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—
Chair

Ms. Marlene Catterall

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• (0910)

[English]

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Gary Schellenberger (Perth—Wellington, CPC)): We were called a short time ago and told that Madam Catterall is not yet available, as she's running a little behind.

Today, I'm running a little ahead, and I'm sorry I missed the meeting the other day.

We might as well start off the agenda this morning. I welcome Suzanne Laverdière from the CBC. Welcome, and I ask for your presentation, if I may.

[Translation]

Ms. Suzanne Laverdière (Director, Corporate Affairs and Strategic Planning / French Television, Société Radio-Canada): Thank you very much. With your permission, I'm going to speak in French. Good morning, ladies and gentlemen. Thank you for having me here today.

First, allow me to offer you greetings from Daniel Gourd, Senior Vice-President of French television at Radio-Canada, who could not be here with us today and who asked me to represent him.

I am especially delighted to have the opportunity to speak to you about Radio-Canada Television's significant role in the success of French-language Canadian feature films over the past six years.

During your consultations with key film industry stakeholders, a number of them said that Canada has two distinct feature film markets with very different realities.

As you know, Quebec films have enjoyed considerable success in recent years. Allow me to recap the results for 2004. Films produced in Quebec accounted for 21.2 percent of total box office receipts. The share of English-language Canadian films was 1.6 percent. For both languages combined, the share of Canadian films in total box office receipts was 4.5 percent. In comparison, the market share of Australian films in Australia was 1.3 percent, and — at the other extreme — the market share of French films in France was 38.4 percent. As you can see, Quebec cinema is doing well — very well, even. Audiences and critics applaud it at home and abroad.

How then can we explain this difference between the results of the two Canadian markets? Some will say that language protects French-speaking audiences. But they forget that in Quebec, moviegoers are exposed to the same U.S. films with the same enormous promotional budgets at the same time as the rest of Canada, in the original English versions and in their French versions. In addition, the growing market share of Quebec film has not affected the market

share of U.S. movies. It has instead reduced the share of “non-U.S.” offerings, as in most other countries where a national film industry has developed.

Now let's talk about the Quebec model.

The difference between the two Canadian markets lies in the approach. If the French-speaking market is now receptive to homegrown cinema, it is because the entire industry — screenwriters, directors, actors, producers, distributors, and broadcasters — has worked to develop it with the same clear vision I will summarize as follows: to provide culturally significant films that people can identify with, ones that talk to the audience through stories that touch, entertain, and stimulate.

Radio-Canada Television fully shares this vision, for as you know, we undertook to restructure our programming a little over two years ago with an “audience first” approach that was open, innovative, credible, passionate, and unifying.

Another phenomenon specific to Quebec is its highly developed star system that gives life to cultural expression and talent in all its flexibility in front of and behind the camera, in movies and on TV. This star system, which has no equivalent in English-speaking Canada, is due to the smallness of the market and the limited opportunities outside Quebec for talent, except in rare cases. It comes as little surprise that in an environment like this, film and television have become natural allies that feed off each other's success.

In addition, in 2004, the ten most popular Quebec films all enjoyed the support of a TV broadcaster: Radio-Canada Television partnered with six of them: *Camping sauvage*, *Elles étaient cinq*, *Le Papillon bleu*, *The Last Tunnel*, *Monica la Mitraille* and *Ma vie en cinémascope*, TQS supported *Les Aimants* and *Nouvelle-France*, and TVA was the partner of *Elvis Gratton XXX* and of the film spinoff of the TV series *Dans une galaxie près de chez-vous*.

Now let's look at the role of Radio-Canada Television.

In April 1999, Radio-Canada Television announced the establishment of a program to support cinema with twenty million dollars in funding over five years. We then brought together representatives of professional associations of screenwriters, actors, directors, producers, and distributors into an advisory committee to provide input on our strategies. Together with the industry, Radio-Canada Television developed an action plan in perfect tune with its personality and abilities that focused on assistance for the development, production, promotion, and distribution of homegrown cinema.

As for development assistance as a whole, the industry has understood the crucial importance of this aspect that was once neglected and far too centred on the creator's wishes to the detriment of the public's. Radio-Canada has joined forces with many organizations that now fund project and script development. 21. We have put a single team in charge of assessing and monitoring drama and feature film projects. This team is often called on for its recognized expertise to review projects at the script stage, sometimes even before distributors have gotten onboard. With its long tradition of producing high quality drama series — particularly weighty, high budget series — Radio-Canada contributes to the discovery and development of promising scripts, whether from seasoned or emerging screenwriters.

● (0915)

Radio-Canada adds to its support for script development by sponsoring screenwriting awards at various Canadian festivals, many in outlying regions.

Now let's talk about production assistance.

Nearly three-quarters of our French-language Canadian film assistance program is invested directly in script development, production, and new film acquisition. Our involvement is based on three key aspects we consider important for the revival of French-language Canadian film and that are shared by all industry stakeholders: script quality, risk taking and film genre diversity.

Over the past six years, Radio-Canada has contributed to the production of sixty-odd feature films and the development of some forty scripts, particularly by making room for new talent.

We had a hand in a wide variety of projects ranging from comedy films to auteur productions, including most Quebec box office hits in recent years, such as *The Boys III*, *Wedding Night*, *Séraphin: Heart of Stone*, *Seducing Dr. Lewis*, *The Barbarian Invasions*, *The Last Tunnel*, *Camping sauvage*, *Ma vie en cinémascope* and *Le Survenant*; films for youth such as *The Mysterious Miss C*, *The Incomparable Miss C*, *Daniel and the Superdogs*; auteur films and the first works of new filmmakers such as *Mariages*, *The Left Side of the Fridge*, *L'Ange de goudron*, *Le goût des jeunes filles*, *CQ2*, *Littoral*, *Les États-Unis d'Albert*, *Gaz bar blues*, *La vie avec mon père*, and *Looking for Alexander*, to name a few.

We believe that our support for the diverse forms of film expression ties in perfectly with the generalist and cultural mission of a national public broadcaster.

As to promotion assistance, the success of Quebec cinema in recent years is the result of significant investments in promotion. Taking the U.S. model as an example, Quebec film producers and distributors are implementing powerful promotional strategies when films are released.

Radio-Canada Television plays a key role in this respect. We devote nearly one-quarter of our investment to a variety of different promotional strategies. On a film's theatrical release, promotional activities are launched throughout the French-network television, radio, RDI, and Internet. We also provide off-air promotional support through a variety of activities at many festivals for the general public and film events for professionals.

Our television network broadcasts the Jutra awards, which honour Quebec films and performers. We regularly show behind-the-scenes documentaries on the production of seminal films before their release to attract audience attention, as for example the making of the film *Aurore* which I invite you to watch on Sunday, July 3 at 8 p.m.

