose employment status with the CBC was precarious. They are new people we trained on other projects, who went elsewhere, and are coming back to the CBC to help us develop this journalism of the future, which everyone is talking about.

• (1230)

**Mr. Pierre Nantel:** Since we're talking about the future, perhaps Ms. Conway could answer my question.

You spoke at length about your initiatives in the Windsor market, which is moving increasingly toward digital. Sorry, was that Kingston, rather than Windsor?

**Mr. Hubert T. Lacroix:** It's London.

**Mr. Pierre Nantel:** Okay, thank you.

Well, I was in Windsor one Saturday morning, listening to the news in my car. To my great surprise, the national news was followed by local news from Toronto. Does this mean that news is still in demand on the radio on Saturday mornings? Radio is often seen as a medium with less of a future, but, nonetheless, it's what people generally listen to when they're in their cars.

**Mr. Louis Lalande:** In Ontario, our strategy for the weekend is indeed a multi-station strategy. We don't yet have the resources necessary to do radio shows seven days a week during the daytime and evening. However, we have a radio presence that relies on and is intended for people just about everywhere in Ontario: the northern part of the province, Toronto, and Windsor.

**Mr. Pierre Nantel:** Understood.

With respect to the digital presence, you're right to say you were the pioneers in the field. I remember it. You've been talking about radio, television and the Internet for 10 years, I'm sure.

Has the feedback from people in Kingston been good?

**Mr. Hubert T. Lacroix:** Are you referring to London?

**Mr. Pierre Nantel:** Yes. I'm constantly getting the cities mixed up. You're quite right; I meant to refer to London.

[*English*]

**Ms. Heather Conway:** Yes, universally. It's not up and running yet, but we have met with community leaders in London to talk about what kind of service they want. It will have its own radio, as well as a digital bureau. We did talk about location so that we could ensure we were in a location that would work for the community.

**Mr. Pierre Nantel:** Okay.

**Ms. Heather Conway:** It has been universally positive. This is a city that has wanted service for years and has felt underserved by the public broadcaster. It was, in fact, the next city on the list of local service extensions when we developed a plan to invest more in local.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Hubert T. Lacroix:** Mr. Nantel, you will recall that one of the strategies in the 2015 plan was to open the public broadcaster where services were not being delivered, and where Canadians said they were underserved. In that context, new stations were opened in British Columbia and Alberta. We went to London as part of a "local services extension plan."

**Mr. Pierre Nantel:** I hope to have the opportunity to ask more questions afterwards, but in the minutes I have remaining, I'd like you to tell me how you reacted to what the three children's television creators have come out with. Incredibly, they're exploring the option of bringing ads back to children's programming. I know the Kids' CBC brand is very strong. Radio-Canada still has cartoons for children, but there are no live-action programs anymore.

Could you describe this situation to us?

**Mr. Hubert T. Lacroix:** Mr. Lalande, would you like to answer this question?

**Mr. Louis Lalande:** Actually, we're still doing *Salmigondis*, which is a live-action program. We're the only ones still doing one.

**Mr. Pierre Nantel:** That's true. Sorry.

**Mr. Louis Lalande:** In fact...

**Mr. Pierre Nantel:** My children are in their twenties. At the time, the Charles Gaudreau show was a solution to replace advertising. But that doesn't exist anymore.

**Mr. Louis Lalande:** That's a good question. *Salmigondis* is the only live-action type program. We do it in collaboration with Télé-Québec because we firmly believe it's important to keep this kind of programming in place.

**Mr. Pierre Nantel:** And it's a success. All the young children tell me about *Salmigondis*.

**Mr. Louis Lalande:** Of course, and you can be sure that some of the reinvestments are going to projects for young people. Such projects are always a bit more time-consuming, but this was always clear. In fact, our reinvestment plans include a youth campaign by

Tou.tv, which is a very accessible platform. We'll start with that, and develop other live-action initiatives afterwards.

[*English*]

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Lalande and Mr. Nantel. I think that's it.

If we really stick to the time—and we never do—we could do another round of three minutes. I'm going to start with Mr. Maguire and Mr. Waugh, for three minutes. You are splitting it, so I'm going to have to be very sharp on your splitting here.

• (1235)

**Mr. Larry Maguire:** Okay. Thank you.

Mr. Lacroix, one person came before our committee and said that for about \$350,000 they could set up a news unit or a new facility focusing on local news in a region. Part of what we are studying is how to do that. You indicated your efforts, and they're good, but for \$150 million.... Over those four years, each year there was some consternation by these local independents that perhaps some of this funding could have helped set up some of those smaller facilities, and those funds could have been utilized in a manner that would help small independent groups get going and make them viable.

