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•(0910)

[Translation]

The Chair (Mr. Guy Lauson (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry, CPC)): Good morning, ladies and gentlemen. I would like to welcome all Committee members, as well as our guests today.

This morning, we are going to talk about support for francophone minority media. We have three special guests today: Ms. Leblanc, Mr. Lafrance, and Mr. Lalande.

Your opening statement should be no more than 10 minutes long. We will then open it up for questions from members.

Mr. Sylvain Lafrance (Executive Vice-President, French Services, Canadian Broadcasting Corporation): I would like to begin by thanking Committee members for inviting us to appear this morning. I have been working in public broadcasting for 26 years. For quite sometime now, I have taken a very serious interest in issues dealing with the media and la francophonie, and I'm always very pleased to have a chance to talk about them.

Allow me to introduce two close colleagues who are with me today: Louis Lalande, who was made General Manager for the Regions a few weeks ago, and who has been with the Corporation for a very long time; and Christiane Leblanc, who is the first Executive Director of Espace Musique, Radio-Canada's music channel, which presents a diversity of Canadian music.

This is the first time that I have appeared before the Committee as the person responsible for all French services at Radio-Canada—that we have only very recently consolidated, as a matter of fact. So, this is an opportunity for us to present our overall strategy for French services and share our vision of our role as public broadcaster to Canada's regions and its francophone communities.

This is, in fact, a good time to do this, because by consolidating our services, we have added greatly to the strength of the public network. Just to give you a bit of background, keep in mind that our competitors are big media groups that play the “group” card to the hilt. However, Radio-Canada is certainly the most integrated media group of all, which is something we decided citizens should benefit from. That is the main reason behind our reorganization strategy.

The second reason is simple—things are going well at Radio-Canada. Rarely have our TV or radio audience numbers been as high, or our websites as busy. The time is therefore ripe to promote a new philosophy that stresses our commitment to public service, but also seeks to reinforce the media personality of our channels and networks.

We also wish to strengthen our identity as a public broadcaster. In today's media environment, the Radio-Canada “brand” is one of our strengths and a real asset. It is what sets us apart. And with the proliferation of platforms, our quality, diversity, and depth as a public broadcaster must be evident to all. As a public service group, Radio-Canada must continue to play its role in enhancing the cultural and democratic life of Canadians everywhere.

Last week, Ms. Oda, the Minister of Canadian Heritage, asked the CRTC to assess the impact of changing technology on radio and television in Canada. This is obviously a matter of key concern to us as a public broadcaster. At Radio-Canada, we view new technology as an opportunity to be seized, not a threat to be feared. We are already present on some 27 platforms, including the web, satellite, broadcasting, and cell phones. We will continue to study changes in technology to harness their potential and make our public system available on all emerging platforms, as it should be.

As I was saying, the multi-platform environment offers new opportunities to public broadcasters to better fulfill their mission of service to citizens. For instance, Radio-Canada International can now provide programming to Canadians through the Internet and satellite radio, and platforms that complement Radio-Canada's national and regional services.

Last December, RCI launched a new multilingual channel on Sirius Canada that, for the first time ever, broadcasts programming to the Canadian public. Next fall, RCI will launch a web radio service aimed at newcomers to Canada. Why such a service? Well, apart from the huge challenge we all know it can be for newcomers to integrate, their arrival is also changing the francophone face of Canada all across the country.

Of course, one of the most crucial issues with respect to integration is that of cultural cohabitation in a spirit of mutual understanding and acceptance. It is our role, as a public broadcaster, to forge ties between new citizens and the communities that welcome them.

It was to address this need that we decided to create a new service at Radio Canada International. A veritable multiplatform radio portal, our new web radio channel will broadcast general interest programming and special reports that will take a no-holds-barred look at issues in Canadian society, particularly those related to immigration and the integration of newcomers.

For our francophone communities, this new Radio Canada International service will become a valuable tool for forging ties with newcomers and welcoming them with respect and understanding. This is a great illustration of the role that we, as public broadcasters, must play within contemporary Canadian society.

Of course, another of Radio-Canada's important roles is obviously to offer distinctive, quality programming to francophones from coast to coast. And when I look at our record, I'm proud of what we have accomplished so far and really look forward to what's coming up next season. As you will see, we are present all across Canada and are investing massively to spur production, so as to support francophone culture and see it flourish in every region of the country.

Allow me to cite a few facts that provide a concrete illustration of what this means.

In television, we have eight regional stations, six of which are outside Quebec. The fact is that nearly 60 per cent of regional television budgets is devoted to francophone communities outside Quebec. We present at least one regional edition of *Le Téléjournal* in each of the regions where we provide services, for a total of 13 regional newscasts. Whether for news or culture, our regional productions reflect life in local communities. In all, we offer nearly 60 hours a week of regional programming.

Again in television, our support for independent productions outside Quebec has increased considerably. In eight years, we have quadrupled the number of projects and television hours funded by the Canadian Television Fund. In 2005-06, there were some 18 projects with a licence value of \$2.2 million.

With independent producers in the regions, we have also developed documentaries and dramas that reflect the hopes and realities of local communities.

For example, *Francoeur*, a drama series written and produced in Ontario, was broadcast in network prime time in the spring and summer of 2005, capturing a 13 per cent share of the viewing audience.

Also, there is the new drama series called *Planète Belle-Baie*, written by a Caraquet filmmaker and set in a small Acadian town in New Brunswick. Filming of the first eleven episodes of the series began on June 18.

Séquestrés is a new 90-minute drama written and produced in Winnipeg—a first for French-language television in Canada.

As well, ARTV—we are one of the channel's main shareholders—devoted 20 per cent of its budget in 2005-06 to regional productions. *Pour l'amour du country*, one of the channel's most popular shows, is produced in Moncton. Other products are in the works with producers in Toronto and Winnipeg.

In radio, we have been investing in the regions since the late 1990s, and now have 20 regional production centres, including 11 in communities outside Quebec. Over two thirds of the total radio budget for the regions is earmarked for communities outside Quebec.

At Première Chaîne, 100 per cent of prime time is devoted to regional programming. It is also the only francophone radio network to have reporters right across Canada. Espace Musique, which we

will come back to a little later, is also firmly ensconced in the regions.

We also have a strong regional presence on the web. For example, regional news is prominently featured on Radio-Canada.ca, one of the most popular media sites in Canada.

A few years ago, we launched transcultural initiatives for the complete CBC and Radio-Canada networks involving both the French and English media. These projects foster synergies and engender a very beneficial cross-fertilization among the media. They bring communities into closer contact and help them learn about each other. It's a unique approach and a source of great pride for us as a public broadcaster.

I could go on for hours about all our initiatives in the regions, but I would rather turn things over now to my colleagues, who will speak to you about two significant accomplishments by Radio-Canada in terms of reflecting regional realities and contributing to community development. I will turn first to Christiane Leblanc, Executive Director of Espace Musique.

● (0915)

Ms. Christiane Leblanc (Executive Director, Espace Musique, Canadian Broadcasting Corporation): Thank you, Sylvain.

Espace Musique was launched in September 2004 with the very clear mission of stimulating musical diversity and developing Canadian musical talent. Its impact was felt immediately right across the country. We actually began broadening network coverage in 2002 into what would become Espace Musique by adding some 20 new transmitters. As a result, Espace Musique is today a national network present in every province and in 91 per cent of Canadian homes.

Espace Musique plays an active part in the development and promotion of musical life in all its forms right across the country. We are behind a number of support initiatives for young talent, both in song and classical music, and we are involved in all the leading musical events across the country, from the Vancouver Jazz Festival to Caraquet's Acadian Festival. Every year, a significant portion of our live concert recordings are in the regions. In fact, this summer alone, over 70 per cent of the 108 concerts we will record at Espace Musique will be outside Montreal.

As I was saying, the fact that Espace Musique is broadcast coast to coast puts us in touch with all Canadians. For example, 30 per cent of Espace Musique's audience is people living outside Quebec, compared to 67 per cent living outside the Montreal metropolitan area. Interestingly enough, 27 per cent of Espace Musique's total cross-Canada listenership is anglophone or allophone—a great example of music building bridges between cultures.

Mr. Sylvain Lafrance: I said it last week to our senior management team when they met to discuss strategy, and I'll say it again with conviction today: it is fundamental for us as Radio-Canada, as a public broadcaster, to be present throughout Canada. The reason is simple—well-informed citizens are better citizens, so we must inform them of everything that is happening in Canada.

A success story on the news front is RDI. RDI was launched 11 years ago, and today reaches over 2.6 million viewers a week. With RDI, we have succeeded in creating a veritable journalistic strike force in all the main regions of the country, one that we can call on today to launch new programming centred on breaking news.

To provide additional information about this new positioning, allow me to turn the floor over now to Louis Lalande, who, before I asked him to take up the mantle of General Manager for the Regions and develop an overall regional strategy for French services, held the position of General Manager of French Language TV News, where he oversaw development of this new positioning for RDI.

Mr. Louis Lalande (General Manager for the Regions, French Services, Canadian Broadcasting Corporation): Thank you, Sylvain.

First allow me to briefly explain the context over the last two years or so as we developed our new positioning.

Like everybody, we had noticed the news environment had changed a lot. We were facing new competition from other TV outlets, but also new media platforms. Basically, the public was no longer consuming news the same way as before.

Despite the great viewership numbers Sylvain cited, RDI was still locked into a rigid programming dynamic with regional shows at set times that did not always allow it to adequately cover regional news, among other things. The fact is that we were receiving a lot of complaints about regional programming being constantly interrupted to cover breaking news, an understandable cause of frustration for our viewers.