Just recently, we conducted an experiment in cooperation with distributor Alliance Atlantis Vivafilm and Telefilm Canada: supporting the theatrical release in Ontario of the latest Quebec hit film, *Le Survenant*. Our regional radio and television stations backed the promotional effort in the cities of Sudbury, North Bay, Cornwall, Timmins, Kapuskasing, and Hearst, where the film was showing.

We are currently repeating the experiment with much success in Moncton and Bathurst in New Brunswick with the film *Looking for Alexander*, the big winner at the last Jutra and Genie award galas. Of course, we are very proud to be a part of these initiatives that give French-speaking audiences and Quebec film an opportunity to broaden their horizons. Additional actions will be announced shortly.

As to distribution assistance, we can almost say that Radio-Canada is now the "official" broadcaster of French-language Canadian cinema by giving all Canadians access to our films, especially the million French speakers living in a minority environment who do not always have access to Canadian films in French.

The number of Canadian films broadcast on French television has nearly doubled over the past five years, from 38 titles in 2000-2001 to 60 in 2004-2005. In the current season, a significant percentage of the feature films scheduled for prime time on Saturday night are homegrown productions.

● (0920)

Last, as a shareholder of TVS Monde, Radio-Canada contributes to the international repute of French-language Canadian film.

Radio-Canada Television is an essential partner. Radio-Canada is the only broadcaster that systematically supports homegrown cinema. Radio-Canada's consistent and ongoing efforts over the past six years have made it a very valuable ally to all its partners.

Allow me to also quote *Association des producteurs de films et de télévision du Québec*, which states as follows in the paper it presented to you:

This broadcaster [Radio-Canada] has therefore become an essential partner for the development, production, promotion, and distribution of Quebec feature films, all without any upfront obligation. We applaud the vision and excellence of this initiative and urge other broadcasters to follow this example. Most importantly, we must not cut this organization's budget.

Recent years have seen the birth of works that have fired our imagination and helped shape our culture and collective values. French Television is very proud to have been directly involved. Given this success, we believe it is absolutely essential to pursue this initiative, for it is the very core of our mission. Our support for Canadian film directly affirms the central and unifying role that a national public broadcaster should play.

In April 2004, Radio-Canada Television announced the renewal of its commitment to French-language Canadian film with an additional investment of \$12 million over three years.

Radio-Canada Television also continues to play an active role in all discussions regarding the renewal and consolidation of various forms of film production assistance. Radio-Canada is committed to playing this influential and specific role for as long as it is able.

Thank you for your attention. I am ready to answer your questions.

• (0925)

The Chair (Ms. Marlene Catterall (Ottawa West—Nepean, Lib.)): Thank you very much, Madam.

Mr. Schellenberger, will you begin?

[English]

Mr. Gary Schellenberger: Thank you.

Thank you very much for that presentation.

I know we've been going around the country listening to various witnesses and interviewing people on the feature film industry. The one thing we have noticed is there were goals set of upping the amount of Canadian film, or getting the audience attending Canadian feature films in theatres up to 5%. I know we were at 4.6%, and the biggest part of that was in French film.

You say that:

We then brought together representatives of professional associations of screenwriters, actors, directors, producers, and distributors into an advisory committee to provide input on our strategies.

Has there been a different approach to feature film policy between the French and the English divisions of the CBC? It seems that the French side has succeeded and, somewhat, that the English feature film side has not.

[Translation]

Ms. Suzanne Laverdière: I won't take the liberty of speaking on behalf of the CBC, since Richard Stursberg is to come and meet with you in the next few weeks. I can simply tell you that, since the linguistic and cultural realities of the Anglophone and Francophone environment differ, each obviously goes about meeting the needs and expectations of each market in a completely different way.

So Richard will come and explain to you how the CBC is working to support Canadian film in the Anglophone market.

[English]

Mr. Gary Schellenberger: I have to say one thing. I've always been one of those people who have thought you should have the stakeholders involved, whenever there's any policy, if there's a problem. I think it shows that there has been, by bringing all the

stakeholders in and sitting them around the table. I've been one of those people who has said, "Bring everybody into the room with this committee and lock the doors until we come up with a policy that everyone can agree to, and then that's when you can go out the door."

So I guess that's what we'll have to ask the English division of television for CBC. We have been looking for that catalyst, and when I see this here....

I understand that the French part of CBC has done that. That is one thing we've been looking for. Why has this happened? This is the first time I've had it relayed to me in this particular way. So I hope we can check that out.

There was one other thing here: "Quebec film producers and distributors are implementing powerful promotional strategies when films are released." That's another thing we've heard as we've gone around, that some of the distributors give a half-hearted effort to a film's release. We all know that probably if we were to check this Saturday's local newspaper, it would tell you all the films that are going to be released in the United States and all over. I don't think some of those promotional moneys have been spent. That's another thing we've heard.

So what does a Quebec film producer or distributor refer to when they talk about "powerful promotional strategies"? Is it primarily money, or again, is there something there that the English could tap into?

• (0930)

[Translation]

Ms. Suzanne Laverdière: I can tell you that the strategy put in place in Quebec and that at Radio-Canada are the envy of a lot of countries. I often have occasion to go to Europe. I work with France, Belgium and Switzerland. I can tell you that Belgium and Switzerland have enormous problems with their national film industries. The fact that all the partners in Canada — distributors, producers, screenwriters, actors, directors and broadcasters — work together ensures that they represent a greater force than if each of them worked individually.

That's what happened in the past. Someone made a film, then looked for a distributor. Once the distributor had the film, it looked at casting and asked why certain actors had been used and why the film had been produced in a particular way. It could say that the film was way too long, that it had to be reedited or cut. In short, as it had not been involved, it wound up with a work it had trouble marketing. It did a very summary marketing job, saying it would do what it could with the revenue from that film and that it would then move on to the next one.

The strength of Quebec's film industry, I believe, stems from two things. The first is the quality of scripts, the quality of the stories that are told. The second is promotion. With respect to promotion, I'm going to explain more precisely how we work with distributors and producers.

From the moment we know that filming is to start, that is to say that its financing is complete, we organize a meeting with the producer, director, distributor and people from Radio-Canada, from program services, variety programs, advertising sales, communications, RDI and the Web site. We have a meeting, and, even before filming starts, we discuss the film's marketing, when it will be done and the film's target public. How can we start talking about that right away? Can we have interviews with the main filmmakers during filming? Can we send reminders during the editing? We prepare for the film's release.

In Canada, unlike people in France, for example, who are very jealous of us, we can broadcast film trailers on television. That's prohibited in France. They say the film industry will drain the life out of television, since there are a lot of American films in France. In any case, let's come back to Canada.

