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—
Chair

Ms. Marlene Catterall

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• (0905)

[English]

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Gary Schellenberger (Perth—Wellington, CPC)): Good morning. This is a surprise for me this morning, to chair this meeting.

I'm very pleased to welcome the vice-presidents of CBC and Radio-Canada. I'm quite sure you have a presentation to make. Without much more ado, I would ask if you would like to introduce yourselves individually and give us those words of wisdom we would hear here this morning.

[Translation]

Mr. Daniel Gourd (Executive Vice-President, French Television, Canadian Broadcasting Corporation): Good morning. My name is Daniel Gourd and I am the Vice-President of French Television, Radio-Canada. I am accompanied today by Jane Chalmers, Vice-President of English Radio, Richard Stursberg, Vice-President of English Television, and Sylvain Lafrance, from French Radio.

I would like to thank you very much for your welcome. We are pleased to have the opportunity to meet with you today, because when it comes to French television, we are the bearers of good news indeed.

As you know, two years ago, we undertook to reposition Télévision de Radio-Canada. We relied on a realistic, though aggressive, strategy to re-establish the important position of French television within the francophone community.

Our primary intent was to reaffirm the key role that it plays in the cultural development of French-speakers Canada-wide. To do so, we focused on public television's unique capacity to make bold programming choices.

For the most part, we have remained faithful to the qualities that make our television distinctive. For example, rather than climbing on the reality-TV bandwagon, we decided to continue to explore new drama formats that reflect the varied contemporary realities of our society.

We have continued to innovate and to place our trust in young authors, new actors, and talented directors, the likes of Frédéric Ouellet, Isabelle Langlois, Héléne Bourgeois Leclerc, Patrice Sauvé and many others who were duly rewarded for their efforts at the last Gemini Awards Gala.

We have strengthened our news and information role and now offer over 40 hours of such programming weekly. This is unprecedented in our history.

Furthermore, we have reinforced our distinctive character through our public affairs programs. We now offer 10 such programs every week — we are the only network to do so.

Our boldness was well met by the public, and our viewership increased strongly, exceeding our initial expectations.

Our fall programming—built on the success we experienced last winter— enabled us to garner nearly one-quarter audience share in the evenings (22.0 points), up almost seven points over the previous year and three and a half points over the entire day. In my opinion, this is historic.

Initial ratings since our winter programming schedule was launched in January are just as encouraging. Our efforts to enhance our program schedule are succeeding, and our new on-air signature, “Vous allez voir” (Just Wait and See) now seems very appropriate.

You will recall the stir caused by the program *Les Bougon* one year ago, even before the first episode was aired. It so happens that as I speak, the American networks Fox and ABC are taking an interest in the show.

Some columnists were predicting that the new comedy *Cover Girl*, which is set in transvestite circles, would cause a scandal. They proved to be wrong. Why, do you think? Because the public fully understands that our networks can indeed air this type of program. Our positioning, one of boldness and innovation, is clear.

As was to be expected, our regional programs are buttressed by the network's strengths. According to the BBM results for the fall of 2004, all news programs are on the rise in all markets.

I might add that our progress is not merely quantitative in nature. A positive and substantial change in the public's perception of us has occurred in a very short space of time.

Now to the results of the seventh barometer survey.

I am referring to a poll of 1,500 people we have conducted twice annually for the past three and a half years. This is the seventh such poll, using the same series of questions, designed to get an idea of what the public thinks of our programs, the people in them, and our competitors and their programs. So, the survey is an attempt to compare and contrast. The results of our last fall poll show that the percentage of the francophone audience that deems our programs satisfactory is up, from 71 % in March to 81 % in the fall.

Credibility remains the key feature of our new positioning that is most recognized by the francophone audience; it is also on the rise. Furthermore, 78 % of respondents held the view that Télévision de Radio-Canada fully met their expectations of what public television should be, compared to 73 % in March 2004. Eighty-six per cent of respondents believe Télévision de Radio-Canada offers quality programming, up from 81 % in March. A greater number of viewers now consider Télévision de Radio-Canada to be a network that is on the move, that stirs the imagination, and that provides innovative programming.

This significant rise in ratings and public appreciation confirms that we made the right choices.

This is no reason to let our guard down! We are fully aware that our successes are fragile. The coming year will be critical. It is of the utmost importance that we have the necessary resources to prevent a drop in our audience shares. We must maintain a strong schedule at all costs or we run the risk of losing the trust of the public, our advertisers, our producers and our employees, and incurring the dire consequences this would entail. We were able to get back on our feet, but a second fall would be fatal.

• (0910)

If this should occur, Télévision de Radio-Canada would be marginalized, and its downfall would be speedy. Shrinking audience shares and advertising revenues would be irreparable. Public support and satisfaction would tumble.

As you well know, repositioning a service such as ours is a lengthy process. In the field of television, several years may go by from the time we commit to a production to its broadcast.

We set a target of successfully repositioning Télévision de Radio-Canada within four years. It is essential that we shore up our fragile successes. In such circumstances, you will understand why the lack of stability and predictability of our financial situation is of such grave concern to us.

I would like to thank you for your interest and your support.

I would now like to hand the floor over to my colleague, Mr. Sylvain Lafrance, Vice-President, Radio de Radio-Canada and New Media.

Mr. Sylvain Lafrance (Vice-President, French Radio and New Media, Canadian Broadcasting Corporation): Mr. Chairman, ladies and gentlemen, I am proud to speak to you today about public radio in Canada. Firmly rooted in our communities, Radio de Radio-Canada includes some 20 stations or regional production centres and 14 news bureaus around the country. It represents the most comprehensive French-language news network in Canada and is the only public radio service in French in the world to broadcast over the air across an entire continent.

With over one million listeners, our radio service has attracted record audiences. The latest ratings testify to this incredible success. Overall, Radio de Radio-Canada now has a 16 % audience share. The fall 2004 results were Radio de Radio-Canada's best ever in terms of reach and audience share, both for the Première Chaîne, which continues its upward trend with a 2 % increase in listenership,

as well as for our new music network, Espace musique, whose audience jumped 43 % compared to fall 2003.

And we have more than just quantitative data. I can also assure you that the qualitative studies conducted on our services show an increase in audience satisfaction as well.

Last May, we announced a major repositioning of our networks. Our goal was to do more for young people, more for culture and more for music. Consequently, the hours devoted to culture on our second network were transferred to our mainstream network, which allowed us to both launch a major initiative for cultural diversity and increase listenership for our cultural programming.

We were deeply convinced that public radio is more than just a tradition. It also has to be a project: a project to improve the quality of our fellow citizens' democratic, cultural and musical life. This project may have disrupted old habits. But we know that, as a result, we were able to both increase audiences for cultural programming, as well as get more people listening to and discovering Canadian and world music, thus reflecting the country's diverse range of musical creativity.

Let's start with the Première Chaîne. It is Radio de Radio-Canada's main voice. Country-wide, its transmitters reached 98 % of Canada's francophones over six time zones. During prime time, its programs are produced in the regions. As I have just mentioned, its programming focuses on news and culture.

On the news front, our Première Chaîne offers complete international, national or regional newscasts every hour, three current affairs programs a day, and four public affairs magazines each week.

The other aspect of its programming, culture in all its forms, is featured in some 20 programs produced by teams that, depending on their mandate, may explore such areas as the arts, literature, philosophy, or major trends shaping the society we live in today.

The Première Chaîne proves daily that you can be a high-quality network while increasing your audience and respecting your mandate and individuality.

And so this past September, we launched Espace musique. This initiative is public radio's response to a major problem. The lack of musical diversity on the country's radio waves, the difficulty of getting air play for homegrown artists, and the difficulty of hearing music of all backgrounds created today by the many ethnic communities that enrich the Canadian music scene.

With its lineup of classical music, jazz, French-language songs, world music and emerging artists, Espace musique is the most concerted and calculated effort in public radio's recent history to broadcast and popularize homegrown talent.

Espace musique offers a real choice to listeners and attests to the public's interest in a broader musical selection. Launched only three months ago, this venture has already met with resounding success and will continue to evolve.

We were thrilled with the BBM survey results for fall 2004, which showed that our network now has 430,000 listeners—a 43% increase in its audience.

Canadian musicians will be among the first to benefit from this wider exposure. We can expect that, in the long run, Espace musique will have a ripple effect on musical diversity, just as our Première Chaîne has had on news coverage and culture.

Offering two public radio channels, both distinct and complementary, in French, and across the country, has helped us focus on our three major areas of concern for Radio de Radio-Canada: strong regional roots, openness to the world, and Canadian talent development.

Today, we can do more for Canadian culture, in all its forms of artistic expression and all its musical styles. Radio de Radio-Canada is more distinct than ever and more than capable of fulfilling its public service role.

Thank you for your attention. I would now like to introduce my colleague, Jane Chalmers, Vice-President of English Radio.

● (0915)

[English]

Ms. Jane Chalmers (Vice-President, English Radio, Canadian Broadcasting Corporation): Thank you, Sylvain.

Good morning, everyone. Thank you for this opportunity.

Canadians place a high value on CBC radio. Our services are unique on the dial. Canadians tell us that tuning in to CBC radio, wherever they happen to be, is an authentic and indispensable Canadian experience. Qualitative surveys show listener approval ratings of 96%. Such levels are unprecedented in broadcasting.

Our radio service is the product of talented and committed professionals. Our focus is on program excellence. Our success is recognized through awards and exposure of our programming around the world. Canadian stories, Canadian perspective, and Canadian artistic expression are heard around the world.

Today I focus on the foundation that defines our national radio service, that being our regional stations. Our national airwaves are in large part defined by our commitment in over 50 Canadian communities. In news and information, our stations explore local perspective, opinion, and events. In arts and culture, they discover the best of local music, drama, literature, and other forms. Through these grassroots contributions, the national services are a distinct and evolving daily portrait of Canada.

