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## Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage

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EVIDENCE

**Tuesday, May 6, 2008**

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**Chair**

**Mr. Gary Schellenberger**

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## Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage

Tuesday, May 6, 2008

• (1535)

[English]

**The Chair (Mr. Gary Schellenberger (Perth—Wellington, CPC)):** I call to order meeting 27 of the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage.

Today we're on committee business. The first order of business is a notice of motion from Bill Siksay.

Mr. Siksay, would you like to present your motion?

**Mr. Bill Siksay (Burnaby—Douglas, NDP):** Thank you, Chair.

I want to confirm that we're in a public session.

**The Chair:** Yes, we're in a public session.

**Mr. Bill Siksay:** Thank you, Chair.

I think folks have all seen the motion, which would call on the committee to hold hearings this month regarding the decision by CBC/Radio-Canada to disband the CBC Radio Orchestra, on the CBC/ Radio-Canada commitment to classical music, and on the changes to CBC Radio 2, and as part of that, that the committee travel to Vancouver for some of those hearings.

As we were discussing at our last meeting when the folks from the CBC were here, this decision has been very important to thousands of Canadians. I think probably all of us have heard from some of those folks. My understanding is at least 15,000 Canadians joined a Facebook page to discuss the changes at the CBC, many of whom are also concerned about the disbanding of the CBC Radio Orchestra.

As I noted the other day, this is of particular interest in the area of Vancouver where I think CBC Radio 2 enjoyed one of its largest, if not its largest, listening audiences, and where there was very strong support for CBC Radio 2, as Canadians have come to know it. It's also where the CBC Radio Orchestra was based. There is a strong commitment to the radio orchestra in Vancouver as well.

There aren't very many national cultural institutions based in western Canada, let alone in Vancouver. I think probably the CBC Radio Orchestra is one of the only ones. I think that gives it a very special place in Vancouver, in the lower mainland, in metro Vancouver, in British Columbia, indeed in western Canada. It's very important that the change that disbands the radio orchestra not be done lightly. I think it's something that demands the attention of elected officials as well in that regard.

There is great concern across the country about the changes in CBC/Radio-Canada's commitment to classical music. Many people

have seen CBC playing a key role in the development of classical music in Canada and in the development of classical musicians, composers, and conductors in Canada. The role of the orchestra and the CBC was crucial in all of that. They are very concerned about what that means to classical music in Canada with the changes at Radio 2 and the changes to the orchestra.

It's very important that we hear from those folks. I know we've been hearing from them in e-mail, but there are many people: academics, people who have worked in the cultural industries, composers, musicians, and others in Canada who have very strong feelings about this and would like to make the case directly to us about the place of CBC, its commitment to classical music in the cultural life of this country, and how they see that as fundamental to the mandate of the CBC under the Broadcasting Act.

Some of them have spoken at public demonstrations. We've seen demonstrations outside many of the CBC facilities in Canada. They called it "Raise a Ruckus for Radio 2". Many of them spoke there. In Vancouver at the most recent concert of the CBC Radio Orchestra, there was a rally before the concert began, which included many folks from the cultural community in Vancouver, folks from the UBC School of Music, musicians from the orchestra, and student musicians from CBC, who all spoke about the importance of the radio orchestra. I think it would be very important for all members of the committee to hear their input on this.

It's for those reasons that I hope that folks can support this motion. I hope we will agree to travel to Vancouver. I think we should visit other cities as well with regard to this. I'm sure if we decide to do this, members will have suggestions about it. I see it as something very important.

I think many Canadians feel we're on the verge of losing something that's been very important in the cultural life of Canada, and I think that would be something that would demand the attention of this committee.

Thank you, Chair.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

We'll go to Mr. Coderre.

[Translation]

**Hon. Denis Coderre (Bourassa, Lib.):** Mr. Chair, we are in favour of this motion. I have no statement to make for the media, so I will not take as long as my colleague. But I feel that we should also bear in mind that the president and the vice-presidents of CBC/Radio-Canada were here last week and we still listened to their point of view. We heard their point of view first-hand, whether we accepted it or not. But it would be appropriate for us as parliamentarians to take the pulse of Canadians. We have all received letters and every lobby group in the world has sent the same message.

• (1540)

[English]

I think it's useful to have that kind of discussion. Now we're talking about urgently having those hearings in May 2008. I guess we should take a look at what you have on the agenda already, but I think, for the sake of the discussion, we will support that motion for all the reasons that we spoke of in the last meeting, because we asked all those questions about it from both sides of the committee. I think it's an appropriate one.

I'm questioning a bit the fact that you want to hear it urgently in May 2008. Maybe we should have some discussion—not another filibuster—on that. However, I will support that motion.

[Translation]

I think that my Vancouver colleagues, Don Bell, Hedy Fry, among others, are working very hard and are in complete agreement that we should look into this problem. We must also protect the spirit of what CBC Radio 2 is presently doing with classical music. The radio orchestra is part of our heritage too. It is the last one in North America and it must be protected.

I will not do the same as the anglophone chair,

[English]

who called that just a band. I think it's more than that.

I believe, though, that we should be supportive of our colleague, and why not go to Vancouver?

**The Chair:** Mr. Godfrey.

**Hon. John Godfrey (Don Valley West, Lib.):** Thank you.

I know, Chair, that it's a bit cheeky for a visitor and sub to actually butt right in, but I am a former chair of this committee and also probably the only one at the table who took part in a demonstration outside the CBC building here in defence of classical music on Radio 2.

**An hon. member:** Out of order.

**Some hon. members:** Oh, oh!

**Hon. John Godfrey:** Well, I wasn't arrested. There's that about it, which wasn't always the case in my past, but we needn't go there.

Simply to say that I've found the changes that have already been occurring with Radio 2 distressing, in the sense of the dumbing down and the loss of intelligence. And the proposed changes, as we understand them to date, make it even worse as they get rid of some

of the most talented and thoughtful people who talk about classical music and turn it into God knows what.

I urge this work upon you even if I won't be part of it. Of course I'd like to go to Vancouver too, and I may offer to substitute for that trip too.

**The Chair:** Okay.

Ms. Mourani.

[Translation]

**Mrs. Maria Mourani (Ahuntsic, BQ):** Mr. Chair, we are also in favour of this motion. The only thing that I wonder about is the urgency. I know that it is important, that it is in the news and that it is happening now. But, given the agenda, I wonder whether it is realistic to arrange it for May 2008. That is my only question. We have already passed a motion to meet with the CRTC about regulating the Internet. Normally, we should put it into the agenda.

I was also wondering about the whole matter of artists and their income. I wanted to look at that too. We should see whether this can be done in May. I do not know if my colleague would amend his motion so that we could consider doing it later.

[English]

**The Chair:** Mr. Chong.

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

I'd rather not go to Vancouver to have some of these hearings, because I think that it's just as well to have the witnesses come here to Ottawa to present us with their views, rather than having the entire committee and all the research staff, the analysts, the clerk, and all the support that's entailed, go to Vancouver. I think it's much easier to have the witnesses from Vancouver come to Ottawa to present us with their point of view. That's my view.

We're not here enough as it is. Many of us come in Monday night and leave Thursday night. We're barely here three days and this is just another disruption to our schedules here in Ottawa.

My preference is to stay in Ottawa.

**The Chair:** Mr. Abbott.

**Hon. Jim Abbott (Kootenay—Columbia, CPC):** Mr. Chairman, of course all of us have had representations by Canadians.

I think one of the interesting things that was said by our witnesses from the CBC was that Canadians are as engaged on this issue as they are, as brought out by Mr. Godfrey and others. That is excellent and says that people care about the CBC, but I think we do have to take a look at jurisdiction. I think we have to take a look at the legislation within the Broadcasting Act as to whether in fact it would fit in with the law, as I read it, for us to be undertaking this trip.

I'm taking a look at the Broadcasting Act, under standing committees, subclause 45(4). Let me read it:

The standing committee on English language broadcasting shall perform such duties in relation to English language broadcasting, and the standing committee on French language broadcasting shall perform such duties in relation to French language broadcasting, as are delegated to the committee by the by-laws of the Corporation.

So, to begin with, there is a question about the jurisdiction. It very well may be a good exercise in this virtual negative public relations exercise that we would fundamentally be undertaking. It may be a good exercise, but we don't really have the jurisdiction.