So we can broadcast film trailers on advertising air time, and we conduct a twofold marketing campaign: we market well in advance of the film's theatre launch, and we know what audience the film is aimed at; our advertising people and the distributor's marketing people target programs whose audience is interested in seeing the film. So there's a twofold impact: there's a long-term impact, and we're sure the audience for a particular subject or filmmaker will see the film.

We offer enormous bonuses as part of our support. When a distributor buys 30 seconds, we can provide three, four or five times that, depending on the overall value of the film. The more a film is aimed at a large audience, the bigger the bonus, since we can reach the audience not only in the evenings, but throughout the day as well.

So promotion is completely orchestrated from the moment the film is started and continues until its commercial release. For example, the film *Idole instantanée* will be released this weekend. The press campaign has started. The next film will be *Aurore*, which will come out on July 8; we'll be presenting a feature on the making of that film on July 3. As you'll see, there will be talk about *Aurore* for the next few weeks as well.

• (0935)

[English]

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Schellenberger, I have to pass the microphone now to Mr. Kotto.

[Translation]

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

Good morning, Suzanne. We've known each other for a number of years now.

Ms. Suzanne Laverdière: For at least 15 years.

Mr. Maka Kotto: That's it. I can attest to her professionalism, passion and serious-mindedness. The presentation she made to us is one of rational beauty, I would say. Being myself a former member of the film community, I can attest to the truth of all the details in that presentation.

I won't make any more comments. I'll simply say that the film support and promotion program embodied in Radio-Canada Television should serve as a model for other public television networks, in particular the English-language network, which should support that film industry which I think is operating in a vacuum. Elsewhere, people don't have access to all the ingredients underlying Radio-Canada's success in its support and promotion of French-language films in Quebec.

I'd also say it's a laboratory that could provide us with food for thought in the search we're conducting here, since we've been travelling across Canada gathering information, consulting and so on. It's a microlab full of information, one that would do even better if it had more resources. If it had more resources, it would go even further, like Quebec, where market share is currently 21 percent. I think Quebec could reach 30 percent faster than the rest of Canada. What do you think?

My second question concerns the number of dramatic productions. Based on certain information we've managed to obtain, isn't there a risk that the development of new talent will stagnate? That's one of our concerns right now. Thank you.

Ms. Suzanne Laverdière: The number of dramatic productions broadcast on Radio-Canada has not declined. That may be the case in the industry as a whole, but not at Radio-Canada. However, fewer dramas are produced internally: these projects have been taken over by independent producers. The overall volume has thus remained the same. In fact, five new dramas were broadcast in January, which is considerable. In short, the volume is constant, even a bit higher.

Apart from promotion and script quality, I believe the success of the French-language film industry stems from the success we've experienced for years now in the area of television fiction, in other words drama. In don't think film can be strong in any country if television fiction isn't strong as well. I believe that television drama must be very solid to enable screenwriters and directors to take risks with certain authors, actors, even producers, to learn to do fiction in order eventually to take on film. Television fiction makes it possible to create stars and develop screenwriters, directors and actors. It also affords the public an opportunity to identify with characters. I'd also say that, because of the number of fictional productions it presents, television enables us to address highly varied subjects; this makes it possible to test the waters before turning to film, which requires a lot more resources.

Maka, you talked about money, but the fact remains that the major challenge in the Quebec film industry right now is for it to continue financing as many films as it currently does. It's fantastic to see that. At least one film is being released every month right now. The film *Le Survenant*, which is still ranked in the top 10, is barely starting to fall in the ratings, while *C.r.a.z.y* is coming out, then *Idole instantanée*. Then there's a slight decline. It takes about five weeks for there to be a real drop. That's when *Aurore* comes out. This fall, there'll be *L'Audition*, and so on. A Quebec film is in the theatres at all times. In fact, there are always a number of them at the same time: while one film rises in the rankings, another falls slightly, and so it goes.

However, films cost a lot of money. Production costs haven't fallen in recent years: on the contrary, they've increased. When you want to make films on specific subjects, that require certain effects or a larger cast — period films, for example — the production budget has to be bigger. If financing remains the same and budgets increase, it's a matter of arithmetic: fewer films will be made. I have a concern. It's now June, and production has started on only six feature films since January, as a result of financing decisions made by the two essential partners, Telefilm and SODEC. That's not much. So if we can't manage to finance a large number of projects in the next few months, at the time of the release next year, no films will be appearing during certain periods.

The public's with us, but they can also be unfaithful. They can forget us. My fear is that, if no film is launched in the theatres for one, two or three months, audiences will turn to other films. You know as well as I do that may mean American films. So it's really important to ensure regular production and regular film releases to maintain public interest.

• (0940)

[English]

The Chair: Merci.

Mr. Angus.

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Thank you, Madam Chair.

I'll begin by asking a qualifying question. You stated that the 21% of the Quebec market share that you have now hasn't come from cutting into films based in Hollywood or the U.S. It has come from the non-U.S. share. Would that be the same for English Canada? Would we have 25% of the market in non-Hollywood films in English Canada or is this market particular to Quebec?

[Translation]

Ms. Suzanne Laverdière: That's the situation in all countries whose language isn't English. By that I mean that the phenomenon is the same, whether it be in France or in Quebec. When the national film market is growing, it isn't the U.S. industry's market share that declines, but rather that of all the other film industries.

For example, in Quebec four years ago, the market share of the French film industry, that is to say of films originating in France, was 15 percent. Now it's two percent. It's quite clear that the growth in the Quebec film industry's market share has come at the expense of foreign films, indeed of films made in France.

[English]

Mr. Charlie Angus: Regarding the question about participation and development of film, you mentioned you're showing trailers. Trailers and, particularly for the English Canadian cinema, the lack of exposure for trailers have been a big issue with us. Do you do that as a public service? Do you get a cut? What does Radio-Canada get out of showing trailers on TV?

[Translation]

Ms. Suzanne Laverdière: Over the years, we've discovered a promotional phenomenon: the more you talk about a film when it's released in theatres, the more successful it is when you broadcast it.

I'll give you an actual example: *Les Boys*. There was *Les Boys I*, *Les Boys II* and *Les Boys III*. Each of those films earned about \$6 million at the box office. If you set the ticket price at \$6.00 for comparison purposes, that means that one million Quebecers saw each of the films in the *Les Boys* series in the theatres.

When we broadcast the film, despite the fact that it had been in many commercial theatres, been broadcast on pay TV, been available on video on demand and been released on DVD and VHS, market share, the ratings were 1.6 million viewers for the first film and 1.8 million for the third; so 1.8 million television viewers saw *Les Boys III*, when one million had seen it in the theatres.

This is a constant phenomenon. We create visibility, a reputation, in fact, because the on-air promotion we do contributes to a film's reputation. The bigger the reputation, the more people want to see the film when it's broadcast.

This is so true that Radio-Canada has on occasion acquired the rights to films in foreign markets, when distributors hadn't released them in the theatres. Those films never had any success on our network. Why? Because the public didn't know about them.