The cornerstone of our approach is the ongoing effort to ensure that local stations look, feel, and sound like the communities they serve. Our programs must therefore reflect the diversity of cultural backgrounds, political opinion, social and economic policy, age, education, artistic express, etc. This commitment must live in our hiring practices, ongoing program evaluation by staff and listeners, and dialogue and partnerships with civic and cultural organizations.

To reinforce our commitment to the regions that define Canada, we have decentralized our service. We have moved parts of our complete national shows out of Toronto to Ottawa, Winnipeg, Vancouver, and Atlantic Canada. This process is ongoing.

Finally, and this is the most difficult objective for us, we are focused on expanding our service to unserved or underserved communities. This country is growing and changing. The shifts of a

mobile population are combining with immigration to create thriving, dynamic, new urban centres. These communities want and need local CBC service. I would argue that their inclusion will enrich both CBC radio and the country.

There are now 25 cities in Canada, with populations exceeding 50,000, without CBC radio service. That's three million people unable to have access to local news coverage and cultural programs. Our vision of the future has radio in all of these cities and more. This is a centrepiece of our regional strategy.

However, our ability to maintain our current service is in serious jeopardy. Even without budget cuts, the annual creep on our finances is almost 2%. After years of cuts, redirections, implementing technology and efficiencies, we are at the limits of our ability to continually absorb these pressures.

We have a vision of embracing all segments and sectors of Canadian society. We have a vision of being a driving force in promoting Canadian culture, but to fulfill that vision, radio must be able to connect with Canadians in all communities, and to connect, we need the tools to do the job.

Thank you very much for this opportunity. I'd like to now hand it to Richard Stursberg, executive vice-president, CBC television.

Richard.

● (0920)

Mr. Richard Stursberg (Executive Vice-President, English Television, Canadian Broadcasting Corporation): Thank you, Jane. It's a pleasure to be here this morning.

I became the executive vice-president of CBC television at the end of last September, so it's been four months. Since then it has become clear to me that we need to accelerate the process of transforming CBC television that was initiated by my predecessor. I believe in a public television service that is both distinctive and popular, a service that adds public value to the airwaves, and a service people want to watch in large numbers.

This phase of our transformation initiative has four pillars: the first is to address the crisis in Canadian drama; the second is to strengthen the regional roots of CBC television; the third is to revitalize our news programs; and the fourth is to renew our commitment to children's, sports, and cultural programming. I'd like to say just a few words about each of these, in turn.

I am convinced that the number one cultural policy challenge in English Canada is the crisis in Canadian drama. Most other forms of cultural expression in our country are thriving, from newspapers and documentary production, to music and prose fiction. Television is the most powerful storytelling medium in our society and, unlike in any other English-speaking country in the world, of all the hours Canadians spend watching TV drama, less than one in ten is devoted to Canadian drama. If Canadian drama were as popular as Canadian music and literature, up to eight of the top 20 shows on Canadian television would be Canadian shows, as opposed to the current none or one.

All broadcasters have a role to play in tackling this problem, but only the CBC can be the cornerstone of a solution. The reason for this is simple. Only the CBC has the shelf space to devote to Canadian drama. Private broadcasters' economic model is based on simulcasting U.S. shows in the heart of prime time, 8 to 11 p.m., Sunday through Thursday. They simply can't afford to convert any of those hours to Canadian drama.

Let me turn next to our regional strategy. CBC television is doing its very best to reflect Canadians in every region to one another. Fully half of all our Canadian production, both in-house and independent, takes place outside of Toronto, but television is an expensive medium. At successive rounds, the budget cuts have taken their toll, especially on local programming.

We want to fix that problem. We want to be more present in more Canadian communities more often and more consistently throughout the day and week. Ideally, that would mean local programming throughout the day, at the supper hour, late at night, and on the weekends. As you know, further to your report, we have tabled our regional strategy with the minister and we are awaiting her response.

I'll touch very briefly on our other priorities.

In information programming, we recently conducted a comprehensive study of Canadians' information needs. Now we're using the results of the CBC news study to inform a fundamental reshaping of all of our news and current affairs programming on both the main channel and CBC Newsworld. We are already starting to see the results of that, with lots more to come. We are also continuing the integration of all of our CBC news resources on radio, television, and the Internet so that we can serve Canadians better and do more with less.

Finally, we intend to continue the Canadianization of our children's programming, refocus our youth strategy, and continue our commitment to both amateur sports and performing arts programs.

We need the tools to do all of these jobs, and that means money. We will be redirecting several tens of millions of dollars from other activities toward the priorities I've just outlined. We will be cancelling some programs in order to launch others. We will be further streamlining our operations to free up cash, and we will be seeking new sources of self-earned revenue. We'll be announcing some of these decisions in the coming weeks and months.

But we also need your help and that of the government. The process of developing and bringing to air a large quantity of distinctively new Canadian drama necessarily unfolds over several

years, so the success of our drama strategy depends on predictable, multi-year funding. The only way to achieve that is through a separate CBC and Radio-Canada envelope within the Canadian Television Fund so that we can license more dramas from independent producers right across this country.

• (0925)

We believe the appropriate level of access to the Canadian Television Fund for CBC and Radio-Canada is 50%, as was the case when the fund was originally set up.

In terms of the regional strategy, to restore what has been lost in local television will cost far less than what we've had to cut over the years, because today we can work much more cost-effectively. We are already doing what we can with the existing resources, and we're starting some pilot projects to experiment with different ways of expanding local presence in selected markets. But to do the job effectively, comprehensively, and permanently will undoubtedly require additional funding earmarked for this purpose.

Finally, let me just say, on behalf of all my colleagues, a word more about financial realities. When the president spoke to you late last year, he reminded you that CBC and Radio-Canada's parliamentary appropriation is worth \$415 million less today than it was in 1990. As budget day approaches, we await news about the renewal of the \$60 million—now \$50 million—in additional annual funding the government provided through "Tomorrow Starts Today", as well as news as to whether the government's 5% redirection exercise will affect us.

CBC/Radio-Canada has done more than its share to find efficiencies in its use of public money. Over the past five years we've generated \$65 million per year in permanent ongoing savings and new revenues, plus over \$100 million in one-time savings and earnings. Every year we need to find another \$12 million just to cover inflationary increases.

In closing, I can say the future we see is the one we are bringing before you today, a vision of four CBC and Radio-Canada media lines, French and English, radio and television, working together more closely and collaboratively than ever before in pursuit of our common goals as public broadcasters: excellence and distinctiveness, relevance and impact, the reflection of this country to itself, and service to Canadians.

Thank you very much, Mr. Chair and members of the committee.

We'd be pleased to answer your questions.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Gary Schellenberger): Thank you very much.

Before we get into questions, I'd just like to explain one bit of literature people may have received this morning. It was delivered to us from the ministry just this morning. I want to let everyone know, as you go through it, that it's hot off the press. It's too bad we didn't get it in advance so we could have gone through the whole document.

I would now like to start the questioning, if we could.

Thank you very much for your presentations. I also appreciated sitting in for our chair, who has just come in. It was indeed an honour for me to start this meeting today.

And we'll open with questions from Mr. Brown, please.

Mr. Gord Brown (Leeds—Grenville, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'd like to thank the four vice-presidents for coming today. I think we could have had you come individually, really, to do justice to all the various issues.

I'll go quickly, because I have a few issues.

Number one is for Ms. Chalmers, while you're here. This is a local matter for my constituency. In the city of Brockville there seems to be a little bit of a reception problem with CBC radio. Of course, you have Ottawa and Kingston. It's something I get asked about, and I've received complaints about this quite frequently.

Ms. Jane Chalmers: We can ask the head of operations in Kingston.

Mr. Gord Brown: Well, you have Kingston, of course, with your Kingston repeater and your Ottawa service. Anyway, I'll leave that one with you.

My question is for Mr. Stursberg, and it has to do with children's programming. What is the CBC doing? I realize that now a lot of children's programming is on the specialty services, but what's the CBC doing to improve and enhance Canadian children's programming?

• (0930)

Mr. Richard Stursberg: We're very heavily committed to children's programming. Pretty much the whole of the morning of the CBC schedule is taken up with children's programming. Our view is that children's programming should be advertising-free. Our general sense of what we would like to create is what we call a safe space for children, a space where they can go where they're not going to be bombarded with commercial pitches of one variety or another, so our policy is no advertising.

So far the programming is also designed in a way where we try to tie it not just into entertaining children but into assisting their development. In fact, we have quite an elaborate process we go through to test to see whether the programming we put on helps children develop mentally.

Right now our programming, I'm pleased to say, is not only working well, it's working very well. We are number one with preschool children in that time block. Our commitment at this point is to continue with those policies, and as I mentioned earlier in my remarks, I think we have one foreign program, which we're going to take out to conclude the Canadianization of the children's schedule.

Mr. Gord Brown: That's good. With a four-year-old, I'm a big consumer of children's programs, so of course that's important to me.

Another issue that has been coming up—and I know that we asked the president the last time about it—is over the Olympics in Vancouver and in Whistler in 2010, in terms of the bid to determine which broadcaster is going to be doing that from the Canadian perspective. I know it's coming up very soon. There's a great deal of concern over the fact that the CBC may have unlimited funds to run up the bid in terms of ensuring that it gets it.

Is there anything the CBC's doing to ensure that this is not the case? I think if that happened it would be to the detriment of regional programming and the other programming the CBC does. We'd like you to address that.

Mr. Richard Stursberg: We totally agree with that point of view. We're going to make a bid. We have been pulling together a partnership with some others to assist us in this bid because what we would like to have is a bid that accomplishes two things. One is that it gives Canadians the best possible coverage in French and English of the Olympics in Vancouver and at the same time is a financially responsible bid—and in this sense it's precisely what you say you would like to avoid that we would like to avoid.