We wanted to both reinforce our regional presence and develop a more fluid approach, with greater editorial consistency. With the depth of our journalist teams across the country, we at RDI are the only francophone news network able to provide complete cross-Canada coverage, from live reports anywhere in the country, to compelling analyses and discussion of all aspects of a story. By building more flexibility into our coverage from 6:00 to 6:00, Monday to Friday, we can offer live coverage of the news, anywhere in Canada, at any time.

Another of our strengths is the ability to offer regional perspectives on national and international news. The softwood lumber dispute, which has been the subject of a great deal of discussion in recent months, is a good example of that strength. In Atlantic Canada, Quebec, Ontario, and the West, our journalists provided a regional take on the issue and analyzed the dispute and its impact from the perspective of local communities and their main players and stakeholders.

Lastly, we are going to create a new 10:30 p.m. newscast to recap the day's main stories from the regional *Téléjournal* editions and provide an overview of top events in the various regions of the country.

I would like to conclude by pointing out that regional programming is a fundamental requirement under our CRTC licence, and that we have always met our obligation to include at least one third regional content in our programming.

We view on-the-ground support from the regions as vital to the success of our all-news format at RDI, and we are convinced that the contributions of the regions to our new approach will be even more decisive and significant.

● (0920)

Mr. Sylvain Lafrance One of our distinctive features as a public broadcaster is to be present throughout the country and play an active part in the cultural and public life of the communities we serve.

As I said earlier, our goal is to institute an overall strategy for French services focussed around our regional presence and reflection of the regions in our national coverage. The challenge is to interlink strategies and clearly set out our goals and how we intend to meet them.

That's why we have created a Regions Directorate to coordinate our decision-making. In fact, Louis Lalande's first task will be to design our new strategy by this fall.

At the beginning of my opening comments, I also mentioned the multiplatform environment that is posing new challenges, but also offering new opportunities to fulfill our role as public broadcasters.

For the future media and communications world we now see unfolding, we need to trust the wisdom of those who created the Canadian broadcasting system in 1936. Its success rests on a balance between public and private broadcasters, and it has enabled us to preserve our cultural identity.

Public broadcasters must continue to play a central role in this system. The strength of the public system must serve as a bulwark against the loss of cultural identities and the erosion of democracy.

Canadians will still have a fundamental need for access to media that help them understand local, regional, national, and international realities, whether the delivery platform is traditional or new.

Radio-Canada will continue to meet this challenge and offer Canadians a public system that is both strong and relevant to their lives.

That concludes our presentation. We are now available to take your questions. Thank you.

The Chair: I want to thank our three guests for a very interesting presentation.

We are going to start the first round of questioning. Each party will have five minutes.

Mr. Murphy.

Mr. Brian Murphy (Moncton—Riverview—Dieppe, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Lafrance, I'd like to begin by thanking you for your presentation.

I also want to say, on behalf of people in the Maritimes, New Brunswick, Moncton, and Acadians, that we are delighted that Radio-Canada is active regionally, both in New Brunswick and the other regions.

I have a couple of comments, and then I'll have a few questions.

Mr. Lafrance mentioned that services are being reorganized. We are a little concerned about that, because in the past, there have been some bad times in terms of regional and local service.

As you know, in my riding of Moncton—Riverview—Dieppe, the only major Radio-Canada bureau is there to provide television programming. As you yourself pointed out, there are three main shows: *Le téléjournal/Atlantique* at 12 p.m., *Le téléjournal/Atlantique* at 6 p.m., and special shows such as coverage of the Acadian Games, masses, the August 15th national holiday, and so on.

This is important programming for our community—we all agree on that. However, local programming is often interrupted to present newscasts that are not particularly important to the people of our region. Let me give you a couple of specific examples. On January 16 of this year, notaries in Quebec gave a live news conference. Then on January 18, there was coverage of a live news conference given by the Leader of the Parti Québécois. On January 20, there was coverage of the City of Montreal's budget. These are things that are very important to people living in Quebec; I understand that. However, for people in my region, they aren't important enough to interrupt local coverage. I just want you to know that regional news shows are very important to people living in the regions.

When you talk about a new face for Radio-Canada or a new level of service, I do hope you're not talking about job losses in the Atlantic region. I hope that you can provide assurances that there will be no cutbacks affecting newscasts in the Atlantic provinces.

Finally, if you can, I would like to receive some assurance from you that air time for regional news will not be cut back. I know I'm also speaking for my colleagues from Manitoba and other regions of Canada. Can you give me that assurance? That would assuage concerns I've had since hearing that Radio-Canada intends to reorganize services. We know that under similar circumstances in the past, there have been job losses in Moncton.

Thank you.

● (0925)

Mr. Sylvain Lafrance: There have been job losses across Canada in the past. The 1990 or 1995 cutbacks affected Canada as a whole, and not just Moncton.

To begin with, I want to point out that the reorganization that occurred in Montreal has nothing to do with saving money or anything like that. That reorganization had two objectives: to ensure better integration of Radio-Canada's services as a whole, and to create a regional brand, to ensure that the regions have a stronger voice.

Louis can perhaps provide additional details once I'm finished, but let's talk about interruptions in newscasts. This occurred on the Réseau de l'information, called RDI, which is a breaking news

channel. As a result, when a specific event occurred, we had to carry the news immediately, resulting in the interruption of certain televised newscasts, because the regional newscasts are broadcast at specific times.

It's important to understand that RDI broadcasts the same material all across Canada and that it has no regional stations. It is a cross-Canada national network, with no regional windows. It is important to understand that reality. As a result, when a special event occurs, regular programming is obviously interrupted. You cited a number of good reasons for reviewing RDI's current mandate. Of course, there will always be breaking news. At all times of the day, there are reporters on site in Moncton, Edmonton, Vancouver, and elsewhere to ensure direct coverage of an event without a need to interrupt regional newscasts which, rightly so, bothers audiences.

However, we can guarantee that the space currently set aside for the regions on RDI will not change. That is a CRTC licence condition.

Louis, would you like to continue?

Mr. Louis Lalonde: That is, indeed, a CRTC licence condition that we intend to abide by. As a result, we have decided to change the current formula, under which every region had a very specific time slot, in favour of a more flexible arrangement, in order to avoid precisely what you have talked about. If an unexpected event occurs, in Quebec or elsewhere, we can address it within our flexible programming grid, and will therefore not be forced to interrupt previously announced programs.

However, in order to be sure we can meet all our commitments, we have created a measurement tool which will allow us to assess, on a daily basis, the origin of all our news. That shows that we are taking a serious approach to these issues. We want to be sure that all teams will be able to assess, on a weekly basis, the number of items and the time devoted to regional news programming.

● (0930)

Mr. Sylvain Lafrance: I would like to come back to the matter of budget cuts. There will be no budget cuts. I should also point out that Radio-Canada is an organization that employs about 10,000 people. Every year, some people leave, and others join the organization.

However, the RDI plan includes neither budget nor staff cuts, in any of the regions.

The Chair: Mr. Murphy, your seven minutes are up.

Ms. Barbot, you have the floor.

Mrs. Vivian Barbot (Papineau, BQ): Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Good morning. I want to thank you for being with us today. I'm a passionate Radio-Canada listener. I would even say that I am a die-hard fan, particularly of radio—more so than television. It provides more of an opportunity to know what is going on. Based on your presentation, as well as what I have heard, it seems quite clear that radio has a much higher level of penetration than does television. People complain a lot about the fact that television does not convey the same thing as radio, and that is really too bad.

First of all, I am surprised at your comments about the multilingual channel. Are you indeed talking about Radio Canada International?

Mr. Sylvain Lafrance: We develop special programming for Radio Canada International for Canada, for a very simple reason: Radio Canada International produces programming in nine languages. It basically deals with culture and democracy in Canada, and that programming is broadcast overseas. And yet, when you look at Canada's current immigration, you see that 36 per cent of newcomers to Canada speak neither French nor English. Being able to explain what is going on in Canada in Chinese or Arabic, for example, could be an extraordinary way of welcoming people to this country. As a result, we have decided to provide satellite service via the Internet starting in the fall. This is only the first manifestation of the services we would like to provide to newcomers. I believe a public broadcaster has a responsibility to develop citizen solidarity and should thus encourage cultural cohabitation.

In our opinion, the ability to broadcast these kinds of programs in Canada would be absolutely fantastic, given the number of people who only speak Mandarin in the Vancouver area, for example. We already produce programs about Canada in Mandarin. We want these programs to be available in Canada.

Mrs. Vivian Barbot: Continuing my thought process, I find that somewhat paradoxical, given that you have also talked about integration. If we're talking about languages, especially French and English, it can be difficult to ensure that they coexist on an equal basis all across Canada.

In my own riding, people speak some 136 languages. If we were intent on speaking to every citizen in his language of origin, we would never manage it. So, we desperately try to bring people to speak the language of the majority.

I am wondering whether integration should necessarily be based on what is common. As I see it, what you are trying to do is present programs in other citizens' language of origin about the way we do things here, as opposed to sharing with them our understanding of what is essential for their proper integration.

Mr. Sylvain Lafrance: I believe we have the same goal. This radio programming is especially designed for newcomers. When a newcomer arrives here, that person, who may speak Chinese, Arabic or Russian, will learn about how to settle in Canada and how our democratic and cultural systems work here. The whole purpose is to integrate these people into our system, whether it's in French or English. It will be a multilingual channel. We shouldn't expect someone who speaks Chinese and settles in Vancouver to be listening to that radio programming for 15 years, because he would always hear exactly the same thing—namely, how people deal with their arrival in Canada.

It really is intended to be a station for people who have just come to Canada, so that newcomers will be interested in listening to Radio-Canada or CBC in French or English all across the country. We see it as transitional radio programming aimed at welcoming newcomers to Canada, as opposed to all allophones living in Canada.