Reputation thus comes from the knowledge we have of a work, from the promotion that's done of it, from the print media, from criticism, from the fact that people have seen the stars and the awards they've won, and so on.

So this factor is extremely important and, despite the fact that we have no obligation, we therefore see, behind all this, a way to help develop our film industry. As a broadcaster, we can thus develop much fuller programming that will have a major impact when it is broadcast.

• (0945)

[English]

Mr. Charlie Angus: Because I just jumped into the question but I didn't preface it by saying anything, I guess I should say I feel that your presentation has been very instructive. I would like to say it's very inspiring, but I actually feel it's very frustrating. I know you're here to speak on Radio-Canada, but Radio-Canada is part of a corporation, which is the CBC. We're seeing an amazing success story, and yet the CBC has done a terrible job in English Canada trying to do what you're doing so successfully in the Quebec market. I understand that you're not here to speak about CBC as a whole, but I have to ask, is it a culture within Radio-Canada that makes this possible, or is it the funding, or is it a combination of both? To me, this is the answer I need to get out of today.

[Translation]

Ms. Suzanne Laverdière: The decision to support the film industry came from Daniel Gourd, our vice-president, who was director of programs at the time. I was director general of film and television at SODEC, and he hired me to handle independent productions. In view of my experience in the film industry, he also asked me to develop a support program, since he believed in Canadian film.

This really stems from the taste, interest and desire of individuals at Radio-Canada; it's as a result of this that we've achieved the success we have today and that we're working with the entire industry. Film is another medium in itself. However, as I told you, it's important for us that film and fiction combine. It's important to move talent around a small market like ours. This results from the determination of individuals.

When I arrived in 1999, I brought in script analysis experts to build a strong team, and thus to consolidate our commitment to developing the industry, promoting the next generation and developing new talent.

Do you know what's happening now? Very often, young people come and pitch their own projects to us; we start talking with them, and they ultimately submit a television project. Sometimes young people pitch a short film and we discover that they have program projects on the backburner. The thing is to open up to creativity and not to limit yourself within an extremely rigid framework and benefit from the creativity, exchange, contacts and experience of everyone else. Once again, this decision to support the film industry is individual, but Radio-Canada derives benefits from it in all areas of activity, particularly fiction.

● (0950)

[English]

The Chair: Mr. Angus, I'm sorry, but I have to pass the questioning to Mr. Smith now.

[Translation]

Mr. David Smith (Pontiac, Lib.): Ms. Laverdière, thank you very much for being here this morning. As a Quebecker, I'm very proud of the results achieved by Radio-Canada, your team and everything you've managed to do.

My family and I are film lovers, and we can't wait until the next film comes out so that we can go and see it. You're doing an extraordinary job.

I know the financing question is part of the sinews of war. When I was in business, I tried to have as much revenue and as few expenses as possible in order to be able to invest elsewhere. Your brochure states that you have had certain films translated into English for the Anglophone market. Could you tell us about some of the films that have been translated into English, about the results they've achieved, and tell us to what extent they managed to penetrate the Anglophone market in Canada, for example?

Ms. Suzanne Laverdière: First, it's subtitling that we present, not dubbing. A film is presented in French, with English subtitles. Why? It's out of respect for the creator and for the original version. Whether it be *Les invasions barbares*, *La grande séduction* or, more

recently, *Le Survenant* or *Mémoires affectives*, those films have been presented with subtitles.

It's obviously not easy for French-language films, such as those from France, Belgium or Switzerland, or even for films made in languages other than English, to penetrate the English Canadian market. In most cases, the success of our films — let's consider the case of *Les invasions barbares* and *La grande séduction* — is a global success. Despite their enormous international appeal, since those films were made in French, they remain art films, experimental films. That's what you also have to understand.

When films like *Les invasions barbares*, with box office receipts of \$5 million in Quebec, and *La grande séduction*, with a box office of \$7 million, have international appeal, they fall into the niche of art and experimental cinema, auteur films, since they fall within the small percentage of films that are not domestic or American. They therefore become very specific cultural items. For example, it's now easier for us to penetrate the European market than English Canada.

However, two recent experiments we've conducted with *Le Survenant* and *Mémoires affectives* were extremely conclusive. One of the mistakes that was made in the past was to release a film in the major cities. So we thought we should first reach Francophones by presenting films subtitled in English, expanding promotion so Anglophones could come and see the films and focusing first on Ontario. In Ontario, the box office reached about \$30,000 in two weeks, which is enormous for a film of which only two copies were released and shipped from city to city.

As for *Mémoires affectives*, we were shocked to learn how the film did in New Brunswick last weekend. The film earned \$9,000 after three days in the theatres, with one copy in two cities. That corresponds to a good weekend in Montreal at a major theatre. In New Brunswick, we did the same box office in three days. The distributors and theatre owners in those regions are discovering the public's interests.

When I was at SODEC in 1995 and 1996, when we got out of Montreal, theatre owners in Quebec told us they didn't want Quebec films because they didn't work for them. They preferred to screen American films.

Then there was all the synergy, all the work that was done with the distributors and producers to do theatre releases, to meet the stars, to take them into the field. Today, 60 percent of revenues from a film comes from outside Montreal, whereas it used to be perhaps one percent of revenues.

Theatre owners in the regions, outside Quebec, and distributors are starting to discover that those regions may be a distribution area that will make it possible to expand the market share of Quebec films and conquer new audiences.

In my remarks, I said that other initiatives were in the offing. I hope we can release *Aurore* in the Winnipeg region. We'd like — we're crossing our fingers and we're going to work very hard with Telefilm Canada and Alliance Atlantis Vivafilm — to release *Maurice Richard* across Canada, since Maurice Richard is an idol for all Francophones, since he was a hockey player, and so on.

With our current results, I'm virtually certain that, within a few years, a significant portion of revenue generated through theatre distribution will come from Francophone markets outside Quebec. In that way, I believe we'll also be able to reach Anglophone film lovers with French-language films.

● (0955)

First, however, artists have to travel and directors have to meet the media. Roy Dupuis went to Moncton, and I can tell you he had a lot of success. The same thing happened when Jean-Nicolas Verrault toured the cities of Ontario. There were a lot of young girls in the room, but they had come with their boyfriends. It happened by word of mouth in the Quebec regions. These initiatives, the results of which have been conclusive, give me a lot of hope. As I told you, the same phenomenon occurred in Quebec a few years ago, when the decision was made to take films out of Montreal and Quebec City.

Mr. David Smith: Through new technologies like e-cinema, are you considering offering certain films, whether it be from your Web site or from a bank of films that would be available? For example, someone from another country could download some of those films.

Ms. Suzanne Laverdière: It's the distributors, not Radio-Canada, that hold the film marketing rights. For that reason, we have no right to sell those films. However, we can promote them on and off the air and broadcast them. What you're talking about comes under the business plans of the distributors.

