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# Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage

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Chair: The Honourable Hedy Fry





## Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage

Thursday, November 23, 2023

• (0820)

[*Translation*]

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

Welcome to meeting No. 100 of the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage.

I would like to note that this meeting is taking place on the unceded traditional territory of the Algonquin Anishinabe people.

[*English*]

Today's meeting is taking place in a hybrid format, pursuant to Standing Orders, and members are attending in person in the room and remotely using the Zoom application.

While public health authorities have suggested that you do not any longer require mask wearing indoors or in the precinct, I would like to say that COVID-19 and the flu are rampant out there, so if you would wear a mask, that would be great for you and others.

I want to take this opportunity to remind everyone in the room that participants are not allowed to take screenshots. The proceedings will be made available via the House of Commons website, so you can go and look at it there.

This room is equipped with a powerful audio system. As such, feedback can occur, and it's quite often harmful to the ears of the interpreters. If you have any of your devices or anything, make sure that your mikes are off when you're not speaking. Make sure that you have things far away from the mike so that you don't get feedback sounds. Also, every question you have or anything you want to say, please address it to the chair.

It's my pleasure to welcome the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission today. We have chairperson and chief executive officer, Vicky Eatrides; Rachelle Frenette, general counsel and deputy executive director, legal services; and Scott Shortliffe, executive director, broadcasting. They're here in person in the room.

I welcome you and ask you to begin your presentation. I'm told that you say you don't need 10 minutes; you will need eight. We give you the floor for eight minutes.

Thank you.

**Ms. Vicky Eatrides (Chairperson and Chief Executive Officer, Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission):** Good morning, and thank you very much for having us.

I would also like to acknowledge that we are gathered on the traditional unceded territory of the Algonquin Anishinabe people.

I am joined today by our head of broadcasting, Scott Shortliffe, and our general counsel, Rachelle Frenette.

Let me quickly touch on three things before we get into questions: first, how the CRTC is set up; second, the context within which we operate; and finally, how we are prioritizing our work.

Starting with how we're set up, as you know, the CRTC is an independent, quasi-judicial tribunal that operates at arm's-length from government. We hold public hearings on telecommunications and broadcasting matters, and we make decisions based on the public record.

The commission has nine members: a chair, a vice-chair for telecommunications, a vice-chair for broadcasting and six full-time regional commissioners who are located across the country. Supporting the nine decision-makers is a team of expert staff like my colleagues who are here with me today.

That brings me to the context within which we operate. As we know, Canada's communications sector touches every aspect of our daily lives. It's the pathway that connects us to each other, to our communities and to the world around us. Since taking on my role earlier this year, I have had the privilege of meeting with and listening to a range of stakeholders from across the country, and I've heard about the importance of our communications sector. Let me share a couple of examples.

In Whitehorse, we heard many stories about the state of communications in rural, remote and indigenous communities. We heard about one isolated community where students could not pivot to on-line learning because of a lack of connectivity. Their children lost one, two and three years of education.

Another example takes us 5,000 kilometres away from Whitehorse to Halifax. As you know, there were devastating wildfires in the area over the summer. We heard first-hand from community members about how they relied on local radio stations to give them the latest updates on the location of fires and the need to evacuate. We've heard countless other stories about the importance of our communications sector. We know that the CRTC has an important role in regulating the sector.

That brings me to our areas of focus. Earlier this year, we set out three priority areas for the CRTC: first, promoting competition to deliver reliable and high-quality Internet and cellphone services to Canadians; second, modernizing Canada's broadcasting system to promote Canadian and indigenous content; and third, improving the CRTC to better serve Canadians.

Let me briefly touch on each.

[*Translation*]

I am going to start with telecommunications.

We are taking action to increase choice and affordability for Canadians, while supporting investment in high-quality networks. Our approach to cellphone competition is a good example of how we are advancing this work.

In May, the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission, the CRTC, established rules that allow regional competitors to operate across Canada using the networks of the large cellphone companies. With this access, regional providers can expand their reach and offer Canadians more choice. However, that approach is only a transitional step. Regional providers can use the existing networks now, but they must put their own independent networks in place within seven years.

Our work is already showing results. Canadians can go online today and find offers that were not on the market a year ago. These improvements are an indication that we are moving in the right direction in cellphone services competition. We are working hard toward promoting competition for Internet services as well.

In March, the CRTC launched a proceeding on the Internet services market to create more choice and lower prices. Two weeks ago, we released an initial decision as part of this proceeding. On a temporary and expedited basis, the CRTC is providing competitors with a workable way to sell Internet services using the fibre-to-the-home networks of large telephone companies in the provinces where competition has declined most significantly.

We are continuing our work on this proceeding and will be holding a public hearing in February.

We have a lot of other work underway on the telecommunications front.

● (0825)

[*English*]

As you know, we are also busy on the broadcasting side. Parliament has given us a mandate under the Online Streaming Act to set up a modern broadcasting framework. The changes needed to implement the modernized Broadcasting Act are substantial and complex.

In May, we published a plan that sets out a phased approach to modernizing the regulatory framework. As part of this plan, we launched four initial consultations. In response, we have received over 600 submissions. Many of them are long and detailed. All of them show that people are highly engaged.

The first consultation looked at which online streaming services need to provide basic information. The second looked at basic con-

ditions of service. The third consultation involves the regime for fees, which recovers the CRTC's costs of regulating the industry. The fourth consultation looks at contributions that players need to make to support the broadcasting system.

Today, right after this appearance, we are on day four of a three-week public hearing on this consultation. We have heard from approximately 20 intervenors so far and look forward to hearing from over 100 more. During this hearing, we are exploring whether streaming services should make an initial contribution to the Canadian content system and, if so, where it should go. We are also asking whether this would help level the playing field with Canadian companies who are already required to support Canadian content.

Through our hearings, we are building a robust and diverse public record that will enable us to make decisions in the public interest.

[*Translation*]

As you know, we have also been given another mandate by Parliament this year. The Online News Act requires us to set up a bargaining framework for fair negotiations between news organizations in Canada and the largest online platforms. We have published our regulatory plan, and will launch a public consultation soon to gather views.

Our third area of focus is improving the CRTC to better serve Canadians. I have heard directly that the CRTC needs to move quickly and transparently, given the impact of its decisions on consumers, businesses and the Canadian economy. We have heard what people are asking for and we are becoming a faster and more transparent commission, thanks to the efforts we are making behind the scenes.

We're doing more to engage with Canadians; we are clearing backlogs; we are looking at our internal processes to see how we can do better; and we are dealing with applications in a more timely way.

[*English*]

I've covered a lot in 10 minutes, so maybe I can just end with an earlier thought, which is that Canada's communications sector touches every aspect of our daily lives. We understand the importance of the sector. We understand the importance of our work. The CRTC will continue to work hard to connect people through technology and through culture.

Thank you, again, for inviting us to appear today. We appreciate the opportunity, and we look forward to your questions.

● (0830)

**The Chair:** Thank you very much. That was very succinct. You stuck to your timelines that you told us you were going to use.

Now we're going to have a question and answer segment. The first one is six minutes. What will happen is that you'll get questions, and you will answer. That is included in the six minutes. It's not just six minutes for questions.

Therefore, everyone, please remember to be as succinct as you possibly can so that we can get as many questions in as we possible can.

We'll begin with the Conservatives.

Mrs. Rachael Thomas, you have six minutes, please.

**Mrs. Rachael Thomas (Lethbridge, CPC):** Thank you.

Ms. Eatrises, thank you for being with us here today. We've been looking forward to having you at the table. It's taken a little while to finally coordinate this, and we appreciate your time.

During the debate on Bill C-11, as you're aware, there was great conversation with regard to user-generated content and whether or not it was scoped in. The government tried to insist that it wasn't. What I note, however, is that, in its directive to the CRTC, it has had to make that explicit. It has made the distinction, or it has distinguished for you, that user-generated content is not to be regulated.

If that's already not in the legislation, then why would that distinction need to be made in your directive?

**Ms. Vicky Eatrises:** I would say that we know that user-generated content is out. That is clear to us. I can't speak to why something was in a directive or not.

**Mrs. Rachael Thomas:** Okay.

However, if it's not in the legislation, why does that need to be a specific directive given to you?

**Ms. Vicky Eatrises:** We do have clarity at the CRTC that user-generated content is not within the scope. I can't speak to why it was spelled out in a directive.

