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## **Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage**

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**EVIDENCE**

**Tuesday, May 10, 2016**

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**Chair**

**The Honourable Hedy Fry**



## Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage

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•(0845)

[English]

**The Chair (Hon. Hedy Fry (Vancouver Centre, Lib.)):** I will call the meeting to order. I will be very formal today. Pursuant to Standing Order 108(2), this committee will do a study of the media and local communities.

Today we were supposed to have two sets of witnesses, but we right now have the *Canadian Punjabi Post* here to meet with us, and our New Pathway media group may come in a little later.

Normally everyone gets 10 minutes to present, so you as a group will have 10 minutes. You can split that time, five and five, or one of you alone can speak.

I will ask you to begin, Jagdish Grewal and Jagdeep Kailey.

**Mr. Jagdish Grewal (Editor and Publisher, Canadian Punjabi Post Inc.):** Thank you so much, Chair, vice-chairs, and members of the standing committee. It's a great opportunity for me and my colleague, Jagdeep Kailey, to make the presentation today.

I would like to start with an introduction about my media house. The *Canadian Punjabi Post* was started in 2002. It became Canada's first daily newspaper in the Punjabi language. It also became the first daily newspaper in any language published from the Peel Region. It was also the first daily newspaper in the Punjabi language to be published from anywhere in the world outside of India.

Back in those days, it was seen as a daredevil's gamble by many. Through our hard work and persistence, we have turned it into a mainstream newspaper among ethnic newspapers in Canada.

With a daily readership of more than 35,000, it stands tall in terms of its reach and credibility. It is respected for its fair and balanced reporting. Canadian institutions, both government and non-governmental, look to the *Canadian Punjabi Post* to gauge public opinion among immigrant communities living in the greater Toronto area on matters of their interest.

It plays a pivotal role in creating stronger ties of immigrants with their new country, Canada, and also towards strengthening Indo-Canadian ties. We are the only newspaper in the Punjabi language in Canada whose editorial content is 100% Canadian. Also, it is the only newspaper to write an editorial every single day.

More than 25,000 copies are published five days a week. Its website is read all over Canada. We are followed by over 25,000 people and businesses on social media, including Facebook pages.

I also host a radio program that is beamed across North America on 770 AM. It is aired on prime time from 8 a.m. to 10 a.m. on all weekdays from Monday to Friday. Radio Khabarsar, which means “news talk radio”, stands out from other ethnic radio programs due to its matchless quality and rich content. It aims to serve the varied needs of the South Asians, particularly its vibrant Punjabi community settled in Canada. Like the *Canadian Punjabi Post*, the content of our radio program is over 70% Canadian.

Regarding access of local communities to information, Indo-Canadians are politically more active than any other visible immigrant community in Canada because of their exposure to strong and rich democratic experiences back home in India. That explains their hunger for news and the need for a large number of Indo-Canadian media outlets.

Political parties of all stripes do round tables and media conferences with the ethnic media throughout the year. It happens more during elections. With three major elections—federal, provincial, and local—happening almost one after another, it keeps the local ethnic media busy and the local population engaged.

Brampton has emerged as a political test laboratory in Canada. It is said that how Brampton immigrants behave during an election is how the rest of the immigrant communities will likely vote in Canada; hence, there's more value to the ethnic media outlets.

As for the consequences and impacts of concentration in the media, we act as a gateway for business and political organizations to get access to the immigrant communities. But for us, they would find it very difficult to reach this important section of the Canadian population.

However, as said before, Indo-Canadians in general and Punjabis in particular are politically more active than other groups. This has led to a mushrooming of media outlets in the Punjabi language. There are so many weekly newspapers, radio programs, and television channels that it is almost impossible to create an inventory of them.

You see a new channel being started every other day. It has become a crazy situation now and is not a healthy sign for responsible journalism. There is an utter lack of professionalism. People without any training or commitment are entering the ethnic media just because they see it as a tool to promote themselves. It makes them feel better, but it causes many problems in the community.

•(0850)

Over-concentration of media is having a negative impact on the social life of the community. To stay one step up from the other, the dirty and petty matters of the community are discussed in disgusting details in public. It has a heavy cost in terms of impact on the social well-being of people who consume this information.

Hard-core elements within the community exert overt and covert pressures on us to cover their news, the majority of which is very controversial and is dangerous as well. There was an attack on my life in October 2010 because I said no to some of the things they wanted me to say. This has happened not only to me, but to many of us. At least my case was profiled in the mainstream media, but in the majority of other cases, journalists are beaten, threatened, and forced to keep silent, which is a dangerous trend that is happening on a large scale. Political patronage to the hard-core is dangerous to us in the ethnic media.

Political pressure is causing fractures within and between the communities, which is not a healthy trend. An editorial in the *Brampton Guardian* last year is an example.

In regard to the impact of digital media on local information, the new generation of immigrants is using digital media in a big way to create a space for themselves. Canadian youth born to immigrant parents are making waves through the use of digital media. New immigrants coming to Canada these days are more inclined to use digital media than print media. However, as a large section of immigrants are still not tech savvy, there continues to be a strong demand for print media, and it still the way to go because of its acceptability and receptivity. Things will change gradually to make room for the digital environment.

How do we see the future and where is the industry going? OMNI Punjabi television, an initiative of Rogers, had to cut down its operation because it could not sustain itself under the rising cost of hiring quality journalists. Similarly, two daily and several weekly newspapers in the GTA themselves have died unnatural deaths. That explains why serious journalism among ethnic media is missing. The print newspapers are already facing serious difficulties in surviving because of dying sources of revenue. The same is going to happen to radio and television channels.

The federal government must think of supporting well-meaning ethnic media outlets on the same pattern as it supports the CBC. It could be on a much smaller scale, but help is clearly needed. There should also be an initiative for us to hire professional journalists through subsidy programs. In the absence of such support, there is going to be a crisis among the ethnic media industry, and this will be a devastating blow to immigrant communities and to Canada as well.

The government should work with the CJF, the Canadian Journalism Foundation, or any other such initiative to support and strengthen our ethnic media.

Thank you very much.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Now we will go to Mr. Yuri Bilinsky, managing editor of the New Pathway Media Group. He is video conferencing from Mississauga.

Mr. Bilinsky, you have 10 minutes to present. I'll give you a two-minute warning and then we will move to questions.

Thank you.

•(0855)

**Mr. Yuri Bilinsky (Managing Editor, New Pathway Media Group):** Thank you.

The access to information is an issue if we're talking about recent immigrants. That is probably the most affected social group in this respect, because many of them don't speak English well, and their language of choice is almost always their native language. It especially applies to the seniors, the more elderly part of the population. They look for three types of information: information about Canada as a whole, the wider community; information about their ethnic community in Canada; and information about their home countries. They obviously can find the information about the wider Canadian community in the mainstream media, but as I've said, there is a language barrier.

To move to the second question about concentration in the media, and about the concentration process, that doesn't help, because when there are fewer mainstream media outlets or community media outlets—we're talking about geographic communities rather than ethnic communities—they tend to cover ethnic communities less and less because there are fewer of them, and they have to cover the same array of issues. The issues of the ethnic communities fall through the cracks as this process develops. Obviously, the ethnic media, the cultural media, have to compensate for this lack of coverage of their respective communities.

But the ethnic and cultural media do not cover only their communities. We always try to cover the wider community, and even some international issues. A lack of funding and, as the previous speaker mentioned, an inability to have professional staff and professional journalists on our editorial teams seriously reduce the opportunity for us to cover wider issues. As I've said, a lot of people, especially from the recent immigrant population, still turn to community media for the coverage of these kinds of issues.

The impact of digital media is quite substantial. I would say that community media are affected less than the mainstream media because there is huge technological progress being made at the moment. There are some platforms and media technologies that are still not being used, but it's all developing as we speak.

Our media group is currently starting to tap into that market. We are trying to position ourselves to be able to benefit from digital media and from the access to people who only use digital media as opposed to the printed media and even radio and television. It's very difficult at this stage to estimate the extent to which we will be able to benefit from digital media and the digital media market. For instance, it's very difficult to tell whether we will be able to compensate with digital advertising for the loss of the printed advertisements while still preserving the printed version of our newspaper, because it is only developing.

• (0900)

At the same time, there is also growing competition in that market, and for the community media as well, not only in the mainstream market. A lot of people are seeing opportunities—and actually the need—to develop digital outlets, and sometimes very informal outlets such as Facebook groups. They are being created. In our community and ethnic market, they're only starting to be created. It's very difficult to tell how long they will be able to survive and how they're going to affect the older community media, which is also entering this digital market. As I said, it's only developing.

However, I would say that the competition in that digital market for the community media is probably going to be as intense, if not even more intense, than in the mainstream markets of print, television, and radio. From the perspective of the ethnic and cultural media, I can tell you that the competition is very intense. From the community's standpoint and the wider community's standpoint, I consider this competition a very positive thing, because more voices are being heard and that contributes to the wider discussion.

In terms of the economic viability, it's too early to tell, but as for the government's position, I think that looking at supporting digital media and newer kinds of media in the same way that the government supports printed media through the aid to publishers program is probably worth looking at.

Thank you.