Mrs. Vivian Barbot: I'll try and listen to some of the programming, but I doubt very much that it will achieve the desired

goal. The subjects would obviously be very limited in scope. But you can decide you are a newcomer to Canada ten years after settling here.

So, it may work, as long as the subjects or stories are really specifically aimed at meeting the needs of people who have just come to Canada.

The other point is that I really don't understand how this can help francophones.

Mr. Sylvain Lafrance: When we meet francophones from Edmonton, Vancouver or Toronto, in particular, the fact is we see far fewer White Catholics from the St. Lawrence Valley among them. There are lots of people from around the world who live in Toronto and are part of the francophone community, because they're from an African country or North Africa where French is spoken. For the francophone communities, this is an important issue, because they would like immigrants to learn French and understand that it is possible to live one's life in French in Canada.

We can welcome and support immigrants in their own language and tell them that we provide services in French, and that there are things happening in French in Toronto. We can encourage them to get involved and to continue to live life in French in Toronto and Vancouver.

This is the kind of thing that is frequently asked of us. When we visit with francophone communities, particularly west of Ottawa, we are often asked how we can provide services to immigrants. Sometimes this contributes to increased numbers of francophones in a given region.

• (0935)

Mrs. Vivian Barbot: Was that actually part of Radio-Canada's mandate, or was it added because of these new requirements? There are many groups out there providing settlement and integration services. I find it surprising that you're doing this, since the Corporation's primary mandate is to promote two official languages. That is a completely different area of activity.

Mr. Sylvain Lafrance: Radio Canada International has been around for 60 years. Now we simply offer that programming to Canadians, because we believe it's a useful tool. In any case, because all Canadians have paid for those programs to be developed in nine languages, offering them to Canadians only seems logical, particularly if you look at Canadian demographics. It's as simple as that. You mustn't see it for more than it really is.

Mrs. Vivian Barbot: You mentioned competition a number of times. You also talked about the media personality of competitor stations and of the Radio-Canada brand.

In your opinion, what is the difference between commercial radio and television programming and the kind of programming available on Radio-Canada? Radio-Canada is often criticized for being increasingly similar to what is available elsewhere.

Mr. Sylvain Lafrance: There really isn't much of a resemblance. What motivates our decisions is Radio-Canada's mission—not profit. That changes everything. Our radio services are a good example of that. Radio-Canada's television programming schedule includes 42 hours of news programs. There is not one private station that does that. We have science, religious and regional programming from all over. No private station does that. We broadcast major Canadian drama programs more than any other network does. We have news from across Canada. And our analysis of the francophone market is that our programming is totally different from what is available on TVA or TQS.

For some types of programming, such as variety shows, there can be similarities. However—I'm new to television, I'm from radio—there is no doubt in my mind that most of our television programming focuses on public service and that what motivates our decision-making are things like democracy and culture. That's important.

If you analyze the schedule as a whole and compare it to what's available on TQS, TVA or any other television network, you will see that our television programming is truly different in many different ways.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Lafrance and Ms. Barbot. Mr. Godin, do you have any questions?

Mr. Yvon Godin (Acadie—Bathurst, NDP): I want to welcome you and congratulate you on your new responsibilities. But with responsibilities come other things as well.

Personally, I would say that Radio-Canada is our television network. It saddens me to hear people talking about Radio-Canada and the regions, because you really get the feeling that Radio-Canada is more like Radio-Montréal, and that the rest of Canada is made up of regions. It looks as though we are making a difference. You say that Radio-Canada has done this or that in the regions. But when you talk about New Brunswick, a province with some 250,000 Acadians living there, you talk about it as being a region.

Mr. Sylvain Lafrance: If I can just make one comment, I'd say that also applies to Montreal.

Mr. Yvon Godin: But Montreal is a very well served region.

I find it unfortunate that RDI changed its programming and cancelled the program *L'Atlantique en direct*, which was on from 12:15 to 1 p.m. There have been a lot of complaints about that.

RDI is a national, not a regional, network and yet the newscast in the Atlantic region was interrupted so that people could hear the PQ Leader congratulating Stéphane Bergeron on his election. There have been elections in our area as well. Yet Radio-Canada has never interrupted newscasts in Quebec to congratulate a politician who had just been elected in New Brunswick or Manitoba. Still, the newscast in the Atlantic region was interrupted to let people hear Mr. Parizeau—with all due respect for him—congratulating Stephen Harper on his election.

Now that you've abandoned *L'Atlantique en direct*, I'm concerned that people won't dare complain for fear of their programs being cancelled.

● (0940)

Mr. Sylvain Lafrance: I'm tempted to say that I agree with you.

Mr. Yvon Godin: Well, since you agree, I will go right to my second question.

Mr. Sylvain Lafrance: I was the Director of Regional Production for a number of years. In Moncton, for instance, I often said that we had to find some way of resolving that problem.

At the same time, the demographics in French Canada are problematic. There are about three million people living in Montreal, and that's a fact. In Montreal, there is a large concentration of artists, actors, creators and independent production houses. That is part of the francophone demographic reality.

The public broadcaster's role is to share that wealth and redistribute the products of that creativity across the regions. Based on the numbers, we invest much more in the regions than their actual demographic weight would require. I'm not trying to suggest that we should be doing anything else. I'm simply saying that is what we do. And there is no doubt that leads to a lot of complexity that is very hard to manage.

When I go to Caraquet, people say that in Moncton, all they ever talk about is Moncton. And it's true that on Moncton radio programs, they tend to talk more often about Moncton than they do about Caraquet or Bathurst. In Nova Scotia, they say that people don't talk enough about them in New Brunswick. This is something that we are trying to manage. For example, we have increased the number of news stories from across the country that are part of our major radio newscasts. Over the last five years, there has been a big increase. On the television side, there are quite a few as well. Louis can probably provide figures in that regard.

However, I agree that we must improve our performance in that respect. At the same time, you have to recognize that French Canada has a particular characteristic, and that is that many Acadian actors live in Montreal and pursue a career there.

Mr. Yvon Godin: Mr. Chairman, that's all very well, but I already raised this point in committee when Mr. Rabinovitch was present.

At the Sommet de la Francophonie which took place in Moncton, 54 countries were in attendance, including two as observers. However, because Ms. Pagé decided to hold a press conference after being acquitted of stealing gloves from a store, you interrupted coverage of the Sommet de la Francophonie. That is completely unacceptable. People should be given a good slap on the wrist every time they go near that switch.

We're talking about Radio-Canada—not Radio-Montréal. We pay our taxes and this radio network belongs to the entire country. As francophones living outside of Montreal or Quebec City, and as francophones living in Canada, we feel insulted by the way our television network treats us.

Mr. Sylvain Lafrance: Louis went a lot further than just slapping people on the wrist. He has completely changed RDI's approach.

But this is a complicated matter. RDI is a breaking news channel and news has to be provided on a timely basis. Sometimes we have to decide whether we're going to broadcast the information quickly and interrupt regular programming in order to do that. Those are always difficult choices to make, even where international news is concerned.

Mr. Louis Lalande: I'd just like to talk about platforms and regional bases. Francophone listeners, whether they're in the Atlantic provinces or Western Canada, must receive proper services. That is the challenge for us, but I think we are on the right track. The action is not only occurring in one place or on a single channel. RDI is a national channel with ongoing coverage that operates without either time zones or regional distribution.

You're right. There have been cuts, and that's the reason why we have changed the way we operate. Programming on a network such as RDI cannot work the same way it does on the main network.

Let's take the example of a francophone listener waking up in the morning. He can listen to very high quality regional radio programming in every market across Canada. Let's move to the Maritimes now. If a listener decides to watch RDI, he will now have access—because this has already begun, we are in the middle of a transition—almost on a daily basis, to a reporter in Moncton or Halifax, because they are not one hour behind, but one hour ahead. So, from now on, rather than being limited to a 10:30 or 11 a.m. slot in the morning, the reporter will really be involved in talking about current events in the area. That is new, and it's an important change.

At noon, we broadcast an exclusively regional newscast on both radio and television. At 6 p.m., there are complete newscasts on the main network and on radio. *Le téléjournal/Atlantique* is the most self-contained newscast that best reflects current events for a full hour and in a comprehensive manner, at a time of the day when people are most interested in getting news. Then there is *Le téléjournal*. Those are peak listening and viewing times.

In the meantime, RDI covers current events wherever they are occurring and is able to do that with its people in various locations. It is a tremendous challenge, and the regional teams that we have been meeting with, who told us they felt stuck in a particular programming model and really wanted to explore other avenues, are encouraging us to meet this challenge.

When an event occurs in Moncton, it is important that it be covered at 7 a.m., 8 a.m., or 9 a.m., or as soon as it happens. It should be the same in Western Canada. That way, we can add to and complement the major newscasts, and continue to move forward.

We are moving forward, but we are in the middle of a transition. These platforms are new for me as well. Compared to the current service offer as a whole, I would say that what we're offering now is much improved. People like Radio-Canada and believe in it. We began with 17 regional sites on the web. What other media is currently investing as much in the regions to round out the regional news offer?

● (0945)

The Chair: Since Mr. Godin has no further questions, we will move on to Mr. Petit.

Mr. Daniel Petit (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Lafrance, Mr. Lalande and Ms. Leblanc, thank you for accepting our invitation to appear. I have one question for you, but I would like to make some brief comments first.

I am from the Quebec City area and, like my colleagues Mr. Murphy and Mr. Godin, it is my sense that you have made Radio-Canada more of a Montreal network. By way of explanation, I would like to address two points in particular.

First of all, you were incapable of covering a scandal that occurred in the Quebec City area. Indeed, a scandal involving prostitution lasted for some two years. But it was only when it was all over the news that Radio-Canada began covering it on radio and television. Yet the scandal lasted for two years.