If we were to overpay, then we lose our capacity to do all the things I was talking about in my remarks in terms of being able to recommit to drama, to do more in the regions, to strengthen our news and current affairs. Inevitably, it would erode our capacity to do that.

So we're putting together a bid that we think will be competitive, but one that will be responsible in terms of balancing it out against the requirements of the rest of the schedule.

The Chair (Ms. Marlene Catterall (Ottawa West—Nepean, Lib.)): Mr. Kotto, you're first up.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Maka Kotto (Saint-Lambert, BQ): Thank you, madam Chair.

Thank you for coming to speak with us this morning. I will be brief and direct.

On page 36 of the 2003-2004 annual report which you have provided, there are diagrams showing the breakdown of operating expenses. Can we use as a reference the ratio that we find in this table, that is, two-thirds for the English side and one-third for the French side?

Mr. Daniel Gourd: At Radio-Canada, the traditional breakdown is usually about 60 % to 40 %. However, it can sometimes be 63/37 or 59/41. For reference purposes, we usually say that 60 % of the funding is for the English side and 40 % is for the French side.

Mr. Maka Kotto: I don't want to split hairs, but I see that when it comes to the funding for radio, the English side is penalized: I see that they receive 42 %, whereas 58 % goes to the French-language side.

Mr. Daniel Gourd: Yes, that can happen from one year to the next, but on the whole, we use these reference points.

• (0935)

Mr. Maka Kotto: Conversely, for television, the French-language side is penalized.

Mr. Daniel Gourd: That is true. For example, extra funds were made available for the transformation that took place on the English-language television side. Last year, we received more money than usual to undertake decoding. It varies from year to year. On the whole, this is not a firm point of reference: we call it a global point of reference, which represents more or less a 60/40 breakdown.

Mr. Sylvain Lafrance: Mr. Kotto, I would like to add that the figure accounts for what is, for management purposes, the responsibility of the French-language services. For example, Radio-Canada International in Paris is probably the responsibility of French radio since it is managed by that service. We must be careful when making comparisons because these services are managed by one side or the other. This is not necessarily the program budget for each individual sector.

Mr. Maka Kotto: I understand. I would like us to briefly turn our attention to an issue which was raised by Ms. Payette in the *Journal de Montréal*, last week; the issue to which I'm referring is pay equity. For the past 30 years, female artists and employees working for Radio-Canada have been fighting for pay equity. This group includes newscasters and actresses, people whose pay is determined on a subjective basis as it is. Recent studies show that virtually nothing has changed since the 1970s: a gap of around 30 per cent still separates the salaries earned by men and women in these jobs.

Given that the situation for employees of the English network is far more palatable, how would you explain this anomaly on the French side, and what do you plan to do to resolve the situation?

Mr. Daniel Gourd: Firstly, I should point out that the problem of salary equality, for it is indeed an issue of salary equality between men and women and not equity, is one which affects a particular group of our employees. It affects those employees who have additional income, be it by means of overtime, or because they have a particular ability or market value which results in their being awarded an income supplement over and above the amount set out in the pay schedule. The pay schedules are the same for everyone.

We recognized that there was a problem, and furthermore, we carried out an in-depth study in partnership with the SCRC, the union representing these employees. We drafted a report, we developed a work plan which was published some two years ago, and together with the union, we are currently working to resolve this problem. We committed to resolving the matter by 2007.

The analysis offered by Ms. Payette in her article reflects the situation as it was four years ago. It was at this time that we had a fairly significant confrontation with the union and recognized that there were problems. We are in the process of resolving these problems.

Mr. Maka Kotto: Nevertheless, you must recognize that this is a problem that has been with us for some time now. It is little wonder that people are asking themselves why it cannot be solved.

Mr. Daniel Gourd: You have to understand that this is not a problem specific to Radio-Canada, but, rather, one which affects today's society in general. If you take all businesses operating in Quebec...

Mr. Maka Kotto: Yes, I'm aware of that. But, two wrongs do not make a right. We are here to do something about the situation.

Mr. Daniel Gourd: Yes, the situation was brought to our attention. We often review things on a case-by-case basis, and then we get statistics and we are able to draw conclusions. As soon as Sylvain and I realized what was happening, we made a formal commitment to resolve the problem, which is what we are doing at this time.

Mr. Maka Kotto: Would it be possible to have some further information on expenditures relating to what is preventing the settlement of...

Mr. Daniel Gourd: We can do better than that. If you would like, we can send you all the documents and all the work that we have done thus far. We have several documents. We will send you the entire file, the same information that we gave to your predecessor, the member for Quebec. You will be able to see for yourself what we have done so far and how we are in the process of solving this problem.

Mr. Maka Kotto: Fine. That would be very useful.

Earlier, Mr. Stursberg spoke of doing more with less. Are you being hurt by cutbacks at Radio-Canada? That is a straightforward question, and all I need is a straightforward answer.

Mr. Daniel Gourd: I can give you an answer in terms of the French television network. The problem that we are currently experiencing is the result of our commercial revenue being around \$10 to \$13 million less than anticipated. It is therefore imperative that we implement corrective measures for the upcoming year, because we do not have the necessary revenue to fund next year's programming.

We did receive some help from headquarters, but it remains, nonetheless, a difficult time for us. Last year, our ratings reached an all-time low. As a result, our air time dropped in value, meaning that we sold less and at a lower price. Next year, given that our ratings have improved, we ought to be able to do better. But the shortfall in revenue means that we will have to change tack. The cutbacks have to do with neither grants nor the way in which the institution is run, but, rather, the commercial market.

• (0940)

[English]

The Chair: Mr. Christopherson.

Mr. David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre, NDP): Unfortunately, having just received this, it's a bit of a scramble to try to get on top of the document. I thank you all for your presentation.

I'm going to start with the infamous memo, to get that out of the way.

As you know, Mr. Stursberg, there's a lot of concern about where you've been in the past on some of these issues. I know you've taken the time in some media reports to distance yourself from that memo. Given that what was in that memo versus where we want to go and even what your plan is purporting to do today are completely different directions, maybe you could just help clear the air for all of us and relieve our anxiety about where or where not you plan to take things.

Mr. Richard Stursberg: I'll tell you a funny thing. I'd been talking to the president about taking this job, and inevitably we were thinking to ourselves, okay, when this gets announced, people are going to have one issue or another or one question or another about it.

Do you know what? I had totally forgotten about that. So I was surprised when it resurfaced, because it had been a story from 1996. It was a story from eight years ago, and even then it was a kind of non-story.

The Chair: I have a point of order here.

Mr. Christopherson, not everybody on the committee is aware of what you're referring to.

Mr. Richard Stursberg: Would you like me to explain the story?

Mr. David Christopherson: I don't want to lose all my time on this.

The Chair: I'll give you time. People do have to know what the discussion is about.

Mr. David Christopherson: It's in the media; it was reported in the paper. A memo that came out in 1996 talked about the future of the CBC. It talked about going in a completely radically different direction from where we want to go and what's purported here today, and I was just asking for his comments. I can't provide everybody with all my homework.

Mr. Richard Stursberg: Very simply, my view is the view that I have expressed today. That is my view as to where we should be going.

Mr. David Christopherson: So that should be our starting point.

Mr. Richard Stursberg: Absolutely.

Mr. David Christopherson: Again I want to emphasize how disappointing it is to be handed a document literally minutes before the meeting starts, given the document's size and importance and comprehensiveness.

Mr. Richard Stursberg: Can I just make a little observation about this?

Mr. David Christopherson: Yes, sure.

The Chair: I believe this document was provided by the department, not by CBC officials.

Mr. Richard Stursberg: Right, but I will just tell you the backdrop to it, if I may.

What happened was that this committee asked for some proposals with respect to what we might do to better reconnect, locally and regionally, so, as the president noted in his letter to the chair, we produced a set of proposals.

These proposals were sent off to the minister around the beginning of December. Since then we've had a couple of discussions with officials as to what the report was. It was our view it was kind of up to the department and the minister to decide when she would like to release the report to the committee. As it turns out, I understand that she's released the report this morning, so I sympathize with your inability....

One of the things we would be completely happy to do is...if you would like, when you have had a chance to read it and think about it,

we would all be delighted to come back here and spend whatever time you need to go through it in detail and to talk about it, rather than trying to do it in a kind of haphazard way this morning. We are completely at your disposal whenever you want to.

Mr. David Christopherson: I appreciate that very much. That would be very helpful to the chair and to the delegates. It takes a little bit of pressure off in terms of trying to cram everything in, given the importance of all this.

I represent Hamilton, by the way. I'm the largest population that is underserved and recognized, so I'm here both on behalf of the caucus and as a Hamiltonian saying that we want our coverage.

One of the things that's been brought to my attention is a lack of detail. It will mention greater TV presence, but what exactly does that mean? If you are going to come back to a subsequent meeting, will you be prepared to provide those kinds of details, so that we can look at exactly what you mean when you refer to increased presence here, increased service there?

Mr. Richard Stursberg: Absolutely. Absolutely, we would be delighted to do that. We are in your hands. If you'd like to reflect on it, we'll come back whenever you want and go through the report in detail with you.

Mr. David Christopherson: I'm sure the other committee members will comment on that, but I'm sure my colleague Charlie Angus would very much appreciate a chance to go through this. I know that the friends of CBC and others have an interest. I would like to take it back to my people in Hamilton to have a look at it.

• (0945)

Mr. Richard Stursberg: Sure, absolutely.

Mr. David Christopherson: While we're on the subject, though, let's start sorting it out. What sorts of dollars are we talking about, and what do you mean when you say things like increased service and increased presence? Is it a standard for each underserved area? Is there a particular formula?

