



House of Commons
CANADA

Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage

CHPC • NUMBER 032 • 1st SESSION • 38th PARLIAMENT

EVIDENCE

Thursday, April 14, 2005

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Chair

Ms. Marlene Catterall

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•(1010)

[English]

The Chair (Ms. Marlene Catterall (Ottawa West—Nepean, Lib.)): Welcome. My apologies that you've been kept waiting. Our committee has been trying to do a recap of a very busy and productive week of hearings in Winnipeg and Toronto before we proceed further with our study of feature film production in Canada. So we thank you for your patience and thank you very much for being here.

We'll leave it to you now.

Mr. Tom Shoebridge (Founder, Canadian Screen Training Centre): Thank you very much.

My name is Tom Shoebridge. I'm the founder of the Canadian Screen Training Centre. With me is Max Berdowski, the current executive director.

We're here to leave a couple of messages with this committee. One is that we bring to this discussion a background of 25 years of training people in film and television, with a special emphasis on feature films. The Canadian Screen Training Centre is one of the four Telefilm-funded national film schools. I started it 25 years ago because there was a need in this country. We had world reputations in documentary and in animation, but in drama we were struggling, so that's why we were founded.

What we've seen over the last 25 years is a kind of miracle, a cultural miracle. We have experienced first-hand the passion of people who want to tell the Canadian story. They have made enormous sacrifices to be trained—and it's our job to do that—and to be mentored by people in the industry. Other people will make the financial statements about how far we've come, but all of us can't believe that we really have.... Since 1981, when we started, until today, the growth of the industry has been so impressive. What we really need to do is to convince people who don't understand that we have to continue in the same kind of manner of supporting—financially and with legislation—the creation of the industry. The long story on the screen is essential and it's very much like the Canadian novel. It's a chance to explore our culture and our story with some kind of depth.

I'm old enough to remember that at university in the late fifties and early sixties the Canadian novel was a joke. People didn't teach it, it wasn't respected, and there wasn't a body of work large enough for people to care about it. Today Canadian novelists are some of the best in the world. We can talk about the Pulitzer Prize and international prizes for their work. Well, that came about not by accident, but because governments—provincial, local—and a lot of

passionate individuals said, here's how we do it: we invest in it, and we legislate it, and we get an enormous return on our dollar. And that's exactly what's happened.

So I think that's the kind of model we have to keep in mind. It's very easy to get lost in the industrial, complex kind of argument, because there are lots of very important businesses out there. We're not in the business of making sausages; we're in the business of making stories that touch our soul. Quebec has shown the rest of Canada that it can be done, both financially and culturally, and that it can become a major player in everyday life. We in English Canada have to learn from that, and I think we have to continue to grow in that area, because we live next door to the largest cultural juggernaut in the world.

The struggle that we have of getting our stories on the screen, both big and little, is not unique to Canada. Every country in the world suffers because the Americans have been so successful at marketing their culture. And so that's the kind of milieu we are in.

We have some recommendations that we'd like to leave with you, and my colleague Max Berdowski will explain those.

Mr. Max Berdowski (Executive Director, Canadian Screen Training Centre): Good morning.

The Chair: I will first explain for your benefit, and for the benefit of the members of the committee, that your brief hasn't been translated yet, so it can't be distributed to committee members. What you're saying is the first we've heard.

Mr. Max Berdowski: Okay.

Our executive summary was translated, so can that be distributed?

•(1015)

The Chair: Yes.

Mr. Max Berdowski: Okay. Thank you.

Good morning, Madam Chair, and members of the committee.

Our message is that Canada's feature film policy should consider all areas of the film industry, from production to distribution to marketing, in order to ensure its continued growth. As things change and technological advances take hold, both domestically and internationally, policy supporting the film centre must ensure that Canadian features are front and centre in those changes. To that end, we offer six recommendations.

As we well know, the digital revolution in film production, shooting, editing, storage, and delivery will drive future changes in filmmaking. Research funding in those areas is essential for Canada's production future. Canadian filmmakers must be trained to be at the forefront of future innovations. Continued regular training resources are necessary to build and maintain the film and television industries' infrastructure. Funding for training is vital and should be increased to meet these growing and changing needs.

E-cinema and d-cinema, as alternatives to traditional exhibition outlets, must be established in viable communities nationwide to facilitate and expand the reach of our feature films. Marketing for Canadian films must receive additional support, as this is a critical factor in increasing Canadian audiences.

Lastly, we recommend that new funding initiatives be explored. A box office levy, access to lottery funds—these and other innovative revenue sources should be examined.

Thank you for this opportunity to participate in the proceedings. We're ready to take your questions.

The Chair: Mr. Schellenberger.

Mr. Gary Schellenberger (Perth—Wellington, CPC): Thank you, and thank you very much for being here this morning.

You say there are four training centres. Do you all work under the same umbrella of criteria, or do you work together, or are you all four individual centres?

Again, is there an agenda between the four of those centres?

Mr. Max Berdowski: Heritage Canada, PCH, through Telefilm, funds a national training school program. There are four schools: the Canadian Film Centre, the National Screen Institute, L'INIS in Quebec, and our school, the Canadian Screen Training Centre.

There are efforts made to look at the training needs of the sector as a whole, but our curriculums are independently developed. We meet on an ad hoc basis fairly regularly, just to keep ourselves abreast of what's going on, but we have essentially different approaches.

Our approach is focused on ensuring that training is accessible at low cost. We're targeting all of the country in two ways. First, we have a major training event in the summer, called the Summer Institute of Film and Television. People travel to Ottawa, about 250 people every year, and they take training. The various instructors are all filmmakers in the industry, producers, directors, screenwriters. We bring them in to Ottawa. So it's not a local Ottawa program. It's a national program that takes place in Ottawa.

We also go out to the various centres: Montreal, Toronto, Winnipeg, other areas, and we deliver training there on weekends. This ensures that our training is accessible. We're not-for-profit, so it's low cost. We also place great emphasis on diverse communities, disadvantaged communities, and regionally disadvantaged communities. We have people attending from all across the country, and we also offer bursaries to make it more affordable.

We have the largest number of people coming through our door because our training is more focused on entry level, intermediate level, and skills upgrading for people who are already in the industry and looking to make a transition. A program like the Canadian Film

Centre in Toronto would have fewer students per year. It's limited in terms of the numbers, but it's a more advanced program. It's more of a finishing school. It's designed for people who have more experience, who already have a body of work to their credit. They go in there to get ready for the final step.

Does that give you enough background?

• (1020)

Mr. Gary Schellenberger: Yes. So you are connected with the other centres in doing your specialized training. Students might go to Toronto for finishing school. But for script development and those kinds of things, a person who's new to the field would have an opportunity to upgrade in your centre.

Mr. Max Berdowski: Very much so. We make a point of offering our training at different levels, so while there is a lot of interest in introductory-level training, there are also opportunities for people who have gone beyond the entry level and are ready to step up. They're not ready for the final step, but we step them up.

Mr. Gary Schellenberger: What percentage of your operation is funded by government?

Mr. Max Berdowski: About 40% to 45%. There's also a tuition component, and there's private funding as well. Private industry plays a big role in supporting our training. We've got different industry organizations supporting us, such as the Independent Production Fund and the Harold Greenberg Fund. Script development funds will support us because they see the benefits of working with us. A lot of our graduates will go on and submit works to them for funding. Practically all of the national broadcasters are involved. There's also participation by various groups such as the Directors Guild and the Writers Guild.

Mr. Gary Schellenberger: Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Lemay.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Marc Lemay (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ): Thank you, Madam Chair.

Thank you for coming here this morning. I read the summary of your brief carefully and I'm interested in two comments in particular.