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

Now we will go to questions, but before we do, as you all know—but I will remind you—we may have bells summoning us at 10 o'clock. We may not, but just be prepared. We may have to cut short whatever we're doing if the bells ring.

What we do have is a seven-minute question period from each person who is questioning you. That includes questions and answers.

Again, I will ask you to be very succinct in your questions and in your answers.

We begin now with Dan Vandal from the Liberals.

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

My first question is for Mr. Grewal.

Do you publish seven days out of seven?

**Mr. Jagdish Grewal:** No, it's five days out of seven. I started it as a seven-day publication but then had to cut it down to six days. Now I have five days of publication.

**Mr. Dan Vandal:** Five days, and your readership is 35,000 every day?

**Mr. Jagdish Grewal:** Yes, sir.

**Mr. Dan Vandal:** I'm wondering if you could share with me your funding model, your revenue streams, for your newspaper.

**Mr. Jagdish Grewal:** The majority of my revenue stream is from local businesses. There are many businesses in the local community that run their ads in our paper on a daily basis. That is our main revenue stream. It's from local pizza shops, barbershops, and others. Local businesses are supporting these daily publications.

**Mr. Dan Vandal:** What percentage would that be?

**Mr. Jagdish Grewal:** Almost 95%.

**Mr. Dan Vandal:** Okay, so that's sponsorships, local businesses...

**Mr. Jagdish Grewal:** Yes, sir.

**Mr. Dan Vandal:** Do you get any sort of support or financial help from any level of government?

**Mr. Jagdish Grewal:** No. There are only some advertisements from the federal and provincial governments, and that portion, I can say, is less than 5%. I get 2% to 3% from corporate ads, such as Rogers or Bell or other ads like that.

**Mr. Jagdeep Kailey (Associate Editor, Canadian Punjabi Post Inc.):** Also, the fact is that it's not government advertisements, it's the political parties who give us their advertisements.

• (0905)

**Mr. Dan Vandal:** Okay. What is your annual budget for running your newspaper?

**Mr. Jagdish Grewal:** It's close to \$100,000 a month.

**Mr. Dan Vandal:** So the annual budget would be \$1.2 million?

**Mr. Jagdish Grewal:** Yes.

**Mr. Dan Vandal:** How many staff do you have?

**Mr. Jagdish Grewal:** I have five staff in my office here in Canada and eight overseas in India.

**Mr. Dan Vandal:** What sort of web presence do you have on the Internet?

**Mr. Jagdish Grewal:** I have a *Canadian Punjabi Post* website. It gets updated every half-hour or hour. It covers all the breaking news in every section. I have Canadian sections, GTA sections, and world sections, and then the India or Punjab sections.

**Mr. Dan Vandal:** We've seen in our delegations a trend across the country of less people reading newspapers and more young people going online to get their information. Do you have information on your demographics? Who reads your newspaper? Also, are young people migrating towards digital?

**Mr. Jagdeep Kailey:** As we said in our presentation as well, the younger generation does not have a handle on the language itself, so it's not of interest to them. Even the younger immigrants who come from back home tend to be more tech savvy. Our readership is primarily people who are aged thirty plus, but as our friend Yuri said, it is the elderly and seniors who are more interested, and they have, I would say, a keen interest in the political. They are the ones who influence the families on political decisions. Our readership ranges from very few in their thirties to the plus-thirties, the forties, and the fifties.

**Mr. Dan Vandal:** Plus seniors.

**Mr. Jagdeep Kailey:** Yes.

**Mr. Dan Vandal:** What sort of viewership do you have on digital, on the Internet?

**Mr. Jagdeep Kailey:** As Jagdish said, as it comes, we post our news on our website and on Facebook. We have 25,000 followers on Facebook, so that gets out pretty fast.

**Mr. Jagdish Grewal:** There's another thing I want to say. This the only media outlet that invests more in Canadian content. Many times I have seen the Punjabi language newspapers from British Columbia using the same Canadian content I publish in my paper. Also, many radio program hosts and news readers take the news from this website and this newspaper.

**Mr. Dan Vandal:** Where is your competition?

**Mr. Jagdish Grewal:** It's within the community. There are many weekly newspapers. There were two daily newspapers in the Punjabi language. They were shut down and have become weekly now. There are other weekly newspapers, plus radio programs and TV channels.

Now there's also the IPTV box. In the last two weeks, about five or six daily 24-7 TV channels have started in the Punjabi language here in the greater Toronto area. Whenever we publish ads in our paper, they go after those business people. They tell them that they will promote them on TV and they tell them how much it will cost them. Of course, the IPTV box doesn't cost much. It has a much lower cost than printing a newspaper, so that is our competition.

**The Chair:** You have one minute, Mr. Vandal.

**Mr. Dan Vandal:** You mentioned that many radio stations are popping up regularly that are of concern to you. Can you say more about that?

**Mr. Jagdish Grewal:** The concept of the radio program is totally different in the Punjabi community. There are only a couple of people who own the 24-hour channels. Others own just two-hour or one-hour slots. I own only a two-hour slot on someone else's radio program. About 70 or 80 people own these half-hour, one-hour, two-hour, or weekend-hour slots on the radio channels. They have their own ideologies and their own way of covering the stories. It's very hard to create an inventory of these radio programs.

• (0910)

**Mr. Dan Vandal:** Is that a good thing?

**Mr. Jagdish Grewal:** As I said in my presentation, no. As I said, to be one step ahead of other people, to get the attention of the community, and to have more listeners and viewers, they do bring a lot of controversial things onto their radio programs. There is lack of professionalism. They start their radio programs just to.... There are many people who think it's better than working in a factory or driving a truck or a taxi to start a one-hour radio program, to have a journalist from India and just pay him \$200 a month to get the coverage from India, and to just do the marketing and make money from the marketing.

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

Now I go to Mr. Van Loan, for the Conservatives.

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

Mr. Bilinsky, you serve the Ukrainian community, which is an interesting study, because there have been multi-generational waves of immigration. You have the folks who trace their roots to those seeking economic opportunity around the start of the 20th century or the late 19th century. We have a couple of waves of immigration related to the time of the revolution in World War II, and now we have a new wave of post-1991 immigration.

You have new immigrants and people who trace their family to old immigrants. How does that diverse set of audiences contribute to your readership?

**Mr. Yuri Bilinsky:** Our publication is bilingual, so we cover basically all those waves of immigration and all those generations. Some other Ukrainian news outlets and media tend to be more Ukrainian-language or English-language outlets, so they cover more specific parts of the community.

From our standpoint, we find that it's really worth covering all the groups to actually bring them together, to create an economic synergy for ourselves, but also to try to bring the community together. Obviously, for the reason that different languages are preferred and spoken by different groups, they tend to become detached from one another and from other groups. To actually be able to discuss the same issues with all the groups, we need to be bilingual. It does create some limitations, because the community is not probably as big, obviously, as the wider population. When people prefer one language to the other, it sometimes limits the market for us in some cases.

**Hon. Peter Van Loan:** It's a geographically dispersed population all across the country, too, which I imagine creates challenges, especially in terms of getting advertisers.

**Mr. Yuri Bilinsky:** Yes, and it creates difficulties in our attempts to attract nationwide advertisers like the big multinationals, or at least nationwide companies. Yes, this is a smaller market. This is a niche market.

**Hon. Peter Van Loan:** To what extent in that vein do you cover issues of the homeland versus your efforts to cover local Ukrainian community issues here in Canada? Could you comment on that?

Also, how have recent events in Ukraine, particularly the Russian aggression, the annexation of Crimea, and the conflict in Eastern Ukraine and the invasion there affected the role that you play, the demands on you, and the interests of readers?

**Mr. Yuri Bilinsky:** This all creates the need to cover basically everything—from the geopolitical issues to the tiniest community issues that we have here in Toronto or elsewhere in the Ukrainian community. It creates a positive in this respect, in that it broadens the range of issues we need to cover. On the other hand, it has been said a couple of times today that it's difficult to do because, due to the lack of funding, we cannot afford large editorial teams—if any, at times. Sometimes these papers are basically one-man bands, and it's very difficult to provide quality coverage of very different issues.

• (0915)

**Hon. Peter Van Loan:** What changes would we have seen over the years in the number of Ukrainian print publications serving the Canadian Ukrainian community?

**Mr. Yuri Bilinsky:** I think the bulk of closures happened probably before the digital media came. Still, in our particular case, in the case of our community, we have not seen a lot of closures of the older newspapers.

That being said, their economic situation is not getting better, to put it softly. I'm afraid we might see, in community media as a whole, the withdrawal or reduction of support from our long-term supporters, going forward.

**Hon. Peter Van Loan:** It's certainly been the pattern in a lot of the ethnic communities. For example, a lot of those who came here in the wake of World War II had a diversity of publications, and were fairly strong in those early years.

As people become more and more integrated into the Canadian population over time, the population gets older, and the subsequent generations get less attached to the community. You see closures and consolidations and mergers, with fewer and fewer publications, and less frequency.

Is that a pattern you see, or has the wave of recent post-1991 immigration helped stave that off a bit?

**Mr. Yuri Bilinsky:** Absolutely. For instance, our subscriber base is shrinking, and this situation with the Russian invasion in Ukraine has created the need to cover these issues back in Ukraine. This has kept interest in the Ukrainian Canadian media, in the community and from the sponsors, which obviously is not a good.... We would prefer that not to happen, obviously. As time goes on, that interest will subside, and what happens then? I'm afraid we'll face the same kind of problems as the mainstream media and other ethnic community media.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Van Loan.