Furthermore, the Broadcasting Act is very, very explicit under objects and powers, subclause 46(5), which is the most germane one:

The Corporation shall, in the pursuit of its objects and in the exercise of its powers, enjoy freedom of expression and journalistic, creative and programming independence.

So the CBC, if there were a desire—and I'm not suggesting there should be or even that there is—to change the Broadcasting Act to make it that committees could go to Vancouver and have hearings with Canadians and give direction to the CBC, that would require a change in the Broadcasting Act.

If I may read this most germane clause again:

The Corporation shall, in the pursuit of its objects and in the exercise of its powers, enjoy freedom of expression and journalistic, creative

—and this is the key one—  
and programming independence.

So we could go and we could take the time of the committee and the dollars to go to Vancouver, and we could have these hearings, but we have no jurisdiction. So the hearings would be very interesting, and I'm sure the executives of the CBC would probably take note of what was said at those hearings, just as much as they took note of many of the comments by my colleague, Mr. Fast, by Bill Siksay, by Mr. Coderre, as they did at the committee hearing last time, but nothing changes. We have to make sure that what it is we're doing on behalf of the people of Canada will have the potential to have a change, and as I say, according to my reading of the Broadcasting Act, 1991, we have no jurisdiction. So I don't know why we would be going through this exercise.

• (1545)

**The Chair:** Mr. Coderre.

[*Translation*]

**Hon. Denis Coderre:** If that were true, we would not be able to look into much. At a certain point, democracy requires us to represent public opinion, and we must make use of that in order to send messages.

The CBC/Radio-Canada people really want to hear from us. That does not mean that we are going to manage their programming. We are not putting the independence of CBC/Radio-Canada in doubt and we are not influencing it. They have a job to do. On the other hand, our job is important too. This committee did not intervene in the *Hockey Night in Canada* affair. That was programming as well.

As representatives of the public, we are called on to look into a number of matters. This is a forum in which it is acceptable to do so. If it were not, the chair would be forced to declare any number of questions out of order.

The way in which my colleague has drafted his motion is interesting because it makes us into a springboard or a forum for Canadians who are sending us letters about the problem with CBC Radio 2 and the radio orchestra. I think that it is relevant. Are they going to listen to us? If they do not, I can see that they will pay the

price as people change stations. Our goal is to prevent that. I have always felt that democracy consists in listening to people's opinions and representing them without getting in the way of the law.

• (1550)

[*English*]

**The Chair:** Okay.

Mr. Siksay, and then Mr. Fast.

**Mr. Bill Siksay:** Thank you, Chair.

I want to speak to some of the concerns that Mr. Abbott raised.

As I remember the discussion we had with the folks from the CBC last week, Mr. Chair, you reminded us of some of the same kinds of legislative obligations that Mr. Abbott just reminded us of. I think you might have warned us once about that, but I don't think you disallowed any of the discussion.

I don't think the CBC folks refused to discuss anything that was raised at the committee last week. In fact, I was pleased that they encouraged a very open discussion of the changes at Radio 2 and the decision to disband CBC Radio Orchestra. It seems to me they are very willing to see us engage in that kind of discussion with Canadians. I don't think there was any attempt there, or no one saw the need, to limit that discussion. I think that speaks positively about the kind of exercise this motion would imply.

I don't think there's anything in this motion that's directive. It's us seeking information from Canadians about the importance in Canada's cultural life of the CBC, of Radio-Canada, of Radio 2, and of the CBC Radio Orchestra. Nothing in the motion prescribes what action we would take. I think the committee would have to discuss that, after we've held our hearings, to see what action we might want to take at that point. That might be the appropriate time to have that discussion. But I think it is very important, as Mr. Coderre said, to hear from Canadians on this, given the concerns.

With regard to “urgently in May 2008”, my concern has always been about how long this Parliament is going to last. I think that's where that phrasing comes from. I do believe we need to do this before the summer recess, because the decision to disband the orchestra comes into effect in the fall. If we haven't done our work this spring, then I think we may miss the boat. It may be too far down the road to have any influence on that decision.

I would suggest that we need to do this prior to the summer recess. If that wording is helpful to people, I would be prepared to see that change made. We could take out “urgently in May 2008”, and we could say instead “prior to the summer recess”. But I do think it's important that we do this before the summer.

Thank you, Chair.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Mr. Fast.

**Mr. Ed Fast (Abbotsford, CPC):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

If, as it appears, a consensus is emerging that there be this kind of public consultation, I would want to add my voice to my colleague's comments regarding the location of these "hearings". I have a concern that if we go to Vancouver, we're making it Vancouver specific. Even though the CBC orchestra is based out of Vancouver, the issues that the motion actually address are much broader than that.

I think I've shared my feelings at this table already that one of the angriest people would have been my wife, when she heard about some of these changes. I would suspect that people right across this country have serious concerns about what they perceive as a dumbing down of CBC's classical music offerings. I would prefer that the hearings be held here in Ottawa so that we're not sending the message that this is a Vancouver issue. I would prefer to have them here.

Quite frankly, I would hope that even the CBC would send representatives to those hearings to make sure that they hear first-hand what Canadians are saying about their proposals. I know that one will be here, but if in fact that's the direction we're going to go, at least let's have it located here in Ottawa.

**The Chair:** Ms. Mourani.

[*Translation*]

**Mrs. Maria Mourani:** Mr. Chair, I have an amendment to the motion. I would remove the words "urgently in May 2008" and would replace them with the words "prior to the summer recess". I would put a period after "CBC Radio Two" and delete the words "and that the committee travel to Vancouver for some of those hearings."

If we hold the hearings here, we could meet more people. Given our agenda, I doubt whether it will be possible for us to go to Vancouver and to do all our work before the summer recess, because we scarcely have four weeks left. We will have perhaps two meetings in May and perhaps three in June. So I would take out the part about Vancouver and I would put "prior to the summer recess", because, as our colleague has just said, it will possibly be too late in the fall. This is a consensus that would allow us to hold the meetings and to hear from as many people as possible before the summer.

• (1555)

[*English*]

**The Chair:** Ms. Fry.

**Hon. Hedy Fry (Vancouver Centre, Lib.):** Mr. Chair, I think that while Mr. Abbott brings up a very important point, that in fact we do not have the ability to intervene or to interfere legislatively or according to our mandate in anything that the CBC does with regard to its programming, the point made by Mr. Coderre and others that in fact it could engage public discourse on the whole issue of Radio 2, of deciding not to continue with classical music, etc., is an important one, as long as there is the knowledge and expectation that we do not have the power to change this. It helps us to get feedback.

I'm in agreement with the feedback piece. However, if that is the case, and if, as the motion said, it's also about the overall intent of the changing of Radio 2 and the disbanding or lessening of classical music, then it would seem to me that holding it in Vancouver alone

may not meet that broader demand for public input, because we'd be asking a whole bunch of people from across the country to come to discuss the other two components of the motion in Vancouver.

So I think perhaps Mr. Chong makes some sense in saying let's do it here, where we can attend to all three pieces of Mr. Siksay's motion.

**The Chair:** We had a motion, but we have an amendment.

Mr. Coderre.

**Hon. Denis Coderre:** I have a proposition, if Mr. Siksay is in agreement with it, because I think that I feel a consensus. It has nothing to do with the spirit of the motion, but we believe that there are some issues we have to discuss. Now, we know it's a broader issue. I would agree anyway with the amendment that Madame Mourani and Ed and Michael were proposing, so maybe by having a gentlemen's agreement, by getting rid of "hearings urgently in May 2008", by saying it has to be before the end of the session, and taking out the other hearings in other places, we won't have any problems, because we should be in places in Ontario and some other places too, because CBC Radio 2 has some impact from coast to coast to coast.

So I would propose that my colleague Mr. Siksay take that as a gentlemen's agreement and proceed with the vote.

**The Chair:** Okay, I'd just like to explain one thing about the travelling. We have to have a budget. We would have to have that okayed. Hopefully we could get a budget to do it here more easily. I'm just going to give you an example of my success every time I've gone to get money to travel. I'm three down and one up. I got money once. It's not just whatever we say here today. That doesn't necessarily make it happen.

Mr. Siksay, would you entertain Mr. Coderre's and Ms. Mourani's and Mr. Fast's suggestions?

**Mr. Bill Siksay:** Chair, I am prepared to accept the change taking out "urgently in May 2008" and say "prior to the summer recess", if that's what folks are suggesting. That's acceptable to me.