As for e-cinema, we're still very much monitoring the steps that are being taken in that area, particularly by Daniel Langlois and the NFB. In addition, one event directed by Sheila de la Varenne, who works with Daniel Langlois, will take place in September. This digital film distribution market will be attached to Équipe Spectra's Festival du nouveau cinéma. We'll be monitoring that very closely. That will be not only one way of expanding film distribution, but also an opportunity to make technological advances.

Because we can't market films, we're not part of that process. However, we could definitely offer our promotional support, even though the idea here isn't to decide whether to put equipment in one place or another.

Mr. David Smith: In your opinion, if you were asked...

[English]

The Chair: Mr. Smith, I'm sorry, I have to pass this over to another member.

Madam Oda.

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

Thank you for being here today.

As I read it, there's recognition here that Radio-Canada does play a critical role in film in the French language, in all stages of development. You invest in development, in script development, etc., and you also license as a broadcaster. As well, you take equity positions in some projects. So you have some ownership there.

It would seem to me that your role in francophone-language films is critical, and I have a concern—it's more of an overall concern—when I look at the investment. I know that your investment in this area is limited by your funding. You've invested an average of \$4

million a year since 1999. You recently made another commitment for \$12 million for the next three years, which still gives us an average of \$4 million. When you have the same amount being invested over an eight-year period, in fact there's a decrease happening; just inflation would say there's a decrease.

I guess my concern centres around your ability to not only maintain the role you play but to increase it, because it is pivotal, I think, to the film industry in Quebec. Do you have any comments on your ability to reallocate or to find dollars so that you're not decreasing your commitment or your focus in this area?

● (1000)

[Translation]

Ms. Suzanne Laverdière: Yes. The average is \$4 million a year. However, you have to recognize that, over a very long period, there's a decline in constant dollar terms. So that would be really sad, first of all for us at Radio-Canada, and for the industry, if it were impossible for us, for financial reasons, to continue our commitment to Canadian film.

Unfortunately, we can't generate funds for that purpose, since our operations are not for profit: they're related to promotion and support for screenwriting. As you probably know, scripts that we have financed don't automatically make it to the production stage. Some projects are never carried out, in some cases because the author has abandoned them. That's money being wasted.

What will be decisive for us is getting access to the Canadian Television Fund. If we can't get direct financing for film, which is one of the parts of our programming, we'll have to find a way to support our programming as a whole. In that way, it will be possible to reallocate money internally and thus to continue supporting film.

Funding from the Canadian Television Fund is an essential factor for us in that it can enable us to finance youth programs, dramas and other types of programs. Our current talks with the Canadian Television Fund to obtain stable financing are absolutely decisive. It's essential for us to get at least 45 percent of the envelope intended for CBC and Radio-Canada projects — here I'm talking about all funds — so that we on the French side can get money.

[English]

Ms. Bev Oda: You gave me exactly the answer I wanted regarding the television fund. You're saying it's 25% of the CBC envelope.

Is that the current level of the CBC envelope?

[Translation]

Ms. Suzanne Laverdière: We're talking about 45 percent here.

[English]

Ms. Bev Oda: Is it 45% of the CBC envelope? Oui?

[Translation]

Ms. Suzanne Laverdière: I'm saying that 45 percent of the Canadian Television Fund's Francophone envelope should be allocated to Radio-Canada. We were previously allocated 50 percent of the total fund. What I'm telling you now is that we should get at least 45 percent.

• (1005)

[English]

Ms. Bev Oda: I just want to make sure I'm clear on this. Of the entire television fund, CBC's envelope represents how much, including Radio-Canada and CBC English? Are you aware? Do you know?

[Translation]

Ms. Suzanne Laverdière: For the French section, it represents about 38 percent.

It must be kept in mind that, during the period when the Canadian Television Fund was founded, and until 2000, Radio-Canada received 50 percent of the Francophone envelope. Subsequently, exclusivity was taken away from us. We were thus competing with all programs presented by Francophone broadcasters. Our access to the Fund varied and finally settled around 38 or 40 percent.

Earlier we were talking with Maka Kotto about the importance of drama, the cornerstone of all programming. To ensure stability for us, this figure has to be 45 percent. Ideally, we should return to 50 percent. However, with 45 percent, we could continue doing the work we're currently doing.

[English]

Ms. Bev Oda: I have two more questions. I want to make sure I can get them in during my time here.

I note from your presentation that you've supported script development of 60 films over six years. You always have to invest in more script development than you're going to actually have in film at the end of the day to broadcast on Radio-Canada. Do you know the proportion or the averages? We've heard in other testimony that major studios will invest in hundreds of scripts before they get down to one or two projects. Based on your experience, what is your history with that kind of investment?

[Translation]

Ms. Suzanne Laverdière: Yes, absolutely.

Script development has varied from one year to the next. When the program started, we mainly invested in project writing, since it often takes two years, sometimes even three years, to develop projects. Production was subsequently stepped up.

The number of scripts developed has varied from year to year, from seven to 15 a year. On the production side, Radio-Canada has financed six to 17 feature films a year. Radio-Canada supported development of 15 feature films in 1999 and seven in 2004. The opposite was true in production: we financed the production of six projects in 1999 and 17 in 2003; that takes two to three years. Some screenwriters abandon projects and, in some instances, come back a few years later. In fact, one in two projects gets to the production stage over a very long period of time.

[English]

Ms. Bev Oda: Perfect. Merci.

I have one final question.

The Chair: I'm sorry, you're over your time limit.

It's time for Monsieur Lemay.

[Translation]

Mr. Marc Lemay (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ): I find your presentation very interesting, Ms. Laverdière.

I'm going to use a word that's fashionable in Quebec: convergence; not convergence with TVA, but convergence with Radio-Canada. Let's say my name is Stéphane Bourguignon and I have an idea for a program that would be called *La vie d'un couple à l'âge de 30 ans*, and that couple has been together for five years. I meet you and I start developing the idea. Am I to understand that, as Stéphane Bourguignon or Avard — or whatever my name might be — my idea, with your advice, could be transformed into a drama project and even become a film?

What kind of oversight does Radio-Canada, and thus your team, have in implementing my project? From the moment the idea is accepted and the financing is settled, what kind of oversight do you have up until the film hits the screens?

Ms. Suzanne Laverdière: The relations we've established over the years with screenwriters, directors and producers are extremely close. As I said earlier, those stakeholders work with us in television. We therefore intervene in an extremely open way. When we decide to finance a project, we become real partners, and we put the expertise we have at the service of the project and those who are carrying it out. We analyze the script, we sit down with the scriptwriter, the director and the producer. We discuss the script in depth. We comment. We're the first audience. You have to understand that Radio-Canada is the first audience to take a look at the script outside the creative team.