Mr. Nantel, for the NDP.

[Translation]

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

My thanks to Mr. Kailey and Mr. Grewal, and to Mr. Bilinsky for participating in this meeting by videoconference.

[English]

If I'm not mistaken, you do not have English translation, so I will speak English. I think it's much simpler.

I can see that you are the editor-in-chief for New Pathway, but you're also from the Ukrainian Canadian news portal. You were saying just a few minutes ago that you would be even more challenged than mainstream media by the electronic numerical challenges and people moving to this. Do you see that in your Ukrainian Canadian news portal?

**Mr. Yuri Bilinsky:** Well, what I probably meant was that digital media, by its nature, is very democratic. Basically anyone can do it. For instance, there are a lot of Facebook communities and groups who are becoming hubs for discussing community issues, the Ukrainian Canadian community issues, and the issues back home in Ukraine because of the war. They are starting to serve a very important role. That obviously is creating some competition, but it's also creating some opportunities.

What I also want to say is that, for us, it's probably a very early stage to be able to draw any conclusions. Also, there is no market as such. There's no advertising market in this particular segment. In the mainstream—

• (0920)

**Mr. Pierre Nantel:** In the portal?

**Mr. Yuri Bilinsky:** Yes. Well, I'm talking about all those new digital media hubs in the Ukrainian community. In the mainstream media there is a digital advertising market, a printed advertising market, television, and radio. In the community, and especially in the cases of smaller communities, there are no distinctive markets divided by the types of media yet, and it's very difficult to tell how those advertising markets are going to develop. Obviously, they are very small.

**Mr. Pierre Nantel:** Thank you. I'll let you go.

**Mr. Yuri Bilinsky:** The last thing I want to say is that because the ethnic and cultural media are to a large extent focused on seniors and new immigrants, they cannot discontinue their printed version. From a cost perspective, it would be something to think about, but it cannot be done. Because of that, it weighs down the cost structure, and digital advertising so far is not compensating for that.

**Mr. Pierre Nantel:** Yes, of course not. If it's on a Facebook group, then the money goes to Facebook, I guess.

I see Mr. Kailey nodding his head.

In the Punjabi community, is there some sort of portal, some community, or do various media come together? Is it all individual? If I understand you well, different business projects come up and get an audience. Is there is no getting together?

**Mr. Jagdeep Kailey:** Not even businesses are coming together, not to mention that it's individuals who are trying to make their presence felt.

We are in a kind of catch-22 situation. Our advertisers in the newspapers are ethnic business people. They want to see their advertisement printed somewhere, because it gets.... You have to see that, and our audience, our readership, is that, but at the same time, there is another pull, which is digitalization. We have to be aware of that fact as well.

On the social media from the community, we call them Facebook media. They have set up their.... They tend to be media groups; they are not, but they say things that we cannot even afford to think of. That creates greater competition. You can say anything on social media and then you are done with it, but for us it becomes a greater challenge in how to position ourselves.

We are struggling on the one side with revenue streams that are based, as Mr. Grewal said, on ethnic business people's stores. They don't understand the compulsions or the difficulties we are facing, and at the same time, the social media digitalization is giving us a huge challenge.

**Mr. Pierre Nantel:** Absolutely. I understand.

Mr. Grewal, I have a question for you, and I see that you're wearing your earpiece. If I speak French, will you hear it in English?

**Mr. Jagdish Grewal:** Yes, I will.

[Translation]

**Mr. Pierre Nantel:** What is the proportion of local news in your paper? After all, that is sort of the subject we are dealing with here. In our study, we are always facing different issues, whether there is local news, a local readership and a local advertising market.

Earlier, you said that you have correspondents in India and five reporters here. What is the proportion of local news about the greater Toronto area in your paper in comparison with the international content that probably deals with your home country?

[English]

**Mr. Jagdish Grewal:** If you look at the printed edition of my newspapers, you will see Canadian headlines every single day. My first priority is to give a headline to the Canadian national news, the second is the provincial news, and the third is the local municipal news. Every day I instruct my staff to do at least 15 to 20 local news items. They are about the federal, provincial, or municipal governments and how they're changing their policies.

Also, as I said in my presentation, we write our editorials strictly on Canadian issues. So far, I have never written a single editorial on Indian politics or on what is happening in India. All I write about are Canadian issues, either about how you guys are changing policies here in Ottawa, or about the provincial or the municipal governments and whatever changes they are making or whatever policies they're bringing in. That's what we are writing about in our paper on a daily basis. There are at least 15 to 20 news items every day, either on small events, such as seniors celebrating someone's birthday at the seniors' club, or on things that are happening here on Parliament Hill.

● (0925)

[Translation]

**Mr. Pierre Nantel:** Have you also seen a decline in government advertising? I note that Mr. Kailey pointed out specifically that there are no government advertisements but there are advertisements from political parties reaching out to members of your community. Did you have government advertising before? If so, have they stopped recently? I imagine that they involved a good deal of money.

[English]

**Mr. Jagdish Grewal:** Yes. There's a significant drop in advertisements on the government side. If we go back to the previous Liberal government and then the minority Conservative government, at that time many advertisements were coming to our paper, but recently there's been a big drop in those advertisements.

Locally, to talk about Brampton or the Peel region only, if they are giving \$1.2 million to the English papers, I get only \$2,000 in a year. That's the kind of drop I see in advertisements from provincial, municipal, or federal governments.

**Mr. Jagdeep Kailey:** An interesting fact is that the City of Brampton—we are based in Brampton—has allocated over \$700,000 to monitor ethnic media. They don't give us any financial support, but they invest so much money to know what we are saying about them. That's something that surprises us.

Until they support us, until they see that we can communicate on their behalf to the community.... But they are more interested in knowing what we are saying about them, so they invest over \$700,000 every single year to monitor ethnic media. That's interesting.

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

Thanks, Mr. Nantel.

For the Liberals, Ms. Dabrusin is next.

**Ms. Julie Dabrusin (Toronto—Danforth, Lib.):** I would like to thank all the witnesses for your presentations today. They were very helpful.

For Mr. Bilinsky, I'll say "*dobry den*". I have the luck to have a Ukrainian intern working in my office at the moment, so I asked her for some help, but that's about as far as I got.

We're looking at two things right now. The concentration of the mainstream media has been a big focus of the discussion we've had to this point.

Starting with Mr. Bilinsky, when we're talking about Ukrainian issues and what you're presenting in your media, how well do you think the French and English mainstream media are paying attention to issues relating to the Ukrainian community?

**Mr. Yuri Bilinsky:** I think most of what I've seen was related to Ukraine in the mainstream media, not to the Ukrainian Canadian community as such.

In talking about Ukraine, I don't know whether this will be off the topic, but I'll tell you one thing. Sometimes we see something that we consider a misrepresentation of what's going on in Ukraine.

For instance, it's not always called a Russian "invasion". Although it's a Russian invasion and there are Russian regular military on the ground in Ukraine, which is not said very often in the Canadian mainstream media, the problem sometimes is called a "civil war", although it's not a civil war. It's an invasion by another country.

This is what we, as Ukrainian Canadian media, feel a need to compensate for, but the problem is that we're quite small. We are much smaller, and we cannot bring that particular message across to the wider community, and I would call this the single biggest problem content-wise in terms of the mainstream Canadian media in covering any kind of Ukrainian issues.

I haven't seen a lot, to be honest, in the mainstream media about Ukrainian Canadian communities here. Probably when we have our festivals or Ukrainian independence day celebrations, it hits the news channels and mainstream papers. We try to cover all the issues, obviously, and we cover the local community issues more than we cover Ukraine, because there is a lot of information coming from Ukraine.

● (0930)

**Ms. Julie Dabrusin:** Thank you.



If I could ask quickly for an answer from you as well, gentlemen, when we're looking at how well mainstream media represents different community voices, from your perspective, how well do you feel it represents the Punjabi voice?

**Mr. Jagdeep Kailey:** I think there is a great disconnect. We know that whenever an incident happens within the community, the mainstream media guys use us as their contact point because they do not have inroads into the community. They don't understand the nuances are woven around a particular issue. For example, when Mr. Grewal was attacked in 2009, it was a brutal attack on his life, and he was the contact point for the mainstream media to get his version and the version of the community as well.

What we have seen at this time, and what we have said in our presentation as well, is that at this time ethnic media is a fact of life today, and it's going to be that way. There is a greater need for supports to come up from wherever they come from, whatever the level of the government, to connect us to the mainstream organizations.

They must have that kind of relationship with us. We can work jointly. Collaboration is going to be the key point, and we need to create those spaces within mainstream media organizations and they need to support us. We need to be taken up a step so that there is a collaboration with both wings of the media. That's the way that Canadian communities will be more enriched. I think it's going to be good.

**Ms. Julie Dabrusin:** Thank you.

I understand, Mr. Bilinsky, that your paper is a recipient of support from the Canada periodical fund. We're looking as well at the different supports that government can and should be providing to different forms of media. Do you have an opinion about how it works now? What changes do you think you need to see in continued support for your paper?