**Mrs. Rachael Thomas:** Do you not feel that you could have interpreted the legislation without that directive?

**Ms. Vicky Eatrises:** I will turn things over to our head of broadcasting to speak a little bit further about that.

**Mr. Scott Shortliffe (Executive Director, Broadcasting, Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission):** Having a directive from government is absolutely within the purview of the government. Because we're at arm's length, we don't engage in a long dialogue with the government about our understanding of the act. We received the act. We interpreted it when we received it. The government has fulfilled or used its power to give us greater clarity. Whether or not we already had realized some of those things is something that the government wouldn't be aware of because we're at arm's length. The government felt that there would be usefulness in giving us greater clarity about the act. We received it. Certainly, we will apply it in the spirit in which it was intended.

**Mrs. Rachael Thomas:** I understand what you're saying here today. Of course you're going to take that position. I find it very interesting, as do many Canadian creators, that the government tried to insist that user-generated content was not scoped in within the legislation but then needed to give a directive to the CRTC with regard

to that end. That actually suggests that it is, in fact, within the framework of the legislation, hence the need for the directive.

Nevertheless, you also mentioned that you function at arm's length. Your mandate letter says, "The independence of the CRTC, along with the transparency of its processes, will be of the highest importance."

However, there is a page on the CRTC's website titled "Myths and Facts". When I read it, I saw that it is, verbatim, the talking points from the minister's office, the talking points that he used over and over again in the House of Commons and right here at this committee table.

I'm curious as to who authorized the publishing of the "Myths and Facts" page.

**Ms. Vicky Eatrises:** I can briefly speak to that, and I can turn things over to our head of broadcasting.

We are an independent quasi-judicial tribunal.

**Mrs. Rachael Thomas:** I'm just curious about who authorized the publication of that page.

**Ms. Vicky Eatrises:** We are independent. The CRTC—

**Mrs. Rachael Thomas:** I understand. I'm just curious about who authorized it.

**Ms. Vicky Eatrises:** The CRTC did draft those myths and facts in order to provide some clarity for Canadians in terms of what was going to happen with the implementation of the legislation. That is something that was drafted by and approved by the CRTC.

**Mrs. Rachael Thomas:** Okay.

Ms. Eatrises, as the head of that organization, did you authorize it?

**Ms. Vicky Eatrises:** I did.

**Mrs. Rachael Thomas:** Thank you. That was simple.

I am now curious. I have this OPQ in front of me, which is an access to information that members of Parliament, of course, can submit. In it, the question that was asked by my colleague Mr. Shields was on what type of communication took place between the department and the CRTC.

One of the things that went from the department over to the CRTC was "media lines and questions and answers". That doesn't speak of independence. Why would the heritage department send you media lines and questions and answers if you're functioning at an arm's length?

• (0835)

**Ms. Vicky Eatrises:** I can tell you with full certainty that we absolutely are independent.

I do know that our communications team sometimes shares some communications information, not for comment but just for information.

**Mrs. Rachael Thomas:** Okay, but regarding questions and answers, could you not come up with those on your own, if you're supposed to be functioning independently?

**Ms. Vicky Eatrides:** Again, I can't speak to exactly what was shared, but the communications teams do sometimes share some communications information, for information.

**Mrs. Rachael Thomas:** Okay, so not exactly independent.

One thing said by the CRTC is that “Content and digital creators will not be regulated”. Of course, on September 29, out came a podcast registry.

I understand that you will try to lead this committee to believe that you are not actually regulating podcasters but rather the platforms. What is interesting is that podcasters rely on those platforms to get their podcasts out. Of course, by regulating the platforms, those who use them are in fact regulated.

For example, if a bookstore is mandated that they can sell only red books, that doesn't impact the publishers. The publishers aren't being regulated. In fact, they are, because if they publish a blue book, its sales are going nowhere; green book sales are going nowhere.

In mandating things to the platform, you are in fact mandating those who are producing content. Is that not true?

**Ms. Vicky Eatrides:** I'll be very clear with this. We are not regulating individual podcasts. We are not regulating podcast content, and we are not regulating podcast creators.

**Mrs. Rachael Thomas:** I understand that you're not doing that directly, but you are doing it indirectly. It's a distinction without a difference. We'll leave it there.

**Ms. Vicky Eatrides:** If there is time to respond to that, perhaps I could explain what that decision did. It was to ask large platforms to provide basic information, like contact information with respect to their services, and that would include podcasts. That is the extent of it. I wouldn't say that we are regulating, in that sense.

**Mrs. Rachael Thomas:** Why are you asking for registration?

**The Chair:** Mrs. Thomas, I'm sorry, but your time is up.

Oh, I'm sorry. You have one minute left. I didn't see the one there.

**An hon. member:** We're over six minutes.

**The Chair:** Okay. I think you've gone over the time. I'm sorry. I wasn't paying a lot of attention to the stopwatch.

Now I will go to Ms. Hefner for the Liberals.

I'm sorry, guys. I'm in a like 14-hour jet lag, and I'm kind of a little bit...whatever.

**Ms. Lisa Hefner (Hamilton Mountain, Lib.):** You're going to give me those 10 seconds back. Is that right?

**The Chair:** Yes, Lisa, I'll give you the 10 seconds back—absolutely.

**Ms. Lisa Hefner:** Thank you, Chair.

Thank you, Ms. Eatrides.

Thank you, all, for being with us today.

I would like to give you an opportunity to respond more fully to the previous question. What does it mean that the CRTC is an independent quasi-judicial body?

**Ms. Vicky Eatrides:** Thank you for the question.

We operate as a quasi-judicial tribunal, which is like a court. We are independent. All of our decisions are based on the public record. We hold public proceedings, and our decisions are made by basing them on the public interest and what is put before us.

**Ms. Lisa Hefner:** If the CRTC came up with a really well-phrased myths and facts page on new legislation, does it seem reasonable that a minister would maybe use those same lines that came from the CRTC?

**Ms. Vicky Eatrides:** It would be hard for me to speculate as to whether that was used.

I would say—and this comes down to our third priority, which I touched on, which is to better serve Canadians—that putting forward the myths and facts page was one way that we wanted to be more transparent and give more certainty to Canadians.

• (0840)

**Ms. Lisa Hefner:** Thank you.

I'd like to go back now to what I was originally going to ask you, which is about your taking on this role quite recently. You have a background in law, in teaching law and with the Competition Bureau. I'm wondering if you can tell us what those experiences bring to this role.

**Ms. Vicky Eatrides:** Thank you for that.

Before taking on this role at the CRTC earlier this year, I spent over 23 years in the private and public sectors, mainly in the area of regulatory law. Obviously, I had the chance to work in the area of telecommunications and digital technologies in my 12 years at the Competition Bureau in senior roles.

I actually started my career appearing before tribunals like the CRTC, such as the Copyright Board and the Competition Tribunal. The various leadership positions that I've had over the past many years within the public service have set me up nicely to work at the CRTC, among an incredible expert group of staff and expert commissioners.

**Ms. Lisa Hefner:** Do you think Canadians understand the role of the CRTC? If not, how would you explain it to them?

**Ms. Vicky Eatrides:** I think we can do better. When people mention the CRTC, what we often hear—I'm sure that committee members hear this as well—is that people pay too much for their cellphone bills. That's the kind of thing we hear about often.

I think there's an opportunity to do better. I would come back to what our mandate is, which is really to regulate the broadcasting and telecommunications industries. We've put forward areas of focus, because the volume is huge. As everybody here knows, the volume is huge, and we don't want a D grade on everything. We'd like to focus on the areas that have the most importance and the highest impact. That's making sure that we have competition on the telecommunications side. That's for Internet and cellphone services. It's making sure that we reach out to indigenous, rural and remote communities, making sure that broadband is rolling out there. On the broadcasting side, it's ensuring that we have a modern framework, which is what we are right in the middle of in the hearing that's going on right now.

**Ms. Lisa Hepfner:** How important do you think it is that we have a modern framework for the Broadcasting Act?

**Ms. Vicky Eatrides:** It's critical. Again, as I said, we're on day four today of a three-week public hearing. We've heard from a wide variety of stakeholders over the past few days. We've heard from traditional broadcasters that have said they are shackled by regulations and they're having a very difficult time competing. We've heard from creators who say they need more money in the system. We've heard from online services and global online services that say they already make huge contributions.

We've heard from a lot of stakeholders so far. That will continue over the next two and a half weeks, but certainly, we've heard that there is a need to make some changes.

**Ms. Lisa Hepfner:** How much power does the CRTC really have to regulate Internet giants that are based in other countries?