Mr. Richard Stursberg: When you get into the report, you will see that it's a couple of different things. In the case of radio, it's largely the extension of radio to unserved areas. In the case of television, it's principally an increase in the amount of time in which we broadcast local news and information and cultural shows. So it's a little bit different between the two.

There is a series of proposals—just ideas, not cast in concrete—to give people a general sense of where the extension might be. In the case of English television—and the others should speak for their areas—the general notion is that what we would ultimately like to do.... You know we had to retreat to a certain extent from local coverage; we'd like to come back to local coverage.

We'd like to be able to put up hour-long local supper-hour newscasts; we'd like to have late-night supper-hour newscasts; we'd like to be able to cover local culture more effectively on television; and we'd like to be with Canadians throughout the course of the day in terms of what's going on in their local communities. That's the gist of the idea.

Mr. David Christopherson: The only thing, if I still have time, is you mentioned that things aren't cast in stone, but at what point will they be? If you come back for the next round of discussions, those details will be...?

Mr. Richard Stursberg: This plan costs about \$80 million. What we'd like to do is come back and have a further conversation with the committee. We'd like to hear the views from other people as to how best to do this. Then if the money is forthcoming from the government, we will finalize the plan and get moving.

Mr. David Christopherson: What was the total amount?

Mr. Richard Stursberg: About \$80 million, but it ramps up over three years, so it's \$80 million by the end of the third year.

Mr. David Christopherson: Have you had any initial feedback from the government, from the minister?

Mr. Richard Stursberg: No. We've had a couple of conversations. As I say, the president and I saw the deputy minister and his senior officials a couple of days ago just to chat about the plan, but it was more just to ensure that they understood the nuts and bolts and how we were going at it. But we haven't had any signals.

Ms. Jane Chalmers: Could I add a few things to what Richard was saying?

For the radio portion of this plan, it is largely trying to provide service to underserved areas, and you'll see in there, layered in, that there are new stations, and there are regulatory implications to that for large urban centres. I think you could read between the lines.

Mr. David Christopherson: I'm trying. I'm hoping.

Ms. Jane Chalmers: Yes, and the other thing is that I come from western Canada, and every place I go I've seen that we can do a better job out there on the cultural side. The idea is to put more of our resources and our capacity out in western Canada and other parts of the country to bring more of the cultural expression that exists in the regions of the country to the country, and also to the regions themselves. That's the thinking behind it.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Mr. Simms.

Mr. Scott Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor, Lib.): Thank you.

There are two things I want to address: radio and TV. I probably have more praise for one than the other, but I'll let it go anyway. It was touched on earlier but I want to touch on it again, because at this point, with the question being asked, I think I can offer a comment.

About two weeks ago in central Newfoundland, Radio 2 came on line. And I want to congratulate you, Ms. Chalmers, and everybody, because there was a level of sensitivity that was not brought before. Also, I think at a time when private radio is probably going more towards centralized news, a report filed here and there but read and basically editorialized by the centre, it's a refreshing thing to hear as opposed to see. I want to congratulate you on that, and I sincerely hope that what you discussed earlier is going to be carried forward, please.

On the other side, on the television side, there was absolute disdain for what happened on the supper-hour newscast. It was a decision that ran roughshod over regional sensitivities. I believe that

being reduced from an hour to a half an hour was a decision that was done from the centre to the detriment of these regions. You said earlier that you do want to return to the 60-minute newscasts on local, and I wanted you to know that I hope you do it on a regional basis, meaning that if you need to save money, if something doesn't work, can you look at a particular market and gauge the feasibility of that market? Because what happened last time was you basically reduced a substantial audience in the province of Newfoundland and Labrador by just cutting a half an hour, which no private broadcaster or any broadcaster worth his salt would ever do.

One of the reasons why I say that is because you said earlier that you wanted to show Canadians to the rest of Canada. I don't mind—I shouldn't say I don't mind—I actually enjoy watching a report about the problems in the east end of Vancouver and the drug situation they have. As someone who lives in central Newfoundland, I find that interesting, and it's because of that I have far more of a connection with Vancouver than I do Boston, even though we have economies and lifestyles that are very similar, more similar than the west. But that's what the CBC does.

What I am afraid of is that if you reduce the regional presence, the people in Vancouver won't hear my story. Gander opened its gates, its homes, to the people involved in 9/11, and it was a wonderful story, but I don't think the rest of Canada would have heard about that if the Americans weren't there first covering it, quite frankly. I want to hear about the beautiful architecture of all these churches in the small towns of eastern Quebec, but I'm afraid that won't get covered if you keep making editorial decisions from the centre, because that's what happens.

I hope that's what you had in mind when you said that you do want to show the rest of Canada to Canadians. I hope it's not these major markets being shown to the rest of Canada.

• (0950)

Mr. Richard Stursberg: Let me make a couple of observations. One is that I agree completely with the thrust of what you're saying. But I would put it this way. We want to show all Canadians the country. We don't want to just show them the different parts of the country, we want them to hear the different voices and different views of the different parts of the country, which is a different thing. Having a picture of a lighthouse at Peggy's Cove is not that interesting, but hearing what it is that people in Halifax and Nova Scotia think is going on really matters.

When we think about this we want to create a news service in which people can hear and understand what people in different parts of the country are thinking and what the people in different parts of the country are feeling.

As far as Newfoundland is concerned, what you refer to is quite right. The newscast was a tremendous success, and since the format was changed—this is, frankly, a little before my time, so I'm catching up with it—the audience has slumped profoundly.

I mentioned earlier that one of the things we were doing was we were trying to figure out how, if the new money were forthcoming to allow the CBC to reconnect locally, we would do this, and how we would do these supper-hour newscasts in a way that would allow us to take advantage of the changes that have been made over the last little while in terms of the integration of radio and television news resources and in terms of what we've learned from the news study I referred to.

So we're going to do these pilots, and one of the pilots is going to be precisely in St. John's. That's exactly where we want to go. We want to go there—

Mr. Scott Simms: I'm sorry to interrupt. A pilot, did you say?

Mr. Richard Stursberg: Yes. We're going to take the local supper-hour newscast as it is in St. John's and we're going to get rid of it. We're going to expand it back to a full hour, and we're going to treat it as a pilot. We're going to do three of these across the country so that we can understand better how to—as I mentioned, if the resources were to become available—spend those resources in a way that will be as intelligent and as useful as possible. So we're going to start doing that, and one of the areas we're going to focus on is St. John's.

Mr. Scott Simms: Now I have praise for everyone, then. That's great. This works out rather well.

Thank you, Mr. Stursberg.

Ms. Chalmers, I have a quick question for you.

The Chair: I'm sorry, your time is up. I'll be happy to come back to you.

Mr. Scott Simms: I have to leave.

The Chair: Ms. Oda.

Ms. Bev Oda (Durham, CPC): Thank you, Madam Chair.

Before I start, without taking time from my questioning, I would like to put some clarification on the record.

My office had been asking for this report for a number of days and it wasn't forthcoming. Therefore I had to speak directly with the minister last evening to ask her to provide this. Unfortunately, she was not able to provide this any sooner, since it was after 6 p.m. last night. Consequently, her commitment was to provide it. I explained that it was not going to be very useful to us by providing it this morning.

So this is just to clarify how this may have come about.

● (0955)

The Chair: May I suggest that if you feel there's something that should be in front of the committee when we have witnesses coming up, perhaps the minister's office should anticipate, but—

Ms. Bev Oda: I did not ask for it to come to committee. I asked for it to be provided to me in my role as the critic, and she indicated that she chose to provide it to committee, not directly to my office.

The Chair: I'm just saying I'd be happy to assist at any time in any of those matters, Bev.

Ms. Bev Oda: Thank you.

Thank you very much for coming. I certainly anticipate your appearance here and look forward to it.

In the context of the public broadcaster, the public broadcaster has a special role and certainly a special mandate. And how do you see your role being fulfilled, particularly with the responsibility of exposing and making accessible to Canadians those other works, the other arts, crafts that receive government funding? For example, on NFB projects, should there be a commitment from the CBC to directly commit to exposing and making accessible, on a consistent basis, all projects or featuring arts and culture programming, other artifacts, creative works that also receive government funding? I think what the government has asked for is more accessibility, and yet for a vehicle such as the NFB there is no dedicated commitment to showing all NFB products.

Mr. Richard Stursberg: Well, we actually show quite a lot of NFB stuff. It comes in two forms. One form is that we pick up NFB documentaries and put them on the main channel, and sometimes on Newsworld.

Ms. Bev Oda: I know you do that, Mr. Stursberg, but I guess my question is should there be a commitment to be the first exposure of all NFB-supported programs?

Mr. Richard Stursberg: No, I don't think so. I think if they make things that are appropriate for English television, absolutely, we will pick them up, and we have.

The only other thing I was going to say is that, as you know, we're involved in a co-venture with the NFB through the Documentary Channel; Corus, the CBC, and the NFB are partners in the Documentary Channel. So there's another vehicle that's also available to ensure that the NFB pilot gets out.

Ms. Bev Oda: Thank you.

My next question is going to be taken from page 2 of your presentation today. I know you have insight into the challenges to Canadian drama; you've pointed out that private broadcasters do have a different circumstance. Do I read this paragraph then to say that under your leadership, the CBC will commit to having 8 to 11 p.m. for Canadian drama on a dedicated basis? If so, what would be the minimum commitment you would be making? It sounds to me you've carved out a role for yourself here. We'd like to know what the commitment would be to Canadian drama.