First of all, you state in your brief that some agencies, such as Human Resources and Skills Development, should be made to contribute. Have any efforts been made to involve this department? It seems obvious to me that it should be involved. That's my first question.

My second question contains a number of sub-questions. How many of your graduates — I'm assuming that they have degrees — manage to find a job after they complete their studies, or must they work for a franchise like MacDonald's? What are their job prospects? I understand that in Quebec, many of them are recruited by the television industry to work in series television. They cut their teeth mainly on television. I'm wondering if after graduation, any job opportunities open up for them in other centres in Canada.

Secondly you talked about new funding sources that must be explored. Tell me more about these potential sources.

Thank you.

• (1025)

Mr. Max Berdowski: If you don't mind, I'll answer in English.

Mr. Marc Lemay: That's fine. We have an excellent interpreter.

Mr. Max Berdowski: Thank you.

[English]

I just started to listen a little late, so I missed the very beginning. I thought I understood it, but I wasn't quite sure. Were you asking which other ministries are supporting us?

[Translation]

Mr. Marc Lemay: No. I was wondering if any steps had been taken to involve other departments such as HRSD. You state in your brief that agencies like HRSD should be involved. I felt that that was an important comment, but I was wondering if you had already taken any steps to make that involvement a reality.

[English]

Mr. Max Berdowski: For example, the Canadian Screen Training Centre was the administering agency for an international internship program. It was the precursor to HRSDC. It was a Young Canada Works.... There are a number of different components that go into it, but essentially, the purpose was to match up talented potential employees with production companies that are focused on working internationally. For example, a Winnipeg company that was doing an international production we matched up, based on what their needs were, with people from the talent pool we were aware of—either past students, or we canvassed for them.

There was funding available through the Young Canada Works program. I believe it's part of HRSDC, or was. There have been some specific initiatives that we were involved in from ministries other than Heritage, but as a regular ongoing source of funding, it has been Heritage Canada funding through Telefilm.

We're developing a number of new strategies and initiatives, and we are absolutely planning on talking to HRSDC about a couple of them that we think will be a good fit. We'll be talking to them shortly. Of course, it makes perfect sense—job development, job creation—and that's what we're doing.

Leading into the second part—and I know Tom has some thoughts on this—we offer a certificate of completion for students once they've completed the training, but we're not a trade school, although we do some technical training. We've offered since last year HD training and camera and lighting workshops, but that's a small part of what we do. The vast majority of the training we do is really targeted at what we call the executive of filmmaking, i.e., producers and screenwriters and directors.

For most of them, it isn't that there's a job waiting for them to walk into. In a lot of cases, they are the ones who are out there, who will be and are developing their projects. They are the ones who will come up with the properties or write the scripts and then will take them to established production companies or broadcasters to take to the next level of production, as opposed to, say, training someone to be a sound man and then they go off and do something like that—so it is less on the technical and more on the creative and business sides.

Tom, you had a comment.

Mr. Tom Shoebridge: In the arts generally, what happens is that you need a certain amount of maturity in this field, and experience, so they have to build their careers and then get experience. That's why we have ongoing training, so people come back to us. We have a lot of repeat customers, which we're happy about—it means we're doing a good job. But it also means that they're progressing in their careers. Many of them do in fact have to support themselves in areas outside the industry, but they're trying to move in by getting that kind of experience. It's a long-term process.

I have a friend, a very successful screenwriter, who made the national papers in articles on one of his programs and how he was discovered. Well, he had been writing for twenty years and he said, "I'm an overnight success, after two decades". In the arts, that's not uncommon. They're all self-employed in the sense that they're contract workers. It's a tough struggle, but an important one.

• (1030)

[Translation]

The Chair: I must now turn the floor over to Mr. Silva.

[English]

Mr. Mario Silva (Davenport, Lib.): Thank you, Madam Chair.

There's no question in my mind that feature films and the film industry are important for the Canadian identity. It does make a very powerful statement. There's no question about that. How to mature that, how to grow that, is what we're grappling with here, with these very issues.

One of the things that I want to know, and I want to hear your opinion on, is the whole issue of quotas. How do you feel about that, and do you in fact believe that would actually help or hurt the industry?

Mr. Tom Shoebridge: That's a tough one. I don't know under NAFTA and other trade agreements what kind of quota system you can have; however, in the international marketplace I think there are a number of things that can be done in terms of helping move that along. One is to find some way for the money that is generated particularly by American exhibitions in Canada, the cinema revenue, which is almost entirely returned to the United States.... Is there a way in which there could be some kind of support for the Canadian fund?

Having either a ticket levy or some kind of tariff or whatever to generate money through the exhibition of American films has been talked about for 30 years. It's never been tackled because the American cultural lobby—I think you're all aware—is one of the most powerful lobbies in the world. Jack Valente is maybe the second or third most powerful man in American industry, and his job is culture.

Culture in the United States is business, and it's very big business. So you're dealing with people who have very long arms and very big clubs. Will this committee recommend raising that kind of ire? How to generate money from it is a very sensitive issue. But it's important, because our screen content—and you all know the figures—is under 2% Canadian films, and if you take the Quebec numbers out of that, it's under 1%.

We should be arrested as a country for impersonating the country culturally if only 1% of our screen time is Canadian. What we really have to do is to figure out how we both generate money from the other 99% and make Canadian product more attractive to Canadian and international audiences. That's one of the reasons we suggest things on the promotion side.

People go to cinemas and rent films because there's some kind of attraction to them. I mean it's either a star or it's a kind of story or it's a genre that they're going to go to see. I spent 30 years in the classroom teaching people, and the hardest thing that I had to do in Canadian film was to make these students who had been totally culturalized by American kinds of films understand that Canadians made good films. I had to sell our own stories in my classroom. That shouldn't have to happen.

We must find money to promote Canadian films, and maybe even have a star system so that our people will recognize our good actors. Building up that whole promotion side of things, through, as we can suggest, a whole series of things, is one way of doing this. We have to raise the profile so people will attend.

Quebec has this incredible system where they know their stars; they're passionate about their stories; and they turn out in huge numbers, both in front of television screens and in cinemas. It's working. We have to do that in the rest of Canada.

• (1035)

Mr. Max Berdowski: On your question on the quotas, there are a lot of comparisons made to the music industry and how that industry was developed—and successfully so—and it has grown as a result of mandating that there should be a certain number of Canadian songs per hour, and so on.

And it's certainly an impressive story. I don't think it translates, though, as directly in terms of using a quota—for want of a better word—and saying it must be mandated that x percentage of films on Canadian screens are Canadian.

People vote for music in two ways. Well, they used to anyway; it's all different now. They would go out and they'd buy the CD, but also they would listen passively. There is a component on radio where you're in your car, you're at home, you're listening to these things, and tastes are developed, and people would discover artists they would then want to vote with their pocketbooks for and they could purchase their music.

Whereas in the case of film, regardless of whether more of the screen time was Canadian, you still would have to get people to go out and vote with their wallets and you would not be able to drive them into the theatres just by simply putting the films on the screens.

It's that marketing component that is so critical, and that's another area where they're so powerful, as the marketing budget for films exceeds the production budget, which is already an impressive number.

So our suggestion is that a great deal of focus should be made, and funding should be increased, with regard to the marketing opportunities, advertising opportunities, ways of perhaps supporting the pricing of ticket sales for Canadian films. Maybe there could be a

differential in the cost of a Canadian film ticket versus an American film ticket.