**Mr. Yuri Bilinsky:** I think I said that the government might want to think about supporting some endeavours to develop digital platforms for ethnic media, because ethnic media is so poorly financed that any kind of support would be helpful.

Like other ethnic media, we get some funding from election campaigns, from candidates' campaigns during elections. We don't get much between elections in terms of government advertising or government support, other than the ATP subsidy, which is very helpful. It's always helpful if it's increased or upped, but it's a big support at the moment.

**Ms. Julie Dabrusin:** There's a certain delivery model that we have now. That's what's happening right now, but would it in fact be much more helpful if changes were made, be it through the tax act or other ways? Would you say that would be more helpful than what we have now? Or maybe you like it the way it is?

**The Chair:** They will have to wait to respond to that, Ms. Dabrusin. Your seven minutes are up.

You can respond to that on the next round.

We're going to move now to a three-minute round only. We'll start with Mr. Van Loan.

If there's a Liberal who wants to take advantage of those three minutes, please let me know.

● (0935)

**Hon. Peter Van Loan:** Mr. Grewal, you talked about an attack in 2009. What was the motivation behind it?

**Mr. Jagdish Grewal:** We still don't know. The police have never

**Hon. Peter Van Loan:** What do you speculate?

**Mr. Jagdish Grewal:** At that time, there were a couple of issues going on in the community. There are always conflicts. There is a conflict between the the Indian and Sikh communities from a long time ago. There were a couple of issues about that going on at the time. There was some pressure to cover those issues, and some people thought that I wasn't covering them in the way that they were thinking about it.

I believe it's that, but I still don't know. The police are still investigating. I get in touch with them regularly to ask if they've found anything. I'm getting no answers.

**Hon. Peter Van Loan:** Kevin.

**Mr. Kevin Waugh (Saskatoon—Grasswood, CPC):** I'm wondering about national ad agencies. Do either of you have them in your organizations? If I'm Procter & Gamble, there is one national ad agency that looks after my account. Do you have a national sales rep to deal with this?

**Mr. Jagdish Grewal:** I do have two sales reps who deal with them, but still I fail to get the corporate sector. Here's what has happened in the past. When we start getting the corporate or national ads in our paper, another paper, an English paper, would pop up in the community, and their marketing team would be much stronger than ours. Their paper is run by the biggest media group and it would start saying that theirs is the South Asian newspaper that covers the South Asian news and goes to the South Asian houses. They took that over. When we were to get national advertisements, there was another one. The national mainstream media started their own South Asian newspapers, then we failed in front of them.

**Mr. Kevin Waugh:** Mr. Bilinsky, what about your organization? Do you have a national ad agency that can look after your newspaper?

**Mr. Yuri Bilinsky:** I would imagine so. We have probably a greater disconnect from the national advertising market than the Punjabi media. I would encourage the national advertisers to look more closely at ethnic markets such as the Ukrainian one, because there is some untapped potential. I think there is a big opportunity in terms of advertising and coverage in the ethnic community media, because the mainstream market is so competitive and ethnic community issues are covered much less. They're—

**Mr. Kevin Waugh:** I'm just talking ad agencies here.

**The Chair:** Mr. Waugh, you have about three seconds.

**Mr. Kevin Waugh:** Okay. That's it.

**The Chair:** I'm sorry about that.

Now we have Mr. Samson for the Liberals for three minutes, please.

[Translation]

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

My thanks to the witnesses for coming to make these presentations today. It gives us a very important perspective for our study.

I have a question that you can answer yes or no, as long as you provide some examples to back up those two possible replies. Do you find that CBC/Radio-Canada programming reflects the points of view of the various ethnic communities?

[English]

**Mr. Jagdeep Kailey:** No.

**Mr. Yuri Bilinsky:** No.

[Translation]

**Mr. Darrell Samson:** Can you give us some examples? Are those points of view less well reflected now? Were they previously? Can you comment on that further for us?

[English]

**Mr. Jagdeep Kailey:** I think they are making a hard effort to get to the core of what the community issues are. We do not have resources to get to the core of the bigger issues. They have difficulty in reaching out to ethnic communities. They don't understand the nuances of the ethnic communities and how we behave. Our cultural behaviour is still outside of their comprehension.

**Mr. Yuri Bilinsky:** There needs to be more of a two-way street, I think, between the mainstream media and the ethnic media.

No, they have not covered the ethnic communities a lot. They can turn to us for explanations, for the details, or they can do it themselves, but they have not looked into our communities very closely.

• (0940)

[Translation]

**Mr. Darrell Samson:** Madam Chair, can I ask another quick question?

[English]

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

[Translation]

**Mr. Darrell Samson:** Mr. Kailey, can you tell us what you think is the biggest challenge that the ethnic media faces?

[English]

**Mr. Jagdeep Kailey:** I think the hardest threat or the challenge to our survival is the revenue. We do not have enough resources to sustain us. Whatever resources that are at our disposal today, they're failing us. Every single day, they are shrinking.

**Mr. Jagdish Grewal:** For us, it becomes more passionate. We're doing it passionately rather than just looking to make a lot of money out of it. This is the way I look at my media house now. I cannot make a lot of money if we're running just this ethnic media, but it's my passion to connect my community to the mainstream community, to bridge the gap. That's what I've been doing for the past 15 years through this daily newspaper.

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

Mr. Nantel, you have three minutes.

[Translation]

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

I would also like to thank the members of the committee and the witnesses. We will soon have to leave you today.

Mr. Grewal, you mentioned that the IPTV channels, broadcasting around the clock, seven days a week, constitute one of your fiercest competitors. They are taking over your readership. Is that really what you said? Can those channels go out and look for advertising revenue?

[English]

**Mr. Jagdish Grewal:** I meant to say that IPTV boxes, with those TV channels that are coming up every other day, are not taking my readership away, but they are taking my advertisers away. That's the difference.

**Mr. Pierre Nantel:** This is precisely the question. Do they sell local advertising on IPTV?

**Mr. Jagdish Grewal:** Yes, they do.

**Mr. Pierre Nantel:** I don't know about anyone else around the table here, but this is the first time I have heard about this. This IPTV channel comes out from where? Where is the programming done?

**Mr. Jagdish Grewal:** They are running their programming on TV channels from a local city, from Brampton, from Toronto.

**Mr. Pierre Nantel:** Yes, okay. They do have a sales team?

**Mr. Jagdish Grewal:** Yes, they do.

**Mr. Pierre Nantel:** My God. Okay, does this affect...? I guess the answer is yes, because I was wondering. To me, I think that clearly all the witnesses we have had here have told us about the advertising market slowing down for them in favour of the electronic, but for you, besides this IPTV phenomenon, I would be under the impression that your communities and your businesses have a very solid approach to talking to the audience, to talking to the community, through you. Are your sales of advertising declining?

**Mr. Jagdish Grewal:** Yes, they are declining, and there's other print competition that I have. The majority of their advertisements are from so-called fortune tellers. We call them "babas" or pundits, who run their ads to tell people their fortune.

Almost 60 or 70 advertisements—almost one full section—in those weekly papers are from so-called fortune tellers, and I don't run even a single misleading ad in my newspaper. That's a principle of my media house. If they are saying that they will fix anyone's problem in 17 hours or 10 hours or so, no, I do not run those ads in my media outlets. I just run ads from local genuine business people in my newspaper. That's another blow to my media house.

**The Chair:** I'm sorry, Mr. Nantel. That's it.

**Mr. Pierre Nantel:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** I have one question to ask.

The Canadian periodical fund was set up in order to help people in newspapers and/or digital programs who face challenges in reaching their local community groups. It's there to help them. Do you think this periodical fund actually has adapted itself to suit the needs of ethnic communities? If it hasn't, what suggestions do you have that could make that change or that we should be recommending for this to really help you with your specific needs as ethnic media?

I'll ask Mr. Grewal and Mr. Kailey, and then I'll go to Yuri.

● (0945)

**Mr. Jagdish Grewal:** My media house never applied for that fund. I've heard about it. It's about \$25,000 or so that we can get from the government to run our media house, which is just maybe a drop in the bucket. It doesn't change much, and there's maybe a lot of paperwork, but I never tried for that.

The suggestion I have for this committee is to start, as I said in my presentation, to subsidize the journalists who can produce Canadian content in all languages. They can be hired by us, with part of their salary paid by us, while part of their salary should be subsidized. This way, we can engage our community better with the Canadian content. That's my first suggestion.

Second, just as the government funds the CBC, there must be that sort of funding for the ethnic media papers.

I also had a suggestion about the Canadian Journalism Foundation. There should be an engagement between the ethnic media groups and the CJF. The CJF or any other organization like it must be supported in order to engage these media persons in the ethnic communities so that they will understand how important it is to provide proper information to the community. I think only one or two persons who are running media houses now are educated in media or have a journalism degree. The majority of them have just the tenth grade or the twelfth grade and they are running these media houses.

To run a barbershop, you have to have a barber's licence, but to run a daily newspaper or a radio program, which is providing such important information to the community or leading the community in a way, you don't need any kind of training. You don't need any kind of licence to run that kind of house.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Mr. Bilinsky, quickly, can you give me a comment on that?