A scriptwriter, director and producer can work for a number of years developing a project, but they do it amongst themselves. They have their script read by their friends, wives, someone at the office, but no critical, outside look is taken at it.

Radio-Canada takes a look as a person or organization outside that group, but, in addition, its role is to make television programs that will reach an audience. In the comments we make on the script, we always make the following point: if anything is hard for us to understand, and we're used to reading scripts, imagine what it will be like for the audience. They won't understand. Consequently, we comment on the script, we discuss it with the people who wrote it, and we reread a number of versions, which we improve through our comments. This is done in a context of exchange. We work the same way on dramatic series. Generally, since trust is established between the creative groups and us, our comments are listened to. I'm not saying they're all accepted, but the creators listen to them.

That's what we do right up to the production stage.

Once a script is written, we talk with the director, producer and distributor about actor selection, casting. Why? Because we have a very, very broad vision of all film projects carried out in a year and of a large number of television series. We can tell the producer that such and such an actor would be extraordinary in this role, but he'll be in such and such a series or film and that overexposing him might hurt the project. The idea is to inform and discuss.

As you know, we have a casting service at Radio-Canada. Directors often use the services of our casting agent to discover new actors, since we hold auditions involving a large number of actors. In short, we also work in close cooperation.

Once the filming has been completed, there are all the post-production stages: first and second rounds of editing, then final editing, then sound editing. We edit the film before the sound. At this stage, we're invited to screen the film, once again with the creative team, and to comment on the pictures we see. Here again, through our questions and comments, we provide input to enrich the work, again in a context of transparency, dialogue and respect for the creators.

• (1010)

Mr. Marc Lemay: Then we come to broadcasting.

Ms. Suzanne Laverdière: And marketing in theatres, video, etc., then broadcasting on Radio-Canada.

• (1015)

Mr. Marc Lemay: If by some misfortune — which I obviously don't want to happen — you disappeared, what would happen to Quebec and Canadian film?

Ms. Suzanne Laverdière: I hope that other partners would continue supporting the film industry just as vigorously. I'm going to tell you about a new phenomenon that I find very reassuring: when Radio-Canada began supporting the film industry in 1999, no Canadian Francophone feature film had any major visibility with the private networks. Today, as I said earlier, of the 10 successful films of 2004 — I'm talking about the major success stories of the year — six were supported by Radio-Canada, two by TQS and two by TVA. I hope all broadcasters will support the film industry.

Every broadcaster will obviously select films that correspond to its programming orientations. The selections of TVA and TQS will obviously be very different from those of Radio-Canada, and Radio-Canada has much broader support, as I said earlier, ranging from very popular film to auteur cinema. However, I believe it has now been proven that feature films are important, not only in developing a cultural identity, but also from the standpoint of programs, for broadcasters.

Mr. Marc Lemay: Thank you.

[English]

The Chair: Mr. Silva.

[Translation]

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

Our committee has held a number of meetings, and many witnesses have told us about the quality of scripts, particularly in English-language films. I find it interesting that this aspect is your

first priority in film development. What work do you intend to do to develop this important aspect of the French film market in Canada?

Ms. Suzanne Laverdière: As I explained in my last answer, a scriptwriter can come to us with an idea. A scriptwriter can come and see us with a synopsis, that is to say a summary of the film's storyline. They can come to us with a first version of the script. They can come to us with written material at a much more advanced stage. To support project development, we're open to all ideas, all kinds of film, projects that come from experienced scriptwriters and from someone who is just starting out. The openness we show in reading all these projects, in meeting the authors, in discussing with them, is the starting point.

Then, depending on how advanced the writing is, we'll develop a first version of the script, a final version of script or polish the script. There's always a progression toward the most impeccable script possible. A good script can result in a bad film for various reasons, but a bad script will never result in a great film.

From the outset, we try to give ourselves as many chances as possible and to ensure that the film is one of very high quality. So we put the necessary time and money into it; that is to say that we take the time to comment, meet the scriptwriter and discuss the script with him to ensure the script improves stage after stage.

This work is also done with the producer. Since we want the film to be done, a producer has to be assigned to the project to ensure that, once the writing is done, someone is there to fight for financing for the project. So there's a trio, and sometimes there's a fourth person: directors are increasingly involved in writing, not in writing with the scriptwriter, but in ensuring that what's written can be filmed or sometimes in order to find images that make it possible to lighten the dialogue in the script before information that doesn't have to be described in words can be given visually.

So this is a working group that, stage after stage, enriches the project so that, when requests are made for financing for these films, the script is complete. You're right in saying that the success of our film industry is based on very strong scripts and promotion. In my opinion, those are the two main aspects: a strong script, then ways of reaching the audience.

[English]

The Chair: Madam Oda.

Ms. Bev Oda: Thank you again.

I would just like to talk to you a little bit about the broadcasting of feature films on Radio-Canada. You indicated in your presentation that in 2000-01 you broadcasted 38 full-length feature films, and that has increased to 60 for 2004-05. I'm wondering how many of those were because there were no NHL hockey games. What would the normal level of Radio-Canada's feature film broadcast be if there were NHL hockey?

•(1020)

[Translation]

Ms. Suzanne Laverdière: I can tell you that there was hockey on Radio-Canada. Hockey stopped not very long ago. So hockey was still being broadcast in the last reference year I gave you. It has nothing to do with this.

[English]

Ms. Bev Oda: So there were 60 feature films aired on Radio-Canada and none of those were in the hockey time period blocked on the schedule?

[Translation]

Ms. Suzanne Laverdière: I'm telling you that 60 titles were broadcast on Radio-Canada in various time slots. A small portion of that number were broadcast in the hockey time slot. However, most of them were broadcast in other time slots. Let's go back to what I think you want me to say. It would be false to say that the increase in the number of feature films broadcast on Radio-Canada is related to the fact that there isn't any hockey.

[English]

Ms. Bev Oda: I think what I was trying to achieve was an estimation of or an average for this next broadcast year, regardless of whether hockey is there or not. Would Radio-Canada be broadcasting about 60 titles. Is that correct?

[Translation]

Ms. Suzanne Laverdière: Absolutely. It must be kept in mind that, very often, when we were broadcasting hockey, we were broadcasting Canadian feature films on Sunday evenings. So they were moved from Sunday to Saturday.

[English]

Ms. Bev Oda: I just didn't want to make an assumption that this could be an ongoing expectation. I wanted to make sure that I understood the impact of hockey or no hockey.

Out of those 60 titles, how many would Radio-Canada have either developed or have an equity position in? The other way of asking the question would be, about what proportion of those would you have just licensed from the independent production sector? I don't need an exact number, just sort of a proportion. I'd just like to get an idea of how many you yourselves, Radio-Canada, are taking an active part in, how many are being purely licensed, and how much work you do with the independent sector in Quebec.