I think I have to say, though, that I think it's very important that we go to Vancouver. As I pointed out, there are precious few if any other national cultural institutions based in Vancouver, based in western Canada. I think that since we're talking about disbanding perhaps the only one, we have to go to Vancouver to allow as many people as possible from the Vancouver area to speak to that. The only way we can do that is by holding hearings in Vancouver.

If this were a national cultural institution based anywhere else in the country, I don't think we would for a moment dream of not going to hear from people in that community. I think it's very important that we do that. So if we can accept the change deleting the "urgently in May 2008", that's fine. I would still like us to vote on the second part of that if possible, because I can't support that.

I'd like to point out to folks that the motion, as it's presented, says "travel to Vancouver for some of those hearings". It doesn't preclude having hearings anywhere else. It certainly wasn't my intention to say that it be only Vancouver, but I do think it is very important that we especially go to Vancouver, so the suggestion that we take out that phrase isn't an acceptable suggestion to me, Chair.

• (1600)

**The Chair:** Now, Ms. Mourani had made an amendment or had caused an amendment to be made. We've talked around various other things, and we've talked about a friendly amendment among us.

Would that be acceptable to you, Ms. Mourani, in terms of your amendment?

[*Translation*]

**Mrs. Maria Mourani:** We are all in agreement about using the words "prior to the summer recess". As to the trip to Vancouver, I am trying to see if it is feasible. I am looking at the calendar. Today is May 6th. So we have three weeks left, four at most. The best that I can do to try and get consensus around a motion is to propose one hearing only in Vancouver. I do not know if Mr. Siksay would agree to that. That would get everyone on the same page. We would set aside a day to hear witnesses in Vancouver. We could set aside a whole day. That is as far as I can go to amend my own amendment.

[*English*]

**The Chair:** Mr. Del Mastro.

**Mr. Dean Del Mastro (Peterborough, CPC):** We have a number of motions before us here today. I think we have a consensus on what the vote is about. Maybe you can read back the motion so we can vote on it. I think we are continuing to talk about the same things, if I may say so respectfully.

**The Chair:** Ms. Mourani.

[*Translation*]

**Mrs. Maria Mourani:** Mr. Chair, I have received all those letters too. It is true that I am not from Vancouver, but I am sensitive to the people who are so attached to this radio station. I would like to withdraw my first amendment and put forward another. My new amendment would delete the words "urgently in May 2008" and replace them with the words "prior to the summer recess". I do not want us to be tied down. In fact, rather than saying "prior to the summer recess", I would prefer to say "before the end of this session".

[*English*]

**The Chair:** Point of order from Mr. Coderre.

[*Translation*]

**Hon. Denis Coderre:** Mr. Chair, the question about the summer has already been decided. Mr. Siksay has accepted. We are talking about the main motion. It mentioned May 2008. Everyone is in agreement that it should be before the end of the session. Given that the first part of the motion has been settled, I think that Mrs. Mourani should speak to the second part, whether or not we are going to Vancouver, and stick to that, because the clock is ticking.

**Mrs. Maria Mourani:** Mr. Chair, if Mr. Coderre can spare us some time, I would like to rework my amendment. It would read as follows:

That the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage hold hearings before the end of this session supporting classical music and the changes to CBC Radio 2, and that the committee hold one hearing in Vancouver.

• (1605)

[*English*]

**The Chair:** Mr. Abbott.

**Hon. Jim Abbott:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

We've had a lot of excellent cooperation within this committee, and in the spirit of cooperation I've made my point; I'm not going to repeat it. I just ask that if we are to pass this, we simply pass it on division. I don't want this to be unanimous, because, I have to be honest, there are so many other topics that this committee can engage in and should engage in. I will speak in favour of my own motion later, but it is a motion that will give the committee some power so we can actually do something and create something.

The motion we're talking about right now would give Canadians an opportunity to vent, other than on Facebook, through e-mails, or by the methods they presently have. We'd make our committee another place for Canadians to be able to vent about the CBC and the programming.

If we have a question I would ask for the question, and I suggest we pass it on division.

**The Chair:** It's my understanding that Ms. Mourani's amendment would be that the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage hold hearings prior to the summer recess on the decision by CBC/Radio-Canada to disband the CBC Radio Orchestra; on CBC/Radio-Canada's commitment to classical music; and on the changes to CBC Radio 2; and that the committee hold a single hearing in Vancouver.

I'll call the question on the amendment.

**Mr. Bill Siksay:** Chair, on a point of clarification, it's not clear to me whether Ms. Mourani was trying to say that our total consideration of this issue be only one day of hearings in Vancouver. I don't think that's what she intended, but it's the way the motion would read if it were left this way. I think the intention was to have at least one day in Vancouver, but that we could also have hearings here in Ottawa. I just want to clarify that's the meaning we're taking into this vote, before we vote on it.

**The Chair:** Is that the meaning, Ms. Mourani?

[*Translation*]

**Mrs. Maria Mourani:** Yes, we will have hearings here in Ottawa, but we would have one, not a minimum of one, but only one, in Vancouver.

[*English*]

**The Chair:** Mr. Coderre.

**Hon. Denis Coderre:** I'm new to this standing committee, but when we talk about anything regarding modalities or budgets, don't we settle that in the steering committee?

**The Chair:** Yes.

**Hon. Denis Coderre:** Okay. And for the record, since we're public, everybody here loves Vancouver and wants to be supportive of the people from British Columbia, but we also support the people from Quebec, Ontario, and the Atlantic region, from coast to coast to coast, wherever.

I believe that it being May 6 today, there's a difference between the spirit of the motion itself and what we want to accomplish as a committee, and the reality. So we need a reality check here.

First of all, we don't have a new budget, and we don't know about it. Secondly, we believe that it's important to talk about the future of CBC Radio 2.

So I would suggest taking apart the issue of whether or not we are going to Vancouver, and agree among ourselves that we should talk about that issue at the standing committee; and then at the steering committee, decide among ourselves what's the reality of the agenda and how we should manage it, and at least wait to see if we have a new budget for it.

**The Chair:** There isn't a steering committee, but we do have to go to the Liaison Committee. It's different.

**Hon. Denis Coderre:** It's even worse.

**The Chair:** Yes. That's why I'm saying that every time I've gone to the Liaison Committee I'm batting one for four.

All I can say is that if we have to have the one hearing there, and we're turned down at the Liaison Committee, where do we go?

•(1610)

**Hon. Denis Coderre:** So what I would propose is that we vote on the amendment. But if we have an agreement among ourselves.... And I heard my friend Mr. Abbott talking about agreeing on division. I too would agree on division, if we got rid of the last part of the amendment, that the committee travel to Vancouver for some of those hearings, because we need to have a debate on the validity of going somewhere else.

I remember when Mr. Chong was asking questions and talking about his own population, who have the right also to be here. It's a Canadian issue; it's a national issue. It's important for B.C., and I totally agree because of the orchestra, but at the same time, I have people in Quebec, and there are people in Ontario, and others from from coast to coast who have something to say about this. I wouldn't be doing my job properly if I didn't have the capacity to have those people here too.

So I would suggest a vote on the amendment. I will vote against it, but after that, if necessary, I will propose an amendment to put a period after "CBC Radio 2", and then we can proceed by saying that we support it on division—for a reality check. But we love people from B.C.

**The Chair:** We'll talk to the amendment then:

That the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage hold hearings prior to the summer recess on the decision by CBC/Radio-Canada to disband the CBC Radio Orchestra; on CBC/Radio-Canada's commitment to classical music; and on the changes to CBC Radio 2; and that the committee hold one hearing in Vancouver and additional hearings in Ottawa.

All those in favour of the amendment?

(Amendment negated)

**Hon. Denis Coderre:** Mr. Chair, I will come back by saying that we need to have a meeting on that before the end of the session—that's an amendment—and we'll cut the reference to the committee travelling to Vancouver for some of those hearings, because I'd like to hear from the Liaison Committee and the steering committee about how we can manage with the agenda we have right now.

**An hon. member:** We don't have one.

**Hon. Denis Coderre:** We've already had the debate on everything, so I propose that we vote on my amendment and then on the motion.