Can you comment on that? Do you see that there are enough other news sources out there as well?

**Mr. Hubert T. Lacroix:** Sir, the mandate of CBC/Radio-Canada is one that is important. It's a wide range of programming. It's about information. It's about enlightenment. It's about entertainment. That's what we focus on.

When these dollars were made available to us, that's what we focused on. We listened to what Canadians wanted us to do. We have these conversations going on all the time.

We have been under pressure, and severe financial pressure, for the last year. We have done a whole bunch of cuts trying to reshape the broadcaster and make sure we can deliver on the promise of balancing our budgets, which we did, through thick and thin.

I'll come back to a comment that I think was to Mr. O'Regan. One of the things we did not do is that we never changed our footprint. We kept every single station out there alive, because we believe in being deeply rooted in the regions. If you are not there, then you can't have the pulse of the region and you can't understand what's going on in the country.

That's what we did in this environment. That is our focus. This is what I understand the dollars to be invested in CBC/Radio-Canada are for, to be able to continue delivering on our mandate.

**The Chair:** You have one minute.

**Mr. Kevin Waugh:** I have one minute, so I'm going to interject, if you don't mind.

The heritage minister asked for your advice about the qualities of a CBC director. We know—

**Mr. Hubert T. Lacroix:** Qualities of a what, sorry?

**Mr. Kevin Waugh:** The qualities that CBC directors should have: education, of course, and experience and knowledge.

Can you tell me how many of your current directors would be ideal candidates right now, according to the note you sent to the minister?

**Mr. Hubert T. Lacroix:** You do understand that I'm not going to comment on the quality of my directors.

We have a board right now that has been working with us for a long time. I understand that the minister is putting together a process by which new directors will be added to our board. We look forward to these directors, because we now have a number of vacant seats.

It's important for the broadcaster to be able to do its job, to have a board of directors to deliver on the mandate of the board.

**Mr. Kevin Waugh:** Advice to your current—

**The Chair:** Mr. Waugh, I think that's it. Thank you.

Now we go to Ms. Dabrusin.

**Ms. Julie Dabrusin (Toronto—Danforth, Lib.):** Thank you.

I was really happy to hear that we were talking about hockey. We talked about how there isn't the same hockey programming that there used to be. We were talking about men's hockey. I want to flag that there's an opportunity out there, the Canadian Women's Hockey League. They play on Saturday nights.

In fact, this Saturday, Brampton and Toronto will playing. Go Furies. I think we should be talking a bit more...because we're studying women in sports right now.

Some of the evidence we've been hearing is that one of the challenges faced by female athletes is that there's less media coverage for them. Because of that, there's less sponsorship, less financial support for women in sports.

I was looking at your inclusion and diversity plan. As far as hiring women and having women at boardroom tables is concerned, CBC has been doing well. The point is that it also gets reflected out. I want to ask what the opportunities are to better reflect women in sports on the CBC.

**Mr. Hubert T. Lacroix:** I'll answer that question in terms of the Olympics, and then I will ask Heather to help me explain how the sports strategy has evolved.

In this current context, you know how much we are invested in the Olympics. We're invested in the Olympics, allowing us—not only allowing us, but ensuring that not only men's sports but also women's sports are seen on a Saturday afternoon on *Sports Weekend*. The stuff we do between Olympic Games will involve skiing and luge. It will involve all sorts of sports that women actually play and that are in this window on Saturday afternoons.

On sports strategy, Heather, perhaps—

• (1240)

**Ms. Heather Conway:** Our sports strategy is very much to focus on amateur and elite performance sports.

Women's hockey is something that I'm a fan of. I'd love to see more women's hockey. We do have contractual arrangements with Rogers for Saturday nights until June of 2019. That would be the first opportunity to have a window to look at programming other kinds of either cultural content or amateur sport on the network.

We're not feeling that it wouldn't be an interesting thing for us. Our sports folks are deeply interested in all of our professional and amateur sports that are not in that category of \$75 million to \$100 million to \$1 billion in rights fees. It's impossible to recoup your investment on those.

**Mr. Hubert T. Lacroix:** There are all sorts of other ways for us to bring this to Canadians. We can stream. I mean, television is only one of the windows available for women's sports.

**Ms. Julie Dabrusin:** I'm sorry, but I'm running out of time.

One of things we're also looking for is more voices about women in media reporting on sports. Actually, CBC does have a number of women reporting on sports, which is wonderful. Radio-Canada, I believe, has Marie-José Turcotte and Chantal Machabée, so you have women who are doing very well.