**Ms. Vicky Eatrides:** The Online Streaming Act gives us the mandate to do that. We will take the mandate that has been given to us by Parliament and we will implement it.

**Ms. Lisa Hepfner:** Have you found, since your appointment, that your goals or priorities have changed at all? Has anything taken you by surprise since you took on this role?

**Ms. Vicky Eatrides:** What has taken me by surprise is the volume of work. There's a lot. Coming in, I saw that we had over 400 decisions, notices and orders that go out every single year—that's our bread and butter, if I can put it that way—and then we have very big issues, like how we fix cellphone and Internet competition and modernize the Broadcasting Act at the same time.

That's why we've focused on priority areas.

**Ms. Lisa Hepfner:** Would you say you need more people or more resources in order to more adequately fulfill your mandate?

**Ms. Vicky Eatrides:** The answer to that is always yes, but what I would say is that we are well prepared to do the work that we need to do right now. To the extent that we need more resources, I will ask for them.

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

Now I go to the Bloc Québécois and Martin Champoux.

You have six minutes, Martin.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Martin Champoux (Drummond, BQ):** Thank you, Madam Chair.

I also thank the three witnesses for being here.

This meeting was much anticipated. It is our pleasure to have you with us and listen to your answers. We have a lot of concerns, particularly as regards the revision of the Broadcasting Act, Bill C-11, on which we worked very hard and for which we overcame a number of challenges.

Ms. Eatrides, in your opening statement, you said you had received 600 briefs, requests and submissions from various groups everywhere in Canada. You also said that you had heard from roughly 20 intervenors so far. That concerns me, because this is really a very daunting task.

Do you think you will be able to complete this mission in time to be able to quickly breathe life into culture, the broadcasting sector and our producers? Do you think the job is too big for the resources you have?

• (0845)

**Ms. Vicky Eatrides:** Thank you very much for your question.

Yes, we are completely ready. We have a team of experts who will be helping us, and the members of the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission who are here with me today are also experts. We will be basing our decisions on the submissions we have received.

**Mr. Martin Champoux:** The minister recently said that she hoped to have a new regulatory framework in 2025. For us, for the culture sector and broadcasters, 2025 is an eternity. A lot of things could happen by then, not just in politics, but also in the culture sector, which has been considerably destabilized by the situation.

Do you feel this urgency in your work, and do you have the resources to address it? That is what I am very concerned about. I get the feeling that the machine is complex and is not capable of responding to the needs fast enough.

**Ms. Vicky Eatrides:** I will answer first, and then I will ask my colleague to add her comments.

Yes, we know it is very urgent. There is no doubt about that. That is why we started holding consultations very early on. That is why we chose an approach consisting of several phases or steps.

**Mr. Martin Champoux:** When I say it is too far off, 2025, I also think it could just as easily be in 13 months as in more two years. That is a pretty wide range.

Do you think there is a chance that the regulatory framework will be put in place in early 2025, or is it a bit too optimistic to think it can be done in so little time?

**Ms. Vicky Eatrides:** Thank you for the question. I will answer first, and then I will ask my colleague to add her comments.

We are going to start by making decisions. We have already made two, and we are going to continue on that path. There are steps to go through.

**Mr. Martin Champoux:** Right.

We have all heard about positions being eliminated at TVA in recent weeks. They are disastrous for the culture sector and the television sector in Quebec. It is the biggest private broadcaster in Quebec and it has eliminated 547 positions. This is literally a nightmare.

Mr. Péladeau, the president of Québecor, has said that the regulations are killing their business and TVA was forced into making its recent cuts. That means they did all the pruning they could, if I may use that horrible term in this context. They did everything they could and they cut everything they could cut to maintain their operations. That implies that after that, there is nothing more that can be done.

Do you think there is a future for television in its present form? Did Mr. Péladeau's statement affect you? What about the statement made by the vice-president of Bell, who made similar comments about the regulations, which are much too complex for the traditional broadcasters? Are you aware of this request?

**Ms. Vicky Eatrides:** It concerns us a great deal. We have heard Québecor. We started with Québecor on Monday morning. It concerns us, but that is why we are acting so fast to determine whether we should put an immediate contribution in place.

**Mr. Martin Champoux:** When you talk about a contribution, are you talking about requiring that digital companies make a contribution? Can you tell me a little more? What form would it take?

**Ms. Vicky Eatrides:** Yes, exactly.

**Ms. Rachelle Frenette (General Counsel and Deputy Executive, Legal Services, Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission):** As the Commission chairperson said, we are currently in the middle of a hearing to examine the possibility of asking digital platforms to make a bigger contribution to the Canadian broadcasting system.

Obviously, since that hearing is in progress, we cannot necessarily go into the details. The Commission members are examining these issues, but, as the chairperson said, these issues are crucially important to the Commission. That is why we started by giving that hearing priority.

• (0850)

**Mr. Martin Champoux:** I think that is a very fine idea. I agree that...

[English]

**The Chair:** Monsieur Martin, you have 15 seconds.

[Translation]

**Mr. Martin Champoux:** Thank you.

Given the reaction by these digital companies regarding any regulation that is presented to them, do you not have the feeling it is

wishful thinking to try to get money out of them by asking them for a contribution?

[English]

**The Chair:** Thank you. The time is up. I'm sorry.

[Translation]

**Mr. Martin Champoux:** I will come back to it.

[English]

**The Chair:** I'm going to the New Democratic Party and that would be Peter Julian.

Peter, you have six minutes, please.

[Translation]

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

I would like to thank our witnesses.

I am going to continue along the same line as Mr. Champoux.

First, what size contribution are we talking about, roughly speaking? A \$500,000 contribution is not the same thing as a \$300 million contribution.

Second, what tools will be put in place to enforce the contribution requirements?

**Ms. Rachelle Frenette:** Those are exactly the questions that are before the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission.

What will be the nature and size of the contributions to be made? Those questions are currently being examined by the Commission.

I can tell you that some foreign entities have appeared during our hearing, including Google. The Commission finds their presence encouraging.

The bill we are currently implementing gives us the tools to finalize regulations that could require these major players to make certain contributions. I can tell you they are present. They are speaking with us and we find that encouraging.

**Mr. Peter Julian:** Thank you.

I see at this time that Meta and Google receive over \$1 billion per year in indirect subsidies. Canadians, through the Canada Revenue Agency, are subsidizing all the companies that want to advertise on Meta and Google. That is \$1 billion a year.

These big tech companies could make a bit of a contribution. That is important.

[English]

I wanted to come to the issue of cellphones. Canadians are gouged mercilessly by big cellphone telecoms, and we have a market monopoly of over 90%.



Canadians pay among the highest prices in the world, often, as you cited in your introductory remarks, without the service that goes with it. Internet and cellphone fees in the midst of the affordability crisis that so many Canadian families are facing are a critical aspect of reducing the gouging that is going on when people go to the grocery store, when they go to the gas pumps or when they try to use their cellphone or have Internet access.

I note that one of the criticisms of the CRTC regime is that the CRTC regime places all of its bets on existing regionally bound competitors who have already demonstrably failed to provide sufficient price discipline and service innovation despite years of effort. As the Commission itself notes, the dominant providers exercise market power at a national level, allowing them to weather a substantial amount of competitive pressure in any particular region.

How do you respond to those criticisms that what the CRTC is putting in place simply will not address the affordability crisis that comes from the massive gouging by big telecom?

**Ms. Vicky Eatrides:** This is something that we have heard from many Canadians about around how unhappy they are with respect to their bills and service.

We can use the levers that we have, and what we've done on the cellphone side is to allow regional providers to access the networks of the large companies for a period of time. They need to do that within seven years and build out their own networks, but that has already shown more choice in the market and we've seen that recently.

As I said in my opening remarks, just over the past year you can see plans now, both from regional carriers and also from the national providers, that are better for Canadians than they were previously. We are also taking all kinds of other steps through our broadband fund, making sure that we reach out to rural, remote and indigenous communities so that they have more choice there as well.

• (0855)

**Mr. Peter Julian:** Thank you.

I want to address the takeover of Shaw by Rogers. It was rubber-stamped by the Liberal government, tragically.

I was on the picket line just last weekend with long-time Shaw workers who were basically locked out by Rogers, and they're massively using replacement workers. The NDP has pressed for anti-scab legislation. It is before the House now, and we are expecting that it will be adopted. However, to what extent does the CRTC see with a bad eye this type of action by big telecom, where they run roughshod over their workers and simply lock them out and bring in replacement workers rather than negotiating in good faith for a collective agreement?