I also want to say that there is one thing that irritates me about RDI. Some of your reporters only express one viewpoint. For example, if Joyce Napier is covering news out of Washington, her position is always anti-Bush. No other version of the facts is ever presented. If I want to hear another perspective, I have to listen to American stations. And if I switch to another channel and they're talking about Iraq, the bad guys are always the Americans. I never hear another perspective. That is starting to be really tiresome. You seem to think that we should accept your take on reality.

Quebec City has become a region. Mr. Murphy's and Mr. Godin's cities are in the same predicament. It's almost as though you want us to accept the ideas presented on your programs. I find it very irritating. I'm forced to listen to English stations in order to hear the other side of the story. I'd be interested in hearing your comments on that.

● (0950)

Mr. Sylvain Lafrance: First of all, as regards the prostitution affair in Quebec City, I'm surprised by your comments. I haven't always lived in Montreal, and I heard about it a lot. So, the media clearly were talking about it. I listen to Radio-Canada a great deal, and I believe that the very morning the first suspect was arrested, there was considerable radio and television coverage of these events in Montreal.

So, I'm rather surprised to hear you say that we provided no coverage for two years. I could speak at length about the prostitution scandal in Quebec City. I live in Montreal, and that's where I get my information. We even carried public affairs program, debates and call-in shows dealing with it. So, in my opinion, we provided extensive coverage.

As regards whether Radio-Canada is left-wing or right-wing, sovereigntist or federalist, that is an issue that has been debated forever and a day. At the same time, every time there is any objective analysis of the situation, with due regard for all the opinions expressed over the airwaves, be it on radio or television, the conclusion is that Radio-Canada has an objective approach and that its reporters are extremely competent.

It could be said, if we're talking about suggestiveness, that certain positions are more left-leaning than right-leaning. Personally, I believe there are people with every kind of perspective at Radio-Canada. However, we have to ensure that on our network, the full spectrum of ideas is expressed, so that events can be covered in a comprehensive manner and the societal debates that need to happen, can. At Radio-Canada, few ideas are rejected. At least, no example comes to mind. I don't know whether a particular correspondent may have seemed anti-Bush to you. In any case, I believe that overall, the perspectives and debates presented on Radio-Canada are predicated on quality information. I would be very concerned if I believed otherwise.

Mr. Lalonde may wish to add something.

Mr. Louis Lalonde: I would just like to add that every time an objective study is carried out, that is indeed the conclusion that is reached. Of course, we live in an age of instant access to information and instant impressions, and that's always dangerous. In that respect, I believe we have to be on our guard.

I watch a lot of American television, and I can tell you one thing. When it comes to news, I'm particularly proud of what we do in Canada, on Radio-Canada, RDI and Première Chaîne. I have been working in television since 1976, and at that time, the reference where news was concerned was what the Americans were doing. I'm sorry, but that is no longer the case. Both the Americans and Europeans have been following the way we deal with the dynamic of instant news. They find that overall, we have a balanced and objective approach, which is never easy to achieve. At the same time, we are working tooth and nail to meet that daily challenge.

Mr. Sylvain Lafrance: I would add, Mr. Petit, that Radio-Canada's journalistic policy is probably one of the most stringent and rigorous in the country. Across the world, that policy is generally considered to be an example of journalistic integrity. I truly believe that it is objectively a good policy. Much is made of the need to reflect a spectrum of opinion. Nowhere is that debate more lively than within Radio-Canada itself. When it comes to news, nothing is done lightly. Our reporters and editors-in-chief debate every one of the major issues. Every time there are important events occurring in Canada's democratic life—and I'm thinking in particular of federal or provincial elections—we have citizen committees, external auditing firms, and tabulating systems in place that demonstrate Radio-Canada's objectivity. Objectivity is part of Radio-Canada's DNA; it is its major strength. We are often criticized. Sovereignists accuse RDI of draping itself in the Canadian flag and federalists accuse RDI of being run by sovereignists. The truth is that every opinion is heard at RDI, on both our newscasts and in our debates. All our objective measurements clearly show that.

Mr. Daniel Petit: I would like to ask one last question, Mr. Lafrance. I'd say the packaging is excellent; I'm not criticizing that. You represent the packaging. But I'm talking about the content. You don't represent the content; you are trying to present that content. Here is the challenge for you: turn off your television set and try and listen to Ms. Napier. You won't hear her. However, you can bet that she is saying something bad about Mr. Bush. Then, turn on your television set and that's exactly what you'll hear. That's why I contend that what you say is not completely accurate. I listen to your programs. I don't know whether you listen to your own television programming, but I do, and it's not quite right. As far as

the packaging is concerned, yes, it's excellent, but the content is problematic. I feel as though I'm living in a region, just like Mr. Godin and Mr. Murphy. That's the problem. I'm not trying to be critical, but we are here to exchange views. You have a problem in that regard. I wanted to draw your attention to it.

• (0955)

Mr. Sylvain Lafrance: I will be brief. You said that you have the feeling you're living in a region, when in fact you're in Quebec City. If you were living in Longueuil, you would probably also have the impression that people don't talk much about the place where you live. Some neighbourhoods in Montreal have 300,000 people living in them, and we don't talk very much about them either. Television is a medium that simply doesn't allow you to talk about every single area—even areas in Montreal or Longueuil. Do you hear people talking about Longueuil? Yet a lot of people live there. It's not a simple matter. I would like there to be some recognition of the efforts we're making to improve the situation and of the fact that this issue is not easily resolved.

Are we anti-Bush or not? I believe that we have an objective. The voices that have been heard on our network have generally reflected Canadian opinion on the subject. Radio-Canada is a Canadian corporation. I believe our employees have shown themselves to be objective and that everything we do is objective. It's my opinion that if people had the perception that Radio-Canada was opposed to Mr. Bush, it's because the voices being heard across Canada were opposed. We are only the reflection of what is occurring in Canada. We are nothing other than that.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Lafrance.

We have now completed the first round. Those were very interesting questions and answers.

We move to a second five-minute round now. We will begin with Mr. D'Amours.

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

I would like to begin by making one comment. It is clear to me that our Conservative friends are pro-Bush and that they're very happy with that idea. However, the fact is that Radio-Canada is a Canadian radio network and if we really want to show respect for Canadians, we certainly won't do so by defending George Bush.

Let's get back to Radio-Canada. Mr. Lafrance and Mr. Lalonde, I believe that the situation you have described is fairly common. As I was saying earlier, I'm from New Brunswick. I know that you want to provide some flexibility and that there are three million francophones living in Montreal, but I think there has to be some logic, which can be difficult at times.

For example, it happens that right in the middle of *Le téléjournal midi/Atlantique* broadcast on RDI, the program is interrupted because there is flooding on Highway 40. For an hour, we hear about people trying to figure out why the storm sewers have backed up. Of course, this brings a smile to your face. But the reality is that even if they were to talk about it for 24 hours running, we would never learn anything more about the reason for the flooding. When the program airs in Atlantic Canada, it's 12 o'clock. Even if you waited 15 or 20 minutes to air special programming about the reason why the storm sewers on Highway 40 are backed up, it wouldn't change much. It's all well and good to want to keep people informed, but someone who is behind the wheel of his car will only know that there is a traffic jam on Highway 40 if he listens to the radio.

You may well be in the midst of making changes to increase your flexibility, but it's important to remember that there have been similar situations in the past. So, you need to understand that we have reservations and are wondering whether things are really going to improve. You say they are and that the process has already begun, but, as the saying goes, once bitten, twice shy.

As for newscasts, it's always a question of cost. It's always a matter of figuring out whether you have the necessary budget or not. When there is a news item out of the Atlantic, the event has already occurred. Why couldn't a news item from the Maritimes be included, from time to time, in the national newscast, so that we would see a reflection of ourselves? Francophones in Canada would have an opportunity to see what's going on in the Maritimes or in Manitoba. Even if it was only the occasional news item, people would have a much greater sense that RDI is also their network. I would be interested in your comments on that.

My last question has to do with radio. In my riding, there are still some areas where access is limited to the AM band. At the same time, there are other areas where they have access to FM. In areas that have access to AM, very often it is impossible to receive FM. Do your conduct reviews from time to time to see whether radio programming carried on Radio-Canada can be heard everywhere or whether there is a need to improve inefficient systems?

• (1000)

Mr. Sylvain Lafrance: I will give you a quick answer, and then maybe I'll turn it over to my colleagues to add their comments.

With reference to your "once bitten, twice shy" comment, Mr. D'Amours, your concern is a legitimate one. I realize that we have not always been perfect in that regard. It is perfectly normal for people to demand more of Radio-Canada in the regions, and I'm never upset by that. I'm happy when people want more from Radio-Canada. I was talking earlier about independent productions, which we have improved over the last five years. RDI's new structure will help in that regard, as well as the fact that the regions will figure more prominently now in radio newscasts. All of that proves that this is a concern for us. We are trying to find a solution—the proper balance that will mean that people everywhere will see themselves reflected in the programs we present.

As we were saying earlier, in radio, 100 per cent of peak listening hours are devoted to local programming. As a result, when the regions ask us to broadcast one of their programs nationally in peak listening hours, we must refuse, given that all the peak listening

hours are devoted to local programming. If we carry a program from the Maritimes on the national network, we will automatically cut back the number of regional peak listening hours in the other regions. Radio is very deeply rooted in the regions. We also have to ensure that our services are somewhat complementary. Radio-Canada cannot be everything to everyone, unless it's operating on every single platform. However, we can be everything for quite a few people, because we are able to present many hours of programming on several different platforms in every region of the country. I consider people's concerns in that regard to be perfectly legitimate, and I am not offended at all by them.