**Hon. John Godfrey:** That's before summer, with no reference to travel.

**Hon. Denis Coderre:** It would be before summer, with no reference to travel.

**Hon. John Godfrey:** It would be right after "to".

**Hon. Hedy Fry:** As a point of information, Mr. Chair, are you going to read that amendment out right now?

**The Chair:** Yes.

**Hon. Hedy Fry:** Okay, that's fine.

**The Chair:** I will read out Mr. Coderre's amendment:

That the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage hold hearings prior to the summer recess on the decision by CBC/Radio-Canada to disband the CBC Radio Orchestra; on CBC/Radio-Canada's commitment to classical music; and on the changes to CBC Radio 2.

I'll call the question....

Ms. Mourani had her hand up first, and then we'll have Mr. Siksay.

[*Translation*]

**Mrs. Maria Mourani:** Mr. Chair, I find it a shame that we are not going to Vancouver at least once. After all, Mr. Coderre says that he loves the people of the city so much, but he is not prepared to go and listen to them.

**Hon. Denis Coderre:** A point of order. If the honourable member wants things to go smoothly, she must be careful about what she says. I never said that. She is the separatist, not me. I want to make sure that the committee works. If Mrs. Mourani wants to play her little game, she can count me in with pleasure. But for the purposes of the minutes, I would like to clarify that I said that we should discuss where we would be going afterwards.

Do not get into petty partisan politics, your polling numbers do not let you do that at the moment.

**Mrs. Maria Mourani:** Mr. Chair, I understand that Mr. Coderre needs to let off steam, but I think that he should calm down a little so that we can have a civil debate at this committee. We can always check the record, but you said that you loved the people of Vancouver and that you wanted to go and see them. Well, you are not going. Facts are facts. But all we asked you for was one hearing in Vancouver.



•(1615)

[English]

**The Chair:** We already voted on the amendment.

[Translation]

**Mrs. Maria Mourani:** I will not go on about it, Mr. Chair. I just wanted to tell you that it was regrettable and that we will be voting against this amendment.

[English]

**The Chair:** As I said, your amendment was voted down.

Go ahead, Mr. Siksay.

**Mr. Bill Siksay:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I know that Mr. Coderre is new to the committee. He seems to believe that we have a steering committee at which we would discuss this. Unfortunately, we don't have that structure at this committee.

Our only time to discuss where we travel, when we travel, and if we travel is right here and now. If he thinks he can defer that discussion to somewhere else, that other place doesn't exist; we have to decide it now.

**The Chair:** I will correct that. There is a Liaison Committee. We can decide what we want to at this committee when it comes to travel; I have to then take the motion and ask the Liaison Committee.

**Mr. Bill Siksay:** Yes, Mr. Chair, I understand that, but that's not what I'm addressing.

The Liaison Committee decides whether any committee can travel—

**The Chair:** Correct.

**Mr. Bill Siksay:**—and I appreciate that, but with regard to this committee, the only place and time we can decide what we want to do to make the request to the Liaison Committee is here and now, and Mr. Coderre seems to imply that we can put that discussion off to somewhere else. Well, we can't; we have to decide now.

It's very important that we go to Vancouver. I've said that a number of times now. If we're going to have other people appear, I think they should come to Ottawa. We can make that arrangement for them. People have spoken strongly in favour of encouraging people to come here for that, but Vancouver does have a particular interest in this, so I would urge us not to support Mr. Coderre's—

**The Chair:** I'm going to call the question on the amendment by Mr. Coderre:

That the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage hold hearings prior to the summer recess on the decision by CBC/Radio-Canada to disband the CBC Radio Orchestra; on CBC/Radio-Canada's commitment to classical music; and on the changes to CBC Radio 2.

(Amendment agreed to)

**The Chair:** Now we vote on the motion as amended.

**Hon. Denis Coderre:** It's proposed on division.

**The Chair:** Is it proposed on division?

**Mr. Bill Siksay:** That needs to be unanimous, Chair, and I don't accept moving it on division. I'd like to have a vote on it—and a recorded vote, Chair.

**The Chair:** So the motion, as amended, reads:

That the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage hold hearings prior to the summer recess on the decision by CBC/Radio-Canada to disband the CBC Radio Orchestra; on CBC/Radio-Canada's commitment to classical music; and on the changes to CBC Radio 2.

(Motion as amended agreed to: yeas 10; nays 0)

**The Chair:** A point of order, Mr. Coderre.

[Translation]

**Hon. Denis Coderre:** Mr. Chair, after this vote, I will submit a notice of motion that you be given the mandate to seek the Liaison Committee's approval for us to travel, specifically to Vancouver.

[English]

**The Chair:** We'll move on to the next order of business, a notice of motion from Maria Mourani.

[Translation]

**Mrs. Maria Mourani:** Thank you, Mr. Chair

I will read the motion.

That, pursuant to Standing Order 108(2), the following be reported to the House at the earliest opportunity:

The Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage recommends that the government point out to the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission that conventional television must support information services, including quality regional information services.

This motion is as a result of what happened at TQS recently. I hope to get the committee's unanimous support for this motion in order to send a message to the CRTC that conventional television should maintain its information services. I am also very pleased that the Liberal Party may have its opposition day on this matter. I see that we are all going in the same direction, and I thank you for that.

•(1620)

[English]

**The Chair:** Mr. Coderre.

[Translation]

**Hon. Denis Coderre:** Mr. Chair, we have been working on this matter for a long time. I had an opportunity to discuss it not only with TQS people, but also with the unions, with TVA and others. But our intention is not to tell CRTC how to conduct its business, and TQS people understand that. Our role, as the government in waiting, is to provide some direction and to allow the minister to do her work satisfactorily, not the CRTC's work.

Unfortunately, Mrs. Mourani's motion is not complete. I think it should be amended because we cannot just mention information services. Does that mean exactly the same thing? The CRTC knows that it would be impossible for TQS. I feel that we have lost a little regional sensitivity. If we are mentioning quality information services, we must also mention local production. So I would like to make an amendment.

I gather that this is a new file for Mrs. Mourani, but what is important now is to provide opinions that will reflect something that the unions understand and accept. We want TQS to survive, but we also want to make sure that conventional television supports a basic level of information services, specifically quality regional information services and local production. They may make television for the Montreal region, but we, who understand and are sensitive to the other regions of Quebec, and to the country as a whole, we have to make sure that people on the spot are going to offer a basic level of information services and, above all, local production.

So here is my amendment. After "conventional television must support", the words "a basic level of" would precede the words "information services". And, at the end, the period would be removed and the words "and local production" would be added.

[English]

*En anglais*, we're talking about "local production", but we're talking about "a basic level of information".

[Translation]

If Mrs. Mourani does not understand, it is her problem, not mine. I said that I wanted to address the focus and the local production.

Those are the amendments I am proposing, Mr. Chair.

[English]

**The Chair:** Could you just help us with that amendment?

Next is Mr. Abbott, and then Ms. Mourani.

**Hon. Jim Abbott:** I'd like to make some comments specifically with respect to TQS; then I would like to read into the record from the Broadcasting Act.

First, with respect to TQS, as I answered in the House of Commons on Friday to a question from a Liberal member, the government is following the situation at TQS very closely. The Minister of Canadian Heritage has sent a letter to the CRTC chairman asking him for details on the process he intends to follow in this matter.

I might mention in a bit of a parenthesis that it is our reading of legislation with respect to the CRTC that this is the extent, at this time, of what the minister can undertake, and she has done it.

In response to that, on Friday, April 25, the CRTC announced that it will be holding public hearings in Quebec and Montreal starting on June 2.

Again, if I can put it in brackets, one of the frustrations of this is—certainly I'm aware of the fact—that there have been 200 people laid off as a result of the decisions made around the TQS issue. I'm sure it must be very frustrating to them and to listeners and viewers of TQS that the hearings are not starting until June 2; nonetheless that's the practical reality of how long it would take to actually get things in place to hold the hearings. They are moving forward. They have made a commitment. The CRTC is planning that all stakeholders will be able to participate in the process.

I'm about to read from the Broadcasting Act to underline the fact that it's the CRTC's responsibility to regulate in a way that ensures that the act's objectives are reached. I just want to put clearly on the

record that the minister, within the law as presently written, is doing exactly what she can do. After the CRTC has made whatever their decisions may be, there may be other things that can happen, but at this particular point she has gone to the full extent of what she can do.