**Ms. Vicky Eatrides:** I would just come back to the CRTC's role and our mandate as an independent quasi-judicial tribunal. Our focus is on regulating telecommunications and promoting competition.

**Mr. Peter Julian:** Thank you.

The issue of resources has come up repeatedly. Ms. Hepfner raised it, and Mr. Champoux as well. You have a huge and important mandate, given what is happening right now in our broadcast-

ing sector, what's happening with cellphone and Internet gouging and what's happening with foreign interference, for example.

To what extent do you need additional resources, because there are delays and complaints about the delays in CRTC's decisions. Often, there have not been the tools in place for the CRTC to follow up and ensure that companies comply.

**The Chair:** I'm sorry, Mr. Julian, but we're going to have to ask for that answer in the next round. Thank you.

Now we go to the second round, which is a five-minute round.

We begin, from the Conservatives, with Kevin Waugh.

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

Welcome, everybody.

I've been around here for a few years. Bill C-18, originally, was supposed to help the newspapers in this country—it's done anything but. As you know, the big telcos got their hands into it, including the public broadcaster, who wants another additional \$172 million. It's interesting, because Ms. Tait was in that chair a few weeks ago. They get \$1.4 billion from the public and they get \$400 million in advertising, yet they want to get their hands into Bill C-18.

When the bill originally came, it was for the newspapers. As I said, in the last year, I've had gobs of newspapers that have gone under—Metroland, 650 jobs lost. I can talk about Pincher Creek or Vermilion. I have some in my province.

When I look at your mandate letter, Ms. Eatrides, I see that it says that the Online News Act seeks to enhance “fairness in the Canadian digital news marketplace”. It's intended to benefit the diversity of news business, including local and independent outlets. How can that be? The newspapers are absolutely pushed out of this conversation.

I'd like your thoughts on the newspapers being pushed out, when originally Bill C-18 was all about the local newspapers.

**Ms. Vicky Eatrides:** We are concerned about news and the state of news, as I know this committee is and Canadians are. I would say, with respect to newspapers specifically, the CRTC does not have a role or mandate in regulating newspapers or the diversity of voices. What we have is a limited mandate under the Online News Act, under Bill C-18, to put in place this bargaining framework.

**Mr. Kevin Waugh:** I thought you did have a role in the diversity of news business. That's your mandate. You just told me you don't.

**Ms. Vicky Eatrides:** It's not for newspapers. We can elaborate on that if you'd like.

**Mr. Kevin Waugh:** That's a gap in the system, then.

Go ahead, Scott.

**Mr. Scott Shortliffe:** We obviously and clearly have a role in news and broadcasting, which we take very seriously, but it's important to note the difference between Bill C-11 and Bill C-18. Bill C-11 gives us large policy questions. There are a number of policy objectives, and we have to figure out how to achieve them. With Bill C-18, we're basically being asked to administer a policy that the government is setting in regulation, and that will be in regulation by the end of the year. Our role is really to facilitate the commercial negotiations that are based on what we've been given.

For better or for worse, we're not being asked to regulate in the newspaper environment. Newspaper policy is something that very much sits with the Department of Canadian Heritage. Having said that, once we have that mandate we will take very seriously our role to help facilitate those commercial arrangements.

• (0900)

**Mr. Kevin Waugh:** In your mandate, you're instructed to make a free and independent press your priority. That's what it says. How can you concede...? This government continues to spend millions on media. On Tuesday they just threw another \$100 million at journalism. To me, there's a line. This government continues to throw money at journalism, yet you are an independent press.... Your priority is.... There is a crossover here.

When the government starts throwing money at journalism, there is an issue with journalism as we go forward on that. Your role, as an independent.... When you see millions of dollars being spent on journalists, there is a line of integrity that, I think, has been crossed.

**Ms. Vicky Eatrides:** I would come back to the CRTC's role. What I would say is that, under Bill C-11 and under the hearings that we're holding right now, we are looking at whether, if we do go the base contribution route for online streaming services, some of that money should go to news funds.

**Mr. Kevin Waugh:** Okay.

I have only 45 seconds left, so this will be my final question. Bill C-18 passed on June 14. That was the day Bell laid off 1,300 employees or 6% of their workforce. Then they shut down six radio stations. Then, the same day Bill C-18 passed, they turned to you and said they wanted to do less local news.

What was your response to Bell officials that day?

**Ms. Vicky Eatrides:** That request, which came in the form of an application, is still with commission staff.

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

Now we go to the Liberals and Anna Gainey.

You have five minutes, Anna.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Anna Gainey (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Westmount, Lib.):** Thank you.

Thank you for being here today, Ms. Eatrides. Your presentation was very interesting.

I am going to start by saying that like my colleague, I share the concerns regarding TVA and its situation. It is clear that the changes in the world of telecommunications are happening faster and faster and are resulting in job losses.

Is the CRTC sufficiently agile to adapt to the speed of these changes and their impact on the Canadian industry?

**Ms. Vicky Eatrides:** Thank you for your question.

Yes, we can be agile.

Naturally, since the CRTC is a tribunal, its processes are relatively formal. We have procedures and hearings for hearing from stakeholders, and that is a very important part of our work that enables us to make decisions.

As you said, there are big changes. We recently heard a very urgent case, and the commission decided to give the case priority in order to make a decision quickly.

So we can do it, absolutely.

**Ms. Anna Gainey:** Right, thank you.

[*English*]

**Mr. Taleeb Noormohamed (Vancouver Granville, Lib.):** Madam Chair, Ms. Gainey is sharing her time, if that's okay.

**The Chair:** Go ahead.

**Mr. Taleeb Noormohamed:** Thank you so much for being with us.

You know, it's always interesting to hear my Conservative colleagues speak with what appears to be disdain for the media, given that in 2014 they spent \$20 million monitoring it. They talk about wanting to defund the CBC in their caucus, but I find it remarkable that they're even out of touch with their members. Their members voted down the motion to defund the CBC.

I want to put that on the record as we start. I think it's important to note that sometimes what you may hear from Conservative MPs may not actually reflect the will of Canadians or the facts.

Let's talk about the facts. Your "Myths and Facts" page seems to be the topic of a lot of conversation. Did you draft it, or did the minister's office draft it?

**Ms. Vicky Eatrides:** The CRTC drafted it.

**Mr. Taleeb Noormohamed:** Did you share it with them for their feedback? Did you share it with them for information, or did you share it with them as you would with anybody else?

**Ms. Vicky Eatrides:** We don't share documents with anybody for feedback. Those are CRTC-only documents.

• (0905)

**Mr. Taleeb Noormohamed:** Thank you.

There's been a lot of talk about how you are purported to want to regulate podcasts. Are you in the business of regulating podcasts?

**Ms. Vicky Eatrides:** No.

**Mr. Taleeb Noormohamed:** Are you collecting information on podcasts?

**Ms. Vicky Eatrides:** We're not collecting information on podcasts, but perhaps we could just clarify what that decision did.

**Mr. Taleeb Noormohamed:** Please.

**Mr. Scott Shortliffe:** What we've asked for in that decision is to collect basic information on podcast services. That is literally your legal name, your address and how we can get in contact with you. That is all we're asking for. That gives us the ability to collect information down the line, if we need it.

**Mr. Taleeb Noormohamed:** Just to clarify, you're looking for information that would tell somebody where a podcast—

**Mr. Scott Shortliffe:** Not even that.

**Mr. Taleeb Noormohamed:** Not even that. Okay.

**Mr. Scott Shortliffe:** We're asking podcast services, a few of whom you can imagine have revenues of over \$10 million a year—we're not even sure if there are podcast services who have over \$10 million a year in Canada—to register with us to just let us know “we are a service that provides that”. We're not asking them to even enumerate what their podcasts are or who their podcasters are.

**Mr. Taleeb Noormohamed:** Let's say Peter, Mr. Julian, and I decide we're going to start a podcast, and we're going to have the 10 people who probably care about what we think. What would we have to do in terms of the CRTC?

**Mr. Scott Shortliffe:** Absolutely nothing.

**Mr. Taleeb Noormohamed:** We would not have to register with you.

**Mr. Scott Shortliffe:** No.

**Mr. Taleeb Noormohamed:** We would not have to tell you where we're running our podcast out of.

**Mr. Scott Shortliffe:** No.

**Mr. Taleeb Noormohamed:** We would not have to give you the address from where we are broadcasting or the nature of the content.