Mr. Richard Stursberg: Maybe just to give a little background on this, when we talk about prime time, the CRTC defines prime time as 7 to 11 every night of the week, Monday to Sunday. But in fact, when you look at when Canadians actually watch TV, real prime time is 8 to 11, Sunday to Thursday. In fact, you'll see that the viewing of conventional channels, the big channels like CTV or CBC or Global, falls off by about 26% when you get out of those hours, the 8 to 11 o'clock, into other hours.

Ms. Bev Oda: Mr. Stursberg, because of the limit in time, I just want to make sure that I do get my question answered. I think you've explained very carefully, and I think we all understand the challenges.

What I'm saying here is that you've identified that there is a challenge for a private broadcaster to commit to showing Canadian drama. I'm asking you what the CBC's minimum commitment to Canadian drama would be in peak viewing times.

•(1000)

Mr. Richard Stursberg: We would like to effectively double the amount of drama we're doing.

Ms. Bev Oda: From how many hours now?

Mr. Richard Stursberg: Right now, we do four high-impact series or roughly four to five series per year. We'd like to double that. We do two drama series, and we'd like to double that. We do about three or four comedy half-hours; we'd like to add another comedy half-hour. We'd like to put on a big-time soap opera.

To do that, however, the point we make here is that we need to be able to ensure that we have access to the Canadian Television Fund at the level I described in the document. If we have that access, then we will find the necessary resources internally by cancelling other programs and improving our revenue yields to be able to finance it. That's what we would like to do.

Ms. Bev Oda: Understood.

You may not have the answers today for my last question about your plans for regional and local programming, but if you could provide them, maybe in writing, within a reasonable amount of time....

You've mentioned there would be a requirement for about \$80 million, phased in. Could you break down that \$80 million as to how much would be for French service versus English service, radio and television? How much in each of those categories would go to programming, how much to operations, how much to infrastructure, and how much to your website or your Internet activities?

Mr. Richard Stursberg: Sure. When we come back, we will talk to you about all of those things, if you would like to have us back to go through those.

Ms. Bev Oda: Well, I've asked if you could provide answers to at least those questions. They're very specific questions. Because of our schedule, we may not be able to have you back.

Also, some of these new commitments or resources would be shared with radio, TV, and specialty...the other services that exist right now. Do you have any idea of how that would split out, or how much of the \$80 million would be utilized, dedicated, or shared with existing services?

Mr. Richard Stursberg: I don't have the numbers in front of me, but we'll send them along to you. We didn't bring along even the documents because we didn't think they would be here today.

Ms. Bev Oda: Okay, thank you.

Madam Chair, could we decide the timeframe in which those responses could be expected?

Thank you very much.

The Chair: Mr. Stursberg, you might want to indicate how long it might take to get that back to the committee.

Mr. Richard Stursberg: I don't know. It may take a couple of weeks, I think. It's not complicated. All this work has been done to

roll the thing up, in any event. It shouldn't be a problem to get it to you in a couple of weeks. We'll try to do it in less time if we can.

The Chair: Thanks very much.

Mr. Lemay.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Marc Lemay (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ): A very good morning to our witnesses, the vice-presidents. Madam Chair, I have studied the document carefully, and I would like to have a colour copy, because the third photo from the top is really interesting to me. As a former president of the Mondial du Vélo, I think that it should be interesting to study this document, perhaps it will change our attitude.

I have three questions. I imagine that it is the same situation in English and in French, but I am going to speak French, and perhaps one of the vice-presidents could give me some answers.

In my region, Radio-Canada news coverage stops on Friday evenings at 5.30 p.m. and begins again on Monday mornings at 6:00 a.m. No matter what happens in my region, we will hear nothing about it; we will hear all about the big accident on the boulevard Décarie in Montreal, but nothing about the four which took place in our region. I am not here to talk about deaths, I want to address something else. When we broached the subject of regionalization...

I've read the document and I am glad to hear that you will be coming back to it, because I have some questions. I imagine that the situation is the same for the English network. I do not know how you are going to improve the situation, but it is essential that you do, because the world does not stop turning from 5:30 p.m. on Friday until Monday morning.

I am going to ask my three questions, and you can decide who will answer them.

Firstly, as someone who is very involved in sports, I can say that Radio-Canada should stop using the term "amateur". There is no such thing as an amateur athlete anymore, be it in English or in French. Today, we talk about elite athletes, because, frankly, the word amateur sounds a bit amateurish. You ought to use the same terminology that is used by Sports Canada, and which is recognized all over the world. The Berlin wall came down in 1991, so it is time to start talking about elite sports.

The question of broadcasting rights for the 2010 Olympic Games is going to be decided in the next few days. I know that Radio-Canada is ready. Surely, you have a good chance of winning the broadcasting rights. What programming do you have planned? How does Radio-Canada plan on preparing Canada, and Quebec in particular, for the 2010 Olympic Games in Vancouver and Whistler? What is in the pipeline for this special event? I obviously have an interest in this; Quebec boasts some exceptional winter sport athletes.

Thirdly, although we are now in 2005, and in spite of being only 600 kilometres north of Ottawa, some areas of my region still do not get a Radio-Canada radio signal. Can something be done about that?

My last question is for the four vice-presidents. On Parliament Hill, rumour has it that the CBC French and English networks are to become ever more intertwined; they are to share newsrooms and cameras. Will they soon be sharing journalists? Are you going to be employing bilingual journalists so that you can send them from one posting to the next, as is done in the RCMP? That is my question. Is there any basis to this rumour, or are you planning on keeping two entirely separate networks, one English and one French?

Those are my four questions.

• (1005)

Mr. Daniel Gourd: I will answer your question regarding the Olympic Games. Obviously, we are not going to disclose our promotional package for the Vancouver Olympic Games here, because that will be part of our presentation before the international Olympic Committee next Monday.

However, I can tell you that over the next two years we will be covering the Turin and Beijing games. Until 2010, we are therefore responsible for the Olympic brand and the promotion of elite sport. I appreciate your comment, and from now on we will indeed be referring to elite sport. We have already made some changes in that direction. We will obviously be setting up a major awareness-raising campaign to promote our athletes, Canada and Olympism as a whole. However, if you don't mind, we will not disclose the content of our Olympic proposal here, which will be made public in due course.

I will let Sylvain Lafrance answer your other two questions. Jane or Richard will probably answer your question on the delegation.

Mr. Sylvain Lafrance: First, with regard to having news seven days a week, we agree. In fact, under our plan the proposal is to get back to news seven days a week on radio and on T.V. throughout the regions. It's very important to us, and it's a weakness we had noted as well. Under the regional plan, it is important to get back to offering news seven days a week for mostly francophone regions. We are also discussing offering public debates once again, in other words analyses and public affairs debates. This is a frequent request from people in the regions. In some francophone regions, there is no daily newspaper nor is there another TV or radio station. So, there is no public debate elsewhere than on Radio-Canada. The issue of culture is also important. You see, all of this will be available in the document.

Now, it is true that broadcasting problems remain in some regions. I am conscious of the problems in LaSarre, notably. We are constantly reviewing and improving our broadcasting system. Over the last two years, it is true that we did focus strongly on the development of our second station, which became Espace musique and is currently available throughout Canada. With respect to problems in various sectors, I would say that new broadcasting technologies are allowing us to find solutions to problems more easily than 10 years ago. We will therefore look into the specific problem you are referring to.

Before I hand over the floor to Richard or Jane with respect to the issue of integration, I would say that on the French side, the Société Radio-Canada does indeed want to manage all of its resources more efficiently. In fact, some technologies now allow us to do just that. We are convinced of the need to make the best use of all the savings

generated by these technologies and by the opportunities brought about by consolidation. We are talking about intelligent integration, and in fact it will be done with respect for each medium. When it comes to media character, specifically French media, we will ensure that there is respect for francophone work environment. It's in our interest to do so. That being said, equipment and premises may be shared in some cases to allow for more efficient equipment management.

I don't know if Jane had something to add.

• (1010)

Mr. Daniel Gourd: I'd like to add something.

Ottawa is quite different from other regions. The four services have a lot of work to do in Ottawa and are very present here. In five years' time, we plan to have all special staff, specifically journalists as well as management staff, able to use both languages. This will allow us to be able to work together better and consequently to put our resources to better use.

Wherever possible, we encourage our journalists to become bilingual. Internationally, when it comes to television, we share the services of several correspondents with the English network. This allows us to have better coverage of the world. Instead of having two journalists in the same place, whenever possible, we retain the services of correspondents able to serve both networks.

Basically, in the country, there are two main cultures, and we will continue to serve both in both languages to the best of our ability. Whenever we have an opportunity to work on a dramatic series with English TV, we do so, but we always strive to serve the public, be it francophone or anglophone, first and foremost. We do our best to offer this service. We bear this in mind in any programming decision. It is our priority.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you. I've given you quite a bit of extra time because that was a very thorough answer.

Mr. Khan.

Mr. Wajid Khan (Mississauga—Streetsville, Lib.): Thank you for being here today.

I have several questions. I'm trying to get a better understanding of the revenue streams, yields, and so on, but due to time constraints, I'll restrict myself to two issues. Both of them actually relate to dollars.

How can we be assured that your Olympic bid will be based on a sensible business plan and not come at the cost of programming in general, and specifically, English drama, etc.?

The second question is this. Since we are talking about dollars and cents, what is the future of CBC and Radio-Canada International's shortwave in light of the Internet and other media? Should it be downgraded to save some money? I understand there is a substantial amount of funds spent there.

Mr. Richard Stursberg: Maybe I'll start with the Olympic Games. As I mentioned earlier, we're very conscious of this. We have to get the bid right. What we do not want to do, and we will not do, is overpay, because if we did that, then precisely all the things we've been talking about that we want to do will be compromised, whether those be the drama things, the regional things, or the renewal of the news. We absolutely do not want to do that. That would be silly, since it would in fact destroy the very things we're trying to accomplish. I think you can be confident that we would not do that, since we'd be cutting off our nose to spite our face.