[Translation]

Ms. Suzanne Laverdière: I have a list of those 60 titles here. Approximately 40 percent of those films were supported by Radio-Canada. You must understand that a lot of time elapses between the moment Radio-Canada starts a project and the moment we're entitled to broadcast it.

[English]

Ms. Bev Oda: I'm not saying it's a good thing or a bad thing. I'd just like to know the proportion.

[Translation]

Ms. Suzanne Laverdière: There are already 40. That was in 2004, and the program started in 1999. With time, we'll have rights to films. For example, Radio-Canada still has no right to broadcast

Séraphin, un homme et son péché, which is an enormous success, because it hasn't finished being distributed on other platforms. In 2004, we had access to films that had received support in 1999, 2000 and 2001, and they represent approximately 40 percent.

[English]

Ms. Bev Oda: I know we've had a lot of discussion about the actual active role you take in developing and making sure that projects come to fruition, but I also see Radio-Canada as being very important for the independent sector in Quebec in the feature film area. So your balance is about 40-60. Is that correct?

Merci. Thank you.

•(1025)

The Chair: Your chair is going to take the next Liberal slot, if you don't mind.

I think French film is extremely important to the preservation and the flourishing of the French language across Canada. I wanted to explore a bit more with you the broadcasting or the showing of French films outside Quebec and how much of the box office of French films is in fact outside Quebec.

[Translation]

Ms. Suzanne Laverdière: As I said a little earlier, very few Canadian French-language films have thus far been broadcast outside Canada. There was *Séraphin, un homme et son péché*, *Le Survenant* and now *Mémoires affectives*. You can count on the fingers of one hand the number of films that have reached the Francophone minority market outside Quebec in recent years. Box office ratings haven't been very high to date, except in the most recent results I've given you. We can see growth in Ontario and New Brunswick. However, the percentage that those revenues represent relative to total operating revenue is obviously, once again, very small. Consider the case of *Le Survenant*. Ninety copies were used in Quebec, and only two copies are circulating outside Quebec. You can't compare the two situations.

[English]

The Chair: Therefore, the role Radio-Canada plays is very important. In those terms, how much of French film is being seen outside Quebec on Radio-Canada?

[Translation]

Ms. Suzanne Laverdière: How many films are seen on Radio-Canada outside Quebec? I can tell you that the 60 films that were broadcast on Radio-Canada were seen across the country, and I hope that Francophones outside Quebec watched them.

•(1030)

[English]

The Chair: The other thing I wanted to ask about was this. In the French copy of your brief, it says:

[Translation]

We're obviously very proud to take part in these initiatives, which enable Francophone audiences and our film industry to broaden their horizons.

[English]

In the English version, it says you're "proud to be part of these initiatives that give French-speaking audiences and Quebec film...."

One thing I'm interested in is that we've heard no evidence so far of films being made in French outside Quebec, or based on the experience of francophones in Canada, other than in Quebec. I wonder if you could give some comment on that, because just as I think it's important in English film for all regions to have a role in telling their stories, I think it's equally important, and maybe more important, in French film where francophone minorities have particular challenges in maintaining language and culture and a sense of identity.

[Translation]

Ms. Suzanne Laverdière: Radio-Canada's rate of support for the French-language film industry outside Quebec is 100 percent. I want to tell you that, since 1999, we've received only three feature film projects from screenwriters or directors outside Quebec. Those three films were of excellent quality, and that's why we supported them.

Very few screenwriters outside Quebec write feature films, just as there are very few directors outside Quebec and very few producers. We want to develop talent, and that's what we're doing. For the fourth consecutive year, we've organized short film writing competitions together with the NFB and Telefilm Canada. We decided to start with short films. Then we'll move on to fiction for television and, lastly, to film. We're doing business with scriptwriters who are just starting out, and with people who come from documentaries or theatre. So, for the fourth consecutive year, we have a mechanism for developing scripts.

We're currently filming two dramas. Our objective is to produce two dramas a year in the coming years. In this way, we hope to find scriptwriters who will move into the film medium. We've taken it upon ourselves to provide supervision for them in cooperation with the INIS film school so that all stages of the project are really well put together and so that we can eventually find new talent.

[English]

The Chair: I understand the difficulty. Throughout Canada, if you want to work in English film, you go to Montreal or Toronto or Vancouver. I'm sure if you want to work in French film from anywhere in the country you want to be in Montreal because that's where the talent is, that's where the energy is. So I understand the problems. I also want to see if there are ways of dealing with this that we can suggest, so I'm pleased to hear of the initiatives that are being taken.

Just one small side comment in terms of subtitles: I hate them. I don't watch the film; I watch the subtitles.

Mr. Schellenberger, did you have anything further?

Mr. Gary Schellenberger: No, I'm fine, thanks.

The Chair: Do you have anything further, Monsieur Lemay?

[Translation]

Mr. Marc Lemay: I'd just like to ask a question on that, and Madam Chair has opened the door for me. We want our Quebec cinema to be seen by our friends on the other side, but subtitling is useless! Pardon me, I'm expressing my opinion. When I see in film in German, I watch it in German, but when it's subtitled in English... I've attended a number of film festivals. Why limit yourself to subtitling? Is it too expensive?

Ms. Suzanne Laverdière: No, not at all. If it's hard for you to watch a subtitled film, that's probably because you speak both languages. The problem, when you deal with a unilingual Anglophone audience, is that it sees more problems with dubbing where the soundtrack is not completely synchronized with the actors' mouths. It's easier for a unilingual audience to read subtitles than to spend its time criticizing.

Mr. Marc Lemay: Pardon me for interrupting you. Very often, in American films that Francophones watch, the soundtrack and mouths aren't synchronized. I feel that's a minor problem, Madam, because I imagine myself watching *Le Survenant* and not seeing Jean-Nicolas Verrault — we know all women find him good-looking — or Roy Dupuis. I was simply wondering whether there wasn't a way of...

Ms. Suzanne Laverdière: That would be great, but, to date, all experience has shown that, every time a film is dubbed, it's less successful than with its subtitled. That's true for English Canada and for the United States. A lot of experiments have been conducted. It doesn't work. There's resistance to dubbed versions in English Canada and in the United States.

Mr. Marc Lemay: Why do they do versions, dubbing? Canada and France fight with each other to have American films dubbed in...

Ms. Suzanne Laverdière: We're talking about television, mainly about television. What you're referring to very much concerns television and distribution in Quebec. The current disputes are over American films dubbed in French in France, whereas people would like them to be dubbed in French in Quebec. However, I don't believe there's much dispute over films distributed in English Canada. I've never heard about dubbing problems in English Canada.

Mr. Marc Lemay: I was wondering because I was interested in the question. I imagine my colleagues on the other side. Do you have any studies on the subject?