**Mr. Scott Shortliffe:** No.

**Mr. Taleeb Noormohamed:** We could sit anywhere, make our own podcast and say and do what we like, and you're not going to regulate us.

**Mr. Scott Shortliffe:** That is absolutely correct.

**Mr. Taleeb Noormohamed:** For avoidance of doubt, the average person, or the average creator of a podcast, should not have to worry about any kind of oversight from the CRTC.

**Mr. Scott Shortliffe:** That is correct.

**Mr. Taleeb Noormohamed:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

**The Chair:** We started five minutes late, so I'm going to give extra time here.

We'll have Mr. Champoux for two and a half minutes, please.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Martin Champoux:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

I am a little concerned about the podcast plan my colleagues Noormohamed and Julian are hatching. Maybe we will talk about that another time, when it is more—

**Mr. Peter Julian:** We must do it.

**Mr. Martin Champoux:** Maybe, in that case.

Ms. Eatrides, last summer, I was very concerned about the fact that the position of regional commissioner for Quebec at the CRTC had been vacant for so long. Recently, on November 14, Stéphanie Paquette was appointed to the position of regional commissioner for Quebec, and that was excellent news. That is perfect.

The fact remains that this position had been vacant for several months, at a time when, in my view, it was absolutely essential. The study of Bill C-11 was beginning and regulations were being implemented that have a major impact on Quebec culture and the broadcasting sector. The fact that this position was vacant was of much concern to the sector and also to me.

I would like to know the explanation for it taking so long to find the right person and appoint her, when there were several good candidates in the running.

**Ms. Vicky Eatrides:** As you know, the CRTC follows a very formal process. That said, Ms. Paquette, who has just taken up the position, is certainly going to be consulted on all decisions we will be making about Bills C-11 and C-18 and other consultations we will be holding.

**Mr. Martin Champoux:** I understand, but the process still took longer than usual. In fact, it was extremely long, in a situation where there was some urgency. I also know there were good candidates in the running. I wanted to point out that it really did take too long.

This situation raises concerns, precisely about the agility of the CRTC, which you spoke of earlier. I thought that in the current circumstances it would have been important to have that resource person there with you. People, observers, and I am not talking about experts or anything of that sort, contend that the CRTC is an organization that regulates an old system, at a time when our world is undergoing rapid change.

In 30 seconds, could you reply to the criticism that the CRTC is not equipped to deal with the regulations that are needed in the digital world?

**Ms. Vicky Eatrides:** We have a team of experts. We have members across Canada who have expertise in their field, and this helps us.

I also want to note that our decisions are made based on the submissions we receive from stakeholders. We have all the information from the big businesses, from consumers, from everybody. So we have the information we need for making decisions.

**Mr. Martin Champoux:** So regulating digital services is not a subject that concerns you. From what I hear, that is right up your alley.

**Ms. Vicky Eatrides:** Yes, absolutely.

**Mr. Martin Champoux:** Thank you.

I think my time is up, Madam Chair. Thank you.

[*English*]

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

We'll have Mr. Julian for two and a half minutes.

**Mr. Peter Julian:** Thank you.

I want to come back to the issue of resources for the CRTC.

Yesterday in the House of Commons, the leader of the official opposition announced the terrorist attack, which turned out to be absolutely false. Now, this came because somebody in the official opposition leader's office was obviously watching the Fox propaganda network, which was also giving that false news.

I understand that the Fox propaganda network hearings are being delayed and any decision on Fox propaganda, which provides a tidal wave of toxic disinformation in Canada. There's no fact-based journalism there, and they're very open about that. The Fox propaganda network hearings and decision are delayed.

I note that and come back to the fact that there have been complaints about delays with the CRTC. You have a very important mandate. Broadcasting is in crisis. In many respects, people are being gouged with cellphone and Internet fees, and we're seeing foreign interference from the Fox propaganda network and other sources.

Do you have the resources to do the job? I don't share your confidence that you do, given the complaints about delays and given the fact that the CRTC's role is so vitally important.

What can this committee suggest to the government that you need in terms of additional resources?

• (0910)

**Ms. Vicky Eatrides:** Thank you for the question.

As I said, we have the resources that we need right now. We will not be shy to ask for additional resources if and when we need them.

With respect to the complaint that you're referring to that we had received, we did post that as per our normal process. We posted the complaint. We received over 7,000 submissions in response to that complaint. People had very different perspectives on the complaint, but it became very clear that there was concern about issues around content and freedom of expression.

We took that record and decided that we would hold a broader hearing, which is forthcoming, on how we treat foreign services who are operating in Canada.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

I will go now to Mr. Shields for the Conservatives.

You have five minutes.

**Mr. Martin Shields (Bow River, CPC):** Thank you, Madam Chair.

Quickly, you're described as being independent and at arm's length. I've been on Bill C-10, Bill C-11 and Bill C-18, so we've heard ministers say that a number of times.

I have the ATIP question. You said you did not send information to the minister. You said that a few minutes ago. Be careful, because I have information here. They sent it to you, then, because I know what they sent. I know it went back and forth.

When it talks about "media lines", I know what those are. They sent them to you, then. You didn't send it to them, you said, so they sent them to you.

**Ms. Vicky Eatrides:** Again, there is some exchange of communications materials—

**Mr. Martin Shields:** But you said you didn't send them to them. Then they sent them to you—media lines. Is that right?

**Ms. Vicky Eatrides:** I don't know what media lines—

**Mr. Martin Shields:** I do. I have it here, and I have the information, so I know. So be careful.

**Ms. Vicky Eatrides:** Again, if information is shared for information, then that happens through communications. It's not for comment.

**Mr. Martin Shields:** They sent it to you. You said you didn't send it to them, so they, then, sent those media lines to you. Thank you.

Moving on—

**Ms. Vicky Eatrides:** I don't know if any media lines were sent.

**Mr. Martin Shields:** I have other questions to ask.

**Mr. Taleeb Noormohamed:** I have a point of order, Madam Chair.

**Mr. Martin Shields:** I can move on. I can move to my next question.

**The Chair:** You can move on—

**Mr. Martin Shields:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** —but you asked a question. We should hear the answer.

**Mr. Martin Shields:** She said—

**Mrs. Rachael Thomas:** No, it's his prerogative. He can make a statement if he wishes.

**Mr. Taleeb Noormohamed:** She has to be able to answer the question.

**Mr. Martin Shields:** She gave me the answer.

**Mr. Michael Coteau (Don Valley East, Lib.):** You gave yourself the answer.

**Mr. Martin Shields:** Scott, you said that—

**Mr. Taleeb Noormohamed:** I have a point of order, Madam Chair.

**The Chair:** Yes.

**Mr. Taleeb Noormohamed:** The witness was asked a question and was not afforded the opportunity to respond.

**The Chair:** I did make that point. I think the witness should be able to respond. The chair decides who responds and who speaks.

Go ahead.

**Mrs. Rachael Thomas:** I have a point of order.

If you seek clarity from the clerk, I believe you will find that the members of this committee have the ability to make a statement, should they wish to, or ask a question. If my colleague chose to make a statement, that is his prerogative.

**Mr. Michael Coteau:** It sounded like a question to me.

**The Chair:** It sounded like a question, but there you go. If it's a statement—

**Mrs. Rachael Thomas:** I have a point of order.

• (0915)

**The Chair:** Is it a statement, Mr. Shields?

**Mr. Martin Shields:** Yes.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

All right. We move ahead.

**Mr. Martin Shields:** Thank you.

**An hon. member:** No, no, no.

**Mr. Martin Shields:** Moving on, I have the floor.

**Mr. Peter Julian:** I have a point of order.

**The Chair:** No, he made a statement. He has the floor. We continue.

Someone else can take the opportunity to clarify that.

**Mr. Peter Julian:** On a point of order, Madam Chair, it wasn't a statement. It was an accusation.

**Mr. Kevin Waugh:** Well, you made one over Fox.

**Mr. Peter Julian:** The witnesses should be allowed to respond if they choose to.

**Mr. Kevin Waugh:** You make accusations every day.

**The Chair:** I'm sorry, Kevin. We're on the point of order, please.

**Mr. Peter Julian:** If they choose not to respond, that's their prerogative, but they should be given the opportunity to respond.

**Mr. Martin Shields:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

Moving on, Mr. Shortliffe, you made the statement “if needed”. Now, there's a phrase out there that says, “I'm from the government and I'm here to help you”. That's an oxymoron in my riding and very scary. If you ask “if needed”....