With respect to the Broadcasting Act's broadcasting policy for Canada, paragraph 3(1)(i) says that the programming provided by the Canadian broadcasting system should:

- (i) be varied and comprehensive, providing a balance of information, enlightenment and entertainment for men, women and children of all ages, interests and tastes,
- (ii) be drawn from local, regional, national and international sources,
- (iii) include educational and community programs,
- (iv) provide a reasonable opportunity for the public to be exposed to the expression of differing views on matters of public concern, and
- (v) include a significant contribution from the Canadian independent production sector;

That is what is outlined in Canada's legislation presently in existence. The CRTC, in the process of the hearings that will be commencing on June 2, will be taking into account these five points as set out in legislation.

Now, maybe I don't understand—and this is not a rhetorical thing, for I'm saying truly I maybe don't understand—but the fact that the Broadcasting Act currently says "be drawn from local, regional, national, and international sources" and "include educational and community programs" and "provide a reasonable opportunity for the public to be exposed to the expression of differing views".... I'm wondering about the urgency or the necessity of this motion. I'm not speaking aggressively against it; I'm just asking whether there is actually a need for it.

Doesn't this motion in fact duplicate what the CRTC's rules of engagement with the public and rules of engagement with the broadcasters and the broadcast industry are?

● (1625)

If it's the desire of the committee and, if we have Mr. Coderre's motion tomorrow in the House, if it's the desire of the House to give more clarity and more direction to the CRTC, it will be interesting for us to then try to figure out the relationship between the direction that's been given.... Is it a recommendation? Is it a statement of where they must go? And is that in any way in conflict with what is outlined in legislation for them to do at present?

So I'm just putting some facts on the record here, and again I just want to make sure that whatever we're doing is an exercise that will achieve some objective.

**The Chair:** Ms. Mourani and then Mr. Coderre.

[Translation]

**Mrs. Maria Mourani:** I think that what we are doing with this motion is useful. It is important to tell the minister that she has a role, and the role is not necessarily to intrude. Unfortunately, that is not what we have seen lately. We have seen private deals and stalling tactics. The motion is important, in my opinion. If the Liberals are making an opposition day out of it, then of course it is important.

Mr. Coderre's amendment dealing with "quality regional information services and local production" is not a problem for me. But I would like him to expand on what he means by "a basic level of information". What kind of content is that exactly?

• (1630)

[English]

**The Chair:** We go to Mr. Coderre and then to Mr. Siksay.

**Hon. Denis Coderre:** There are several things.

First of all, Jim, thank you very much for your questions. I think they're well put. But at the same time, I think there's a difference in what we're doing at a standing committee of Parliament. Sometimes, as you know, when we're providing some studies and we're pushing the envelope to the government from our own perspective, we're doing exactly that.

So tomorrow we'll have a motion. It's opposition day, and we will talk about the future of *la télévision généraliste*. So I think it's consistent. We're doing our job and we're saying what we think because we're focusing on those kinds of issues. So I think it's a valid point to talk about and I think the motion plus the amendment will provide that.

Secondly, the reason I'm talking about a basic level, *un certain niveau*, I totally agree with you that we shouldn't be there to tell the CRTC or do the job of the CRTC. But at the same time, as a government, as a Parliament, we have the capacity to define some orientation. And the purpose of the motion, which is good, is we're not talking specifically about TQS. We're talking about *télévision généraliste* because there's an issue there. We know for sure that TQS might be just the first of many that will suffer the same situation. We all know that since 1999 there's been a new policy for the future of... How do you say *la télévision généraliste*? Conventional broadcasting. Thanks, Bill.

And we all know there's a precedent with Toronto 1, which became Sun TV. There was a situation there. Now we don't want to ask, and that's the reason I'm talking about *un certain niveau*. We're not saying we will have exactly the same thing and this is what you should do and define percentages and keep the same people there. By talking about a basic level we're saying conventional television includes an information service, so we need to keep a certain level.

That's why I believe the amendment is important. And when we're talking about regional sensitivity, I think there's no way we can have a regional approach without thinking about local production, because if that's not the case everything will be based out of Montreal or from the Quebec area or from Toronto, and we all know that became a problem for the regions, which don't feel their television necessarily represents their regional point of view.

That's why I think that by talking about conventional television here, we're not talking about a specific case—and I know exactly what you're talking about—but at the same time some ministers in the past said they felt they would have to take a decision. We can, after the fact, go through cabinet and decide on the situation. Remember radio satellite and all that. But I don't see any intrusion if we have a minister who tries to define the future of conventional television, because it is a major issue. And I know for a fact that after TQS you might have TVA, which will say we already have our

specialized news network and we will get rid of the others. We can talk about that.

So by keeping it in a principled way and by having those levels of amendments, I truly believe that not only are we doing our job but we are respectful of exactly the point you were talking about.

**The Chair:** We'll go to Mr. Siksay.

**Mr. Bill Siksay:** Thank you, Chair.

I just want to say that I think all of us appreciate the concern about what's happening in Quebec, particularly with regard to TQS. It is very important to the people in Quebec and to workers in the television industry in Quebec. And it's something that is of concern to all Canadians, because there are many circumstances across the country in which a similar scenario has unfolded or could easily unfold.

We want to make sure that Canadians have access to good local and regional news services. We want to make sure that there's competition in those services, as well. For many of us, this goes to the whole question of media democracy and to the importance of differing points of view and differing organizations covering the events of the day and the stories of the day. So TQS is something that's of concern to all of us.

It's not clear to me, in Mr. Coderre's motion, whether you are deleting the phrase "including quality regional information services".

• (1635)

**Hon. Denis Coderre:** No, I'm adding.

**Mr. Bill Siksay:** So you're just adding that there be a basic level of information service, and then you're adding the phrase "and local programming". Is that correct?

**Hon. Denis Coderre:** Yes, it would say that it would include quality regional information services and local production. I'm adding. Regional and local production should be included.

**Mr. Bill Siksay:** I got that, but can you give me the wording of the first amendment you're making, Mr. Coderre?

**Hon. Denis Coderre:** In English it's that "conventional television must support a basic level of information services".

**Mr. Bill Siksay:** Okay, Chair. That helps clarify things for me. I think this is a very important motion, given what is happening, and it's certainly something I can support.

**The Chair:** We'll go to Ms. Mourani.

[Translation]

**Mrs. Maria Mourani:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I come back to the amendment that deals with a basic level of information. Is Mr. Coderre thinking in terms of percentages? For example, if television station *x* had a licence requiring 14% in information services and it no longer wished to produce them, it could ask the CRTC to lower the level to 10% or 9% as long as it did not go below a certain basic level. Is that what Mr. Coderre means? I would like to understand.

**Hon. Denis Coderre:** No, I was just talking about the principle. I really do not want to get into details like TQS having to produce 14 hours of information in Montreal and 9 and a half hours in Quebec City, for example. This discussion is not about the licence or the level of the licence.

In the light of the discussions I had with the union, specifically, we recognize that TQS has to survive, but it still must maintain a basic level of information. A basic level of information can include real information. It does not necessarily have to be news and commentary. It is not up to us to do the CRTC's work.

Given what experts have told me, this basic level as I am referring to it—perhaps I am not expressing myself very well—maintains generally understood principles and approaches for conventional television. I feel that, in so doing, we are not interfering or giving the impression of interfering in the affairs of a body which has a job to do.

[English]

**The Chair:** I'll go to Mr. Abbott and then to Mr. Malo.

**Hon. Jim Abbott:** This is very interesting. I think I heard Mr. Siksay say that viewers should have access to good local and regional services, and Mr. Coderre is saying that it must support a basic level of information services. I noted that better than 50% of the staff of TQS are no longer there.

**Hon. Denis Coderre:** They will do it, but we're talking about days, and there is right now....

**Hon. Jim Abbott:** Yes, but the point is that a major percentage, 50%, of the staff of TQS.... And I'm not talking about TQS; I'm simply using it as an example. They require 50% of their staff in order to have, as Mr. Siksay says, access to good local and regional services, and as Mr. Coderre says, to support a basic level of information services. That's a dollar and cent issue. I've seen figures in the paper about the loss of \$70 million. Whatever the numbers are, they are very substantial. They were looking at cutting half of their staff, so all of a sudden this access to local and regional services is the item in question. That isn't going to happen if those staff are gone.