As for the deficiencies you mentioned, I would say this: we have sometimes gone a little overboard with special programming, and we would be the first to admit that. Because it was fresh news, we felt that we should put it on quickly. Now I'm not saying that sewer pipes on Highway 40 were a matter of urgent national importance. Sometimes things go too far. But we are thinking about all these issues as we reposition RDI. Our people at RDI are aware of this and want time for reflection.

As regards radio and radio frequencies, we have made a great many improvements. In particular, Espace Musique is now available all across the country, as we mentioned earlier. Up until three years ago, Espace Musique was called *la Chaîne culturelle* and was only broadcast in part of Quebec and in the City of Toronto. Now Espace Musique is broadcast all across the country.

As regards *la Première Chaîne*, it is available to 98 per cent of Canadians. I believe that the vast majority of our transmitters are in good shape. If you're driving in your car one day and you see that there are problems, give me a call, and I'll be happy to look into it. There are still some problem areas, because of a lack of FM frequencies, but we are always trying to make improvements. We want it to be available to 100 per cent of Canadians.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Lafrance.

Ms. Boucher.

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher (Beauport—Limoilou, CPC): You talked about repositioning RDI. I would like to know what the cost of that repositioning will be and what impact it may have on television networks in the region. Will this improve or have a negative impact on television production?

Mr. Sylvain Lafrance: I'm going to let Louis answer your question. I simply want to say that there is no cost in the sense that this is covered under our current news service budgets. We believe it will improve the situation. Louis can provide additional details as to how that will work and our overall regional presence.

Mr. Louis Lalande: As for the costs, this repositioning is being carried out using RDI's investment budget. It will lead to greater synergy with all of Radio-Canada's other resources in the regions, in both radio and television. It is important that we return to the kind of logic that was followed previously.

I am particularly sympathetic to the point raised by Mr. Godin, I believe, about our treating the regions like regions, and the networks, like networks. But in actual fact, that is not what we do. What distinguishes us from everyone else is that our network is made up of regions. How can we develop programming and a dynamic that will allow people to constantly evolve and be constantly in touch with the challenges of the day? Well, the dynamic can only be created by having an appropriate mix of news and programming that is of national interest, of regional interest, and both of regional interest and of national importance, and by ensuring that it has an impact on all the main platforms in radio, television, or on the web.

• (1005)

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: What percentage of news items comes from Quebec and what percentage from the regions? I am a francophone, I live in Quebec City, and I was extremely disappointed to no longer have access to *L'Atlantique en direct*, because it allowed me to connect with the francophone reality in a province other than Quebec. There are francophone communities all across this country that we know little about, because we never hear anything about them. Mr. Simard is francophone, but I am less well connected because I get less news about his region. It would help francophones all across this country to better understand what's going on at home and among francophones outside Quebec.

Mr. Sylvain Lafrance: The reality is that the regions as a whole are part of the country. When something newsworthy happens in the Maritimes, we don't cover it at 1 p.m., 3 p.m. or 10 p.m., but when it's actually happening. RDI is a breaking news channel, and RDI's coverage has to include all the regions. In terms of the length of coverage, it will be the same thing, but when you watch RDI, you will know what is happening all across the country. We don't intend to divide the country into a lot of different chunks so that at such and such a time, we'll get news from the Maritimes, at some other time, we'll have news from out West, and so on. That to me is first and foremost a reflection of the nature of breaking news.

When Bernard Lord or another premier announces something, that happens at a specific moment in time, and not at a time when we decide to carry it. That is the logic of breaking news, and that seems to fit exactly with what I'm hearing.

Mr. Louis Lalonde: We have every reason to believe that this will work because we've been rehearsing it on paper for some months now. We have concrete examples. When we quite appropriately cover the softwood issue, just as the news is breaking, that necessarily has an impact on what you're going to see on *Le téléjournal*. As we saw with *Le téléjournal*, when we find out that the softwood issue has been resolved, it's thank to coverage from Northern Ontario and Western Canada, because we have news crews on the ground able to provide information as developments occur. There is a complementarity there that I find very encouraging.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Boucher and Mr. Lafrance.

Ms. Freeman.

Mrs. Carole Freeman (Châteauguay—Saint-Constant): Good morning, and thank you for being with us today.

I'm from the Montreal area, but many members of my family live in the regions. I am aware of their tremendous frustration and their sense that they don't even exist and they're not recognized.

As regards funding, I see that 31 per cent of the Corporations's expenditures—some \$533 million—is for French television and radio. As well, some \$121 million is spent on specialty channels.

Can you tell me what proportion of that is spent in Quebec, and what proportion, outside of Quebec?

Mr. Sylvain Lafrance: We provided some figures earlier, but it is difficult to give you exact proportions, since we do not have one budget for Quebec and another budget for the other provinces. We have a single budget, which is distributed by province, and then, by station.

Mrs. Carole Freeman: And stations outside Quebec must feel...

Mr. Sylvain Lafrance: On the television side, 60 per cent of all regional spending occurs outside Quebec.

Mr. Louis Lalonde: And that does not include investments by RDI, which has invested almost \$6 million in the regions. So, if you add that 60 per cent to the RDI portion—since we are required to account for RDI separately—you arrive at quite a considerable sum of money.

• (1010)

Mr. Sylvain Lafrance: It's important to realize that there is more money spent outside of Quebec because the majority of stations, both television and radio, are located outside Quebec. That is the case for most of our Espace Musique transmitters. This summer, 70 per cent of musical productions will be carried out in the regions—in other words, outside of Montreal, but not outside of Quebec. That means significant investments, because we have stations in a number of large cities outside Quebec. That's the reason why 60 per cent of regional television spending occurs outside Quebec.

Mrs. Carole Freeman: Of course, it's much easier, as far as radio goes, to extend services across the country. With television, it's a little more complicated. How do you intend to get around that problem?

Mr. Sylvain Lafrance: I was saying earlier that in recent years, we have quadrupled the number of productions. We currently have a drama in production in New Brunswick. We also have a film in production in Winnipeg. However, it's important to understand that even there, we are faced with one unavoidable reality. If I'm not mistaken, of the 140 francophone production houses in Canada, 130 are located in Montreal. That is the demographic reality we're facing.

Having said that, the proof that we are making a considerable effort in that regard is the fact that over the last five years, we have increased our annual budget of \$300,000 to more than \$2 million. We have greatly increased production with independent producers outside Quebec. In radio, we have added resources in certain areas, even though the perception is that we have taken some away. We have opened regional offices, particularly in Prince Edward Island.

Mrs. Carole Freeman: The fact remains that as far as television goes, it is still woefully inadequate.

Mr. Sylvain Lafrance: Television broadcasting is extremely costly.

Mrs. Carole Freeman: Mr. Petit raised an issue that has been with us for ages now, namely that information and editorials are always biased, that Radio-Canada is never on the right side, and that you're never in people's good books. It would seem that Mr. Petit has one perception and I have quite another. There are many different perceptions out there. You have to choose your editorial themes, and you convey messages in what you carry. There is no denying that. When you have a message, that message is not universal.

What criteria and parameters do you base your editorial choices on?

Mr. Sylvain Lafrance: First of all, we do not have an editorial position. We develop contents...

Mrs. Carole Freeman: But you provide coverage abroad.

Mr. Sylvain Lafrance: Radio-Canada's *Journalistic Standards and Practices Guide* clearly defines the roles and duties of journalists and what is expected of them in terms of objectivity, and so on. There are many parameters. That guide is like an internal bible, and any journalist starting to work for Radio-Canada is made aware of its existence and required to be familiar with our way of operating.

Because of the many tools available to it, among journalistic operations generally, Radio-Canada enjoys a strong reputation for objectivity. There is the *Journalistic Standards and Practices Guide*, as well as the News Branch, which ensures that the standards and practices are adhered to. As well, there is the ombudsman, which acts as kind of an appeal body. When an individual feels that he has been prejudicially affected, that we were not objective and did not express the whole spectrum of opinion, that person can appeal to the ombudsman. The ombudsman is independent and reports directly to the Corporation's Board of Directors. He doesn't report to anyone else—not to me, or Louis, or Christiane.

When there are more important moments in the life of a democracy where the issues are pretty significant for everyone—an election, for example—we strike committees of citizens chosen from across the country, and they listen to our newscasts and express their opinions in that regard. They may tell us that we're slipping as regards this or that aspect of our news coverage. And outside firms can also give us their perspective.

We then make very precise calculations of the airtime given to each of the parties. That does not necessarily mean that every party has to have the same airtime, but that we have to be in a position to explain the difference. For example, we may spend less time talking about a particular party in a particular region simply because there are no candidates running there.

All of these tools allow us to state that, overall, journalistic objectivity is taken very seriously at Radio-Canada.

I have been working for Radio-Canada for 26 years, and there have been very serious attacks on its objectivity. Yet every time an impartial study has been conducted, it has confirmed Radio-Canada's objectivity.

What is objectivity? We could hold a three-day seminar on that topic alone.

•(1015)

The Chair: Mr. Godin, you have five minutes.

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

My question is directed to either Mr. Lalonde or Mr. Lafrance; you spoke earlier of your new system, under which RDI in the Atlantic region will be no more, and news will henceforth be covered on the national network. You will have the burden of proving that this change is for the better. Rather than being your ombudsman, we will be your watchdog.

You said today that you can better represent the regions. You believe that we're in an age of instant news. We'll see how things evolve. Will we have enough airtime?