You stated that you're collecting that information “if needed”. Is that right?

**Mr. Scott Shortliffe:** Yes. I did say that.

**Mr. Martin Shields:** What does “if needed” mean?

**Mr. Scott Shortliffe:** “If needed”, in this case, means we have a broad mandate to look at the broadcasting system in Canada. We're at the front end of this. There was a question raised about whether podcasting impacts the broadcasting system in Canada. We have no specific questions about it right now. We've preserved the ability to contact large companies that distribute podcasts in the future if needed.

I don't see this as particularly controversial to say that there are elements of the broadcasting system that we need to be in touch with if we develop policies. We have no policies regarding podcasts on the table at the moment.

**Mr. Martin Shields:** You're saying “if needed”.

**Mr. Scott Shortliffe:** Yes, absolutely. We're a quasi-judicial tribunal, and I can't speak to a theoretical for the future—

**Mr. Martin Shields:** But you're setting it up for that as a registration, basically, because you're saying that “if needed” we will need your contact information.

**Mr. Scott Shortliffe:** Yes.

**Mr. Martin Shields:** Thank you. I appreciate that.

One of the things you said is that you're collecting information on what is community, Canadian attitudes, opinions, ideas and values. Is that right?

You're collecting information, and the documentation says that's what you're collecting information about.

**Ms. Vicky Eatrides:** I'm sorry. I don't know what you're referring to.

**Mr. Martin Shields:** When you're out there engaging, you're looking for Canadian values. What are Canadians...in podcasting?

**Mr. Scott Shortliffe:** My apologies—I'm not sure which document you are referring to.

If you're referring to the registration consultation as a whole, we could address that, but I apologize, I'm not aware of the context of your question.

**Mr. Martin Shields:** Okay, I'll move to the next one.

You're talking about connectivity and the words “to the last community”. It's a phrase I've heard today, getting it to the last community.

**Ms. Vicky Eatrides:** That's not a phrase that I use.

**Mr. Martin Shields:** I heard one of you talking about getting the Internet connected to the last community.

**Ms. Vicky Eatrides:** Was that to remote, rural and indigenous communities?

**Mr. Martin Shields:** It's to the last community. To the last farm gate is where it needs to be.

I'm going to turn the time over to my colleague.

**The Chair:** There are 25 seconds for Mrs. Thomas.

**Mrs. Rachael Thomas:** Thank you, Chair.

At this point in time I'll be moving a motion.

Of course, those around this committee table understand that there's only so much time when we are in public and when we have the opportunity to move a motion that we feel is of great importance.

As other parties have done, I will take this opportunity. I recognize that we have a witness here, so I'm happy to move the motion, make a statement and then we can move to a vote quickly, if we wish.

The motion is as follows—

**Mr. Peter Julian:** I have a point of order, Madam Chair.

Last time the CRTC was here, we had a filibuster from the Conservatives that blocked the CRTC from testifying for over an hour—

**Mrs. Rachael Thomas:** This isn't a point of order.

**Mr. Peter Julian:** —and this time we have another hour with the CRTC—

**Mrs. Rachael Thomas:** On a point of order....

**The Chair:** I must listen to what the member is saying before I can rule on whether it's a point of order or not.

**Mrs. Rachael Thomas:** Are you yelling at me?

**The Chair:** No, I am just trying to speak over you because you continue to speak.

Mr. Julian has the floor. He has a point of order.

**Mrs. Rachael Thomas:** As do I.

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

**Mr. Peter Julian:** I note that the last time the CRTC appeared, the Conservatives blocked for over an hour their ability to testify, cutting short our time to ask questions.

It appears that the Conservatives are doing the same thing this time. What they want to do is curtail the witnesses and the important questions. I still have many questions to ask the CRTC. I'm very glad they're here, but those are two consecutive appearances now where the Conservatives are trying to block the CRTC from responding to our questions. I believe that's inappropriate.

Again, the Conservatives blocking the CRTC from answering these questions is not in the public interest.

● (0920)

**Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC):** I have a point of order.

**The Chair:** Yes, go ahead, Ms. Gladu.

**Ms. Marilyn Gladu:** Chair, I've tried to remain quiet while Mr. Julian continues to impugn the motives of the Conservative members of this committee. I think Mrs. Thomas was clear that she understands we have witnesses. We only have them for an hour, as far as I know. We're at the end of that time, and she's going to quickly move a motion, which I think is not going to take very much time.

It's not a filibuster, and I wish Mr. Julian would quit mis-characterizing.

**The Chair:** I would like to point out, however, that we have not finished the questions. There's one other question left to be asked by the Liberal member. I think that is cutting short the questions we are asking the CRTC.

I think Mr. Julian has a point of order. You have responded to it, but I do think it would be nice to have the last question asked.

**Mr. Peter Julian:** Madam Chair, I understand that the motion that we were considering at the last meeting will not be moved, because we have some resolution around the appearance of the Minister of Sport, so I would ask you to ask our witnesses if they're prepared to stay for another hour, because that would give us more opportunity to fully ask the questions that we have to ask of the CRTC.

**The Chair:** That would be out of order, because the agenda says there is only one hour.

I have stretched the hour because I did want to have everyone have a chance to ask a question of the CRTC. What we've done is suggested that one of the questioners shouldn't ask a question due to Mrs. Thomas moving her motion. She could wait until the questioner asked their question and then go ahead and move the motion. She has the time to do it if she wishes.

I would like to see a bit of respect and fairness from this committee so that we don't treat some members of this committee as if they have no authority, no options and no ability to be involved in the game.

Mr. Coteau, you have the floor.

**Mr. Michael Coteau:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

Can I move a motion to move in camera?

**Mrs. Rachael Thomas:** No, because there's already a motion on the floor.

**The Chair:** You cannot. There's a motion on the floor.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Martin Champoux:** Madam Chair, I have a point of order.

[*English*]

**The Chair:** I'm asking Mrs. Thomas whether she would allow, on a point of respect—

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Martin Champoux:** Madam Chair, I have a point of order.

[*English*]

**The Chair:** I'm sorry, Mr. Champoux.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Martin Champoux:** Thank you.

Mr. Julian raised an interesting question about courtesy when he asked about checking whether our guests could stay longer. In any event, we are going to get lost in a long debate, whatever the motion is.

If our guests can stay, that is fine. We could hope to do it quickly. However, if our guests cannot stay an extra hour, it would be the least we could do to thank them and release them while we debate the motion.

That being said, even though I am no fan of the idea of interrupting or preventing our Liberal colleagues from asking their questions, if we go strictly by the rules, our colleague Ms. Thomas is entirely entitled to make a motion at this time.

Obviously, it is a matter of courtesy to ask her...

[*English*]

**The Chair:** She has indeed, and I have acknowledged that. I'm asking her whether she could, out of respect, allow one more question to be asked by another member of this committee.

**Mr. Peter Julian:** I have a point of order, Madam Chair.

Both I and Mr. Champoux have asked whether you could ask the witnesses if they're prepared to stay longer.

**The Chair:** To ask them that, I would need to have consent from the whole committee, if they want to do that.

We have a motion on the floor we have to deal with. All I'm trying to do is get us back in order and ask whether Mrs. Thomas, before she moves a motion, can postpone it while Mr. Noormohamed asks his question. The Liberals have now been cut short of one question in this round. That's all I'm asking.

Go ahead, Mrs. Thomas.

**Mrs. Rachael Thomas:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

I believe this committee is familiar with the rules. Of course, I can only move a motion when I have the floor. I only have the floor when it's my opportunity to ask a question. As much as your chastising is taken to heart, Madam Chair, with respect, it's wrong to imply that I have the opportunity at the end of the question rounds. I do not. The rules of this committee state that I only have the opportunity to move a motion when I have the floor.

**The Chair:** I acknowledge that, Mrs. Thomas, and I'm asking—

**Mrs. Rachael Thomas:** I have the floor right now, and I wish to move a motion.

**The Chair:** I would like to finish what I am saying.

I'm asking you to let Mr. Noormohamed come in. The motion is still on the floor. I will turn to you, because the motion will be on the floor. That's all I'm asking.

However, there you go. You don't want to see that.

We will deal with Mrs. Thomas's motion.

● (0925)

**Mr. Michael Coteau:** I have a point of order.

**The Chair:** Go ahead, Mr. Coteau.

**Mr. Michael Coteau:** May I suggest, considering we had the witnesses for one hour and it's now 15 minutes past the scheduled time, that we finish with the witnesses? We'll forget about our question, then, if that's okay.