These are the things that will help to develop an appetite for Canadian films, but ultimately people have to decide they want to see a Canadian film, so part of it is what goes into the making of it. Training is a part of that, and telling stories that people want to hear, and doing it in a way that they want to see them. Beyond that, they need to know that they're out there, that the advertising...they need the star system that's been talked about. That needs to be developed. They have to actually want to see those products, and there are a number of things that have to be done that can support this. Marketing is critical in that equation.

Mr. Tom Shoebridge: If I may, the idea of electronic and digital cinemas, e- and d-cinemas—I imagine you're all familiar with those terms—is one of key factors. Most Canadians don't get a chance to see Canadian feature films because they don't come to their local cinemas. For towns of 6,000, or 10,000, or even 25,000 in this country, a Canadian film does not get there. This brilliant little film that's playing in town, *Saint Ralph*, which I'm sure all of you have already seen.... That's one of the things I want you to do, to go see it because it's proof that we make dang good films, and you can take your whole family, grandma as well. It isn't going to be seen by a lot of people. My relatives in Saskatchewan are not going to get to see this film because it's not going to come to their local cinema, which is being dictated to by American product.

We're suggesting looking at a system where we have Canadian-only digital cinemas that are accessible in every community across the country. We're just the blink of an eye away from delivering those via satellite, so that in small communities, in community centres, schools, libraries, whatever, we can have Canadian cinema very inexpensively. I think that's one of the models, because if you don't get a chance to see the films, you can't say they're good.

If the only thing you've seen are blockbuster American films, then that's what you think film is, but that's not true. Those of us who've had a chance to experience world cinema understand that there's a whole range of things, and that comes through exposure. We're suggesting that this model—however it's funded or whoever controls it—is one that has to be. It could deliver our short films, our animated films, our documentaries and whatever, and it could be done fairly reasonably. But I think it's a very important thing that we get to see what we make.

• (1040)

The Chair: Mr. Brown.

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

Thank you to the witnesses for coming today. As you know, we've been travelling the country, and we've been hearing a lot of recurring themes from various witnesses across the country. I'm glad to hear your support for e-cinema, because obviously the distribution is one of the most important impediments to success in Canadian film. What other impediments—and maybe we can hear from both of you on this—do you feel are keeping the industry from being as successful as we would like to see it be? What public policy changes or improvements would you like to see that would help the industry?

I know these are pretty general questions, but in terms of the cinema, that's one thing I'm really excited about. It's a great thing for distribution, especially to smaller communities, like some of the ones in my riding, that generally don't have access to a lot of Canadian films.

Mr. Max Berdowski: If you talk to Canadian director-producer filmmakers who have recently, in the last five to ten years, produced a film, they've nurtured it.... First of all, they've invested so much into it, they've got it made, and nobody sees it. Why don't they see it? The big impediment is the system of exhibition in Canada as it's controlled by distributors, the way screen time is doled out. It's a major hurdle for Canadian films to find screen time. And again, it comes back to the marketing thing. Not to be redundant, basically there is such a push made for the first weekend when a Hollywood film comes out that it's like a tsunami that just kind of washes away everything else. That first weekend is critical, but if you happen to be opening your Canadian film on that same weekend, you're just not on the radar. You've just been inundated by all this other hype, and nobody's going to your film.

On the other hand, just to come back and say, okay, these films have to be there is not going to make people go to the theatre. It's kind of a chicken-and-egg thing, but ultimately it's a difficult problem to solve, because there are commercial decisions. It's a business. The theatre owners will say, "We have to sell more popcorn, and this film is going to do it for us. That film is not", or "We'll put it on 10 screens" versus "We'll put it in our small theatre". It's all these various arguments that are made. What it all boils down to is that you can make the best film, and out it goes, and for factors beyond your control it isn't necessarily going to get seen.

We're saying that a critical component to the whole thing is the marketing—the dollars, the programs that would allow for Canadian films to break through and be supported in that sort of way.

Tom, do you have any thoughts on impediments before we move on to the second part?

•(1045)

Mr. Tom Shoebridge: No, go ahead.

Mr. Max Berdowski: On public policy, in terms of building the infrastructure, maintaining the infrastructure on an ongoing basis, clearly there are dollars being spent on training. We would like to see more being spent on training. As things change, as distribution methods evolve, as the technology changes, it's a constant: nothing stays the same; everything moves on. There are different ways of doing things. There are also new opportunities that can be developed where Canada can shine and become a world leader.

But all of this is dependent on research and then training. Because ultimately, if you just keep doing what you know how to do, you're going to get left behind.

So in terms of public policy we would like to see the government do more on the training side. They're doing things, but we would just like to see more of that.

Mr. Tom Shoebridge: It's a commodity. There isn't the same physical structure for this kind of visual art; it really does depend upon people with creative ideas. Our line is that training is the research and development of the industry. Unlike Nortel, which has a

lab where they are exploring and pushing the boundaries, the boundaries in feature film and television are the people. What we have to do is stimulate those people to believe in it.

I grew up in an era in which the idea of becoming a filmmaker was absolutely impossible. It wasn't even dreamed about. I never heard of one and never met one. Today, that's very real. Maybe your children are doing it; they look at it as a possibility.

So we have to have training, first of all, to inspire them; secondly, to give them a chance to find out whether or not they can do it, or whether or not they want to get into this business; and then we have to have enough outlets so they can make money so they can continue to improve. They go through the short film, and then they do things for television, and then they develop until finally they make a feature film, which is a very sophisticated and expensive project. It costs millions and millions of dollars. We have to have marketplaces for these people to continue to work.

Many of our filmmakers live marginally, because it takes so long for a project and so little money comes back. They're constantly hanging in there. If we can find more avenues to market them and more support for them, then they can grow and continue to get better.

A guy like Denys Arcand from Quebec is not a beginner. He's a 60-year-old guy who's made a series of feature films and now makes as good as anybody in the world. You have to see, though, that he worked for a long time to get there. If he hadn't had employment, he would never have got there.

That's a very important thing to look at. It's a very different kind of thing. The support has to come from various factors. We feel rather passionately about training, but we also know there have to be places for our graduates to go in order to make a living.

The Chair: Ms. Bulte.

I'm sorry, we're running out of time. We have other witnesses and I'd like to give Sam a few minutes.

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

Mr. Shoebridge, let me begin by congratulating you on your vision for founding the Canadian Screen Training Centre so many years ago.

I was quite taken by your analogy about the book publishing sector of our economy, how years ago we didn't have any great writers and how we've moved along. I want to pursue that analogy further. Yes, they're listed for the Booker Prize, but we created our own Giller Prize, which drives people to read the books once those awards are announced. I've also had people say to me that the problem with filmmakers in Canada is they make films to win awards at festivals, and that's it, that they're not commercial enough in some sense.

How would you reply to that? How can we benefit from the analogy of the book publishing sector—where it was 20 or 30 years ago and where it is today? Could you expand on that?

● (1050)

Mr. Tom Shoebridge: I'll start at the other end. The reality today is that the world is awash in seconds for visual product. One of the problems that even the American majors are having is that pirates are stealing their films and delivering them to Asia over the Internet before they're seen in America. This is the reality of the world.

You know, 25 years ago, the book world was very different. It was very slow, very methodical, and so on. We're in a very rapidly changing kind of world, and this is the one we have to fight with.

The analogy holds particularly in the storytelling sense. Two things have made our writers good. Number one is that they were funded and supported at the beginning, until they learned their craft. It came through as various kinds of support for publishers, and prizes, and grants, where people could hone their craft. Then they found markets. It's a self-perpetuating thing. Margaret Atwood now gets advances of \$1 million just because she has an idea.