Ms. Suzanne Laverdière: None of the experiments conducted has ever worked. Even *Les invasions barbares* was distributed with English subtitles in Canada and the United States.

Mr. Marc Lemay: That answers one of our questions because, in our study... I'm emphasizing this because, when we went to Toronto and elsewhere, we were told that films were not dubbed in English. You claim that subtitling is better than dubbing.

Ms. Suzanne Laverdière: Unless things have changed in recent months, historically, dubbed versions have never worked outside Quebec.

Mr. Marc Lemay: That's very interesting. Thank you.

[English]

The Chair: Mrs. Kadis, did you have a question?

● (1035)

Mrs. Susan Kadis (Thornhill, Lib.): Forgive me, I missed a portion. I had to go and meet with some students.

I understand some of this was addressed. Just in a ballpark way—hopefully I am not being repetitive—is it an issue more of funding or of philosophy as to why it's more successful than the English? In other words, I understand the integration, the marketing, and the rate of success. Is it a function more of the funding? Are you receiving more funding than the English and utilizing it in different ways?

[Translation]

Ms. Suzanne Laverdière: I'd very much like us to receive more money than the English-language film industry, but the financial allocation for film is comparable to that for television: one-third for Francophones, two-thirds for Anglophones.

Our success stems from the philosophy, vision, approach and coherence of all efforts made. We want our films to be successful; collectively, we're heading — when I say “we”, I mean the entire filmmaking community — in the same direction, and each party is contributing in its own way to achieving that objective. It's not at all a question of money; it's a question of philosophy. If we had more money, as I said a little earlier, it would be used to consolidate our successes, because, if we can't manage to maintain a constant presence on our screens, we'll go back to what we had before. The major challenge is to ensure that films are launched on a regular basis and to ensure that there is a sufficient critical mass for the public to remember us every time we put out a film. Right now, some 15 films in French hit the theatres every year. This includes small films and the biggest films. If that mass fell to seven or eight, it would be disastrous. So we have to keep it at a solid 15 films or so every year.

The Chair: Mr. Kotto.

Mr. Maka Kotto: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I'm aware of Radio-Canada Television's early efforts and initiatives in the expression of diversity. I know you're working on that. Was that a concern previously, when you were involved in supporting films, from script to distribution? Has that always been a concern from the outset, or is it a recent phenomenon based on I don't know what?

I know that, in news programs, for example, this is something that's working well, that's been well noted, because it's public television that also has a responsibility to educate and thus to sensitize people to cultural diversity, on the one hand, and also to the variety of everything that can exist in society.

I don't want to sound like an anthropologist, but I'd like to know what the place of women, especially women over 40, has been in the films you support. Generally, they're discarded — pardon the expression — the moment they reach a certain age.

I'd like to know where this diversity stands among your concerns.

Ms. Suzanne Laverdière: In film, I believe you shouldn't operate with quotas. That's the most important thing.

It's in the talks we have with the directors and scriptwriters to help new projects emerge that we seek out different people, whether it's younger or older women or people from the ethno-cultural communities. Consider *Le goût des jeunes filles*, for example: Dany Laferrière had been wanting to adapt some of his books for a long time. By chance, a number of his books were adapted over a very short period of time. That was important for us because

Dany Laferrière is a major Quebec author and because he reflects a different reality from the one we generally have. So reflecting Canada's ethno-cultural diversity is a concern for Radio-Canada.

However, we receive very few projects. In a much broader framework, we're developing an action plan, which should be ready around December, precisely to ensure that cultural diversity is reflected in Radio-Canada's programming as a whole and even in its management. In all programs, film is obviously one of the program areas we're going to address.

This isn't a refusal on our part. We have to find ways to find creators and projects so that that diversity can be reflected on our airwaves. In the case of film, the answer is similar to the one I gave earlier concerning Francophones outside Quebec: if we don't have any projects, we can't provide the support we'd like.

So it's in our efforts and our meetings that we can seek more representation for the various communities, so that our film industry, like our television industry, reflects Canada's diversity.

• (1040)

Mr. Maka Kotto: Do you have any ideas for incentives in this area that could be written?

Ms. Suzanne Laverdière: Yes, it can go as far as that. Absolutely.

We have to find ways to show the various communities that Radio-Canada is interested in receiving projects. That's what people have to understand. If we don't receive any projects, it's probably because people think we don't want any projects of that kind.

So we have to reverse the trend and make people understand that we're interested. That could be done through incentives like I POLC, which was established for Francophones outside Quebec. It can take various forms.

Mr. Maka Kotto: All right, but you're aware that people from the cultural communities are lagging behind in this industry. Since they weren't represented from the start, the talent and vocation haven't appeared in those communities. However, there are Quebec authors of French decent, Caucasians, who, like Gil Courtemanche, for example, have a universal sensibility and have written about others, who are different.

Wouldn't it be appropriate to increase awareness among this pool of Caucasian Francophone Quebecers until people with a genuine vocation emerged from the cultural communities?

Ms. Suzanne Laverdière: Indeed.

The adaptation of Courtemanche's *Un dimanche à la piscine à Kigali* is currently being filmed with the support of Radio-Canada. It's a project we've been supporting for at least four years, since the writing stage. We've even gone so far as to promote international collaborations, since this is a story that takes place in Rwanda. We're calling on foreign partners to help produce this extremely important work. We often build these bridges between Canadian and foreign productions.

So we're sensitive to these realities. From the moment there are works such as this, extremely important works in human terms and for our cultural identity, we support them very strongly and even try to assist in their international financing. I'm delighted that *Un dimanche à la piscine à Kigali* is finally being filmed. Everything is apparently going well.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Kotto.

[English]

Mr. Smith.

[Translation]

Mr. David Smith: I simply have a brief question. Earlier you asked a question, Madam Chair. You referred to *Les Boys*, which was broadcast on Radio-Canada, with 1.6 million viewers watching the first film and 1.8 million the second. You measured the ratings. Out of the 1.6 million viewers who saw the program on Radio-Canada at that time, do you know how many Quebeckers and how many non-Quebeckers there were? Is it measured in that way? Is it possible to obtain that information?

Ms. Suzanne Laverdière: We'd have to do some digging. Unfortunately, I don't have that information.

The Chair: Thank you.

Ms. Laverdière, on behalf of the committee, thank you for your presentation, your answers to our questions and your obvious dedication to the subject before us.

• (1045)

Ms. Suzanne Laverdière: Thank you very much.

[English]

The Chair: We're going to have a discussion, short or long, of our draft interim report, our pre-pre-pre-report.

How long do people have? Do you have another committee?

Our clerk is quite anxious that I try to contact our whip's office as well, because at the moment we don't have House approval for our travel next week. The motion hasn't gone to the House yet.

Let's just take a five-minute break. I'll make that phone call, and then we'll come back and have a look at our draft report.

[Proceedings continue in camera]

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