This plays directly to the question of fee for carriage, which is currently before the CRTC. I just want to draw this to the attention of the committee, not by way of argument but by way of saying let's think about it. Broadcasters, whether they're the CBC or private broadcasters, are being compelled by various rules and regulations to come up with all sorts of dollars for drama. This committee keeps decrying the fact that we don't have enough comedy or drama or made-in-Canada entertainment; therefore, the stations, the broadcasters, are being asked to come up with those dollars.

If Parliament is going to be giving direction through this motion and through Mr. Coderre's motion tomorrow in the House to say to the CRTC that viewers must have access to good local and regional services, and it must support a basic level of information services, that's dollars and cents. The broadcasters have every right to come back and say that they absolutely have to have additional revenue. We all know that because the advertising revenue is directly related to radio, and to print—be it magazines or newspapers or billboards or whatever—there is a standard that advertisers will pay to for advertising on television, and I would be inclined to think they are

pretty well at the maximum at this particular point. The broadcasters, public or private, are going to require additional revenue in order to do this while at the same time doing what this committee is also asking them to do, which is provide quality entertainment broadcast.

I just point that out, that these positions are not without consequence. That's all. As I said, whether we realize it or not, this, along with other things, is giving some direction to the CRTC that maybe they do have to go to the cable companies and say they're going to have to pay to carry those signals. This then has further consequences down the line from the cable and DTH companies, the BDUs, on the relationship between them and their customers, and whether their customers are going to pay for it.

• (1640)

**Hon. Denis Coderre:** I have an answer for you.

**Hon. Jim Abbott:** That's good. I'm just saying that these decisions we're making are not made in a vacuum; they have consequences. That's all I'm saying.

**The Chair:** Mr. Malo, and then Mr. Coderre.

[Translation]

**Mr. Luc Malo (Verchères—Les Patriotes, BQ):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

On the two proposed amendments put forward by the member from Bourassa, I am interested in his proposal to include local production because, in fact, it was perhaps missing from Mrs. Mourani's motion. However, I wonder why he wants to change "information services" for "a basic level of information". Basically, I do not see that the wording gives us anything new, because information is produced by information services. Mrs. Mourani's motion does not specify either the quality or the quantity of what the information services produce. She does not mention large or small information services, just "information services". So unless there is something behind Mr. Coderre's amendment that he has not yet explained to us, I do not see what his addition contributes to the member from Ahuntsic's motion.

[English]

**The Chair:** Okay, we'll let Mr. Coderre speak to that.

**Hon. Denis Coderre:** Let me respond to Jim's point of view.

I truly believe that the future of the conventional TV is so important that we have to ask ourselves what conventional TV includes. Now, you were talking about the revenue, and there is a discussion right now and a report from the CRTC vis-à-vis the future of sharing with the cable companies. That's an issue.

But I truly believe at the same time that when we're talking about information here—news—you shouldn't just put a number. It's not just to quantify, saying, “Well, we're losing \$18 million, so let's cut information”, because conventional TV includes news services. That's why the kind of discussion we're having about the future is our job. How do we define that kind of conventional TV?

For your information, they want to cut 270 employees out of 500 or so, but on that they're ripping out all the news service. So it sends a message that we're losing \$18 million, so services equal that amount of money. News is becoming a merchandise and we're getting rid of it, and it's just like a budget issue and an expense. That kind of discussion about the orientation—should we merchandise news services?—is a valid point among ourselves in what should be the future of conventional TV.

The reason I'm talking about a basic level is that we can say what information means and all that. We can have a lot of definitions. We can have a former politician who has his own show comment on what's going on in the news every day and say, “Well, I'm doing information. I'm on the news. I've been doing that for three years as a radio host, but I'm not a journalist.” So it's not a basic level of news service.

The reason it's accurate to have that kind of discussion is that no matter what, you have the power at the end of the day. After the CRTC conclusion, the minister has the right to go to cabinet and say “I'm against” or “I'm in favour” or “Redo your homework”.

There are two issues I will just mention. I believe CRTC has the right to do its job, and it's not our duty regarding the level of what should be included, like the percentage or whether we should have nine hours or ten hours, or whatever. But I believe, at the same time, that to say you believe in conventional TV and it should include a basic level of news is sending a kind of orientation of what we believe, but they're doing their job. And if the conclusion is not what the minister believes in, she can come back to cabinet and change that.

That's why we're not talking specifically about one licence. That's why we're not saying specifically how much and what should be the minimum. But that's why, with those amendments, what we're sending as a message is that we believe in conventional TV, and by the way, that conventional TV should include a basic level of news support. And at the same time, when we're talking about a regional sensitivity, we're talking about local production.

I think some of the people should say we're borderline or ask where the thin red line is here. But I really believe, because I check it myself, we show compassion because we believe that it's a disaster to see all those families lose their jobs. And with all the convergence of radio and the news, this is another issue. But our duty is to say what we think about conventional TV. We'll do that today with that motion, and tomorrow we'll have a debate on that from the official opposition.

•(1645)

**The Chair:** Okay, we've heard from all different angles on this. Right now we have an amendment before us.

Mr. Siksay.

**Mr. Bill Siksay:** Chair, could I ask that we deal with the two phrases separately, that we deal with it *ad seriatim*, that we vote on each phrase separately in Mr. Coderre's amendment?

**The Chair:** No. The amendment is what we have here first. Do you want to make another amendment?

**Mr. Bill Siksay:** No. What I'm suggesting, Chair, is that given my sense that there is clear support for one of the phrases he's proposing, if we split them off we would get a good reading of the committee. So if we could deal with them separately, I think that would be very helpful to the committee, and I think it would give us a way forward and a clear indication of what people think of his suggestions. If we just deal with each phrase separately, I think that would be very helpful.

**The Chair:** I'll ask the mover of the amendment.

**Hon. Denis Coderre:** Mr. Chair, I said one amendment that included two points. If he's against it...

**The Chair:** I'll call the vote on the amendment, and we can have a recorded vote.

(Amendment agreed to: yeas 10 ; nays 0) [See *Minutes of Proceedings*]

•(1650)

**The Chair:** Now we will vote on the motion as amended. It reads:

That the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage recommends that the government point out to the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission that conventional television must support a basic level of information services, including quality regional information services and local production.

(Motion agreed to)

**The Chair:** It's been suggested that we move to Mr. Del Mastro's motion first. The notice of motion from Dean Del Mastro reads:

That the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage invite organizers, officials and participants of Canada's pavilion at the Shanghai 2010 Exhibition to give an update.

**Hon. Denis Coderre:** We should have an amendment and ask to go to Shanghai, because we don't want to distract them on the ground and we might slow them down. I want to know what's going on in the field.

I'm kidding.

**The Chair:** Wouldn't we all like to go.

**Mr. Dean Del Mastro:** Would you like me to speak to the motion at all, Mr. Chair?

**The Chair:** Does anyone need Mr. Del Mastro to speak to the motion?

**An hon. member:** Okay.

**Mr. Dean Del Mastro:** Okay, I'll speak to it very briefly.

Obviously up to 90 million people will tour the pavilion. When we had the exposition in 2005 we attracted more than twice as many visitors as we expected. It seems like a good way for Canada to put its best foot forward, and I think it's a worthwhile study for the committee.

**The Chair:** We'll call the vote on the motion.

(Motion agreed to)

**The Chair:** Now, a notice of motion from Mr. Abbott reads:

That the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage consider the request of Konrad von Finckenstein when he asked during his appearance on March 4th, 2008, that the CRTC be given "power to impose Administrative Monetary Penalties or AMPs" (Standing Committee of Canadian Heritage transcripts, March 4, 2008) and that the Committee write to the Minister of Canadian Heritage, Status of Women and Official Languages about their findings.

Would you like to speak briefly to that, Mr. Abbott?

**Hon. Jim Abbott:** I'll try to be very brief.

This came out of the committee, and if I recall the word picture that Mr. von Finckenstein used, it was that he had a bomb and he had a peashooter, but what he really required was something between the bomb and the peashooter in terms of being able to bring the kind of control and restriction. He requires tools in order to be able to do his job.

Because all of us were very, very sympathetic to Mr. Bigras' bill, and for various reasons we couldn't support it in the end, nonetheless this came out as something very constructive that the CRTC could use. I think if we have hearings on this and we construct something that would be of value to the CRTC, if we report that to the Minister of Canadian Heritage, I would expect that we would see the government being in favour of something that could be logically, rationally, and reasonably used as a tool of regulation in the hands of the CRTC. We simply need to create that tool, define it, and see what it looks like.