As I understand it, we will be able to get everything on the national news, because someone will be on the ground. With all due respect, I would point out that our reporters were on the ground, had the news, and would send their items to Radio-Canada national network, even though they were not considered to constitute national news. What is national is the Quebec health care system, hospitals in Quebec, or anything that is going on in Montreal. But national news is supposed to be national news. I'll say it again: outside of Montreal, we want to see ourselves reflected in what Radio-Canada reports. Radio-Canada is Radio-CANADA.

Mr. Louis Lalonde: Mr. Godin, we have taken concrete measures in that regard. Since January, we have had a manager of special assignments who is from the regions. This is an individual who has worked in Western Canada, who is very sympathetic to regional needs, and who knows the country's demographics. This person plays a critical role in decision-making and in monitoring everything that goes on in the newsroom.

That is a very concrete step that we have taken because, to be perfectly honest with you, we are not crazy. We know our people and we know that it's difficult to share that reality with thousands of employees and with people who have to make decisions on a daily basis. We have to support them on a continuous basis, monitor their activity and ensure that we have the appropriate presence. And this approach is yielding results.

For example, according to figures for 2005 and 2006, there has been an increase. Obviously, things will never be perfect, but there has been an increase. Furthermore, we have seen more people. We have seen Ricky Landry more often than last year on *Le téléjournal*. We also see him more often in the mornings, on RDI. That is important for us. The subjects addressed are also important.

Mr. Yvon Godin: I'm not talking about RDI. I'm talking about Bernard Derome's program. And what about programs such as *Tout le monde en parle* with Guy A. Lepage or *La part des choses*. Who are we seeing there?

You have had guests such as Wilfred LeBouthillier and Jean-François Breau. You've also had Jack Layton on, but I think that's about it.

Mr. Louis Lalonde: To be honest, there are more than that. Having said that, you are right to point out that we must make a special effort.

We have talked a great deal about news, but we can also talk about culture with Christiane. Ours is not an exact science; it's not easy. Objectivity is a complex matter. Reflecting the regions is also quite complex in Canada. If there were a simple solution, somebody would already have found it. However, I am aware of our responsibilities in that regard and we do not take them lightly.

For instance, in terms of producing symphony orchestras in Canada or encouraging this or that music festival or new singers—you referred to Wilfred—our crews have difficult choices to make. We were saying earlier that this summer, 70 per cent of the concerts we'll record will be from outside Montreal. That means that we very much want to cover not only cultural events but news all across the country.

Earlier, we were saying that there are a thousand people involved. Radio-Canada is a network of human beings, where people talk, get together and agree on something, and so on. But our field is not an exact science; it's a complex science. We need to ascertain what the most important event is in Canada at a given time. So, that is quite complex, and in journalism, it gives rise to many internal debates. For example, as we speak, journalists with *Le Point* are debating what is going to be covered this evening.

Mr. Yvon Godin: They will most certainly cover our meeting this afternoon.

Mr. Sylvain Lafrance: I hope so.

We are not dealing with simple problems. However, I do want to say that both I and my colleagues are aware of our responsibility, which is to reflect the country as a whole. We need to find a happy medium. We will never be able to satisfy everyone, since we will never succeed in providing a perfect reflection of what is going on in all the regions—because there are a lot of them—but we are working very hard in that respect and, in our opinion, we get better every year.

• (1020)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Lafrance.

Unfortunately, Mr. Godin, your time is up.

We are now going to begin a third five-minute round of questioning.

Mr. Simard, you have the floor.

Hon. Raymond Simard (Saint Boniface, Lib.): Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

I would like to welcome our guests. We were very anxious to hear from you, Mr. Lafrance, as well as from the other members of your entourage. We have heard good things about you. We've been told that you're sympathetic to regional concerns. I'm really anxious to invite you back in a year from now, to see whether we were right to say that.

In Western Canada, one often has the feeling that regional programming is provided out of a sense of obligation, but is not an integral part of your national strategy. Mr. Lalande, I hope you will make this part of your national strategy, so that we don't feel we are being set apart. Take CKSB in Manitoba, for example. Between 6 and 9 a.m., there is regional programming, and after that, there is

programming from Quebec, and we go back to regional programming at noon; however, it's not the same people and the ones that were there before don't come back. We would like you to show some sensitivity to that sort of thing.

Furthermore, there are some 2.6 million francophones and francophiles living outside Quebec. They constitute a potentially important audience. Mr. Lalande, I hope you are going to develop a strategy, that you will come and see us, and that you will not base your strategy only on Quebec.

Also, there are some 400,000 young people in our immersion programs. Do be sure to talk to them as well, and to fully integrate them. One third of the students who receive their diploma from St. Boniface University College are from immersion schools. That is definitely a potential market for you. I hope that you will bear that in mind as well. You can respond on that, if you'd like.

I would like to come back to Ms. Boucher's question. In my opinion, she very correctly identified one of the current problems. You are responsible for ensuring that Quebec and francophones outside Quebec are connected. That is the missing link.

I was really surprised, some two years ago, when one of my colleagues from the Bloc Québécois came to our area. He was thrilled to see such a dynamic community in Manitoba. If our colleagues at the House of Commons don't know what's going on, there is clearly a problem.

You talked about artists and production houses, the majority of which are in Quebec. Since we represent only 4 or 5 per cent of the population, we need your support. Rivard Productions Inc. back home is doing extraordinary work and developing products of the same fine quality as production houses in Quebec, because they've been given a chance. We could have two, three or even more such production companies. What I mean is that we require even more support from you. Radio-Canada has a role to play in that regard.

Mr. Sylvain Lafrance: I travel a lot in the regions. Every year, I make the rounds and talk to people. I've been all across the West, including to St. Boniface. Indeed, René Fontaine, our new Director of French Services in Western Canada, was to be with us today. We have consolidated everything there as well. He cannot be with us today because he is signing agreements with the Europeans. The Western regions are now able to sign agreements with regions in France, Belgium, and Switzerland. There are some interesting things going on there. But it comes back to the same thing, again.

I believe we have a role to play in terms of connecting francophones. I talked about the connection between francophones across Canada, but also between francophones here in Canada and the rest of the world. It is great for people from Winnipeg to be able to sign agreements with certain regions of France. That leads to emulation and communication between people from different backgrounds. We also do this with Moncton, and it works very well.

I'm very sympathetic to what you said about the needs of francophone communities, particularly in the West. They are quite fragile. When in the midst of these communities, you really feel as though you're in a China shop. There are very few production companies, and if we don't help them, they won't be able to hang in there. It's the same in the musical field. When you visit these communities, you become acutely aware of that.

I believe that a consolidation of francophone services out West within Radio-Canada will be beneficial, because this will also allow us to develop a strategy and will give francophones in the Prairies an opportunity to talk to one another from time to time. We're very aware of that need.

• (1025)

Hon. Raymond Simard: Mr. Lalande, can you answer my question about young people in immersion?

Mr. Louis Lalande: First of all, I am making the commitment today, in front of you, to never develop any strategy when I'm sitting alone in my office. I have worked too closely with regional resources within Radio-Canada, and for too long—25 years—to not appreciate and understand the value there. We began our development and strategic efforts last week. Sylvain called a meeting of the French Services Board. This was a gathering of some 180 executives from Radio-Canada, from both radio and television. We devoted an entire session to listening to regional concerns and issues. We gave all our regional managers, who were there together in Montreal, an opportunity to say their piece. Now that this first step has been completed, I feel richer in a number of ways. Later, I will continue that discussion, in each of the regions.

Hon. Raymond Simard: I would advise you not to consult only Radio-Canada executives, but to also speak to the communities themselves. That way, you will hear a variety of perspectives.

The Chair: Thank you for your comments.

Ms. Barbot, you have five minutes.

Mrs. Vivian Barbot: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Lafrance, I was reassured to hear you say that you are aware of the reality that is closer to the people. Personally, I spent 30 years living in a small village in Quebec—South Durham. The times I was happiest were the ones where we heard about an accident in the region—in Acton Vale or the surrounding area, for example. It was on the road, near where we lived. It was as though the entire world had suddenly discovered our village. When that happened, we would hear people talking about South Durham.

That may seem puerile, but everybody wants to feel as though Radio-Canada belongs to them. They want not only to exist, but to exist and be seen by others. I understand that that cannot happen every day. In any case, it is perfectly normal for there to be nothing happening in a village. That's perfectly all right, considering that the news is generally bad news. I understand the challenge you're facing. At the same time, we must not forget the effect of the large and densely populated region of Montreal on the rest of Quebec.

What I'm saying is that we mustn't forget about people, but the fact remains that some people are forgotten. Indeed, nobody ever talks about what goes on in the ethnocultural communities, except to talk about street gangs. When school is mentioned, they talk about

people dropping out, without ever mentioning individuals. That's probably too bad, but it's all part of the challenge.

Indeed, the situation of francophones outside Quebec is nothing new. We have to satisfy people such as the ones living in my village. At the same time, in terms of content, we have to be sure that people see themselves reflected in what is presented. That is also part of the challenge.

While attempting to ensure that the different regions get what they need, we also have to ensure that die-hard Radio-Canada listeners, such as myself, do not find themselves turning off the radio more often than previously because the program content doesn't interest them. So, we have to find a way of presenting this programming and getting people interested in it.

I wanted to draw your attention to these issues and ask you whether you believe you have the means to achieve what you've been talking about.

Mr. Sylvain Lafrance: What a question! I'll start at the beginning.

Three or four years ago, we opened a station in Sherbrooke. There was not one there previously. It's strange to note that even after being around for 60 years, we had no presence whatsoever either in Sherbrooke or Trois-Rivières. That was a rather serious anomaly, but we have corrected it. In fact, it was the same thing in the Abitibi region, where we now have regional programming. In Sherbrooke, Trois-Rivières and Chicoutimi, we have acquired newsrooms that previously belonged to the private sector. We bought them so that news could be carried by Radio-Canada in these areas. That has been done; we have improved things in that regard. As I already said, it's important for people to feel included.