**Mr. Yuri Bilinsky:** Yes, I agree with Mr. Grewal that there might be many different methods of supporting ethnic media. You might want to think about relaxing certain criteria for the ethnic media in terms of the subsidy to make the subsidy bigger, or you might think about at least partly funding other things. I agree completely that we need professional journalists to increase our coverage to make it more professional, and you might think about probably funding some other cost items such as, I don't know, distribution, or for us to be able to print more colour pages. It's stuff like that.

Basically, any kind of help would be useful for us, because we are probably even worse funded.... Our advertising market is much smaller than it is for Punjabi media, and because it's so small, any kind of help would be useful.

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

I want to thank Mr. Kailey, Mr. Grewal, and Mr. Bilinsky for helping us out today. What we heard from you is very, very interesting, and I think it gives us room for thinking about how we deal with ethnic communities. Again, thank you.

We will wait for the change, then, about a minute, for the new group to come in. I want to let the committee know that we have votes at 11:15, so we're saved by the bell, so to speak. Thank you.

● (0945)

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

● (0950)

**The Chair:** Order. We now have with us the National Ethnic Press and Media Council of Canada, with Mr. Saras and Mr. Tajdolati.

Let me tell you what will happen. You will have 10 minutes between you to deliver your statements, your presentations. You can split that 10 minutes any way you like, and then we will go to questions and answers. Thank you very much. Please begin.

**Mr. Thomas Saras (President and CEO, Head Office, National Ethnic Press and Media Council of Canada):** Thank you very much for the opportunity to meet you.

Some of you, of course, I've known for centuries, although you're not as old as I am, and for some of you, I'm glad you're the new blood of Canadian politics.

The National Ethnic Press and Media Council of Canada represents about 800 publications from all over Canada and about 150 producers of TV and radio. The organization has a history of about 30 years. We are working for the benefit of the members of the organization, as well as making sure that Canadian interests are also served by our members.

To add to whatever the previous speakers said, I want to bring it to your attention that I sit on committees of the United Nations about media. I want to tell you there is no such thing as receiving from government official recognition in terms of being a journalist. In fact, for someone to be a journalist, it is not even required that they finish university or high school. They have done so because of the differentiations between the western world and some African countries, where sometimes journalists do not finish high school, and they are recognizing them as journalists—and I mean the United Nations. I want to bring that to your attention, because this plays a vital role in the development of the ethnic media and ethnic journalism.

Over a period of years, in 2009 and in 2013, we organized educational seminars with the help of some institutions in Toronto. We brought in people from all over Canada. That was, of course, with the support and help of Canadian Heritage, to which I want to express one more time our thanks. Another thing I want to bring to your attention is that, until five years ago, the so-called “publishers support” was aimed only at the mainstream media, either francophone or anglophone. The ethnic press was totally out of this.

Finally, in that period of about five years, I met the then minister of Canadian Heritage, James Moore, who also used to be a member of the media before his public life with Parliament. I explained to him the challenges and the difficulties we were meeting, and he accepted that, and for the first time, five years ago, thanks to James, this fund was expanded to also include ethnic media publications.

In the very first year, they put it at about \$1 million for the ethnic media. Let me tell you that at that time the amounts the fund was carrying were about \$67 million for the magazine industry and about \$23 million for the non-daily Canadian papers. From all of that fund, they gave us only \$1 million.

● (0955)

Finally, because my members didn't know what exactly they were going to meet, they tried to get into the fund, and they got only \$700,000 in total. For the rest, as always, there was a gap of \$2.5 million, which was going directly to Rogers' publications such as *Chatelaine* or *Maclean's*. *Maclean's* was receiving \$2.5 million in support, if you can call it that, and my members were receiving \$8,000 or \$9,000.

Last year, this fund went up for the magazines to \$53,404,285. For the non-daily papers, they distributed \$15,433,313. From those amounts, we received \$700,000 for the ethnic magazines—for some of them, I put it around—and about \$700,000 for the non-daily papers. The rest, about \$70 million, again went to the so-called mainstream media.

Last year, we discussed this situation time and again with the authorities at Canadian Heritage. In a multicultural society, this does not seem to be very fair.

I'm doing this job. I'm a journalist, and I've been a publisher for 50 years. As a matter of fact, I don't have a house. Many others can't have.... I don't know how I survived over the period of 50 years. We discussed that. Canadian Heritage finally came out and said they would try a survey to see what exactly they were going to do. A survey was done by Canadian Heritage, and the Carleton University school of journalism conducted the survey.

● (1000)

**The Chair:** You have two minutes left to finish.

Go ahead, Mr. Saras.

**Mr. Thomas Saras:** They came out and said that, as well as the mainstream media, the ethnic press should be supported by the Canadian government. I have the executive summary here. I can leave it with you, Madam Chair, if you wish. They came out with recommendations that we should be more active in the sphere of Canadian support. That's how the situation is today.

Previously, I heard that we were asking for support from the government. Let me tell you that three years ago, each publication was receiving about \$8,000 in government advertisements. During the last two years of the previous government, we didn't receive even a penny. I met the Prime Minister and explained to him how vital even that penny is to the ethnic press, but it seemed that the environment of the PMO was not convinced about that, and we didn't receive anything.

The problem is that I don't know the policy of the new government or the new minister. All I know is that if you are not going to help the ethnic press, the ethnic press eventually is going to die, as it is dying daily.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Saras. We have finished your 10 minutes.

Now I will go to a question and answer period. Each person will have seven minutes. That means seven minutes for questions and answers, so please, everyone, be as concise as you can in either one.

Mr. Vandal will start for the Liberals.

**Mr. Dan Vandal:** Thank you very much for your presentation, Mr. Saras.

One of the themes of these hearings is how the concentration of media ownership affects different sectors. Could you tell us if your sector is affected by media concentration in Canada?

**Mr. Thomas Saras:** I believe that we are the only democratic media outlets. If you go to the mainstream media, five families control the whole anglophone Canadian media. To some extent, they even interfere with the francophone media.

In our case, each one of us has his own outlet. He is working independently and trying his best to serve his community and Canada as a country. The problem we are doing is that.... We are receiving news from the Canadian government, and we give that news to our communities in the mother tongue of the publication, whatever it is. On the other hand, we are bringing the problems of the community to the attention of the Canadian authorities or the Canadian government.

This problem has nothing to do with us. They are doing everything for the dollar. My people are doing it not because of the dollar, but because they spent probably months and years in jail back home, and here they want to continue to do something that they loved and continue to love.

Thank you.

● (1005)

**Mr. Dan Vandal:** Thank you.

**Dr. Mohammad Tajdolati (Ombudsman, National Ethnic Press and Media Council of Canada):** May I say something?

**Mr. Dan Vandal:** Absolutely.

**Dr. Mohammad Tajdolati:** I want to say that many of our members are working as journalists at the same time that they have another job in order to have money for their daily lives. They put money from other jobs into publishing the newspaper because they love it, and because they suffered from the lack of information in their home countries and want to inform the members of their communities.

This is one of the big problems that we are trying to solve. More and more, our members have two jobs. Journalism is not a second job. It is the first job, but they have a second job in order to have money for the first job. This is the problem.

**Mr. Dan Vandal:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** Mr. O'Regan.

**Mr. Seamus O'Regan (St. John's South—Mount Pearl, Lib.):** Maybe I could ask you to make a point one more time, just to make sure that it's absolutely clear. I guess it's frustrating, what you're saying, from your point of view.

**Mr. Thomas Saras:** You know that better than anybody else around here, Seamus.

**Mr. Seamus O'Regan:** I'm going to assume that it's frustrating for you—

**Mr. Thomas Saras:** It is.

**Mr. Seamus O'Regan**—to see large subsidies go to magazines like *Maclean's* and *Chatelaine* while you continue to struggle. Obviously, along with the Carleton study you cited, you firmly believe that the money should be directed towards the struggling ethnic press.

Is that fair to say?

**Mr. Thomas Saras:** Let me tell you something. It is fair what you say. The problem is.... From a \$2.5-million cap previously with *Maclean's* magazine, after negotiations they brought that down to \$1.5 million now. This is the maximum that *Maclean's* magazine can receive. Of course, daily, I am facing Rogers, who is fighting me, because it lost \$1 million from only one magazine, and Rogers has hundreds of magazines, as you know. Of that \$53 million, probably \$40 million is going to Rogers every year as a subsidy. My members are receiving \$8,000, \$12,000, or \$6,000.

There were rules set previously, and those rules were that the government was subsidizing only sales of the magazines, which means that if you are selling a million copies, then, according to the price you are selling at, you are receiving a subsidy from the government. My people were not ready for those things. Usually, the ethnic press has free distribution, except for the subscriptions that they are sending directly.

But it is free distribution. When the matter came down to the rules, Canadian Heritage started cutting everyone: you are not selling, so you don't qualify for the program. Another thing they did was harass every member who submitted an application to submit an audit. The auditors were charging \$4,000 every six months to do the auditing—

**The Chair:** You have one minute, Mr. O'Regan.

**Mr. Thomas Saras:**—and if you lose \$4,000 to the auditor to get \$6,000, it is not even worth it. This is the problem.

Excuse me, Madam Chair.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

You have 30 seconds.