Filmmakers have to do that same kind of thing. Success breeds success, and in a very expensive world, it's even more of a gamble. To write a book, you literally need only a computer and a printer. When it comes out at the other end, it's finished in terms of being a complete artistic product. Other than a little glossy cover on it, the writing is not going to get any better, other than with an editor and whatever. You can produce a novel for under \$10 on your printer.

In this country it costs a million bucks, minimum, to find out whether or not a feature film is going to work. And you don't know whether or not it's going to work. You can't tell by the screenplay. Hollywood and international cinemas are strewn with great screenplays that never became successful products. The only way you can tell whether or not a feature film is going to work is to put it on a screen in front of an audience. That costs a million bucks an idea—minimum. Most countries are embarrassed if you talk about that little money for an idea to happen.

So we're in a very expensive game. The flip side of that, of course, is that the revenue possibilities of a feature film are incredible. We all look at the success stories of low-budget features like *The Blair Witch Project*, which cost \$69,000 to make and generated \$180 million at the box office. Everybody dreams about those kinds of things. The reality, however, is that it has to find a market, and then it goes through all the subsidiary markets until finally some money starts to come back. The economics are very sophisticated in that world.

We do have prizes for Canadian films, but they're a joke, if I may be cruel. I'm a passionate film guy, and I make it my business to see all the films. I haven't seen most of the films that have been nominated. How can I be excited about a prize when I haven't seen the contestants? That's the chicken-and-egg thing that Max talked about earlier. We have to have this kind of excitement about Canadian films, but we can only be excited about films that we've seen.

So the distribution, the energy around the making of the films, some kind of caring about our culture and our stars and our stories, has got to happen. Then people will see those films, and perhaps my grandchildren will see in Canadian films the kind of revolution that I saw in books.

● (1055)

Hon. Sarmite Bulte: I know that the Toronto International Film Festival has the Film Circuit, which has been quite successful—

Mr. Tom Shoebridge: Very successful.

Hon. Sarmite Bulte: —at getting Canadian movies into different communities within Ontario, or I know they started in Ontario. When we were in Toronto, Jack Blum, speaking on behalf of the newly established Toronto Film Board, talked about a project they're working on to go into the schools, starting with the high schools—I think this is also being endorsed by the CFTPA—to get students interested in Canadian films. I happened to be at Humberside speaking to a grade 11 class, and I asked the kids to name a Canadian film. The first question they asked was where they could see a Canadian film, never mind name one.

Do you see the government having a role in supporting projects like that?

Mr. Max Berdowski: It's also part of our presentation; we actually have suggested that and support the notion of exposing.... It's all part of building an appetite—

Hon. Sarmite Bulte: Yes, building an audience.

Mr. Max Berdowski: Exactly, and insofar as how curricula are formed and what level that's done, yes, that's a government issue at some level, and certainly we would definitely support that, and do support that.

Hon. Sarmite Bulte: Part of the analogy for me is the Tomorrow Starts Today program that came out in 2001, with arts presentation as part of the package, whereby the government was assisting not-for-profit companies to showcase Canadian theatre. Could a similar program be developed for the film industry, so that we could use these alternative ways in that way?

Mr. Tom Shoebridge: Yes, in fact, I do that. I live outside of Ottawa, and I do a Canadian film circuit, going around spreading the gospel of Canadian film by showing shorts and features. People can't believe how good they are, but they hadn't seen them.

If you take our 10 best feature films, they compare very well with any 10 films from any country in the world. I would stand on that for a long time, but once you get by those 10, we become very thin, because we haven't had the kind of volume to create the body of work. That's what we do need: we need a body of work.

When I taught at college and high school, it was impossible to have access to Canadian films to show them in my class. Before these last two years, getting a copy of *Goin' Down the Road* was physically impossible. How can you teach classic Canadian film if there's no way you can show the darn thing?

That's one area where we hope that the funding happening for the restoration of Canadian films is going to allow a huge library of films to be accessible on DVD, so we can get them out there and have ways of getting them marketed to students, to show them and get them excited. We've got to build the market by interesting the real filmgoers in attending. Most of us, and I would think most of you, see your feature films at home. Again, a DVD market or satellite delivery or video on demand is the way you're going to see Canadian film.

It has to happen.

Hon. Sarmite Bulte: I have one very quick question. Do you see Telefilm playing a greater role in this area of distribution and exhibiting?

Mr. Max Berdowski: Well, in terms of—

The Chair: Could I just ask you to keep the answer fairly brief? I think we may need a bit of a break before our next witnesses.

Mr. Max Berdowski: Sure.

Part of Telefilm's responsibly deals with marketing, as you know.

Hon. Sarmite Bulte: I'm trying to find a bigger role—or a different role—than Telefilm currently has in this area.

Mr. Max Berdowski: For a start, I think that doing more of what's already being done and just augmenting the resources that are available, and just doing more of it, would go a long way.

Hon. Sarmite Bulte: It seems to me that as we have been going across the country or having people talk to us about Telefilm, the role they play is quite incredible, and that we don't really appreciate enough what they do.

• (1100)

Mr. Max Berdowski: That's true.

Hon. Sarmite Bulte: To me, it is almost as important as the CBC; it's like a national institution, having this really incredible mandate and somehow being this hidden jewel.

Mr. Max Berdowski: It's a critical lynchpin in the way Canada's film and television industry operates, and it's not something that directly correlates to how business is done in the United States, for example; it is a completely different setup, a completely different set of rules. It's very different as you go internationally, but certainly the role that Telefilm has developed into is integral to the way Canada's industry is going to develop as we go forward, and so it has played a big role.

Hon. Sarmite Bulte: Is there a continuing role for the NFB too?

Mr. Max Berdowski: The NFB is really a jewel in the crown. Internationally, when people think of Canadian film, they don't think about Telefilm, but the National Film Board of Canada, so it would certainly be a shame if we didn't continue to keep that as a strong and vital part of how we go forward. They are evolving; they are changing. Whatever the NFB evolves into, we should always keep it as part of our legacy as a nation in terms of film and filmmakers, and it's something that we have to support and continue to keep active and vital.

The Chair: That sounds like a good note to end on.

I thank you very much for your time this morning and for the contribution you are making to Canadian culture. Thanks a lot.

We'll suspend for about seven or eight minutes and then resume.

• (1102)

(Pause)

• (1113)

The Chair: We've had a busy morning, and I thank you for your patience.

Mr. Cardozo, Ms. Elatawi, thank you very much for being here with us.

Mr. Andrew Cardozo (Member, Canadian Opportunities Partnership): Thank you, Madam Chair. Thank you for inviting us to appear here today.

Your study on the future of the film industry is an important one. In our view, the industry has an important role to play in ensuring Canadian film reflects Canadian society, tells Canadian stories, and builds the Canadian film industry. The Canadian Opportunities Partnership is a fledgling think tank that addresses a range of 21st century public issues relevant to our changing society, including the changing nature of Canadian culture.

My colleagues with me today are Paul de Silva, executive producer at Jenfilms, and co-chair of the Canadian Diversity Producers Association. He has been vice-president of programming at Vision TV, and an executive producer at the CBC. Hoda Elatawi is senior producer of the broadcast division of the Ottawa-based General Assembly Production Centre, GAPC.

For the purposes of today's presentation, my colleagues will focus on the role of funding agencies, and I will focus on the role of the CRTC.

I had the pleasure of being a commissioner there for a few years, from 1997 to 2003, and I'm fairly familiar with what they can do. Virtually all film, both feature and short, ends up on television now, so there is much the CRTC can do, and does do, to promote Canadian film.