• (1655)

**The Chair:** Okay. Would anyone else like to speak to that?

Mr. Coderre.

**Hon. Denis Coderre:** If I understand, we're just recommending that he should have that power, and you're asking the minister in charge of the CRTC to make some amendments to the Broadcasting Act to give that kind of tool eventually for a future CRTC. Is that what you're saying?

**Hon. Jim Abbott:** We would be helping to define the tool.

**Hon. Denis Coderre:** The issue right now, as I'm trying to understand, is that you want to give the power to provide some teeth to the CRTC. I wasn't there before, and I don't know if my colleague can talk about that, but what are the consequences? What should we do? Are we too fast? Is there any report already that we provide with that? I'm trying to understand in what situation you're doing that.

I'm not against the fact that the CRTC doesn't have some teeth, but sometimes they don't know how to play with the tools they have already. But that's another issue.

**Hon. Jim Abbott:** If I could answer you, Mr. Coderre, the idea is to define the teeth. How big are they? What are they made of? When would they be used? How would they be used? That is the idea, and

this committee is ideally suited to being able to make those recommendations to the minister.

Of course, the minister, on behalf of the government, will say yes or no, or whatever she will say, but she is looking for this kind of thorough hearing and some guidance. Again, the committee is being asked to assist, if you'll pardon the colloquial or the word picture, in defining the teeth, the construction of the teeth, and when they're going to be used.

**Hon. Denis Coderre:** Basically what you're saying is what the president of the CRTC was recommending, that we make them ours. So we can send a letter of notice to the minister in charge to do something about it, because now it has come out of the standing committee. Is that your point?

**Hon. Jim Abbott:** Yes.

**The Chair:** Mr. Siksay.

**Mr. Bill Siksay:** Thank you, Chair.

I do support this. I'm glad to hear Mr. Abbott say that his intent is that we hold hearings on this, that we're not making a statement that we're sending off immediately. So it would be helpful, I think, if it was reflected in the motion that instead of saying "consider", we say "hold hearings on the request". To me, that would be helpful. I wonder if that can just be a friendly clarification.

Chair, when Mr. von Finckenstein was here, I remember that he mentioned that he could put forward a proposal to the committee or give us more detail on that. Did we ever receive that from him?

**The Chair:** Yes, I think everyone received that correspondence. I know I did.

**Mr. Bill Siksay:** Okay. It's helpful to be reminded of that, Chair.

The only other addition that I'd like to see in the motion—because I can support this—is that we also report our findings to the House on this. I don't think just writing to the ministers is enough. We should make it a report to the House. So I would add a phrase, "and report the committee's findings to the House."

**The Chair:** Okay.

**Mr. Bill Siksay:** I don't know if that's friendly or if we need to make that a formal amendment. Jim seems to be nodding his head that it's okay, so maybe we can just proceed.

**The Chair:** Okay.

Ms. Mourani.

[*Translation*]

**Mrs. Maria Mourani:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I also agree with Mr. Siksay about reporting to the House.

On the other hand, I think that Mr. Abbott's idea in tabling this motion was a very good one, given that we have unfortunately not been able to study my colleague Mr. Bigras' bill amendment by amendment, point by point. We could have seen this point if we had discussed the bill in depth, but unfortunately, such was not the case. It is very a good idea to look at it this way. I think that this has been a concern for Mr. von Finckenstein, because more substantial fines and a little more significant power were necessary. We agree with this motion.

• (1700)

[English]

**The Chair:** Ms. Fry.

**Hon. Hedy Fry:** I was actually going to make the same kind of comment that Mr. Siksay made, although I wanted to add one thing. I think in fact we should take out the piece that says “and that the committee write to the Minister of Canadian Heritage, Status of Women and Official Languages about their findings” and say instead “and that the committee report to Parliament about its findings”.

However, I also wanted to comment on one thing. The quote is “power to impose administrative monetary penalties”, AMPs. That limits the report to only one small part of a tooth, and not to teeth. I think if we're going to consider which teeth we should give to the CRTC, that may not be the only one. That may not be the one. We may find other teeth that we want to give it.

So I think this limits it too much, to just stick to AMPs. I think we should look at the whole concept of the report, hear from many people, and see whether we could give the CRTC teeth to implement the things that it needs to do—and find a word other than teeth, because my teeth are beginning to be on edge here, with all this talk of teeth.

**The Chair:** Let's get off the teeth business here.

Mr. Del Mastro.

**Mr. Dean Del Mastro:** Thank you.

My initial points were made by Mr. Siksay, that we should put after “consider by means of consultation with stakeholders the request”, just in terms of wording.

But I also have some concerns with the motion, with respect to the CRTC. I always get very nervous when we start talking about giving additional powers to a bureaucracy that has been known to extend the boundaries of its powers from time to time. But that said, I think it's a worthwhile hearing.

**The Chair:** Mr. Abbott.

**Hon. Jim Abbott:** With tremendous respect to Ms. Fry, I don't agree with her, and the reason is that the commissioner spoke specifically about AMPs, the administrative monetary penalties. I'm concerned that if we go into much broader things, then if this House were to last until September 2009, we would still be in the study. I think that if we confine ourselves to AMPs, we are going to have something quantifiable and a specific tool we can be working with.

I'm wide open to whatever the appropriate wording would be, “and that the committee hold hearings and write to the minister and report their findings to the House”. I'm wide open to all of those things. I don't think we want to take the time right now to do all the

wordsmithing necessary, but again, because of the goodwill that we have and the acceptance of this, I'm pretty sure that we can move forward with something that would be appropriate.

**The Chair:** Mr. Siksay.

**Mr. Bill Siksay:** Chair, I think we should be clear and move forward at the same time. So given that Jim doesn't seem to accept it as a friendly amendment, I'll make a motion that we change the word “consider” to “hold hearings on” and then at the end of his motion that we add “and report its findings to the House”.

**Hon. Jim Abbott:** Well, that's friendly. That's fine.

**Mr. Bill Siksay:** Okay, and that's all I'm proposing in terms of wordsmithing. So if that's acceptable to Jim, then I think we're done.

**The Chair:** Okay.

**Hon. Hedy Fry:** Mr. Chair, could I have a question, please, of Mr. Siksay, on his amendment?

**The Chair:** Ms. Fry.

**Hon. Hedy Fry:** Bill, are you saying that it would then read “That the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage hold hearings on Konrad von Finkenstein when he asked during his appearance...”?

**An hon. member:** “On the request of...”.

**Hon. Hedy Fry:** Yes, “on the request of Konrad von Finkenstein”.

So you want to stick to the power to impose AMPs alone. You want to limit the hearings to just that.

**Mr. Bill Siksay:** Chair, in response to that, I think if something emerges out of our hearings, clearly I don't think we're limited by that. We could report on it, but it seems to me that what the CRTC was talking about was very specific, and I think that very specific point was what caught our interest at the time. So I'm happy leaving it there, and if something emerges in our discussion, I think we would be fully able to report that.

**Hon. Hedy Fry:** Then I would like to speak to that.

While I agree with Mr. Siksay that we don't want to limit it to that, if that is what we use in our motion we will be limited to that, because then we will have a mandate for our report, and we will be limited to that.

We could say—because I don't want to completely change Mr. Abbott's motion—“given the power to impose administrative monetary penalties or AMPs, but not limited to that”, just so that we have some wiggle room. Otherwise we will only want to hear this. I have been on committees that have reported to Parliament, and we had to stick closely to the mandate and not move outside of the specific mandate. This is a very specific mandate.

•(1705)

**The Chair:** I think I know where the motion came from—again, from when Mr. von Finckenstein was here. To get back to the reason he was here at that particular time, it was, I think, because of Mr. Bigras' motion. I think it was the one thing that came up through that.

I can talk about the peashooter and the bomb, but it was very apparent that you either give a person a good talking-to when they do something wrong or you take their licence away. What he was talking about was having some more powers so that he can maybe put a little more pressure on in between.

What I've heard around the table is that maybe we want to do a full-fledged hearing on the CRTC or on what their rules are, but I think we should stay specific to this. As chair, I think I see nodding of heads around the table, so I will read the motion with its friendly amendment, and if it doesn't pass, then we can go someplace else.