Mr. Sylvain Lafrance: I'm responsible for Radio-Canada International also, and I can tell you that when you look at world broadcasting, there is a technology issue. Shortwave is decreasing, in fact, in a lot of countries, but it continues to be very useful and very listened to in a lot of parts of the world.

At the same time, you have globalization, which creates some needs for international broadcasters, and if you ask Canadians what they want in regard to RCI and the CBC, they want our voices to be heard abroad and they want our values to be broadcast abroad, and it's important for us to do that.

So we repositioned Radio-Canada International last year in a way that will allow us to be distributed not only on shortwave, but we're actually distributed on satellite, shortwave, and FM partnership stations, and we're actively broadcasting in a lot of countries in the world in a lot of different ways. We think RCI has a wonderful avenue for now.

Six months ago we launched a new section, the Portuguese section for Brazil, because we think it's important for us to be there. We did that in consultation with the external affairs department. We think it's very important for Canadians to be there at this specific moment, because things are moving very quickly in the international broadcasting world.

• (1015)

Mr. Wajid Khan: Could somebody tell me what the ratings are on the television side? I understand radio is doing quite well. What are the ratings for CBC TV, and how does that relate? Is the revenue yield reflected accordingly? Is that going up or down?

Mr. Richard Stursberg: Revenue runs off ratings. That's absolutely, completely connected to ratings.

CBC English television's ratings were in some difficulty over the course of the last few years. What's happened in the last two or three years is that the erosion of the share has stopped and in fact it has started to pick up. Last year they would have had about a nine share. That was a little bit artificially inflated by some events, but typically we'd be tracking this year to roughly a seven and a half share.

As I mentioned, I think the great challenge for CBC is to make programming that is appropriate to a public broadcaster, that is in the public interest, and that is popular. We are very committed to doing precisely that.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Khan.

Mr. Obhrai.

Mr. Deepak Obhrai (Calgary East, CPC): Thank you, Madam Chair.

Thank you for coming here.

As a public broadcaster, CBC has quite a large influence on Canada, and as such, you seem to elicit a love-hate relationship with Canadians. I'll stick to the hate relationship today.

The Chair: May I come back to the love relationship a little later?

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: You can come back to it.

You seem to be very slow in changing the environment that takes place in Canada. Canada is dramatically changing, but CBC has been criticized for very slow change. I'll be very blunt with you. I've been looking at CBC and I will say that yes, you are very slow in picking up on the realities that are on the ground here.

Let me give you an example. For the last 25 years that I have been in this country, your programming for aboriginal people on the main CBC has not been excellent. Canadians would like to know more about other cultural communities, but you are extremely slow in doing that.

As a matter of fact, in my riding, which is a blue-collar-worker riding, both CBC radio and CBC television are tuned out because they don't feel that you reflect their points of view on these things.

As a matter of fact, the criticism that is being levelled at you is that you cater to the elite in this country and you do not cater to all the other ordinary Canadians. Yet I look at your programs and I don't see anything that you are really attempting to go ahead on.

An example is even on your newscast. For the last 10 to 15 years, I see the same correspondents giving the same points of view. I can deduce their points of view very quickly, and I don't have to listen to them because I know what they're going to say.

Change is not happening within the CBC. What are you going to say about those criticisms?

Mr. Richard Stursberg: It's interesting that people share that concern. It's fascinating to me.

As I say, I've really only been there for four months, but they have done an enormously interesting thing. About a year and a half ago, they initiated the news study. The news study was a gigantic review of what it is that Canadians want by way of news and information programming, both in radio and television. It consisted of everything from anthropological studies right through to big, quantitative studies with properly drawn samples, etc.

There are a number of things that came out very clearly from the news study. The news study says that Canadians want news that matters to them. They want news that reflects how they live. That's what they want. What they don't want is news that talks down to them. They don't want news that is based on elites. They don't want news in which they have a whole bunch of artificially structured talking heads. They want news that is reflective of how they really live. They want to see the greys, as well as the blacks and whites, and they want to see a greater range of coverage.

What has happened is this. This is what I was referring to in part, in my remarks. The news study has been the subject of an enormous review that we're in the process of doing right now, within the news and current affairs department, on how we're going to do the news differently in the future to take into account what we've learned from the news study in terms of what Canadians want. I think that we're going to news that is more broadly based in terms of the issues it covers, news that is, as you say, more closely connected with the preoccupations of the people we're attempting to serve, and news that has a wider variety of opinion, even if that opinion is grey and unclear as to what's going on. We want to give people a newscast that they can use to formulate their own views on how they should live in the world.

We're in the process of doing that right now. One of the things in terms of the local stuff that I was talking about is to use these pilots to explore some of these issues. You will have seen some of the programming that recently started on Newsworld reflects this, but there is a bigger series of changes coming to Newsworld. This will have ramifications right through *The National* and all of the broadcasting.

• (1020)

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: So you will retain your job. I believe there is a culture of change now.

Mr. Richard Stursberg: On the culture of change, as I said at the very beginning of my remarks, I think that the pace of change has to accelerate within the CBC. I agree with that.

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: All right.

The Chair: Thank you.

Ms. Bulte.

Hon. Sarmite Bulte (Parkdale—High Park, Lib.): Thank you very much for coming.

It's perfect, Mr. Obhrai, that I get to come next. You did the hate side; I get to do the love side of the equation.

First of all, let me begin by thanking you all for coming today. Monsieur Gourd and Monsieur Lafrance, congratulations to you, *félicitations* on your numbers. What you're doing in French-speaking Canada is wonderful, and we need to hear more of it. Your numbers are just amazing.

Ms. Chalmers, your work at CBC radio, again, is 96%. Mr. Stursberg, I think you'll agree we have a little work to do to on the English-speaking side of television to catch up with your colleagues.

There are a couple of things I wanted to speak about in my five minutes. Monsieur Lafrance, on Radio-Canada International—correct me if I'm wrong—there's a special contribution for it that's made outside of the general appropriations. Am I right?

Mr. Sylvain Lafrance: It's now within the appropriations. It has been for a year now.

Hon. Sarmite Bulte: It is. Okay.

That money has remained the same, has it not?

Mr. Sylvain Lafrance: Yes, it has remained the same.

Hon. Sarmite Bulte: Let me first congratulate you and thank you on behalf of the many Ukrainian-speaking Canadians who live in my

riding for continuing your coverage that followed what was happening in the elections there. I know that there has been some concern in the Ukrainian community that you are going to stop services in Ukrainian. On behalf of that community, I ask you to please revisit that.

If revisiting it requires more funds.... I haven't heard a plea for more funds from RCI. I think RCI plays a very important role internationally as a voice of democracy and that Canada is at the forefront. Please don't hesitate to ask us for money in that connection.

• (1025)

Mr. Sylvain Lafrance: I would be happy to do so, Ms. Bulte.

Hon. Sarmite Bulte: Ms. Chalmers, you talked about the need for more moneys as well. My understanding is that a lot of the costs you incur, like the royalties you have to pay, continue to go up every year. This is something, again, we don't understand. When we hear music on the radio, we think we're getting it for free; but there is in fact a cost to having that music on the air.

Mr. Stursberg, on the CTF, the Canadian Television Fund, how much more money are we looking at? You're not suggesting \$50 million of the \$100 million already there. It's oversubscribed as it is. You must be looking at more moneys there.

Second, we already have a lot of Canadian product. We see it at the Genies every year. I'm a great supporter of more Canadian content. We seem to have lots of Canadian movies already, but they don't have the shelf space.

We haven't really talked about the hockey strike and the problem with revenue it's created, but on *Movie Night in Canada* I don't necessarily want to see U.S. movies. I know that you're customer-driven. I would like to see Canadian movies. We have great movies—Denys Arcand's *The Barbarian Invasions* is a fabulous movie. You could even put it on with subtitles in English Canada. It is a fabulous movie.

We have wonderful filmmakers. Go to the film festival. I know there are rights associated with all those things, but I think we're too quick to forget that we have this wonderful product already and we really need to showcase it.

In answer to one of your questions, you said you were going to do another drama. *Coronation Street* is great, but it's not Canadian.

Mr. Sylvain Lafrance: I agree.

Hon. Sarmite Bulte: My concern is, what are we going to do to get that Canadian product on and to make sure there is that space on CBC to watch films? I think we have great Canadian films.

Mr. Richard Stursberg: When we talk about doing a soap, we're obviously not talking about doing *Coronation Street*. We are talking about making a Canadian *Coronation Street*. So it would be a Canadian soap opera. That's the general idea.

I think we have a huge issue with regard to English drama in Canada. Whether you're talking about movies or TV, it isn't working. We are not getting the level of attention by Canadians for what is being produced. That much is clear. If you compare the results in Canada with the results for any other industrialized country or any other English-speaking country, you'll see that Canadians are not watching Canadian drama at the levels people are watching their domestic drama in every other country.

My own view is that this is a category problem. We need a lot of very high-quality Canadian drama in deep prime time, because that's the only way you're actually going to do things such as build stars. Somebody can't be a star if they only appear in a production once every two or three years. They have to appear regularly. People have to get to know them. They have to get to like them, and they have to want to continue to see them. When it comes to Canadian drama, we have to have a strategy in which we say that we must have lots of it, it has to be very high quality, and it has to be available when people want to watch TV. It has to be available Sunday to Thursday, 8 to 11.

Our general view is this is a problem that all Canadian broadcasters have to step up to. We understand the fact that the privates cannot make available deep prime time from 8 to 11. They can't do it. Their economics will not allow it. Their economics are based on selling American programs in those slots. Indeed, the CRTC's most recent decision with regard to the incentives will anchor those U.S. programs even more deeply and firmly in prime time.