I was saying earlier that this is not an exact science. In radio, when a host is on the air, there can be very delicate situations. Even at times when a host is inclined to say that it's nice outside and that everyone is happy, he has to remember that Canada is a huge country. Indeed, it's quite possible that it's snowing in certain areas. So, we tell our hosts to be careful about what they say. For example, we advise them to say that the weather is nice in Montreal, but that they don't know what it's like elsewhere in Canada. I cite that example simply to show that including people even means being careful about what you say. You have to pay attention to every comma, every comment and at times, even the way you describe certain realities. For example, certain ministries in Quebec don't have the same name as in Alberta. In that respect, we try not to exclude anybody, even though that isn't always easy.

As for knowing whether we have the means to achieve what we've been discussing, I would say that, naturally, the answer is no. The expectations of cultural groups, particularly in the musical arena, and of the regions in relation to the public broadcasters are naturally, and quite legitimately, excessive. Everyone would like us to encourage every orchestra, musical group and musician in the country, and for us to support new artists and new literature in every region of the country—basically, they would like us to have a strong presence everywhere. So, I'd say people's expectations are unlimited.

Given our means, we are able to satisfy a great many needs. In my opinion, what we are accomplishing by way of public service is extremely important. Our role is to listen to what people need, to make decisions and to provide explanations. But we cannot be everything to everyone, given our resources.

Every time I go into the regions, whether it's in Acadia, Manitoba or elsewhere, I meet people to whom I say that it would indeed be preferable for there to be more local programming but that, like everybody else, we have certain constraints. As far as I'm concerned, people realize that no organization can claim to have unlimited means. If I were with Telefilm Canada, my answer would be the same: I would say that at the present time, we don't have the necessary resources.

But if we work hard to listen, make decisions and explain what we're about, Canadians will understand the role we are trying to play and the kind of balance we are aiming for. We manage that balance in the musical field. Whether it's classical music, jazz, song or contemporary music, everyone would like us to be there. Should we be primarily encouraging the large orchestras or the small ensembles? Should we be supporting regional festivals? Should our primary mission be to encourage the MSO or the Contemporary Music Festival in Victoriaville? Seeking the right balance is never easy. With the resources available to us, we manage to achieve a decent balance which is nevertheless imperfect. We have to continue to listen to people and make improvements.

• (1030)

The Chair: Your time is up.

Mr. Lemieux, please.

Mr. Pierre Lemieux (Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, CPC): Thank you very much.

I have similar concerns. I am the Member of Parliament for Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, a riding located close to Ottawa and Quebec. Of a population of 100,000, 65,000 people are Franco-Ontarian, which corresponds to 65 per cent of the total population. In Eastern Ontario, there is a large francophone population. My concern has to do with regional services. I would like to see you concentrate on regional issues. Radio waves are mobile, and that's the reason for the question I'd like to put to you now.

Can you explain how you deal with the regional challenge of a broadcast out of Quebec into my riding? How do you go about ensuring that Radio-Canada takes into account the concerns of people in Eastern Ontario?

Mr. Sylvain Lafrance: Let's talk about your riding, one that I know well having lived there myself. The signal from Ottawa covers most of the riding, and the signal from Montreal covers the rest. Radio waves don't always respect riding boundaries. The criteria for determining how they travel are not the same. Sometimes there can be a conflict between two signals.

In this particular case, one of the ways of resolving that conflict has been to considerably increase the signal from Ottawa, as we also have done for Montreal. There must not be many areas of your riding that no longer receive the Ottawa signal. Even in Cornwall, there is a transmitter that casts quite a large net towards the Ottawa River. By increasing our frequencies, we have created areas of overlapping

coverage which mean that people in Quebec can now receive a signal from Montreal. The worst problem for some people is that they receive both signals.

And there are regions that are more problematic than the Ottawa region in that respect. Because of their size, some ridings do not always receive the signals they would like to receive.

To cover *la Première Chaîne* and *Espace Musique*, and all of Radio-Canada's radio services in English and French, we have more than 300 transmitters located across the country. We are able to calibrate these transmitters so that people receive the signal that they should receive.

The rest of the country obviously poses problems in terms of coverage. Moncton doesn't talk about Caraquet, Montreal doesn't talk about the regions, Ottawa doesn't talk much about Prescott-Russell, and we don't talk much about la Petite-Nation. We need to seek a balance, and that's not easy, although we're aware of the issues.

Our reporters on the ground in Ottawa have set for themselves the goal of casting a much wider net all across the region. Between Quebec and Ontario, there is, once again, a question of balance. The Ottawa region is fairly complex: the francophone-anglophone mix, the regional balance, the Quebec-Ontario balance, and the federal government, which plays a very prominent role.

I was manager of the Ottawa station for a number of years, and I can tell you that things are not easy in that region, although our ratings suggest that we are able to satisfy quite a few people.

• (1035)

The Chair: There is one minute left, and I believe that Mr. Harvey would like to ask a question.

Mr. Luc Harvey (Louis-Hébert, CPC): In caucus, we recently discussed the fact that Radio-Canada is competing with producers by sometimes offering its post-production services at very low rates or almost for nothing.

What can be done to ensure that this Crown corporation does not compete with private services?

Mr. Sylvain Lafrance: First of all, what you said is not accurate, because Radio-Canada's rates are competitive. We do not lower our prices in order to sell our services. Canadians have invested in studios and highly competent personnel. The CBC Broadcasting Centre in Montreal is the largest television production centre in Canada. There are skills available there that the industry would not want to do without. So, we need to be careful.

High definition is being created at CBC/Radio-Canada. It's all taking place in the basement of the CBC Broadcasting Centre in Montreal. If our engineers and technicians were not paving the way for the arrival of high definition in Canada, it might never happen, and then we would have quite a problem on our hands.

Our studios are assets that Canadians have paid for and that can serve production as a whole. Because we work very closely with independent producers, they sometimes carry out their production in our facilities. So, it is inaccurate to say that Radio-Canada is lowering its rates for that purpose. At the same time, offering independent producers the best quality equipment and the most qualified staff is good public policy, in my opinion.

Le président: Mr. Godin, one last question.

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

First of all, I want to commend you for the new series entitled *Planète Belle-Baie* by the author Renée Blanchar, which will certainly be a hit. We also hope that this television series will be a popular one, even if it is a regional production. We're quite capable of doing good work, and I think we'll be in a position to demonstrate that. I have faith in Ms. Blanchar.

Mr. Sylvain Lafrance: I have certainly heard a lot of good things about it. I'm very optimistic.

Mr. Yvon Godin: I don't know where it's going to be filmed. It's called *Planète Belle-Baie* and one of the most beautiful bays in the world is the Baie des Chaleurs. I don't know whether that's where it's going to be filmed, but I think it should be.

An hon. member: The most beautiful bay is the Baie des Chaleurs.

Mr. Yvon Godin: It is certainly one of the most beautiful. The weather is beautiful, and it's warm. Everyone is invited to come. But I guess we're not supposed to say that!

When you say that your service in nine different languages should be carried by satellite, that worries me. Is Radio-Canada paying for this on its own, or is CBC doing its share?

Mr. Sylvain Lafrance: I'd say both are involved. In this case, we're talking about Radio Canada International, and I could spend three hours talking about that.

Radio Canada International had separate funding for a long time. Three months ago, Canadian Heritage agreed to restore responsibility for funding to Radio-Canada. So, it comes neither from Radio-Canada nor from CBC. In fact, if we're talking about it now, it's because I am responsible for managing Radio Canada International which, for practical reasons, is located in Montreal. It is under the mandate of the Vice-President in Montreal. People working in the nine different language sections at Radio Canada International are physically located in Montreal. It comes out of corporate financing.

●(1040)

Mr. Yvon Godin: There is one more thing we believe you should think about. Over a six-year period, if I'm not mistaken, there were three or four lockouts and two strikes at the Corporation. This has twice the impact in the regions. The Radio-Canada office in Moncton is linked to the one in Quebec. If they're on strike or have been locked out, we lose everything. When employees working for the English-language network are on strike, once again, we lose everything, because they're on the ground, with the English-language network. So, we get burnt twice.

Mr. Sylvain Lafrance: Union distribution is complicated. This is an historical situation. People in Moncton are part of unions...

Mr. Yvon Godin: If Radio-Canada had locked out all its employees, we would be facing the same situation.

Mr. Sylvain Lafrance: I am very pleased to tell you, Mr. Godin, that in Montreal, we have just signed two collective agreements with our two largest unions, with ratification rates of 90 per cent.

Mr. Yvon Godin: [*Inaudible*] Radio-Canada for signing.

Mr. Sylvain Lafrance: That's right.

We signed agreements with the two largest unions, with ratification rates of between 88 and 90 per cent. The process went very well, amidst an atmosphere that was very positive on both sides. We are currently negotiating a new collective agreement with producers. Again, that process is going well. Our objective, on the French-language side, is to improve our relations with both the unions and our staff.

Mr. Yvon Godin: In closing, I just want to say that the reason why we've been complaining this morning is that we like Radio-Canada. It's our radio and television network, and we want to see it improve across the country. There are francophones from sea to sea. We want to ensure that we can hear what francophones in Victoria have to say. There is even an Acadian association in Victoria now.

So, we're asking the representatives of Radio-Canada to review their programming as a whole and change it in such a way as to ensure that we can see our entire country and all francophones. There are people with talent out there. That will be clear in *Planète Belle-Baie*. I'm sure it's well worth exploring those talents and showcasing them for all to appreciate.