You know the numbers well about diversity in Canada, so let me point to just a few numbers. In the 2001 census, 11% of Canadians, or four million, were visible minorities. That figure is expected to grow considerably; in 12 years' time, at Canada's 150th anniversary, 20% of the population will be visible minorities. Cities like Vancouver and Toronto will be about 50% visible minorities. There are, of course, also large European ethnocultural communities, going back several generations, who make up significant proportions of the population across all areas of the country.

But you wouldn't know that from what we see on film and television. That's the challenge—to make film and television in Canada look more like Main Street Canada. Make no mistake, Canadian sells, be it *Bollywood Hollywood* or *Atanarjuat*; it sells here and it sells elsewhere.

Let me tell you a little bit about what the CRTC does in this regard. It requires all broadcasters to file seven-year plans on cultural diversity at the time of a new licence or licence renewal, and it requires them to report annually on their progress in terms of cultural diversity. The next step, which needs to be clarified now, is how these annual reports are evaluated and what happens if broadcasters do nothing in this regard. So the plans are well in place, and what we now want to see is whether things are happening in terms of diversity.

In the interest of furthering cultural diversity in feature film, the commission should keep a close eye on pay-per-view and video-on-demand services, as well as the other conventional and speciality services that show feature film. You may be aware that Wayne Clarkson of Telefilm said recently he believes our finest drama will emerge from diverse cultures. I think the realization is present among some of our leading lights. We have to be sure public policy and, more importantly, money follow that good sense. Diversity is essential because it is vital to reflecting our culture and our society, and it makes good business sense.

Hoda.

•(1115)

Ms. Hoda Elatawi (Producer, As an Individual): Thank you, Andrew.

I've been producing for just under 20 years. I started off producing videos for corporate and government clients back in the eighties. Just the last eight or nine years I've been producing television, primarily factual programming and documentaries.

I mention the government work because, as I was saying earlier to Andrew, it's ironic that in my time doing work for the government in particular, I felt I was doing a lot more diversity and cross-cultural programming than I am today as a producer producing shows for television. I just felt a little sad, I guess.

We know the challenges that are ahead of us. We know there's not enough cultural, ethnic, and racial diversity in front of the camera or behind the camera. As independent producers, we know we have to respond to the current demands of broadcasters and the trends, whatever they happen to be and however they're driven, be it by advertising dollars, by programming trends from across the border or across the ocean, or by audience numbers. If we can't meet those demands, our shows don't get made.

So how do we change that? We know we can't do it alone. We know that as stakeholders we need to bring all of the parties to the table.

I think the decision-makers, both funders and broadcasters, are aware of the need for more diversity in programming. But take a good hard look at what we see, again, on television; take a look at the mainstream landscape of television. I don't feel we see enough diversity there. Look at the decision-makers, particularly within the broadcast field; if we had more commissioning editors from diverse backgrounds, we would see greater diversity in our programming.

Andrew mentioned some numbers in terms of population shifts, and he said something like the majority of the population of Toronto would be non-white in 10 or 12 years. How are we going to meet the viewing demands of those audiences? Ten years is a blink of an eye, really, and in a producer's life—I know it feels endless sometimes—it's also the blink of an eye. It can take us two to five years to make one program, a mainstream program at that, so when we want to make diversity programming, how much longer is it going to take to make those kinds of programs? How can we open up decision-makers' ears to allow us to increase and make more diversity programming?

In terms of the funding agencies, which we wanted to mention as well, we can look at the Canadian production fund. There are special initiative streams that are set aside already for other kinds of programming, be they for aboriginal language productions or French-language productions outside of Quebec. Is it out of the realm of possibility to create envelopes specifically geared towards diversity programming? Is that something we can look at? Is it something we can support as stakeholders and push for?

We have to make the push. We have to create the demand. I think there is demand there, but we have to grow that demand as a group, as stakeholders. I think Canadians want to hear the many diverse stories there are. We're ready to hear them and we have to start today. We should have started yesterday.

That's all for now.

Thank you.

•(1120)

The Chair: Mr. de Silva.

Mr. Paul de Silva (President, Canadian Diversity Producers Association): Yes, thank you very much.

I'd like to thank the committee for having us here today, and particularly Andrew for facilitating it. I know we don't have a lot of time, but I do understand Mr. Lemay's point of speaking slowly so the translation can take place. I have a tendency to be very rapid, so I will try to remember.

I'm here essentially as the co-chair of the recently formed organization called the CDPA, the Canadian Diversity Producers Association. As Andrew mentioned, my background is as a producer and a director of film and television, and I am an arts and media consultant as well. I was the former vice-president of programming at Vision TV, a channel that I'm sure many of you are familiar with. Vision TV has played a very key role and a ground-breaking role in developing Canadian, particularly multicultural, drama and was responsible for producing the first multicultural situation comedy, which some of you may have been aware of, called *Lord Have Mercy*, set in a storefront black Evangelical church, with a multicultural background.

Also, in my position at Vision TV, I was very fortunate to be the first commissioner for television, because we had at that time a made-for-TV movie, and it later became a feature film, and that was the film *Atanarjuat*. The producer brought me the script originally. I mention this only because it made me very aware of the difficulties and the complexities of financing Canadian feature films, particularly those that have a culturally diverse element and component to them.

That's just a little bit of my background. My comments will be specifically about the aspects of the reflection of cultural diversity in terms of the film and television business, which are, as Andrew referenced, intricately linked. The financing for feature films now, as you probably have heard and know, is very dependent on the television industry. So they go together, and the issue of representation and participation and reflection for culturally diverse communities is very much central to that whole process.

This issue is a very complex one, obviously, and for me it involves three very particular things. I'm trying to keep it fairly simple here. There are issues of the fragility and the inconsistent support of the industry. For one, we know the funding for the CBC, for Telefilm, for CTF, the Canadian Television Fund, as well as for the film board are in a constant state of crisis, essentially, and these are our key funding institutions.

The other aspect is the rapid demographic change that Andrew has referenced, and we all know the numbers. We all know what's happening, particularly in the cities of Canada, particularly in the city that I've lived in for over 40 years, which is Toronto. I've lived in Vancouver and Montreal as well, working for the CBC, but it's mainly in the cities where this huge, demographic change is taking place.

We all know that human beings tend to be very resistant to change. It's part of our genetic makeup. Institutions especially have difficulty changing, and we're in a process of needing to change. That's the second factor, I believe, at play here.

The third one is that there are historical factors I think we're all aware of that create systemic barriers to change, and it is these institutions that are really key to the issues that both Andrew and Hoda have referenced that are experiencing systemic barriers. I should say one of my first jobs that I did after graduating from university was as an investigator for the Human Rights Commission in Ontario, which gave me exposure to a broad range of issues involving employment, particularly, and the human rights aspects of systemic discrimination. There are unquestionably issues we are dealing with here in the film and television industry that are historic. Those I think are among the issues that need to be addressed.

In the short time I have, I want to compress this down to what I believe are the three essential things that are needed, and in a very general kind of way, and I'd be happy to answer specific questions about specific programs as we go. I've broken them under the three C's. I teach as well at the Toronto Film School and I find that people remember the three letters, and it resonates, so I've brought the three C's for you today.

● (1125)

The first C is commitment. We need commitment at the highest level in all the organizations, and that commitment to this change, that commitment to these issues of representation, as Andrew and Hoda have said, will only enrich the system. When we have representation from these communities it will enrich the system, and there has to be a committed process here of meaningful change, particularly in the areas of training and resources.

The second C is capacity, and the capacity I'm talking about is that there be specific resources and goals that are closely monitored and evaluated in a transparent process.