The only network that is able to provide that kind of shelf space right now to get that level of density of Canadian programming is the CBC. We want the others to do their bit, absolutely. The fact that *Corner Gas* is on and is a success is terrific. It's good for everybody. It's good for CTV, it's good for CBC, and it's good for Canadian drama. But nobody else will be able to do it at the level of density and depth that we can. So that's what we're proposing to do—to act, if you like, as the locomotive or the cornerstone for a renewal of Canadian drama.

The Chair: Ms. Bulte, your time is up.

Mr. Christopherson, it's your turn.

Mr. David Christopherson: On page 26 of the document, under "Addressing the Programming Gap", it says, "Add a weekly culturally focused 30-minute local TV show in 10 major markets". One of the concerns might be that major markets are covered heavily right now and yet the need is in the regional programming. Why the trade-off, then? Why go into a major market at this time as part of this plan when it's the regional aspect that is so much in need?

• (1030)

Mr. Richard Stursberg: I hate the term "regional". I think it's an awful term. It suggests that there's a centre and then there's a bunch of other people on the periphery. That's not helpful. What we mean by it is places outside of Toronto. But even in Toronto, if you look at the quality and density of the local news we can provide on television, it's very limited. Basically, we're saying that for ten local

markets across the country, we want to try to dramatically expand our news, information, and cultural programming on television.

Mr. David Christopherson: Is there a trade-off there? Part of the answer is going to have to wait until we get those details to see exactly where you're making the trade-off. But why go into an area that already has a fair bit of the market when there's such a need at the regional level? I'm going to use that term because I represent one of those regions, which has over half a million people.

Mr. Richard Stursberg: Could I rephrase your question to see if I got it right? Is your question "Why would you bother to do something in Toronto, which is already heavily serviced locally, and not do something in a smaller market that has very little local service from other people?"

Mr. David Christopherson: Yes.

Mr. Richard Stursberg: That's a good question. I think that's exactly the kind of thing we would like to get some feedback on. What we need to hear from people is how you would see those kinds of trade-offs and issues.

Ms. Jane Chalmers: Can I just add to that? I'm very sensitive to that, and you'll see that a lot of our plan is based exactly on the radio side.

We're talking about new stations and what we call unserved or underserved areas. We looked very carefully, for example, at Hamilton. But the other thing is everything you see there, because of the integration movements.... Quite often the way it works with radio is we're the first point of contact in terms of new talent and cultural expression. Radio's just a lot cheaper to produce.

Within the context of what we thought was a reasonable plan economically for the government and the people of Canada, when you see radio plans in there I want you to attach TV to them, because we are one organization. We talk a lot to each other. Quite often, with radio and TV, we do the recordings when TV cameras come out to do the shooting. With TV, we provide the sound recording. We provide the people in the field recommending back to TV about who we're discovering and what we're doing.

It's not a perfect plan, but we feel it is a reasonable plan. We feel it will go a long way to addressing some of the gaps we see right now in the country. If you want more gaps.... It will cost more money. We'd love to do it, because the more places we are, the more completely the parts are explored, the better the picture will be for the whole. That's the way we see the country.

Mr. David Christopherson: Certainly those of us who believe strongly in the mandate of why you're there...and as the world gets more complicated it's all the more important. I can tell you, having just been one of the fortunate ones to be an observer in Ukraine, that whole notion of pulling together as a nation, especially one as diverse as ours, is critical.

I keep coming back again.... My questions all centre on the detail. One of my colleagues mentioned earlier that we may not have time to have such a meeting. I'm hoping that's not the case. Really, without the follow-up discussion, less than half the job has been done. This is nice. It's helpful. It's a good start, but the real essence of what's being proposed is in the details of where the dollars are being allocated, so all of us collectively can judge whether or not the trade-offs are the ones we want to make on behalf of Canadians.

I'll just leave by stressing the importance, in my opinion, of having that second meeting and having it quickly. Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Schellenberger.

Mr. Gary Schellenberger: Thank you.

I have a question primarily for Ms. Chalmers and Mr. Stursberg. This committee had an opportunity—whether it was on the last day of your president's first term, or the first day of his second term—to interview Mr. Rabinovitch. I think this is your first time in front of this committee, so I'll just ask you to please give me some information on your experience. Maybe Ms. Chalmers can go first.

Ms. Jane Chalmers: I've been in this job now for about two years. I have to tell you that there was such a collective sigh of relief to know that Mr. Rabinovitch would be continuing with the CBC.

He brought me in because I come from the west and have a strong regional sensibility. He felt, I think, that I would add to the executive group, because we see the country changing rapidly and radically.

The thing I appreciate most about him is his absolute support in that regard. Speaking for radio, he is a businessman but he's also a public broadcaster in his heart. I think one of the greatest things he's done for radio is try to shelter us from the constant erosion of our budgets, with his business activities.

When he says he does everything he can for programming, he means it. We've had to make some tough choices. He certainly pushes us, in terms of efficiency and the business line, but also in the quality of the product and the programming we put on the air. He sets the bar high. He pushes hard.

I'm sorry our colleague here from Calgary left, because there has been a huge amount of change inside CBC.

He always says to us that survival is not guaranteed. He says that privately as well. I appreciate his passion, his enthusiasm, and his business acumen. I think he's been a tremendous leader for the place. I have nothing but respect for him. I've certainly learned a lot from him personally.

•(1035)

Mr. Richard Stursberg: Actually, I've known him for twenty years. I've known him for a very long time. This goes back to 1983. At that time he was the deputy minister of the then communications

department. He asked me to come and work there, and I did; I went to work for him. So I know him quite well and we've been friends for a long period of time. Our careers have sort of bounced back and forth since we've known each other.

It was interesting, when he phoned me and started talking about this—I had not had a boss, I think, for 15 years at that point—I said to him, “Do you know what? I'd be happy to work for you.”

This is a very special person. This is a person with enormous acumen, who I think, as Jane said, has done an outstanding job for the CBC.

What I mentioned in my remarks earlier, which is really important, is that through the various measures he's taken he's generated over \$65 million a year in ongoing savings, all of which has been poured back into programming, just by better utilization of assets and better utilization of the resources that are currently available today to the CBC—quite apart from \$100 million in one-time savings by way of selling off bits and pieces of things one doesn't need.

It's funny, I came when he had literally about two or three months left in his term, so I was obviously hoping that he would be renewed or I would have found myself in a funny circumstance.

Mr. Gary Schellenberger: I know you're head of television. What's your experience in the television industry?

Mr. Richard Stursberg: Prior to this I was the head of Telefilm Canada, which finances movies and TV. Before that I was the chairman of the board of the Canadian Television Fund. I ran a direct-to-home satellite television company called...you would know it as Star Choice, also known as Cancom. I was deeply involved in the cable television and specialty TV business.

Prior to that, in fact before I was in private business, I was, as I mentioned, working in the government. I was the assistant deputy minister for broadcasting and culture. I was actually one of the people who wrote the most recent Broadcasting Act.

So I've had some experience.

Mr. Gary Schellenberger: You would have got this document out a lot sooner, then?

Mr. Richard Stursberg: Well, what can one say?

The Chair: You would have responded to my request.

Mr. Gary Schellenberger: My thing is also—again, it's been mentioned various times—the competition for the Olympics.

I must stress, I was a small-businessman; I wasn't a big-businessman. But business is business, and I feel the CBC is business.

I know that whenever I made a bid to do a job, sometimes I would come to the price I figured I should have and I might cut it a little bit so I'd get the job. I had to suffer the consequences for that. If I couldn't do it for what I had bid, I lost money. When I lost money, the bank was on me. I had to report to someone. I've watched people go broke or have to give up their jobs for that time.

I would hope it would be a business practice in this bid and that we don't find out shortly after the 2010 Olympics that the public purse has to be purged to get out all the things that could go wrong with it.

• (1040)

Mr. Richard Stursberg: As I've said before, I'm completely with you on this matter. I totally agree with that point of view.

My experience, as I've mentioned, has been a long experience in private business. I've run public companies, private companies, all sorts of companies. The point of view that I take on these matters is exactly that. This has to be a sensible proposition or we will not pursue it.

So I'm completely with you.

Mr. Gary Schellenberger: I have one last thing. Again, it's on regional programming.

The Chair: You're over time. I have to give Ms. Bulte her chance. I'll come back to you if you wish.

Hon. Sarmite Bulte: Going back to the television fund again, it's \$100 million right now. We're still trying to get that to be stable, multi-year funding, which hasn't occurred yet, and the \$100 million is oversubscribed already.

Are we looking for an additional \$50 million? Is that what you are saying?

Mr. Richard Stursberg: No, what we're saying is that traditionally.... The establishment of the fund actually goes back to 1983. This may amuse you all: Bob Rabinovitch was then the deputy minister when the fund was set up.

The fund originally was run by Telefilm in its first instance, and the idea was that 50% of the money should go to the CBC. When the cable fund was set up, the idea was that 50% of the money should go to the CBC. The two were put together in the current context of the Canadian Television Fund. So the principle always had been that 50% of the money should go to the CBC. Over the course of time that has eroded. Depending on which year you're talking about, it's now down to 35%, 36%, 37%, etc. It varies from year to year.

What we're saying is that if the government and you, the committee, want to make this kind of commitment to rebuilding Canadian drama, and if you want us to get that kind of density in deep prime time, we would like to do that. To do that, we're going to have to be restored to what we were in terms of the original undertakings with respect to the fund.

The other thing I would say is this. Everybody understands that the fund is oversubscribed. What has happened in the last little while with the CRTC ad incentives is that they've created these incentives for the private broadcasters, who can then avail themselves of these incentives to be able to improve their ability to finance Canadian drama. Those incentives will provide a windfall gain to the private broadcasters. That is absolutely as clear as the night and day, and that's a good thing. Everybody should be very pleased with that. Even if the CBC moves back up to its traditional position of 50%, the private broadcasters have a significant windfall gain to offset any crowding out that they might clamour about.