**The Chair:** I will do that. I was about to do that, because Mrs. Thomas has the ability to move a motion. It's on the floor now.

I want to thank the witnesses for coming and answering questions. I'm sorry we kept you a little longer than you should have been kept. I know you may have other things to do.

**Ms. Vicky Eatrides:** Thank you very much for the opportunity.

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

**Mr. Taleeb Noormohamed:** I have a point of order.

**The Chair:** Go ahead, Mr. Noormohamed.

**Mr. Taleeb Noormohamed:** Madam Chair, it is disappointing that the Conservatives have chosen to cast aspersions, and then deny the Liberals, New Democrats and Bloc members the opportunity to ask questions of the witnesses and take that time up.

**Mr. Kevin Waugh:** I have a point of order.

**Mr. Taleeb Noormohamed:** Yet again, it reflects no real interest in doing the work of the committee.

**The Chair:** I'm sorry. There's a point of order. I need to listen to it to know whether or not it's a point of order.

**Mrs. Rachael Thomas:** Make sure the rules are applied fairly on this side, then.

**The Chair:** I'm sorry, Mrs. Thomas. I need to listen to know whether I can rule on it being a point of order or not. I'm trying to listen.

I'm sorry, Mr. Noormohamed. Go ahead.

**Mr. Taleeb Noormohamed:** In the future, Madam Chair, I'm wondering whether you can ensure that, when we are doing the rounds of questions, there's enough time to complete the rounds so that everybody has that opportunity. Looking at the clock, it would seem that, even if we had finished with Mrs. Thomas, there may have been one minute left, even if we hadn't delayed for five minutes, for us and no time for Mr. Champoux or Mr. Julian.

**The Chair:** Mr. Noormohamed, we have already thanked and dismissed the witnesses. Now we're dealing with Mrs. Thomas's motion. She's absolutely correct in that she had the opportunity only when she had the floor. She did have the floor. She moved a motion, and we have to deal with it.

Go ahead, Kevin.

**Mr. Kevin Waugh:** It's a point of clarification. The Bloc and the NDP were done with their questions.

**The Chair:** They have already spoken.

**Mr. Kevin Waugh:** They were done with their questioning. They did their two and a half minutes. We had a motion here. This is the procedure. Mr. Noormohamed said the Bloc and the NDP had another round of questioning. They didn't.

**Mr. Taleeb Noormohamed:** On a point of order, Mr. Waugh, I stand corrected. It was really only us, so I apologize.

**Mr. Kevin Waugh:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** This is not a debate. I'm sorry—

**Mr. Taleeb Noormohamed:** You scored your points—great.

**Mr. Peter Julian:** I have a point of order.

**The Chair:** Mr. Waugh is correct—

**Mr. Peter Julian:** On a point of order, Madam Chair, as I indicated, and as Mr. Champoux indicated, the CRTC was prepared to stay longer, given how the last time they appeared the Conservatives blocked their full committee hearing. I was hoping for the courtesy of allowing further questions for the CRTC. They were prepared to stay, and we had far more questions.

Mr. Noormohamed is absolutely right. The NDP and, I believe, Mr. Champoux had a lot more questions to ask of the CRTC in the public interest.

**The Chair:** The decision has been made. Mrs. Thomas had a motion on the floor. She had the floor and could make the motion, and we now have to move forward.

Mrs. Thomas, your motion....

**Mrs. Rachael Thomas:** Thank you, Chair.

The motion I wish to move is as follows:

Given that, the Department of Canadian Heritage, under the leadership of the Honourable Pablo Rodriguez, approved 'anti-racism' grants upwards of \$130,000 to Laith Marouf of the Community Media Advocacy Centre (CMAC), on October 21, 2022, the Honourable Pablo Rodriguez appeared before the Heritage Committee, during which time he was asked by a number of MPs about the date he was made aware of Laith Marouf's derogatory remarks about Jews and Francophones and the minister reported to the Committee that he was not informed until after August 22, 2022, an article by the Globe and Mail and an Access to Information Request indicate emails circulated from the former Diversity and Inclusion Minister, the Honourable Ahmed Hussein, his former chief of staff, Minister Rodriguez's former chief of staff, and the deputy minister at Canadian Heritage between August 17th and August 19th, 2022, including one sent to Minister Rodriguez's personal email account titled "Laith Marouf and antisemitic hate speech," the Committee invite the former Minister for Canadian Heritage, the Honourable Pablo Rodriguez, to appear before the committee as soon as possible for no fewer than two hours to clarify his remarks concerning Laith Marouf, and that the committee report its findings to the House.

To the committee, through you, Chair, the reason why this motion is important is that the members here will recall the former minister of heritage, Mr. Pablo Rodriguez, was brought before this committee and asked questions with regard to Laith Marouf's hiring and as to when the minister was made aware of Laith Marouf's anti-Semitic behaviour and conduct on social media platforms.

The minister told this committee he did not find out until it was announced in the media, but we have an ATIP that actually shows the minister was made aware through an email to his P9 account and that email was sent between August 17 and August 19, before things broke in the media. That email was titled "Laith Marouf and antisemitic hate speech". That's pretty clear. That's a pretty clear indication to the minister that there's a problem.

The minister either misled this committee or didn't do his job with great competency. I'd like to give him the opportunity to clarify which one it is. In order to give him that opportunity to clarify, he would need to come to this committee to give us the opportunity to ask questions, hence the motion I have put on the table today, which asks for him to come for no fewer than two hours so we

would be able to finally—hopefully, I guess—get to the bottom of this and understand what took place here. After all, \$130,000 was given by the heritage department to a raging anti-Semite and someone who also rages against francophones, and then that \$130,000 was given to him to run anti-racism training. It's insane. It is the definition of insanity.

It is incumbent upon the minister to come to this committee and answer the questions we have with regard to what happened and, further to that, to answer questions with regard to when he knew about Laith Marouf and his horrible conduct and incredibly vile remarks. Further to that, this is an individual who continues to make those remarks and this is an individual who is supposed to pay back the \$130,000 now that it's been brought to the government's attention by the official opposition. However, more than nine months have passed since that was demanded of him, and not a single dime has been paid back. That's a problem.

I'm curious as to how the former minister would justify what has happened here. The only way that can be settled is for the minister to have the opportunity to come here to clarify the former remarks he made that now seem to be falsehoods and to clarify why this decision was made with 130,000 Canadian taxpayer dollars.

• (0930)

That is my motion. Consider it moved.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Mr. Martin Champoux.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Martin Champoux:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

Obviously, this is an extremely sensitive subject for the Jewish community and for francophones. Laith Marouf is a sinister individual and a contemptible character. I think we have all seen recently, during the conflict between Israel and Hamas, that Mr. Marouf was a loose cannon on social media. He is continuing to say totally unhinged things, things that are, to say the least, intolerably violent and racist. On that point there is no doubt, and the fact that the government has given him money to promote anti-racism makes no sense. We all agree on that.

We held hearings at this committee when this story came to light, at the beginning of the year. We had an opportunity to hear Mr. Hussen and Mr. Rodriguez, who came to answer our questions, particularly regarding how the body responsible for diversity and inclusion in the Department of Canadian Heritage operates. At that time, I was satisfied with the answers given on this subject. Mr. Rodriguez was extremely clear on the fact that the Department of Canadian Heritage was designed in such a way that the ministers have different jobs and do not report to the Minister of Heritage. I too do not find that to be a very sensible way of operating, but I do not think they were the ones who invented it. That is how it works, period.



So in my opinion, the minister who exhibited extreme incompetence in the handling of this matter at the time, to me, was Mr. Hussen. The reason Mr. Rodriguez was alerted, after numerous attempts to communicate, including by our colleague Mr. Housefather, was that there had been no response or reaction from Mr. Hussen. I do not think we can criticize Mr. Rodriguez for being late to the party. I do not think that is useful.

I like to fish. I like to fish for salmon, and I know you do not brag about the little fish you catch. You are happy when you catch a big fish, and I think that is what the Conservatives are trying to do. I do not think it is the thing to do. What we should be doing right now is something other than pointing fingers at somebody, trying to find a guilty party or poking our noses into... I will not finish my sentence, because people who have dogs will understand what I mean. We should be focusing the serious issue: the unacceptable things that Laith Marouf is still saying today on social media. That is what we have to react to.