I recently had the opportunity to speak with a lady who I have great respect for and who is one of the key decision-makers at the CBC. Her name is Debbie Bernstein...a long experience in Telefilm. At the CBC she is now head of arts and entertainment. We were talking about programming and she said to me, "Paul, the two key things in terms of getting programming on from communities, from anybody, are budget and air time. So just think about those two. If

you don't have a budget and you don't have the air time, you're not in the game".

So that is the aspect of capacity. We need that capacity in the communities.

The last C is consistency. Unfortunately our experience has been—and I can speak to this personally—that we have been in a kind of one-step-forward, three-steps-back situation, because of the fragile nature of the funding I've mentioned. It tends to be that these isolated initiatives take place. They do very well. They develop writers and directors who go on to do things, and then the funding is gone. Either there's no more commitment from the organization, or that organization, in the case of the CBC, which experienced tremendous cutbacks, as you know....

I was one of a group of people involved in producing a groundbreaking series called *Inside Stories* approximately 12 years ago. That series developed programming from across Canada. It reflected regional interests. It reflected multicultural interests. We did films in Montreal, in Vancouver, in Regina, all across the country. And from that series developed talent like Deepa Mehta, who did her first drama on that series, and Atom Egoyan. Arsinée Khanjian, who is one of our great actresses, did her first dramatic roles in that series. Stefan Scaini, who is from the Italian community in Toronto, did his first... It was the first opportunity to do quality drama at a good budget. It produced writers like Diana Braithwaite, and Shyam Selvadurai from the Sri Lankan community.

Unfortunately, that initiative died and all the gains that we made disappeared. Yes, progress was made and people went on, but it gave people a chance and that does not exist any more. We're now back to talking about short films with budgets barely able to compete consistently with the kind of programming that's on television.

That's my aspect of consistency that we need. The problem is that we always have to start all over again.

I think there are positive signs. I don't want to sound like nothing good is happening. There are a lot of good things happening, and I think recently Andrew mentioned that the comments by Wayne Clarkson, who is the new head of Telefilm, are very encouraging. I think Wayne gets it. I think he understands.

As I mentioned to Madam Bulte concerning her question about Telefilm, without Telefilm in this country, really nothing indigenous would get made. As I mentioned, I teach a course in film and television financing at the film school, and it's quite apparent when you talk about how films get financed in this country that, without Telefilm, no indigenous drama would ever reach the screen, quite frankly. It would be impossible.

● (1130)

One of the other two funding agencies—since that's our main subject here—is the CBC. Richard Stursberg, who is the new head, who was at Telefilm, and with whom I've had many conversations, has made Canadian drama his most important initiative. In a speech that he gave recently to broadcast executives, he laid out the figures about how much Canadian drama they want to do. I think this is important, because ultimately Canadian drama has to be about where we are as a country.

At the NFB, Jacques Bensimon gets it, and they've made a strong commitment to it. I should also mention CHUM Television. They've come up with a good initiative that has specific requirements for expressing cultural diversity in their programming, with their *13 Stories About Love*. There have also been some encouraging signs at CTV. So there is progress.

The CAB task force that recently presented its decision to the CRTC had some important recommendations. I'm glad the CRTC has insisted that accurate and continuing reporting take place, that we don't rely on best practices. I think that's important.

Essentially, and this is my final point, all of these initiatives have to be measured against resources. We can't simply argue by anecdote anymore. They have to be looked at in terms of the whole, and these activities have to be maintained on a consistent basis.

The key point I'd like to leave with you is that if in your work, in your position of influencing policy and creating it, you encourage and require that diversity be in the decision-making process for film and television, so that the people making those decisions and the people at the table are from these communities, then this will all happen in a faster, more consistent, and more organic way.

It is now key to understand that there are people in the system who have the experience to do this, so we get past talking about only training people. Otherwise, we're in a process of glacial change, and it won't happen in the way we need it to happen. We need it to happen quickly and in a way that will create real and measurable change.

I thank you for your time. This needs your enthusiastic and ongoing support, and I'd be very happy to answer any questions.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

I don't want to take any time from other members of the committee on questioning, but I want to make a couple of comments and ask you to consider them as you're responding to questions.

I'd like to focus on Ms. Elatawi's comments. What we seriously need to move towards is recognizing that diversity is the mainstream. If we don't begin making sure that Canadians see that the mainstream is diversity, then we're in for some serious social tensions. I think it's very important to understand this. If any of you have any comments on that, I'd appreciate it.

I would like to move on to the questioning, if you want to work some comment on that into your answers, feel free.

• (1135)

Ms. Hoda Elatawi: There's nothing to disagree with in what you've said. There are two realities. How do we bring them together? You're absolutely right, Madam Chair, that diversity is the mainstream, but how do we see that trickle down more in our television landscape?

Andrew mentioned that the CRTC requires broadcasters to make a seven-year diversity plan. But who would know, with the exception of some of the broadcasters that Paul has mentioned? Who would know when we look at conventional mainstream television today?

I agree with you 100%. How do we make this a greater and truer and substantive reality?

Mr. Paul de Silva: If I may add just a very quick point to that, I'm very encouraged to hear you make that point, Madam Chair. I think while the understanding is that diversity is part of the mainstream, the very key issue is how decisions are made at these organizations that are key to making things happen. If the people who feel that way and who can reflect that are not part of the decision-making process, if they're not there when these decisions are being made, their interests are not being represented. I think that's the crisis, quite frankly, that we face at this point.

But if you look at the thinking in terms of who the primary audience is, you'll see 60% of the available English audience for television is located in Ontario. I mean, it was an astonishing figure when I discovered that. Sixty per cent of the English Canadian available television audience, and possibly feature film, I would imagine, is located in southwestern Ontario.

If you then break it down to Toronto, it's probably about 50%. If 50% of the available audience is in Toronto and 50% of that audience comes from visible minority, culturally diverse audiences, that's significant. However, decisions are still being made on the fact that the primary audience for a lot of our cultural products is outside of Toronto—the funding for that.

So it's a very complex issue, and without getting too deeply into it, this is an important thing. If those communities are represented where they're making the decisions, that will be the fastest way to do it.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Merv.

Mr. Merv Tweed (Brandon—Souris, CPC): Thank you very much for your presentation. I think that is the challenge we all face—how we can make the cultural diversities mainstream. We accept that they are, but how do we make it in our production?

I know in your letter you said you wanted to ensure that procedures do not unwittingly exclude minorities, and you also talked about the role of the CRTC in urging broadcasters. I guess as a legislator my question is whether that is something that has to be made more apparent to the people who are involved in making these decisions or whether it would be more through the educational side. Do we acknowledge special funding for this type of process, or is it just through discussion and education that we make it more apparent?

Mr. Andrew Cardozo: Maybe I could start, and my colleagues can add. I think, as with any government objective or any corporate objective, if you don't name it, it won't happen. So you have to look at what you want to change and talk about how it's going to change.

Regulation is one way of making that happen. So certainly what the CRTC is doing.... I wouldn't call it actual regulation, but there are certain requirements that broadcasters have to make those kinds of reports and plans. Without those, I don't think you'd see as much change as you're beginning to see.

The one area where television has changed very successfully is on-air news personnel, just on the English side. The French television has not embraced diversity very much, even though you do have a number of fairly competent people in the French language who should be on air but are not. We don't see enough aboriginal people on air in news. But on the English side you do see a lot of visible minorities and a few aboriginal people on air.

So it's one of those things where the television industry put its mind to it, looked around, and found that, guess what, there are a lot of people who are competent. So the issues of competence and numbers are old history. It's a matter of people looking around and saying they have to make sure their news programming reflects their community.

What we're talking about today is how our film reflects that community. So yes, you need some kind of push. Hopefully you don't need it forever. You need it for another 10 or 15 years, and then it's done.