Mr. Sylvain Lafrance: I can assure you that I take these criticisms and questions you've raised very seriously. Indeed, when people criticize a public service, I realize that it's because they like it and want more of it. and of course, I can't be against that. In any case, I am very aware of the fact that part of our responsibility is to hear these concerns, because our mission is to serve the public.

Thank you for raising them with us.

The Chair: You have 30 seconds left, Mr. Godin.

Mr. Yvon Godin: Just to show you how reasonable I am, I won't ask any more questions. I will give my remaining time to this gentleman over here.

The Chair: A 30-second question?

Hon. Raymond Simard: In Manitoba, it was decided to cancel the television sportscasts. But the fact is that there are francophones there that like sports, just like other people do. Now they have to watch English channels. Is that something you will look at as part of your repositioning, Mr. Lalande?

Mr. Louis Lalande: Yes. We are in the process of reorganizing everything related to sports. I find that very positive. Indeed, at Sylvain's instigation, we have decided to restore the sports service and to use it to redefine Radio-Canada's sports mission as a whole. As Sylvain likes to say, we are going to develop a sports strategy that will ensure that everyone can talk about sport, because it's important for Canadians. We have just announced that. I very much hope that there will be improvements.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. Lalande, Mr. Lafrance and Ms. Leblanc, for those very interesting answers to our questions.

And I want to thank Committee members for asking such interesting questions.

We will take a two-minute break.

•(1044) _____ (Pause) _____

•(1052)

The Chair: We are ready to resume.

Mr. Rodriguez would like to table a notice of motion.

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

This motion relates to our meeting last week, when we were very pleased to meet with the representatives of minority community radio stations. They clearly explained that they are operating with very little funding, and often, despite their lack of funding. Nothing currently requires or encourages the Government of Canada to place ads on community radio stations. It does so from time to time, but it can also decide not to do that. There is no minimum or rule in place in that regard.

And that situation applies not only to minority community radio stations, but to non-profit radio stations as well. These stations really need support. They are doing exceptional work, often with little or no resources, thanks to dedicated volunteers. These media organizations play a very important role in terms of extending the influence of French outside Quebec.

I believe it is important to support them. I asked them whether this motion could be helpful to them, and they said that it most certainly would.

I believe the Bloc Québécois would like to amend the motion, and I fully understand why. The Bloc Québécois would like the government to set aside this amount of money every year, starting this year.

The Chair: Mr. Rodriguez, please read your motion.

Mr. Pablo Rodriguez: Ms. Barbot, would you like to do that?

Mrs. Vivian Barbot: I can read the motion. It is to insert, after the words “reserve”...

The Chair: Ms. Barbot, the motion has not been read yet.

Mr. Pablo Rodriguez: I will read the motion without the amendment. Mr. Chairman, the motion reads as follows:

That the Standing Committee on Official Languages recommend to the government that it immediately reserve a minimum of 5.4 per cent of its media buy for non-profit, community-based official language minority media.

The Chair: Ms. Barbot, would you like to move an amendment?

Mrs. Vivian Barbot: I suggest that the motion be amended by replacing the word “immediately” with the words “on an annual basis, starting immediately”.

The Chair: Let's open this up for debate. Are there any comments or questions?

Mr. Harvey.

Mr. Luc Harvey: I have already discussed this with Mr. Rodriguez. When the Committee met, they spent an hour and a half explaining that they wanted \$500,000. However, the motion

refers to a percentage—specifically, 5.4 per cent. I understand the principle, but they also explained that of the \$71 million set aside for advertising, only \$34 million had been spent. So, is that percentage based on \$34 million or \$71 million? I don't want to make things unnecessarily complicated. I told Mr. Rodriguez that we agree on the principle. I understand that they want to move quickly on this and do the right thing, but will we really be doing the right thing by moving on this quickly? That's my question.

•(1055)

Mr. Pablo Rodriguez: There are two parts to your intervention. First of all, you're wondering whether it's preferable to talk about 5.4 per cent or whether we should mention the amount of \$500,000 they were asking for initially. My answer would be that a percentage is preferable, because when they were here, I told them that it would be difficult to get agreement on this because it's a random amount. There is no way of justifying why it should be \$500,000 as opposed to \$300,000 or \$600,000. They replied that that was quite true. They are every bit in favour of talking about 5.4 per cent, which corresponds to the percentage of Canadians living in a minority situation in Canada. That is basically it.

As for media placements, \$70 million was expected to be spent in that area. We hope the federal government will spend what it intended to. We feel it is fair to set aside a percentage of the money allocated, regardless of what is spent on non-profit media.

Mr. Luc Harvey: But what would happen if they got the 5.4 per cent and the government only spent 10 per cent of its expected budget? The situation would be no different from the one we're dealing with now. On the other hand, if they got a set amount, as they requested, they would have the full amount. The government is under no obligation to spend all that money. It is rare for the government not to spend all of it, but it has happened before. It should be noted that 50 per cent of that expenditure is roughly equivalent to \$500,000. In my opinion, when they talked about \$500,000, that amount was equivalent to the amount of the total budget that would be spent.

Mr. Pablo Rodriguez: No, there was nothing scientific about it. I met with them afterwards and asked them why the amount had been set at half a million dollars, and they told me that they thought it was the right amount.

There could have been 8 or 12 departments at \$50,000 each, but they calculated that 10 departments would invest \$50,000 each. But it could just as well have been 8, 10 or 16 departments. So, I suggested that the distribution be less random and that the amount be calculated based on the spending.

The Chair: If 5.4 per cent is the equivalent of \$3 million and there is no need for that amount of advertising, what will happen?

Mr. Pablo Rodriguez: They will use that amount. The 5.4 per cent figure would have represented \$500,000 or \$600,000 last year. The amount would be distributed to all radio stations, which would mean \$30,000 each. That's not much, but if it were \$60,000, it would be very helpful.

The Chair: But what if the government doesn't have any advertising to do?

Mr. Pablo Rodriguez: It doesn't give money away, but it places 5.4 per cent of its ads in community media. It's neither a gift nor a subsidy; it's a media buy.

The Chair: Ms. Barbot.

Mrs. Vivian Barbot: We're talking about a minimum, so it's not restrictive. The idea is to allow them to know that they'll have access to 5.4 per cent. If the budget changes, the \$500,000 amount, as opposed to a percentage, becomes random, whereas the 5.4 per cent sets a base amount that they should be entitled to, which is more consistent with their needs.

The Chair: Mr. Simard.

Hon. Raymond Simard: Mr. Chairman, I would like to ask the clerk or the analyst how this motion differs from the one we tabled last year, or two years ago, with the Department of Public Works and Government Services. Is it the same thing?

Mr. Jean-Rodrigue Paré (Committee Researcher): No, it's not the same. The difference is that this motion calls for a certain percentage of media placements in community media. The motion that came before the Committee last year talked about 5.4 per cent of the overall advertising budget being reserved for minority francophone communities.

It's important to make a distinction between the proportion of overall funding allocated to the community sector and the proportion allocated to francophone minority communities.

There is a distinction being made here that is not exactly along the same lines as last year's recommendation.

• (1100)

The Chair: One moment, Mr. Harvey.

Does this relate to television advertising only?

Mr. Pablo Rodriguez: It applies to everything.

The Chair: Ms. Boucher.

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: I support the principle of this motion because it has a significant impact on francophone communities, although it is not detailed enough. I agree with the 5.4 per cent, but what proportion will go to the francophone community? I think we should set aside this motion until September, to give us a chance to do some research over the summer with the help of our analysts and clerks, so that we can flesh this out a little more. I find it a little vague, and in my opinion, this is too important an issue for our communities.

Mr. Luc Harvey: Does the 5.4 per cent for non-profit community media also include francophone neighbourhood newspapers? In actual fact, the \$500,000 requested by the radio stations is more than 5.4 per cent.

Mr. Pablo Rodriguez: That's for community media.

Mr. Luc Harvey: But if you calculate their spending, you will see that of the \$71 million budgeted, half was spent. So, 5.4 per cent amounts to \$1.674 million.

The Chair: We will have to adjourn now, because the other committee has already arrived.

Mr. Daniel Petit: Mr. Chairman, I think we should first draft an amendment, vote on it, and then go back to the main motion. We can always talk about this again, but the word "immediately" is problematic. I would like to move a sub-amendment, which would be to strike that word from the motion.

Mrs. Vivian Barbot: We've almost resolved this.

Mr. Daniel Petit: Did you strike the word "immediately"? Perhaps we could re-read the amendment and then decide.

Mrs. Vivian Barbot: We have to add "on an annual basis, starting immediately".

The Chair: We could decide to agree on the principle, to vote on that, and then look at the details in September. Would the Committee agree to that?

Mr. Jean-Claude D'Amours: Mr. Chairman, I believe we have to follow the proper process. As Mr. Petit already mentioned, there is an amendment on the floor. We talked about voting on it, and doing the same for the main motion.

The Chair: We are going to vote on the amendment. Is it agreed?

[English]

Mr. Pierre Lemieux: No, I don't think we've debated it enough. My concern is that we've heard from one witness.

[Translation]

Only one witness presented a perspective on that. I note that there is still some discussion on that point. Our intentions are not all that clear. There are still concerns. I believe we need to take more time to discuss these issues.

[English]

I don't want to rush and take a vote all of a sudden. I realize the time—it's after 11 o'clock—but I think we need more debate on this before we can vote.

• (1105)

[Translation]

The Chair: There were some questions. We're going to vote on Ms. Barbot's amendment.

Is there agreement on the amendment?

Mrs. Vivian Barbot: My amendment is to delete the word "immediately" and replace it with "on an annual basis, starting immediately".

(The amendment is carried)

The Chair: We will now vote on the motion, as amended.

(The motion, as amended, is carried)

The Chair: The meeting is adjourned.

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