The serious thing is that up to now, despite what the committee has asked, the measures that have been taken to recover the money that was given to this individual are timid, and I am being polite. One might say they do not want to get the money back and they are pretending to try, by handing it over to a collection agency. There is about as much chance of getting the money back as there is of winning Lotto 6/49 two weeks in a row.

We have to know where we stand in recovering the money. We talked about this again a few weeks ago. We have to clearly hear that serious efforts have been initiated to recover the \$130,000. We also have to hear, as we were told when we held hearings on this at the beginning of the year, what measures the government has put in place to ensure that this kind of thing never happens again. These are the things that concern me.

I have no interest in hearing the minister who held the position at the time and who, according to everything we have been told, had nothing to do with the decisions or measures to be taken in this case. If you still want us to hear Mr. Hussen to find out how bad he was at managing this matter, that will not be useful, it will get us nothing concrete, but it would still be more useful than hearing Mr. Rodriguez. We would do better to hear the present Minister of Diversity, Inclusion and Persons with Disabilities, Ms. Khera, and question her, to find out where we stand. That would have made a bit more sense as the basis for discussion.

What I want to know is what is being done to recover that money, which is still in the bank account of an individual who continues to engage in behaviour that is aggressive, anti-Semitic, disgraceful and insulting to an entire community and to the entire population of Quebec and Canada.

● (0935)

I am going to stop here, Madam Chair, but I think this motion is just a political game that has nothing concrete or tangible to contribute and I will not be supporting it.

Thank you.

[English]

**The Chair:** Thank you, Martin.

I will go to Peter Julian.

[Translation]

**Mr. Peter Julian:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

As you know, I was the first to call for Laith Marouf's contract to be cancelled when this information was revealed. The NDP took it very seriously and called for the contract to be cancelled.

I support what Mr. Champoux said. I think the comments were unacceptable from someone who has a contract to combat racism and anti-Semitism. This person has shown his racism and anti-Semitism repeatedly.

In my opinion, the most important thing is to do everything possible to recover the \$130,000. It is extremely important and it has to get done. I know that we will be hearing the Minister of Canadian Heritage next Thursday, November 30. In seven days, we will be able to ask the Minister and department officials these questions. This is extremely important and much anticipated.

● (0940)

[English]

Because I was the first to call for the cancellation of the contract because of his despicable racist and anti-Semitic views, I believe it is extremely important that we get that money back. We have the minister coming next Thursday. That is vitally important.

I think it is an issue on which all four parties around this table agree. That money, by every means possible, needs to be taken back for taxpayers. The fact that we have the minister coming next Thursday gives us that opportunity to ask those questions.

I have to say how disappointed I am that, yet again, we have the CRTC before us and yet again, it was cut off. The opportunity to ask questions of the CRTC about the affordability of cellphones or about the broadcasting situation in our country that is in crisis, all of that was cut off by a motion that is, as Mr. Champoux pointed out, simply another motion that, instead of getting to the heart of the matter, which is getting the money back, is intended to go fishing to try to find some other headline.

What our committee should be doing is pressing the minister on the important obligation that this government has to get that money back. I deplore the fact that the money has not been recuperated, and I intend to ask the minister about that at the meeting she will be attending next Thursday.

The motion that has been presented is factually incorrect. It wasn't "a number of MPs"; it was me. I was the one who asked the question about the date.

The answer satisfies me, whether or not there were a few hours between the email and the information. That, to me, is not relevant. What is relevant is getting the money back for taxpayers. What is relevant is ensuring that a notorious anti-Semite—anyone who has expressed anti-Semitic or racist views—never gets a government contract again.

We are seeing a rise in hate. We are seeing a rise in Islamophobia. We are seeing a rise in anti-Semitism. We are seeing a rise in racism and misogyny. We are seeing a rise in homophobia and transphobia. Hate, in all of its appalling toxic forms, is appearing now. That is what this committee should be taking on.

We have a safe sport study that we haven't completed, because at every single meeting, there's another motion from the Conservatives that cuts short our ability to complete the safe sport study. We were not able to complete our questioning of the CRTC today because of another Conservative motion. It's every single time.

Mrs. Thomas said she would make this committee “hell”. She was very public about that. We are seeing how that plays out in real form.

It means the athletes who suffered so much have still been waiting for months and months. In every committee meeting, there's another Conservative motion designed for their internal purposes, I guess. They put it out on TikTok. I don't know. However, they are blocking the safe sport study—

**Mr. Kevin Waugh:** I have a point of order.

**Mr. Martin Shields:** I have a point of order.

**Mr. Peter Julian:** They are blocking our ability to ask questions of the CRTC. They're even blocking me from speaking—

**Mrs. Rachael Thomas:** I have a point of order.

**The Chair:** Mrs Thomas, I was about to speak. You don't even let me rule on anything. You just keep butting in.

Mr. Shields had his hand up on a point of order. I was about to point to Mr. Shields.

**Mrs. Rachael Thomas:** I'm sorry, Madam Chair. Am I allowed to say “point of order” in addition to another member?

**The Chair:** No, because Mr. Shields said it first.

Mr. Shields, on a point of—

**Mrs. Rachael Thomas:** Only one person can say “point of order”.

**The Chair:** No, you can come after Mr. Shields.

**Mrs. Rachael Thomas:** I did come after Mr. Shields.

**The Chair:** Mr. Shields has not even spoken, Mrs. Thomas.

**Mrs. Rachael Thomas:** I believe I can say, “point of order” in the mike without being yelled at by you, Madam Chair.

**The Chair:** Mrs. Thomas, you constantly interrupt the proceedings.

Go ahead, Mr. Shields.

• (0945)

**Mr. Martin Shields:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

I request that my honourable colleague stop impugning what he believes I might be thinking. I object to the line of thought he's expressing.

**The Chair:** Okay, Mr. Shields.

Mrs. Thomas, do you have a point of order?

**Mrs. Rachael Thomas:** Actually, he did, if you were paying attention.

**Mr. Kevin Waugh:** I did, actually.

**The Chair:** Was it you, Kevin? I didn't see your hand up.

Go ahead on a point of order.

**Mr. Kevin Waugh:** Yes, it was up, but that's fine.

Just stick to the topic. There's no sense bashing the Conservatives here and there. What we're dealing with is the motion in front of us.

As for the CRTC, Madam Chair, you know they were only here for one hour. We had not agreed to the CRTC.... They never agreed to stay for two hours. There was no discussion here today. There was down at that end, maybe. They talked to them about two hours. At this end, there was no conversation about, in fact, the CRTC being here for two hours.

If you look at today, the second hour was to be in camera to deal with safe sport, but, Madam Chair, the CRTC was not invited for two hours today. I want to make that clear. They were invited for one hour.

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

Now, Mr. Julian, you were speaking.

**Mr. Peter Julian:** Yes, they were prepared to stay for two. I communicated that to all members of this committee—

**The Chair:** Yes, you did.

**Mr. Peter Julian:** —and so did Mr. Champoux. No member of the committee can say, “We didn't know they were prepared to stay for two hours.” Every member of the committee did.

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

Madam Chair, I have a point of order.

I did not know they were prepared to stay for two hours. I'm sitting here. I have no recollection that the CRTC told me they would like to be here for two hours. Those statements are false. I did not know that. It clearly states “one hour”. I wasn't told they wanted to stay for two hours. That statement is false, and I would like it withdrawn.

**The Chair:** Go ahead, Mr. Julian.

**Mr. Peter Julian:** This is ridiculous, Madam Chair.

I move that we adjourn.

**The Chair:** Is there any discussion?

**Mr. Taleeb Noormohamed:** I have a point of order, Madam Chair.

Is the vote to adjourn the meeting?

**The Chair:** It's to vote to adjourn the meeting.

Is there anyone objecting to that?

**Mrs. Rachael Thomas:** You go to a vote.

**The Chair:** I beg your pardon.

**Mrs. Rachael Thomas:** There's no discussion. You go directly to a vote.

**The Chair:** You go to a vote. I'm asking whether anyone is objecting. Then I will go to a vote that will be counted by the clerk. That's how it works. I don't just assume that.

Thank you.

Is anyone objecting?

**Ms. Marilyn Gladu:** I don't want to adjourn. I object.

**The Chair:** I'm sorry. I didn't hear you. I didn't have my earpiece in.

**Ms. Marilyn Gladu:** I said that I don't want to adjourn. I object.

**The Chair:** Let's call the vote on adjournment of the meeting.

(Motion agreed to: yeas 6; nays 4)

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

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