**Mr. Seamus O'Regan:** Is there any other point that you would like to add, Mr. Saras?

**Voices:** Oh, oh!

**Mr. Seamus O'Regan:** You have 23 seconds.

**The Chair:** You have 30 seconds, Mr. Saras.

**Mr. Thomas Saras:** Thank you very much.

**Mr. Seamus O'Regan:** Your laughter just cost you another two seconds. Go.

**Mr. Thomas Saras:** I want to bring to your attention only one thing: we have to change the rules on how the subsidy is going to be given out. We have to change the rules. You cannot keep the rules of 30 years ago, which were only for the anglophone and francophone publications, and include the ethnic press in the same rules now, because the reality is that this is a totally different thing.

• (1010)

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

Now we go to Mr. Waugh, for the Conservatives.

**Mr. Kevin Waugh:** Change the rules to what?

**Mr. Thomas Saras:** Change the rules—

**Mr. Kevin Waugh:** Just to make your papers and your magazines viable? What are your numbers?

**Mr. Thomas Saras:** Sir, my magazine has been publishing for 50 years. Being the president and CEO of this organization, I never applied to receive any subsidy or any help, because I believe there is a conflict in being the president and at the same time asking for benefits for your own publication. My publication suffers because of that, just to bring that to your attention.

The second thing is that my publication is a totally Canadian publication. It is doing exactly the same job as any other publication. If you think that because the other one is printing in another language it should get the benefit of a million dollars and I should be left to die, I believe that you are seeing this country in the wrong way.

**Mr. Kevin Waugh:** No, that's a good point.

**Mr. Thomas Saras:** I have 800 members and about 103 different languages and tongues, and every community wants to survive. It is a matter of pride for them—

**Mr. Kevin Waugh:** Yes.

**Mr. Thomas Saras:**—to show that they are strong, vital communities, so we have to support them.

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

The situation of journalists has changed. There isn't a paper in this country that doesn't use a freelancer every day, so you're right, Mohammad. I know guys who blog and who have more followers on a blog than some newspapers in this country do. That's the reality of this business.

To use the word “journalist” is fine, but the editorial boards in this country—we were going to talk a little bit about this, but I ran out of time—are where this needs to be harnessed, right? Because I can steal from this freelancer, you're doing a story here or you're doing a story there, you bring it in, and then we do the editorial board. I would say that the editorial boards in every ethnic newspaper in the country are probably more important than the journalists.

I would like you to comment on that.

**Dr. Mohammad Tajdolati:** Let me tell you a bit about the reality of many of the ethnic media in the different communities. We have some examples here. The most important example is a very tiny monthly publication that has 12 pages. That magazine is produced by one or two people. There is no board of editors. They can't apply for professional journalists. They produce everything they can with the very little time and energy they have to produce some news for their community. This cannot be compared to the big media and their boards, etc.

You are right, though, that times have changed. There is digital media now, but the majority of the ethnic media addresses to new immigrants. New immigrants are the parents. They are people who have a very strong connection with their home country and their culture. They need to know how things are going in their homeland.

This is not about the second or third generation of immigrants. They have every new device to connect to everywhere. This is a different tool. You also have to consider that reality too.

**Mr. Kevin Waugh:** I'll turn it over.

**The Chair:** Mr. Maguire.

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

I had a question with regard to your UN committee work, Mr. Saras. You said there's no official recognition for being a journalist and that sort of thing. Do you believe there should be some kind of training or some kind of other development status?

•(1015)

**Mr. Thomas Saras:** We are doing that. We did that already in 2009 and in 2013. We organized educational seminars with Seneca College in Toronto. About 350 members from all over Canada attended. We had about 15 academics from the School of Journalism at Ryerson University, York University, the University of Toronto, and the School of Journalism of Seneca College. We are planning to do another one again this year. We are doing our best.

The only problem we have is trying to make sure that the members are spending their time and energy in supporting and reporting on Canadian affairs and not only on the affairs back home. I agree totally with Canadian Heritage the majority of the content of the newspaper, 70% of it—it was 50% until now, but I told them at least 70%—should be Canadian content, which means that if you get a penny, that penny should be given to Canada. It should be left to Canada.

I would add something for my colleague. I want to remind him that in being the publisher of an ethnic publication, you're the journalist and the distributor; you're doing the artwork and the printing; you're moving here and you're moving there; and you're going to get money. You have to make sure that everything has been done by you. If you miss something, you lose.

**The Chair:** You have 25 seconds.

**Mr. Larry Maguire:** The small amount of funds you get must be just a fraction of the cost of your operations. Can you give me an idea? Is it 2% or 3%?

**Mr. Thomas Saras:** Of what...?

**Mr. Larry Maguire:** Of your costs of operation, the amount of money that you get from the government.

**Mr. Thomas Saras:** From the government, I get less than 2%. For the last three years, I haven't received a penny.

**Mr. Larry Maguire:** As a follow-up, what do you rely on and why are you so successful?

**Mr. Thomas Saras:** I rely on my supporters, on the members of the community, and, as Dr. Tajdolati said before, my pocket. My wife and my kids know the cost of producing a newspaper, because we are cutting from there to produce the newspaper.

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

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

Now I go to Mr. Nantel for the New Democrats.

[*Translation*]

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

Mr. Saras, I do not know if you speak French.

**Mr. Thomas Saras:** Yes, I speak French.

**Mr. Pierre Nantel:** Okay.

First of all, Madam Chair, I gathered that the committee was probably going to continue its work in camera. Whatever, I hope that, if possible, we can debate our motions in a public session. That would be more transparent.

Mr. Saras, I have visited your organization's website and I see that a very large number of people from a variety of ethnic communities sit on your board of directors. That is quite impressive. You bring together almost all the communities that make up the new population of Canada. Your desire to handle Canadian news in the language of each of those communities is truly admirable.

Am I wrong to say that, apart from a few radio stations, most of your activities involve the print media? If government assistance were renewed, are you hoping for a new form of assistance, different support? If not, do you want, for example, the subsidized postal rate to be brought back? Structured assistance could strengthen the online presence of your publications and your articles. What kind of assistance do you think would be most constructive?

**Dr. Mohammad Tajdolati:** You know, it's a little bit of everything. Most of our members are print media. Some have websites that do not work and that are not at all up to today's realities. It is fashionable for a newspaper to have a website, but there is no comparison between the content of a newspaper and what is online. Newspapers do not always have the ability or the energy to adapt and to reproduce their content online.

•(1020)

**Mr. Pierre Nantel:** Do you think—

**Dr. Mohammad Tajdolati:** I think a fund could help.

Publications must be able to respond to the criteria that the government defines.

**Mr. Pierre Nantel:** I am going to talk to you as a beginner because I know nothing about these matters and I am not a newspaper publisher.

Your papers represent a mosaic of cultures and are meant for very compartmentalized client groups. It also makes good sense for each community to be served by its media in a distinct way. Is there a platform that you could use as a basic model and tailor it however you like?

As is so often said, it is 2016. Transactional websites, for television, for example, let anyone set up a PayPal account in a few minutes. Could the government help you to make that digital shift? Would that allow you to attract more advertisers? Private sector money makes the world go around, as we know.

**Dr. Mohammad Tajdolati:** Of course.

The members of our organization need training workshops to learn about what the digital revolution means in our day and age. At the same time, they have to be encouraged to look for new advertising revenue. Newspapers could offer their clients an advertisement on their website as well as one in the printed newspaper. This would bring the two currents together and it would be easier to reach the clients.

**Mr. Pierre Nantel:** And eventually to extend to your younger clientele. I imagine that is something you are hoping for.

**Dr. Mohammad Tajdolati:** Of course.

[English]

**Mr. Thomas Saras:** In a digital world, we see daily changes coming to our society. The electronic media nowadays is part of our lives. We cannot as a country go backward to the last century. We have to follow and we have to go. For the first time, as far as I know, Canadian Heritage has come out and said that they encourage us to go digital. We received that letter from them. Last night, we had our monthly meeting in Toronto, and already we have encouraged all the members, about 68 of them who were attending the meeting, to apply for that.

Now, the thing is that they have only a fund of \$5,000 per member in order to create a website, which is very little, but we cannot interfere and say anything. The only thing I can assure you of is that the ethnic press is following the trends. We are following day by day how things are developing, and we are doing our best, but we should be seen with sympathy by the government, and we should also accept support.

Some of you know the organizations very well, have attended our affairs, and have seen how we work and how we do things. We are working for Canada. Our constitution states clearly that we are fighting for a united Canada.

**Mr. Pierre Nantel:** Mr. Saras, thank you. I really appreciate that.

Mr. Grewal and Mr. Kailey, thank you. I have to ask you a question. You spoke of the fact that some IP television services come in and steal your advertising market. Are your members aware of that? Are they angry about it?

**Mr. Thomas Saras:** Yes. I believe that in the field of television, there should be some changes. For example, they accept and run the various programs from the various countries, and they sell them to Canadians, and what do they do? In a 24-hour program, they don't say even a word about Canada.

Now, just one second here, the question is that this is a Canadian property, the property of the Canadian people. You give it to someone to make money, but you don't give anything back to him, because, for whatever reason, exactly as in the newspapers, he prefers to have the news in his mother tongue.