Perhaps you could suggest to us people who could come before our committee to give the perspective of women who are reporting on sports and what a woman's experience is in reporting on sports, because that is not a traditional field in the same way for women.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Whoever answers, could you do it very quickly? We're really over on this particular question.

**Mr. Hubert T. Lacroix:** Sure, we'd be happy to make suggestions.

There are a number of national federations and provincial federations that have a number of athletes and a number of spokespeople. They are in this on a daily basis. I think that's where you should go first.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much.

Now we go to Mr. Maguire for three minutes, please.

**Mr. Larry Maguire:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

I was asking earlier about competition in some of the industries. Just to go back to that, other mediums have come before us in this process as well, and they indicated that the CBC was one of their biggest competitors—was a reason for them not expanding, and that sort of thing—because of your funding. I believe that there are over 7,200 employees, and 66% of the budget is a parliamentary appropriation, so you're getting about \$1 billion a year from the federal government of the \$1.5 billion in revenues. They felt that was inappropriate from their perspective.

As far as competition goes, it's very difficult for them, they felt, do their job of getting the news out there, because they're surviving on advertising where—from the notes we have—you have 16% in advertising revenues. I would like you to comment on that.



As well, 9% of your revenue is from subscriber fees for specialty services and 9% from other income. Can you describe what the specialty services would be, and also the other, because 9% seems to be a fairly large number of other income?

**Mr. Hubert T. Lacroix:** Sub-revenues are easy to identify. That is the price you pay to your cable provider to get RDI or CBC News Network, mainly. We have three or four other specialty channels, including the documentary channel and, in French, ARTV and Ici Explora. Those specialty channels you have to pay for, because, as I'm sure you know, you don't pay for the CBC feed that the cable provider delivers to you, nor do you pay for Radio-Canada, in the same way that you don't pay for CTV, TVA, or the other conventional broadcasters, which is an issue in itself. I'm sure that in the two minutes I have, I don't have time to go into this really important subject matter, which would be value for signal, so I'll stop there.

The other question was on the other income. In the other income, we have all sorts of rent dollars that we create by our own activities, such as in the Canadian Broadcasting Centre in Toronto, where we have actually leased a number of square feet. What we try to do is look within the assets that we are given and try to make them efficient and monetizable so that all of these dollars go back into creating Canadian content.

• (1245)

**Mr. Kevin Waugh:** I do have one question.

On October 6 I was talking about advertising revenues. You're on digital. You're on TV. I asked Ms. Helen Kennedy, the director general of broadcasting and digital communications at Canadian Heritage, about Radio-Canada, about advertising there.

You've done the two platforms, but you haven't done the third platform, which is radio. I see here the quote, "We don't want ads on radio." Is there a reason there are no ads on radio? At one time there were ads. If your revenues are down everywhere else, why wouldn't you look for revenue from radio?

**Mr. Hubert T. Lacroix:** The CBC sound, the Radio-Canada sound, the *Première Chaîne*, Radio One, the sound of our radio network—

**Mr. Kevin Waugh:** Yeah, I know.

**Mr. Hubert T. Lacroix:** —there is no way in the world that we want to mess with that. This is specific to us. It's important. Canadians want it this way. There's no intention whatsoever of linking ads to those two radio networks.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

**Ms. Heather Conway:** Radio listening around the world is down. We are up.

**Mr. Kevin Waugh:** Television is down, too.

**Ms. Heather Conway:** We're up.

**Mr. Hubert T. Lacroix:** We're up. That's the message.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

We'll go now to Mr. Vandal and Mr. Breton, who are going to share their time, I gather.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Pierre Breton:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

[*English*]

**The Chair:** Mr. Vandal, are you starting? Mr. Breton?

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Pierre Breton:** Madam Chair, I'm going to begin.

During the meeting, we spoke briefly about the job reductions that were, I believe, announced in 2014, as part of Strategy 2020. Since then, our government has announced investments.

I am particularly interested in successionship—in the young people who are studying in colleges and universities and who, of course, are interested in the communications field. Earlier, Mr. O'Regan noted that his first job was with the CBC. Many young people are looking for their first jobs in this field, and the CBC remains a very interesting employer in this regard. There are brilliant, interesting young people with extraordinary talents who could help CBC/Radio-Canada make the shift that's under way.

What's your situation with respect to possible hires over the coming years?