So we think that's a good thing, and as I say, I think the really key thing here is to make this commitment so that we really try to hammer down what has been historically and remains the number one cultural challenge in English Canada. We have to get drama running.

Hon. Sarmite Bulte: Could you just share with the committee where this local regional strategy stands right now? I know Mr. Rabinovitch undertook to provide this when he appeared before the committee a while ago, but what's the process now? You said it had gone to the minister. When did it go to the minister? What has been the follow-up? Where do we go from here?

Mr. Richard Stursberg: I can tell you what I know, which is that it was sent to the minister in early December, as I think his letter makes clear to you. There had been a couple of meetings with mid-level staff on Tuesday of this week, I think it was. The president and I went over to see the deputy minister, the associate deputy minister, and a couple of others, just to bounce a number of things. We talked about drama, obviously, but we also talked about the regional strategy. They just wanted to better understand what it was that we were talking about, so we had a conversation to make sure they understood.

That's kind of it, and that's as far as it has gone. I don't know what the plan is beyond that. You'd have to ask the minister.

Hon. Sarmite Bulte: So there are no timelines to say when we're going to implement this.

Mr. Richard Stursberg: I think it's really up to the minister to decide what she would like to do with this now, and how to move forward.

The Chair: Thank you.

Can I suggest that I go back to Mr. Kotto for three minutes and Mr. Schellenberger for three minutes? We'll then thank our witnesses and let them leave.

• (1045)

[Translation]

Mr. Maka Kotto: I wanted to quickly get back to what Ms. Bulte was referring to earlier regarding Radio Canada International. We heard rumours according to which the Ukrainian section will be excluded from distribution, given budget cutbacks at Radio Canada International.

Can you confirm that the rumours are unfounded?

Mr. Sylvain Lafrance: I can confirm that that is not quite correct. There was a reduction in services in the Ukrainian section. It was announced a year ago, but we maintained the service because of the unique situation in Ukraine. The reduction in the services is now effective. We went from seven times 30 minutes per week to two times 30 minutes per week.

I'd like to add that it is not an issue of budget cutbacks, but rather one of internal restructuring at RCI. We chose to make changes to RCI distribution and to launch a Portuguese section for Brazil notably, because it seems important to us at this stage to also communicate with Brazil. The redeployment of existing resources affected the Ukrainian section. There is indeed a reduction in the number of hours produced for the Ukrainian section, reduced to two times 30 minutes on weekends instead of seven times 30 minutes. This is already underway. We postponed it for seven or eight months due to the situation in Ukraine. Now the decision that was made will be implemented.

Of course the problem is not budgetary cutbacks, but money. RCI still has the same budget, which has not increased in several years. The launch of the Brazilian section and the global repositioning of RCI is complex. I would say there have been changes to our RCI global budget because of the new types of distribution I was referring to earlier, such as partnerships...

You have to pay a partner radio station to distribute in Ukraine. Distribution in Ukraine is not strictly shortwave. Costs as a whole have increased, but the RCI budget has not. So there has been a decrease in the number of hours produced for Ukraine. The Ukrainian section is not being eliminated.

Mr. Maka Kotto: Are you aware of this organization speaking out for cultural radio in Canada?

Mr. Sylvain Lafrance: Yes. The changes we have made to cultural radio are good, we believe, and audience response has been good, even excellent. I think that those who listen to public network broadcasts are good judges. It is understandable that when changes of this kind are made, some people may have some legitimate concerns: we made big changes.

Public radio will always have to balance two paradoxical demands; it must on the one hand build optimal audience share to legitimize the funds invested, and on the other, put together resolutely distinctive cultural and current events programming.

I'm convinced that we must create cultural programs of a very high level, significant cultural broadcasts. At the same time, I am convinced that you cannot provide a public service without a public. This is what we are trying to do.

If we look at Radio-Canada's radio experience over the last decade, the public, whether through audience surveys, quality surveys or opinion polls, seemed to consider that all in all, the network made the right choices over the last few years. The increased audience share and the heightened public awareness as far as the radio services of Radio-Canada are concerned reflect that. Having said that, I am paying attention to the concerns of those who fear losing something.

[English]

The Chair: Merci, Monsieur Kotto.

Mr. Schellenberger, for three minutes.

Mr. Gary Schellenberger: I have to get back to regional programming. I know how devastating it was when Windsor was taken off the map a number of years ago. I am from southwestern Ontario. No matter where you go, it's all national news, or whatever, and the only thing we see around our regions are disparities—if

something tragic happens. But all the good little things that happen in rural Canada and some of the smaller areas are missed.

I think the CBC is missing a great opportunity. I must say that last Sunday, at the Stratford Festival Theatre, there was a tsunami relief, a Stratford for Asia day. Peter Mansbridge was our master of ceremonies. Various actors and actresses were there. One of the groups there was the Perth County Quartet—four politicians, of whom I was one.

I have had great response. I'm not the greatest singer and I haven't had any contracts sent my way, but the joy that people get out of what they see in the region, and all those things, is what I think CBC is lacking right now. If you look at our newspapers, all the big conglomerates have bought up all our small papers, so you see the same thing in all of those.

In our area the *London Free Press* used to have someone in the Stratford and Perth County area. Roy Wildgust was his name. He was always around to those little functions. They had a page in there. Now the *London Free Press* hardly has anything in there from London even.

These are the things the CBC has to do, whether it's Radio-Canada or the television. We have to touch the people. It's like my colleague said earlier: a lot of people are tuned out.

I'm a great supporter of the CBC, and I would just like to say, please come down to the level where people would really want to listen. I think your Galaxie is fantastic. I have Galaxie on a lot of the time.

I hope, when I read this, that I hear you're going to get back to what I call regional programming, and that's grassroots, down-to-earth type of people.

• (1050)

Ms. Jane Chalmers: I agree with you totally. I want to say that one of the things we're talking about a lot in radio is to make sure that when I talk about it, it's not just that we're located in a certain spot. We have to sound like the place, celebrate the community sometimes, and explore the events like you're talking about. We have to feel like the place, and that means even the programming. It's not just about journalism. It's trying to capture more of the complete life of the community, so we're absolutely on the same page.

Mr. Richard Stursberg: Absolutely, I think everybody would agree with that sentiment. The only issue is the limits that are dictated by the resources that are available. But in terms of the sentiment, absolutely.

Mr. Gary Schellenberger: If any extra moneys come for regional programming, make sure they go to regional programming.

Ms. Jane Chalmers: Everything you see in there is going to regional programming, but we'll give the full breakdown as promised.

The Chair: We only have five minutes, and Mr. Khan has a motion that I'm sure we don't want to miss dealing with. There hasn't been notice of the motion, so I will need a motion of the committee to suspend the rules so we can consider the motion.

Has it been distributed to everybody? I know I don't have a copy.

I need a motion to suspend the rules to allow us to deal with the motion.

Ms. Bev Oda: I so move.

The Chair: I assume it is seconded by Mr. Khan.

(Motion agreed to)

Mr. Wajid Khan: Thank you, Madam Chair. I would like to make a motion in support of CBC.

I move that in the upcoming federal budget CBC/Radio-Canada be provided with stable multi-year funding so that it may adequately fulfill its mandate, as recommended by this committee in its report, "Our Cultural Sovereignty", and that the \$60 million previously in their funding provided to the corporation to enhance its Canadian programming be made a permanent part of its annual appropriation.

The Chair: Is there any discussion?

Mr. Christopherson.

Mr. David Christopherson: Thank you.

The only question I have is whether or not that leaves this issue, the funding for this, as separate.

Hon. Sarmite Bulte: Yes.

Mr. Wajid Khan: Yes.

•(1055)

Mr. David Christopherson: I'm fine with that, but I still haven't heard when we're going to have that other meeting. I know enough about procedures to know I need to hear that.

The Chair: Mr. Christopherson, if I may just say, this is only our second meeting of the committee since the Christmas recess. We have to look at the schedule for our study on the film industry, because that involves hearings across Canada in at least four major centres, and possibly five.

I think there's a clear understanding from the committee that we do want to have the CBC back again, but until we sit down and look at the schedule we have proposed, we just can't pick a date out of thin air when we're going to pop in. But I give you the assurance that the committee will deal with that.

Mr. David Christopherson: My only hesitancy is that in the absence of knowing when that's going to happen, I'm inclined to move an amendment for adequate money for the implementation... and work up wording about a regional plan. But that really doesn't make a lot of sense, to tell you the truth, given that we don't know exactly what it is. I don't want to miss an opportunity to give it a boost if it is something we want to do.

The Chair: You can come back to this committee any time, Mr. Christopherson. We are a very agreeable bunch.

Mr. David Christopherson: But I can't bring them in on my own hook. It takes this committee to do that.

The Chair: I can assure you the committee will follow up—

Mr. David Christopherson: Is it going to happen within a month or weeks?

The Chair: The committee will follow up. We do need to look at our agenda; we already have meetings scheduled, so we'll have to find a time when we can slot it in.

I give you my personal guarantee that we will do that and that we'll let you know. Okay?

Hon. Sarmite Bulte: If I may, one of the great things about this committee is that we do operate on consensus, so we will definitely discuss it, Mr. Christopherson, I can assure you.

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: Do we convey that to the Minister of Finance or the Minister of Canadian Heritage, Madam Bulte?

Hon. Sarmite Bulte: Both, I believe.

The Chair: Shall I report that motion to Parliament?

Hon. Sarmite Bulte: Yes.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. David Christopherson: On behalf of us, thank you very much for this.

The Chair: I thought that might be a good idea.

The meeting is adjourned.

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