• (1140)

Mr. Paul de Silva: If I'm understanding the core or the thrust of your question, it asks how we achieve this. I think it has to be a many-pronged initiative, a many-pronged attack on this.

But I would be remiss if I didn't say there is a great deal of frustration in the communities—as Hoda has mentioned—of producers, writers, and creative people who have been hearing about this need for better representation for 20-odd years. The first national forum was held, I think, by the Minister of Multiculturalism, Jim Fleming. What was that—25 years ago, when these issues were raised? The frustration is that we know that without very special requirements in terms of representation for women, it didn't happen, in terms of very real regulations for the Canadian music industry. It was resisted quite a bit, as you know; it didn't happen.

So yes, education and sensitivity are important, but I think there need to be very specific kinds of requirements, because the people who make the main decisions in this area are all very busy fighting for survival, in a sense, on a day-to-day basis. I know, from having been in that position many times in certain situations, that you deal with the crisis at hand. If it's financing, it's the survival of your organization, so these subjects tend to get put on the back burner unless, for instance, your committee or regulations require it. Otherwise, it tends to fall off the priority table.

I would say the education process and the sensitizing process are important, but it is also important that there be fairly clear guidelines, clear goals. If you don't have a goal in a business, if you don't have targets, how do you know when you're winning? I think we need to know when we're successful, and we can do it only by establishing measurements of success.

Ms. Hoda Elatawi: If I can add to that, we should also have incentives, perhaps in terms of funding envelopes. I think that needs to go hand in hand.... When we see those kinds of incentives put in place, change does occur, along with the sensitization, the awareness, and the education. It's not just one; it has to be all of them, I think.

The Chair: Monsieur Lemay.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Marc Lemay: I'm fascinated by your comments and I simply want to thank you for sharing them with us. I'm not going to proceed in any particular order.

I have a tendency to draw parallels and the one I'm about to draw may be something of a stretch. Today in Canada, we're encountering many problems associated with cultural diversity. I'm actively involved in sports and was involved for many years at the international level. Here in Canada, the focus is still on hockey and baseball, whereas soccer remains the most popular sport in the world. Yet, soccer is not that common a sport in this country.

Now then, on the subject of cultural diversity, I listened very carefully to your comments. I represent a riding in Quebec's far North. It is home to a large aboriginal population. Very few aboriginals are seen on television or in films. Plans are just now under way in Montreal to organize an aboriginal film festival. However, that's not going to happen overnight. I'd like to see a film festival, not one highlighting our cultural minorities, because I hate that expression, but a festival celebrating cultural diversity. One film produced by an Inuit from the North won a prize at Cannes and at another world film festival. Many people were surprised that the Inuit were in the business of making films.

That brings me to my question. In Quebec, visible minorities stand out when they are assimilated. We don't tend to mingle with them when they are living in their own communities. Very few films or television programs about the Vietnamese or the Chinese air in Montreal. Yet, the Vietnamese speak French. The same is true of people from Arab countries, such as Moroccans or Tunisians. They are very active in the music industry, and in world beat, but we don't see them on television or in other media.

It's very difficult for us to approach members of cultural communities. Efforts were made to forge closer ties with the Greek and Italian communities. Witness the film *Mambo Italiano*. Last week, I visited Toronto for the first time in four years. Clearly, television does not mirror the reality of life on the streets of this city. The same is true in Vancouver. When visitors arrive in Whistler for the 2010 Winter Games, they won't believe their eyes. The Chinese and Japanese outnumber Whites in that region. Japanese is the second most common language spoken in Calgary, but you wouldn't know it. What do we need to do to get you to examine this situation with us?

I hope that my question isn't too awkward. This committee is examining the film industry and we want to see the industry produce more films. For example, I'd like to see someone make a film about Casablanca or Tiananmen. Recently, we attended a screening of a film about Buddhists. We want to see films about your respective countries of origin. I imagine that not all of you were born in Canada.

I apologize if my question was rather long-winded.

• (1145)

The Chair: Thank you for raising a very interesting point.

Mr. Andrew Cardozo: I'll go first. Many people like Paul and Hoda have considerable experience in the film industry and many members of minority communities want to work in mainstream film and television. There's a feeling that differences are discouraged.

In my view, the system and organizations that fund films fail to understand that these persons are Canadians. They are not immigrants or foreigners, just Canadians who want to make films that reflect life in Toronto, Ottawa, Montreal, Montreal-North, and so forth. The system doesn't acknowledge that the makeup of the Canadian population has changed over the years. Does that answer your question?

• (1150)

Mr. Marc Lemay: Yes, thank you.

[English]

Ms. Hoda Elatawi: Can I add two more points, Monsieur Lemay, to a couple of things you had mentioned?

I think you had asked, why are there not more film festivals specifically for these kinds of culturally diverse programs or films? To go back to what Madam Chair had mentioned earlier, I think what we want to do is not to have separate ones but to bring them into the mainstream so they are seen as mainstream films, because they are reflective of Canadians. We don't want to create separate ones; we want to bring them into the major mainstream film festivals so they have an opportunity to compete there. The doors should be open there.

I think you were asking as well, how do we approach the different cultural communities? It has been tried, and it's difficult to approach them and to get in. Again, I think if the mainstream doors are open, they will come. Paul has been here for a long time, I have been here for a long time, and there are many others, but the doors need to be open, both from a financing perspective and from a broadcaster and decision-making perspective. They will come. They will not stay... they will come.

Thank you for your question.

Mr. Paul de Silva: Thank you.

[Translation]

I'm sorry to have to answer in English.

[English]

I'm working on it.

It's a very important question and it has been responded to by Andrew and Hoda.

A key thing I want to say is that there appears to be a very big disconnect in some ways between what we hear from institutions, on one hand, saying they are having difficulty finding people or having people come to them, and from the communities I work with very closely, primarily in Toronto but across the country through our organization, the Canadian Diversity Producers Association. They are saying the doors, as Hoda has said, are not open. In fact, even though the doors are being knocked on quite frequently, they are not responding or are responding in a very minimal way.

The disconnect—if I'm making myself clear—is to hear organizations genuinely saying we want to reach out and we want to include. In some ways it's not just outreach, it's in-reach; it's to bring people inside. But on the other hand, the people we know through our connections encounter barriers and difficulties when they go to present. Either it's not the right time or it's felt the commitments have already been made. That's one important thing.

I've also brought this with me. You asked about a film festival, and the fifth annual ReelWorld Film Festival opened yesterday in Toronto. It was opened by Mayor Miller, and I was at the opening. It's struggling, I will say, in terms of its financing, but because of a very committed group of people it is doing some phenomenal work.

We'd love you to fly down and come and see some of these films. It's just opened and it is the first international festival celebrating excellence in diversity. This is a positive sign, but it needs nourishment and support.

I'd be happy to share this with you afterwards.

Thank you for your question.

The Chair: We have only a couple of minutes. Do you want to get something in?

• (1155)

Mr. Mario Silva: First of all, I want to thank the witness for coming forward and bringing a really interesting perspective on Canadian diversity. It is true, as the chair mentioned, that we need to understand diversity as mainstream. I also believe we have to start understanding diversity as our strength and what really makes the country great. The challenge is how to reflect that in our institutions, our cultural policies, and our films.

On the institutional barrier side I realize it is difficult, because institutions still don't reflect the diversity of this country, and until that happens it's not going to be realistic for them to make sound policies that reflect the diversity.

I think the questions I have are probably no different from the questions that have been posed. We all know this is where Canada is. In my city of Toronto, 50% of the population was born outside the country. I'm included in that category. That is the reality of Toronto and the GTA.