**Mr. Hubert T. Lacroix:** Mr. Breton, when we announced this plan, we immediately spoke of the importance we ascribe to good technical and content delivery skills. Young journalists have those skills, and we want them on board.

Some 300 positions will be created as part of the 2020 plan. Roughly 150 people have already been hired. We continue to seek new talent on an ongoing basis. At CBC/Radio-Canada, roughly 1,200 or 1,300 people have completed retraining programs for the digital environment. Another 630 people who have management skills will enable us to manage our shift. We are very conscious of this.

Mr. Lalonde can probably speak to you about one of our initiatives involving four young indigenous journalists we've just hired. This will give you a window into what we can do these days.

**Mr. Louis Lalonde:** I will tell you about it another way.

At Radio-Canada—and I think it's the same thing at the CBC—the reinvestment is enabling us to become attractive to young people again. That's something I've felt throughout the country. Young people are interested in contributing to CBC/Radio-Canada, on the radio, on TV, on digital platforms, and in every form of expression. It's very encouraging.

To follow on Mr. Lacroix's remarks, we've launched a project for indigenous Canadians. At Radio-Canada, for the first time, four indigenous interns will be joining four regional station teams for a year. This will enable them to contribute to the economy, because the internships are paid.

An extremely stimulating movement has been launched. If you listen to the radio, you'll hear these new, young journalist voices throughout Canada. The movement is very much under way. We'll be able to continue offering young people such opportunities.

•(1250)

[English]

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Mr. Vandal, I'll give you one minute.

**Mr. Dan Vandal:** One minute?

**The Chair:** Yes. I know you're good at doing that. Go ahead.

[Translation]

**Mr. Dan Vandal:** I'd like to come back to what's happening in Saint-Boniface.

Radio-Canada is doing an excellent job reflecting our reality, whether it's covering festivals, the Théâtre du Cercle Molière, or local elections. But four hours of local programming each week have been cut.

What assurance can you give Saint-Boniface residents that their radio will be there for them in the future, and that their voice will be heard?

**Mr. Louis Lalande:** I can simply assure you that radio, TV and digital services in Manitoba and Western Canada will continue to improve.

We were talking about news. In the coming months, we'll be rolling out all our initiatives aimed at ensuring that our programming better reflects the full range of social and cultural interests. I'm not just talking about news programming. We will be even more present at music festivals that encourage the emergence of new talent, and we will offer these young people a springboard.

I can guarantee you that you'll see this dynamic at work. Its presence will be bigger than ever.

[English]

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Lalande. Thank you, Mr. Vandal, for being so crisp.

Mr. Nantel, go ahead.

[Translation]

**Mr. Pierre Nantel:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

There is no doubt that, as our public broadcaster, the CBC must be the champion of new practices, a new framework, and a new telecommunications universe in Canada. I fully support that mission. We also expect a great deal of transparency, because the CBC is the broadcaster of Canadians, and Canadian taxpayers.

To answer my colleague's question, all the selection criteria for the board of directions are posted on the site, but those pertaining to current members have been redacted to avoid showing too much about whether or not they have the requisite skills. Two empty columns correspond to two vacant positions. The site also contains Mr. Lacroix's work report, but it's redacted on the basis that it's a trade secret. Naturally, the choices you make on behalf of all Canadians must be strategic, but they must not be too accessible, because you'd want to avoid the same document being used for the CEO of Global or CTV.

On the other hand, it's unfortunate that this transparency is absent, and this discussion we should be having with the minister as part of the consultations might not take place. The big players—Bell, Rogers and the others—have said what they had to say without whipping themselves, or putting themselves through the grinder. It's too bad, because we really need to speak face to face.

Ms. Conway, you mentioned that you're doing some productions with Netflix. We'd like to know how that works, whether you would licence Netflix to use the programming outside Canada, and whether these productions will be available in Canada after you've aired them live here. I focus particularly on children's television programming.

[English]

**The Chair:** You have one minute.

[Translation]

**Mr. Pierre Nantel:** My constant concern these days is the Netflix Kids portal. It's hell. We're not there yet in Canada. Ms. Conway, do you think there's a way to prioritize children's television co-productions with Netflix?

[English]

**Ms. Heather Conway:** The challenge with children's programming, as you know, is that there are so many channels dedicated to cartoons: Teletoon, Disney—

[Translation]

**Mr. Pierre Nantel:** Hasn't Netflix become a major competitor, with 5 to 10 million subscribers?

•(1255)

[English]

**Ms. Heather Conway:** I'm just talking about commissioning and developing. We don't produce most of our content in-house any more, so most of it is commissioned from independents. Some of our children's is, and some of our interstitial children's is.