This is an abuse of the system, and it is very important that the government take care of this matter. Otherwise, we are going to have Mr. Putin bringing his message to Canada as being whatever—an angel—and the Canadian government itself is unable to communicate a message to Canadians. This is very important, and this is a matter for the CRTC. First of all—

• (1025)

**The Chair:** Mr. Saras, I think you're going to have to wind that up. I'm sorry.

I'm moving on to Mr. O'Regan, but I want to say that I don't think we're going to have time for a second round on this one.

**Mr. Seamus O'Regan:** I wanted to explore a little more your approach to digital media. As you said, Mr. Saras, it appears to be something that's inevitable. Could you maybe tell us a little more about how much demand you're receiving from it from your readership?

**Mr. Thomas Saras:** I'll tell you. We have a website. Our website receives about 80,000 visits per week, which is about a quarter of a million visits per month. For a community newspaper, this is a very big number. The other thing is, whatever we put on our website can be seen and can be read in Japan, or in China, or in Saudi Arabia—all over the world. The newspaper, the hard copy, is not going as far, and therefore the message will stay in Canada, but whatever I write on the website about Canada is going to be seen everywhere, in every part of the world.

**Mr. Seamus O'Regan:** What about revenue?

**Mr. Thomas Saras:** Unfortunately, we don't have revenue. The way the system is right now, the revenue goes to the big guys who are controlling the system, but if the CRTC imposes some rules then probably they're going to protect the little guy. We pay right now. We don't receive.

**Mr. Seamus O'Regan:** What do your traditional print advertisers say to you about digital?

**Mr. Thomas Saras:** To be honest with you, when someone gives you \$200 to advertise in print, then you put his advertisement also on the website in order to make your service more attractive.

**Mr. Seamus O'Regan:** It's added on to your print contract as an entitlement, but there's no extra revenue coming from it?

**Mr. Thomas Saras:** No, unfortunately.

It's entirely different with the Toronto *Star*. The Toronto *Star* is going to put some articles on the website, but again, they are organized. I cannot organize 50 persons to run around and see how we are going to do. This is the production of one man, and you have to do it the way you have to do it, unfortunately.

**Mr. Seamus O'Regan:** When you look down the road, both for your individual enterprise and for the industry as a whole that you occupy, what do you see? What's the future?

**Mr. Thomas Saras:** We try to survive, sir.

Not one of us is making money. This should be understood by the government, by the authorities, and by the ministry. It's not that we are working endless hours. It's not that we are putting in money every day. It's the fact that at the moment one publication closes, this community is going to feel hatred toward the total Canadian community, because they will think that they are down, that they are left down.

When we created multiculturalism, you were very young—

• (1030)

**Mr. Seamus O'Regan:** Bless you.

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

**Mr. Thomas Saras:** —but the person who created multiculturalism, I had the honour to know him personally. He thought of a Canada with a perception that everyone was feeling at home. The ethnic press is part of this perception, either with the digital or with the hard copy.

This is something that we have to study and we have to think about. We have to decide how to do it. Look at how many radio channels and TV channels there are. Can you tell me how many of those channels are in the hands of members of the ethnic media and the ethnic press? Two or three, probably. In Toronto, as far as I know, there is CHIN Radio, with Lombardi, who is a third-generation Canadian, but he continues, and there is a Portuguese guy, who is a first-generation Canadian.

The rest are all controlled by the mainstream media. If you go and ask them to give you half an hour, they will ask you for \$600 for that time. You cannot get from the small market that you are serving \$600 per hour, so automatically the system is going to collapse.

**Mr. Seamus O'Regan:** So in your mind, the mainstream media is too concentrated and asking for too much to reflect the ethnic communities in this country.

**Mr. Thomas Saras:** Yes, unfortunately.

I'll bring it to your attention that two years ago Rogers fired 380 people over a six-month period. All of them were members of the ethnic media, because he said that he had been licensed to serve the ethnic communities. I remember that with Iannuzzi, who received the licence for the first channel for multilingual media. That was in 1985. Mr. Mulroney was the one who gave this licence to Iannuzzi.

That was sold to Rogers because Iannuzzi could not continue the operation. He went bankrupt, and Rogers took it for nothing. Then Rogers.... Suppose the mandate of this licence was to serve the ethnic communities. He put on 28 or 30 different linguistic programs. Two years ago, they found that if they cut those programs and introduced sports, they were going to get more money than they would by serving the ethnic communities, and they did so. We went to the CRTC, we complained, we sent letters, and they did absolutely nothing.

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

**Mr. Thomas Saras:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** I want to thank both of you for coming and presenting. We heard a lot of thoughtful presentations today.

I think that what I hear you saying, Mr. Saras, and what I've heard everyone saying, is that, indeed, multiculturalism speaks clearly in the act about the participation of all Canadians in the social, economic, political, and cultural life of the country, and if the act is not being observed to allow.... Multiculturalism is about saying that you can celebrate your language and your culture. You are making some important points. Thank you very much for coming.

I want to thank the members for their participation. We will move to committee business. It will not be in camera, so nobody needs to bolt. Mr. Nantel has two motions on the table—

**Mr. Dan Vandal:** I have a motion as well, Madam Chair.

**The Chair:** Did you present that with 48 hours' notice, Mr. Vandal?

**Mr. Dan Vandal:** No, I didn't.

**The Chair:** Well, then, your motion cannot be considered.

**Mr. Dan Vandal:** Really?

**The Chair:** Unless it pertains to amendments to Mr. Nantel's motion, then no. There is a 48-hour rule, and you're supposed to submit it in both languages. Then we would consider it. Mr. Nantel gave his—

• (1035)

**Mr. Dan Vandal:** Can we not suspend the rules?

**The Chair:** That's part of all committee rules.

**Mr. Dan Vandal:** Okay. Can we not suspend the rules?

**The Chair:** No, I don't think so, Mr. Vandal.

**Mr. Dan Vandal:** Two-thirds?

**The Chair:** No, not really, unless we can get unanimous consent to let your motion come forward in both languages, and I don't think I'm hearing that.

If you send it off this afternoon, we might consider it next Tuesday.

**Mr. Dan Vandal:** Or Thursday?

**The Chair:** Thursday will not give us 48 hours if you give it today....

Oh, it would? Yes...? We'll do it on Thursday.

**Mr. Dan Vandal:** Okay. Sure, I'll do it.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Let us move to business, because we don't have a lot of time.

The first motion from Mr. Nantel is as follows:

[*Translation*]

That the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage invite the President of the Canadian Olympic Committee, Ms. Tricia Smith, as well as any other relevant Board Members, for a one-hour televised meeting to update members on the activities of the committee on the eve of the Rio de Janeiro Olympic and Paralympic Games, and that this meeting be held on Friday, June 17, 2016.

[*English*]

Mr. Nantel, speak to your motion, please.



[*Translation*]

**Mr. Pierre Nantel:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Thank you for reading the motion in French.

Mr. Lauzon told me that he was interested in the motion but that he wanted to complete it with an amendment that would include the Paralympic aspect too. I feel that is a good idea.

I would be the first to say that, when a delegation of athletes is leaving for a competition, it is not the time to bother the board of directors and disrupt the athletes' training plans.

However, I feel that it would be good for everyone to know that we have taken a look at how things are going now. I see the move as constructive, not disruptive.

I think that Mr. Lauzon is going to want to introduce his amendment, which seems very appropriate to me. I am sorry that I did not think of it myself.

[*English*]

**The Chair:** Is everyone in agreement that Mr. Lauzon present something? He is not a member of the committee, as we know. Okay.

Monsieur Breton.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Pierre Breton (Shefford, Lib.):** I am pleased that Mr. Lauzon spoke to you about that amendment. I completely agree with your motion, Mr. Nantel, especially because this is an extremely important event in Canada. Things have happened in recent weeks and I feel that this is a good opportunity for us to meet Ms. Smith.

As a member of the committee, I would like to propose an amendment asking for the committee also to invite the President of the Canadian Paralympic Committee, Gaëtan Tardif. I have that amendment in both official languages, of course.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

[*English*]

Are you in agreement with this amendment? It's a friendly amendment.

(Amendment agreed to [See *Minutes of Proceedings*])

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Mr. Van Loan.

**Hon. Peter Van Loan:** That now being amended through the friendly amendment, I don't have a problem with either of the motions. The relevant date—by my working of the calendar, if we're doing it before Friday, June 17—becomes June 7 as the latest date that we don't have something scheduled.

**The Chair:** Yes, the 7th is open. Then we were going to do the museums on the 9th, 14th, and 16th. That's fine.

**Hon. Peter Van Loan:** I think we could do the CBC on the same day.

**The Chair:** We haven't voted on the CBC yet.

**Hon. Peter Van Loan:** I know, but I'm just offering my thoughts to move things along.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Is there any further discussion? Shall I call the question?

**Mr. Darrell Samson:** Madam Chair, there's something I would like to know:

[*Translation*]

What is the link with the work that we have done up to now? I recognize that it is going to take place, but why, suddenly, is the committee making a decision that is completely off-topic?

If you have any explanation for me, it would help me to decide whether I am going to support the motion or not.

[*English*]

**The Chair:** Yes. There is no link, Mr. Samson, but sometimes, for timely reasons—and this is timely because of when the Olympics are being held—we can intervene in the study at hand and deal with something, like we did with the museums. We're taking this now to take one hour out of one of our meetings to in fact find out what's going on with both the Olympic and Paralympic committees. That's why that's allowable if the committee agrees that it is allowable.