What I see before me right now is a motion

That the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage hold hearings on the request of Konrad von Finckenstein when he asked during his appearance on March 4, 2008 that the CRTC be given "power to impose Administrative Monetary Penalties or AMPs" (Standing Committee of Canadian Heritage transcripts, March 4, 2008) and that the Committee write to the Minister of Canadian Heritage, Status of Women and Official Languages about their findings and report their findings to the House.

(Motion agreed to)

**The Chair:** We have to give some direction to our clerk regarding planning for future business. We've just gone through our motions; we've accepted these motions, amended or otherwise. I would like to seek guidance on what we're going to tackle first.

Ms. Mourani, because we have held up on some of your motions, would you like to speak to this first?

[*Translation*]

**Mrs. Maria Mourani:** Mr. Chair, we have already voted on a motion asking the CRTC to come and see us so that we can talk about the Internet and regulating it.

[*English*]

**The Chair:** We talked about that a while ago.

We have to be able to get witnesses. One thing regarding CRTC and the Internet is that we'd have to make a request to see when they could have someone here on that. Is there anything else we could put in that would allow us to get witnesses here at least by next Tuesday?

•(1710)

**Hon. Hedy Fry:** I'm not quite clear what we're doing right now; I'm sorry. I wasn't sleeping; I'm just not clear. Are we dealing with a motion by Ms. Mourani about the Internet?

**The Chair:** No, we've already dealt with her motion. It's her suggestion that it come forward. We'd have to find out, first, whether we can get witnesses, whether we can get people here. It takes time to get witnesses lined up.

What we're trying to do here—I'm just looking at order of business—is see how we go forward.

**Hon. Hedy Fry:** I understand that. Then the question that follows is, I know that one of the things the CRTC has postponed and

postponed is to look at the issue of digital platforms. The Internet is only one digital platform. If we're going to spend all this time looking at the Internet, we should look at digital platforms. It's important that the CRTC find a way to deal with digital platforms, which are going out of control. Everyone is using them now, and the CRTC has no way to deal with them. The Internet is not the only platform we need to look at; we need to look at other ones.

So digital platforms would be an idea. We could get all kinds of people here who are dealing with those digital platforms, right away, for the next meeting.

**The Chair:** I know it's copyright, but it's my understanding that when we get into the digital thing, a lot of it is coming up to the industry committee. It's going to be in industry; right now, most of that type of work is diverted over to that committee. There was talk that what we might do is have combined committee meetings: heritage and industry.

**Hon. Hedy Fry:** That was my motion.

Mr. Chair, that's copyright. It's a very different thing from looking at a licence for digital platforms. Those are two totally different things. One is copyright and one is looking at licensing new media. This is where the CRTC has not been upfront. Everybody else in the world has been upfront on that, and the CRTC is still sort of dragging its feet on it. That's where I'm saying it sags.

This is an opportunity to open it up to new platforms, and that's totally different from copyright.

**The Chair:** Okay.

I'll just make a suggestion that if this were September, I could see us going forward. I've been involved in copyright and in digital and new media, and I can tell you how involved it gets as you go forward. I think our last study took over a year.

We have Mr. Siksay's motion, which says we are going to look at CBC orchestra, at CBC Radio 2 and where they're going. We're going to do that before the break in June. If we count Thursday, we only have 10 or possibly 11 meetings—the 19th is sometimes a question mark. That's all the time we have. I say Thursday's meeting is probably iffy, because we have to have witnesses, and we have to be fair to our clerk and our researchers to make sure we have those things.

**Hon. Hedy Fry:** Then I would just like it to be put on the record that if we're going to do a job, I think we should do a proper job. We can't just fiddle with the edges of an issue. Let's look at Mr. Siksay's motion first, then, because it's clear it has a timeline to it.



I really think the most important thing is that we can't deal with the Internet without dealing with other digital platforms. I'm sorry, Mr. Chair. I've been studying this whole issue of digital platforms for about two years. I'm telling you now that you cannot separate the Internet from other digital platforms.

What you're doing is putting your foot in the water and getting your toe wet with a sock on, and the whole sock is wet, but you're still saying you're not going to look at the sock but are only going to look at your toe.

It really doesn't do it credit. It's going to waste a lot of the committee's time, just making work, and then we're going to have to go over it again. I just want to put that on the record. I'm not arguing with you; I just want that to be on the record.

• (1715)

**The Chair:** I think what we have to do is look up what the motion says. We can bring it back next time; I don't have the motion in front of me. We can bring that motion up, because it might, the way the motion is addressed, just fit the bill for what you're talking about right now.

My suggestion is going to be, let's try.... Because Mr. Siksay's motion is time-sensitive to that point, I would suggest that we place it as a priority. Not only that; it's number one on the order paper. I leave it to my clerk to see whether she can.... I guess we're going to have to get....

Yes, Mr. Del Mastro?

**Mr. Dean Del Mastro:** I'm supportive of that. If we have any difficulty lining up witnesses or making this happen, perhaps we could work in my motion in the meantime. It's not exhaustive. It's something that people could pull together relatively soon.

**The Chair:** Maybe what we could do is try to work Mr. Del Mastro's motion in on Thursday. Do you think we can try? What we'll do is try to get the witnesses here for Thursday. I know it's tough, but what we'll have to try to do for next Tuesday, right away, in the next day, is if you have people who you think should be on the list of witnesses, get them to our clerk, because we do need a full slate of witnesses to make things work. We could start that next Tuesday. We can see what we can do about the Shanghai exhibition, Mr. Del Mastro's motion, for Thursday. If we can get some people to come to that one, we'll notify everyone.

I'll go to Ms. Mourani first, then Mr. Coderre.

[Translation]

**Mrs. Maria Mourani:** Mr. Chair, we could still meet with the CRTC about the Internet. They would be the first witness. We could add others afterwards. The motion clearly mentions discussing everything with the CRTC.

[English]

**Mr. Bill Siksay:** Mr. Chair, maybe it would be possible to arrange for the CRTC to come to address both Ms. Mourani's motion and also the one on the penalties. They could come and present to us on both. It would be a way of getting some basic information from them on both those studies, if they were available at some time. We could go with the Shanghai motion and try to get that one done this week. I

suspect those folks are based here in Ottawa. If we gather witnesses around the CBC question, that will certainly get us under way.

Chair, it strikes me that we could really use a steering committee to do this kind of planning in a smaller group and bring back a recommendation about how the committee would proceed when it's made decisions about what issues it wants to study. In other committees I've been involved in, that's worked very effectively and has been helpful in organizing the work of the committee. I think it's been helpful to the committee chair in other instances as well. I really think it's something we should consider here. It's hard to make these kinds of decisions with the full committee.

It seems to me we've got a way forward, given what we've already passed this afternoon.

• (1720)

**The Chair:** I think we're going to stick with this. As a committee, we've decided we wouldn't have any steering committees; we would work as a whole committee. It's been part of the decision we made back at the beginning.

We'll go to Mr. Del Mastro and then to Mr. Coderre. Or have we already looked after you?

**Mr. Dean Del Mastro:** No. That's fine.

I was going to say that if we need a motion to the extent of what I had said, I'd be happy to put it forward.

**The Chair:** No. I think we can work around it.

Mr. Coderre.

**Hon. Denis Coderre:** I propose that we see those people from the Shanghai exhibition. I would keep a last chunk of time, and then we will define what kind of agenda we want for Mr. Siksay's motion. At that time we can discuss hearings in Ottawa and define where we should go from there, so you can go to the Liaison Committee and define what kind of budget you will need. At that time it will be appropriate to have the discussion, because I hear there are people in different parts of the country who have something to say.

If we have the time, and with the agenda that we have to fulfill, I propose that we can have sober discussions about where we should go on that issue, whether we want to travel, and where. I suggest we should travel, but where? You will need some guidance when you represent us to the Liaison Committee. We should have that discussion on Thursday.

**The Chair:** Let's do that. We'll work on the Shanghai thing, and we'll see what we can do for some witnesses here for CBC Radio 2, to start that here next Tuesday.

**Hon. Denis Coderre:** Yes, but I'd like to have a discussion. It would take 15 to 20 minutes.

**The Chair:** We could do that on Thursday.

**Hon. Denis Coderre:** We already had that debate. On Thursday we can discuss where we want to go. We can say we'll go to Vancouver, etc.

Thanks, Jim.

**The Chair:** We can work on it from there.

The meeting is adjourned.

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