We would absolutely be open to partnering with Netflix. We are open to partnering with lots of different folks to create great content. We do have a very specific focus in our children's programming on the under-six crowd. We don't generally go for the stuff that's competing with Teletoon and those kinds of—

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mrs. Conway.

I want to thank the CBC for coming. It was a long session. You sat there for two hours and answered questions, which is good. It's really what we wanted from you.

I have a couple of questions as the chair. I usually don't ask questions, but I really do want to ask this.

Coming up to Canada 150, CBC has a huge amount of archival content, shows that you have done over the period of time between 1952 and 1992. Is it possible for you to put that treasure chest of archival content out there online, so that Canadians can see it and remember the journey?

I can give you one example. It's a west coast production, *The Beachcombers*, and Molly's Reach. There are lots of things you have in your archival content, and it could benefit Canadians to go back and look at them. Do you have any plans for doing that? That's the first question.

The second question is about diversity. We heard a question about diversity. You have *Kim's Convenience* and *Little Mosque on the Prairie*. You have gone into diversity, but I think there is room to do that more. There is room to look at the diverse LGBTQ populations and tell stories about them. I wonder whether you have a plan to become a little more diverse in terms of representing Canadians.

**Mr. Hubert T. Lacroix:** Heather, do you want to go with the archival material? Then I'll ask Louis to answer that question, too, and then we'll go back to diversity.

**Ms. Heather Conway:** Sure.

For the archival material, unfortunately the answer is "it depends". We don't own the rights to all of the archival material. We generally secure rights, if it's funded by CMF, for six or seven years, and then that's all the rights we have. For a show like *Kids in the Hall*, we would have to buy the rights to air that or show that to people on our digital platforms, and so it depends.

**The Chair:** The National Film Board does this, though. Is it possible for you to get that negotiation going with independents, because it's great Canadian content?

**Ms. Heather Conway:** We do that when we feel that it will find an audience. We do that. We have re-issued *Kids in the Hall* on our comedy portal, for example.

**Mr. Hubert T. Lacroix:** Louis, would you comment?

**The Chair:** Is it on diversity?

**Mr. Hubert T. Lacroix:** It's archives first.

**Mr. Louis Lalande:** It's archives.

[Translation]

The archives are extremely important. As Ms. Conway mentioned, there's a large proportion of programs to which we don't own the rights. Therefore, when we want to rebroadcast or reuse them, we need to pay royalties.

Many shows belong to us too. For drama and variety, there's everything before 1985. From then onward, there are all the documentaries, and there's the entire news category.

All I can tell you is that we have an expedited plan in this regard. The first phase is to ensure the full archive is digitized. The second, which we have always had on radio on TV and in prime time, is programming that draws on archives. The TV program *Les enfants de la télé* and the radio program *Aujourd'hui l'histoire* are examples.

This enables us to use archived materials and help audiences re-experience major moments in history from a modern perspective.

All of this will accelerate, but it's true that rights are a challenge for the major productions. We'll probably get there one day.

[English]

**Mr. Hubert T. Lacroix:** Could you comment on diversity, Heather?

**The Chair:** Thank you, and give just a quick answer, because we're running out of the time. I'm asking about more diversity because the face of Canada has changed remarkably, and there are diverse LGBTQ stories that you might want to tell.

**Ms. Heather Conway:** I am a lesbian, so I'm always a supporter of more LGBTQ and transgender stories, and we're not shying away from that.

I think increasingly we want to see shows in which the transgender aspect is not the most important thing about the character. It's just a part of everybody's daily life, the same way that we want to see diversity reflected. We look and say, "Is there a reason that everybody on this show has to be able-bodied? Is there a reason that every character on this show is white?" If there's no rationale for it, we say to producers, "Go and find a diverse representation."

We're also trying to do it on our services. If you look at our last hires, for the last six to 12 months in radio, we have Rosanna Deerchild, Piya Chattopadhyay, Duncan McCue running *Cross Country Checkup*, Candy Palmater, and Raina on Radio Two, who has replaced Tom Power in the mornings. Their backgrounds are diverse, so it's something we are seized with. It's something we care deeply about.

Frankly, one of our biggest priorities is also to reflect it internally in our staffing, because that's how it becomes part of the fabric, and when you've been cutting people, it's very very difficult to do that. You have to be in a hiring mode to be able to do that.

● (1300)

**The Chair:** Thank you very much. I think we have another meeting coming up, so I'm going to have to ask for this meeting to be adjourned.

Thank you very much. The meeting is adjourned.





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