Those in favour?

(Motion as amended agreed to [See *Minutes of Proceedings*])

**The Chair:** We have a second motion, as follows:

That the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage invite the CEO of CBC/Radio Canada, Mr. Hubert Lacroix, for a televised two-hour meeting, to update Members of the Committee on the plans and strategies of the Crown Corporation, in light of the most recent reinvestment announced in the latest federal budget, and that this meeting be held before Friday, June 17, 2016.

You are specifying a two-hour meeting, Mr. Nantel. I don't know when we're going to have that, because we're now having one hour out of the seven, and we only have one hour left.

Let us discuss this motion.

Mr. Nantel, will you speak to your motion and why you think we should do this?

• (1040)

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

[*Translation*]

Indeed, this is also an appropriate time. I know Mr. Samson has concerns in terms of our study. It is quite appropriate given the challenges that CBC has had to face in recent years. Given all those challenges and the large amounts of money involved, I feel that it is appropriate for the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage to meet with people from CBC to see how they are going to use the money.

Moreover, the Minister of Canadian Heritage is organizing a major consultation on the issue. Personally, I would like to know which direction the CBC is heading in. As the public broadcaster, it has to champion public radio and television in Canada. That is why I feel it is important to hear from those who speak for the crown corporation. I have seen people raise their eyebrows about the two-hour length, but we can come to an agreement on that.

[English]

**The Chair:** I didn't frown. I'm just wondering when we're going to find the time, that's all.

Mr. Samson.

[Translation]

**Mr. Darrell Samson:** Madam Chair, once again, I agree on the need to hear from Mr. Lacroix, but I feel that this is not a good time to do it. I believe that, instead, he should appear at the end of our work, once we have heard testimony on all the various situations. He could appear just before we finish the analysis so that we can work on the final report. I would like us to invite him, but at the right time. I think that time would be closer to the end of our study.

[English]

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Is there any further discussion?

Mr. Van Loan.

**Hon. Peter Van Loan:** I have no problem with having Mr. Lacroix come before us this spring. My concern is the practical issue of the time. If it is a one-hour meeting, we could do it as the other half on the 7th; if Mr. Nantel insists that it should be a two-hour meeting, then I think the best option is to put it on the 21st, when we may or may not sit. There's a good chance that we'll sit, but we have the risk of losing it. I suggest that if it's one hour, the 7th, and if it's two hours, the 21st.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Is there further discussion? What Mr. Samson is discussing is the timeliness of it, or the time. Mr. Van Loan is discussing the length of time.

**Mr. Darrell Samson:** To me, that's not the issue I'm concerned about. I'm concerned about receiving.... We will benefit much more from their information at the end rather than now.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Mr. Nantel.

[Translation]

**Mr. Pierre Nantel:** Mr. Samson, that is why I talked to you when I made this request. I do not believe that there is a direct link with our current study, which is very important and on which we are getting a lot of interesting feedback and testimony. There is no link.

The question is: what comes next? Now we know that CBC/Radio-Canada has new amounts of money, what process is the corporation going to go through? Of course, we are hoping that its representatives will be talking to us about regional media and local coverage, but that is not all. This is about all CBC's programming. The Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage could ask Mr. Lacroix, his senior management and his board of directors which direction they are heading in, what the principal guidelines are, and how they will be linked with the results of the major consultation.

There is no link and I fully understand the concern. We are well aware that the study will go into the fall and we hope to have an interim report. However, I feel that it is really a good time to ask

Radio-Canada's management some questions and to get an idea of what they will be doing with the sums of money that they have received this year.

[English]

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Ms. Dabrusin.

**Ms. Julie Dabrusin:** I've been listening to the different perspectives, and it sounds like two hours for Monsieur Lacroix because there's a lot of ground to cover, based not only on what we're looking at, but if you're adding other issues. We can see how quickly we go through questions right here. I'd be very reluctant to call a person twice if we can do it in one....

We're dealing with this time pressure, something that we want to do, and with a lot of questions as well. Does it make sense...? As you know, I've always been trying to rush to get through this. I want to keep going through things quickly, but does it make sense to look at this in the fall, the difference being that we have some time to look at it later, because realistically.... We're talking about maybe putting it on June 21, but we won't be here June 21, or we can cut our time in half—

**Hon. Peter Van Loan:** We may be [*Inaudible—Editor*]

**Ms. Julie Dabrusin:** We may be. I'm just saying that it sounds like it makes more sense to look at this in the fall.

• (1045)

**The Chair:** I would like to point out that, for starters, when you read this motion, you see that it talks about the most recent investment in the latest federal budget. I don't think this has anything to do, therefore, with the study we're undertaking at the moment.

While I think we talked about the Olympics and Paralympics as being extremely timely and about having to get to it before the 17th of June, there is not a timeline set on this. I know that the minister said she was going to talk to CBC about what things would look like.

I think this is an important motion. I would like to see this motion done some justice, so I think one should think about the timing. As Mr. Van Loan suggested, I don't think it would be really fair to hold it on a day when we may or may not be meeting. What we're talking about is not.... I'm not hearing people say that they're opposed to the motion per se. I think what they're speaking about is the timing of this motion and when this should take place, so I will call the vote on this motion as it stands.

However, if you wish, you may say you would put it off to the fall, in which case we don't have to make it sound as though people voted against the motion. That's just a little bit of cuteness here.

What do you think, Mr. Nantel? Comment?

[Translation]

**Mr. Pierre Nantel:** I believe that Radio-Canada is a major player in Canada in terms of culture and information and that this is perfectly in line with the study we are conducting at the moment. You can see the extent to which CBC keeps coming up in the questions we ask ourselves. In that context, I feel very comfortable saying that we will take an hour and proceed as quickly as we can. We will ask the CBC representatives to come back at the end of the study in the fall. This institution is at the heart of TV and radio broadcasting in Canada.

I can amend my proposal so that we only take one hour looking at the corporation's future plans for the new funding it has received. I propose amending the duration to one hour and inviting representatives of the crown corporation to another meeting.

[English]

**The Chair:** I want to remind the committee that we are meeting with CBC on May 19 on the topic of this study that we're currently doing, so calling them back again so soon after may not be possible. Calling them back again if we can only spend an hour and then calling them back for a second hour.... I want to speak to the practicality of it all.

[Translation]

**Mr. Pierre Nantel:** Absolutely.

Thank you, Madam Chair. You raise a valid point. However, Mr. Cormier, whom Mr. Samson knows well, I am sure, is coming to talk to us about news. He will not be talking about the general direction and the parliamentary appropriation, but about news. Of course, that is a very relevant topic in our study.

I have no monopoly on wisdom here, but I feel that it would be appropriate to meet those people quite quickly so that we find out what shape they want the reinvestment to take. Mr. Cormier's participation is perfectly appropriate when it comes to regional news. However, as you rightly pointed out, Madam Chair, that has nothing to do with this motion.

[English]

**The Chair:** Yes. So you've amended your own motion to say a one-hour meeting? Therefore, I will reread—

Ms. Dabrusin.

**Ms. Julie Dabrusin:** I was going to propose another amendment. I think we all agree that it's important to speak with them. We're all in agreement on the basic point, and the question we're talking about is timing and how much time. I was going to propose an amendment that we change “held before Friday, June 17th, 2016” to “held before...”, but I don't have our calendar for exactly when we're back. We may make it the end of September or choose a date in October, but—

• (1050)

**The Chair:** Can you give us the actual wording?

**An hon. member:** The fall.

**Ms. Julie Dabrusin:** The problem is that I don't have a date to give, but I said to be held before—

**An hon. member:** October 1.

**Ms. Julie Dabrusin:** October 1. I'll take that.

**The Chair:** All right. We have an amendment, and we will deal with the amendment before we deal with the vote on the motion. The amendment is for the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage, for a one-hour meeting—that was made by the mover, so we don't have to vote on it—to update members of the committee on the plans and strategies of, etc., and that this meeting be held after October 4.

**An hon. member:** After or before?

**The Chair:** Did you say “before”, Ms. Dabrusin?

**Ms. Julie Dabrusin:** I was trying to be mindful of the fact that you want an end date.

**The Chair:** So you say before October 4, then?

**Ms. Julie Dabrusin:** Yes.

**The Chair:** All right.

Now, discussion on the amendment?

Mr. Waugh.

**Mr. Kevin Waugh:** For television, fall is like harvest, if you don't mind me saying so, because that's when they lay out their programming, but we also have the Olympic Games, for which CBC is the supplier, and he's going to be there. We also have our two-week tour. I would not say the beginning of October. I would say later in October, if you don't mind

**An hon. member:** Or June 7.

**Mr. Kevin Waugh:** Or June 7.

**The Chair:** I would like to urge the committee on this issue.... We have now gone five minutes over time. We have another committee coming in. Whether or not they're coming in because we have a vote at 11:15 is another matter, but may I suggest that we bring this back to the next meeting?

**Some hon. members:** Yes.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Will you make a motion to adjourn, Mr. Van Loan?

**Hon. Peter Van Loan:** So moved.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

The meeting is adjourned.





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