There are wonderful stories of individuals who have contributed greatly to this country, now and throughout the history of Canada, but these stories are not coming out. That's sad. We as Canadians have been robbed, in some ways, of knowing our own cultural identity and knowing the different makeup that makes Canada so great.

Perhaps I can very briefly tell the story of Pedro da Silva. Pedro da Silva is considered to be one of the first postmen in Canada. He had a charter from the King of France to deliver mail in New France. Canada Post recognized him last year with a stamp. It's a wonderful story, but nobody knows about it unless maybe they're of Portuguese heritage. That's about it.

Mr. Paul de Silva: Well, my name is de Silva and I've never heard about it.

Mr. Mario Silva: All these wonderful stories about people contribute greatly to the history of the country, but they're just not being told. It's so unfortunate. There are thousands of stories like that from different communities, from the aboriginal communities.

Years ago when I went to New Zealand I was very fond of hearing people tell stories from the Maori people, and how the Maori felt about this and that issue. In Canada we have such a rich history of the native population, the different nations, yet we don't know their story as well. It's an oral story, but we should be repeating that oral story. It's just not being told.

We're just basically engaged in an ongoing dialogue. But I think you've added an interesting and very important piece to our discussion, as we move forward with the review of our film policy.

The Chair: Thank you.

Ms. Bulte.

Hon. Sarmite Bulte: I have just a very quick question.

Mr. de Silva, you talked about where the cultural products are being made. I think that's quite interesting, because Toronto is penalized when films are shot there. Just by penalizing Toronto for that, you're missing out on the diverse cultural product. This is something we need to really think about.

I'm not against encouraging production across Canada, but there shouldn't be a penalty. If anything, Toronto at least deserves a fair shake, as opposed to being penalized.

Go ahead, Mr. Cardozo.

Mr. Andrew Cardozo: I agree with you. I'll relate one quick experience. When I was at the CRTC, we were dealing with the CBC licence. Two of the things that the commission wanted them to do were regional programming and cultural diversity. At one point in the drafting, the two things were put into one clause, so cultural diversity would happen if it was in regions other than Toronto. I said, well, you're not going to get cultural diversity in that case, because most of the diversity is in Toronto.

It's important to remember that Toronto draws people from across the country like a magnet. The producers in Toronto aren't all from Toronto. They're from other places in the country as well, because it is a Mecca of production. That is important in terms of diversity. It sometimes works counter to the issue of regional production. You can't have the two things playing off against each other.

I want to make one quick point about incentives. One of the things that happened some years back was that the Gemini Awards included something called the Canada Award, which was dedicated to diversity. It's a very successful award. Last year we had 30 entries, which was quite a record in terms of the number of people who've made entries for an award.

One of the things you might want to consider is causing the Genies to have a similar type of award focused on diversity. The CDP recently wrote to the Academy of Canada Cinema and Television and made such a recommendation. It may involve a very small amount of money from the Government of Canada. The multiculturalism program, or Canadian Heritage, is the one that has funded the Canada Award at the Gemins. If there was a similar

award based on diversity for the Genies, it would provide an incentive. It would showcase some of the excellent production of the kinds of stories Mr. Silva is talking about, which we don't see enough of.

• (1200)

Hon. Sarmite Bulte: I think that's a wonderful suggestion.

Mr. de Silva, you also spoke about how Richard Stursberg is committed to Canadian drama. One of the problems I have with that is that we already have great Canadian drama on the shelves, but unfortunately it's not being broadcast. It's one thing to produce it, but it's another thing to broadcast it. Instead of having Saturday movie night, which shows U.S. films, why aren't we using that time to showcase these hidden jewels or ours?

Mr. Paul de Silva: That's an important question. It's a complex question, having to do with the financing of the CBC. It's common knowledge that when *Hockey Night in Canada* was no longer available, these movies filled that time slot. Because *Hockey Night in Canada* was a large source of revenue for the CBC, which they then put back into Canadian programming, they felt that they had to keep those numbers up. That was the reality: Canadians watch American drama.

But I think your point is important. Richard Stursberg said recently in a speech that it's a matter of shelf space; it's a matter of time, prime-time programming. There isn't enough of that to showcase Canadian drama at the moment.

You'll be discussing this question with Mr. Stursberg at some point—why American as opposed to Canada. With respect to Toronto, I'd have to quote the phrase of a TV series, *Curb Your Enthusiasm*. It's an unbelievable situation we have. I've recently done a lot of research in this area. There is this myth that everything is Toronto-centric, that because the CBC's headquarters are located there, Toronto is being represented. Quite honestly, the absolute opposite is true. If you look at it across the board in terms of local representation on the CBC, news, and programming, Toronto is vastly under-represented in resources. The point Andrew and Mario made, if I may use your first name, sir—

Mr. Mario Silva: We're neighbours, but we're not related.

Mr. Paul de Silva: We're not related.

The Chair: That's why I gave him first opportunity on this side of the table.

Mr. Paul de Silva: I don't want to be too familiar, even though we have been neighbours.

The point Mario made is absolutely essential. If the key part of the area, where most of the cultural diversity is, is not being represented for a variety of reasons—the kind of mythic aspect of saying Toronto is there, but it isn't—then we really need to shift our thinking quite dramatically in this area.

Hon. Sarmite Bulte: Perhaps I can go to one of your points. You need the capacity with respect to the CBC and the air time, and to ensure it's there.

Mr. Paul de Silva: Quite honestly, we need a Canadian channel devoted to Canadian drama that is reflective of cultural diversity. The CBC has to be all things to all people. And yes, for the prime time between 7 o'clock or 8 o'clock and 11 o'clock, there are many decisions, but there have been attempts....

I would like to follow up on Monsieur Lemay's point of a kind of a cultural film festival, for which we have the beginnings of a very solid process there. I think the only solution, quite frankly, is a channel devoted to primarily cultural diversity representation in drama, which is Canadian drama—mainstream, with specific reference—and it also will bring the best to the world, representing cultural diversity.

• (1205)

The Chair: Thank you very much.

I'm sorry, we're out of time. We're past out of time. I don't think anybody wants to have a discussion right now on our agenda, but perhaps you could look at it and see if you have any comments, particularly with respect to the minister's appearance. She's scheduled right now to meet with us on May 12. We talked about wanting her to talk about the budget and also about the response to the broadcasting report.

Hon. Sarmite Bulte: Again, I just hope my colleagues will go back to their respective colleagues who aren't here.

I think that to do both at the same time is going to be very difficult. There is the response to the standing committee. Again, I

think it's perhaps more important to move ahead with that. We've had the officials before us. I don't know what the minister will be able to add to what the officials have said. Ministers tend to defer to their officials. I would like to have an opportunity to question the minister on the response to this standing committee, because it's already getting all sorts of press out there, and it's not necessarily positive.

The Chair: Sam, we still do have to set aside time to deal with the estimates, though, because we have motions to pass and so on.

Hon. Sarmite Bulte: What else is there to deal with?

The Chair: We have motions to pass, unless you prefer that the committee not—

Hon. Sarmite Bulte: No. I'm just wondering what else needs to be done.

The Chair: I'll see if Bev is around. I don't know if she is out of town.

Hon. Sarmite Bulte: No, that's what I'm saying. Mr. Tweed and Mr. Lemay should talk.

The Chair: Maybe just before or just after question period the critics can get together.

Mr. Marc Lemay: For me, it's impossible. Actually, I'm leaving for my North Pole.

The Chair: Beyond that, you can trust us. I'll do the best I can with the clerk.

This meeting is now adjourned.

Thank you very much, everybody.

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Publié en conformité de l'autorité du Président de la Chambre des communes

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