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—
Chair

Ms. Marlene Catterall

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•(1105)

[English]

The Chair (Ms. Marlene Catterall (Ottawa West—Nepean, Lib.)): I will now call to order this meeting of the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage, with the main item on our agenda, of course, the review of the appointment of Mr. Guy Fournier as chair of the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation.

[Translation]

I would like to welcome a new member to our committee, Sébastien Gagnon, who is replacing Mr. Lemay. We are going to miss Marc, but we are happy to have you with us.

[English]

Before we begin, I would like to say that I am well aware, after our last two meetings, of the tremendous interest of this committee in many issues relevant to the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation. I don't think there's one of us who isn't happy that it appears that we are on the verge of having a final agreement to have the CBC back on our airwaves; however, that is not the topic of our meeting this morning, and I want to make that quite clear.

I want to read from the Standing Orders as to the mandate of the committee when it is reviewing an appointment. "The committee... shall examine the qualifications and competence of the appointee or nominee to perform the duties of the post to which he"—in this case—"...has been appointed or nominated."

I think it is important that we review as well what has been said in more detail. An excerpt from the *House of Commons Procedure and Practice* outlines the range of the committee's review:

The scope of a committee's examination of Order-in-Council appointees or nominees is strictly limited to the qualifications and competence to perform the duties of the post.

Questioning by members of the committee may be interrupted by the Chair, if it attempts to deal with matters considered irrelevant to the committee's inquiry.

Any question may be permitted if it can be shown that it relates directly to the appointee's or nominee's ability to do the job.

Given that we have an agreement that still has not been finalized—some of the details are still under discussion this morning, I understand—I am going to be rather strict in applying that rule, subject always to a challenge by the committee if it wishes to proceed otherwise.

[Translation]

It's a pleasure for me to welcome Mr. Fournier, who has been appointed chair of the board of directors at CBC/Radio-Canada.

[English]

Mr. Fournier, do you wish to begin by making some comments to the committee?

Mr. Guy Fournier (Chairperson, Board of Directors, Canadian Broadcasting Corporation): Yes, please, Madam.

Madam Chair, dear members, first let me tell you that I have great respect for your committee and what it has accomplished up to now, especially the Lincoln report. I have also some fear of coming before a committee like yours, and I hope you will show some indulgence, especially when I speak English.

•(1110)

[Translation]

I am honoured to be here to answer your questions now that the government has recommended that I be appointed chair of the board at CBC/Radio-Canada.

I won't go into my qualifications, as I imagine you've already had the opportunity to look at my résumé. That said, I will obviously do my best to answer any questions you may have regarding my film, radio and television experience, which dates back to 1957. And I haven't stopped since.

But first, Madam Chair and dear committee members, if I may, I would like to share a few thoughts on our public radio and television system, something to which I have been a regular contributor for nearly a quarter-century, always as a freelancer, but with turns as writer, host and producer.

[English]

CBC/Radio-Canada operates in a very competitive environment. Therefore, it faces many challenges. Fewer and larger media conglomerates now dominate the industry. The Internet attracts an increasing audience. Digital radio has started, and in the coming years television will have to switch to digital services. It's the most important transition since colour television.

For all broadcasters, advertising revenues are not sufficient any more to maintain high-quality programming. CBC/Radio-Canada, like the others, has to look for new means beyond this traditional form of revenue.

CBC/Radio-Canada has always been in a very delicate situation with the private broadcasters, because it has to compete with them for advertising revenues while being financed by public funds. The corporation has to then find a balance between its public policy role and its commercial activities. This balance has been, and should remain, a main concern for the board and the management.

I have been a director at CBC/Radio-Canada for six months. Four other directors were appointed with me in February, and three others were appointed in May. In my view, all those appointments give the board a very good mix of skill and experience.

Like most of my fellow board members, I feel that information provided by management for decision-making can be improved. We receive extensive presentations, but we feel we need more information on alternatives, options, and risks. As chairman, I intend to work closely with management to improve the quality of information provided to the board.

Interpreting the mandate and defining the role of CBC/Radio-Canada has been a challenge since the advent of private television. I believe that in the coming years both the board and management should work very closely to develop strategic directions and to better define what high-quality and distinctive programming is.

This is true for both networks, even if the French network has maintained a significant market share over the years. Our English and French television programming contain a very high rate of Canadian content, with more than 80% in prime time. This is absolutely remarkable. Still, we have to make sure that this content falls in line with the mandate of the corporation.

True enough, the mandate is quite general and can be interpreted in various ways, but there is a certain spirit to that mandate. In my view, it calls for distinctive programming first, and ratings should not be the main driver for the content.

[*Translation*]

While things have improved in the past few years, the fact remains that CBC/Radio-Canada's English and French radio and television networks still function far too often as though they were separate entities, with very few ties between them. In the interest of cost savings and sound management, I think it's important that we focus on strengthening these ties and creating greater synergy between the two networks.

I am not only referring to programming, but also to research and development undertaken by either of the two networks.

That Canadian public television is under-funded is a common refrain these days. It's true that CBC/Radio-Canada receives less funding than the BBC and French public television, but I am not here to draw comparisons, because they somehow never seem to sound right.

In any event, each and every year CBC/Radio-Canada can expect to receive about a billion dollars in public funds. In my book, that's a lot of money! Even though it's important that the board continue to request more money, it seems to me that we also need to stop believing that CBC/Radio-Canada could solve all its problems with additional funding. I'd like CBC/Radio-Canada to begin developing a different mentality, one that would lead us to examine how our

competitors, who happen to be private broadcasters, succeed with far less money in many cases. Here again, I will shy away from comparisons, because I know that you can't really draw parallels between CBC/Radio-Canada's books and those of the privates.

I am also personally concerned with ensuring that CBC/Radio-Canada's staff makeup and programming both reflect Canada's new demographic realities. I'm convinced that there is much work to do in this area, and I intend to give it special attention during my tenure.

Lastly, I wouldn't want to end this brief presentation of my intentions without mentioning that I firmly believe CBC/Radio-Canada radio and television can serve as excellent vehicles for promoting our cultural identity. They are also powerful instruments for bringing together Canadians from coast to coast, and helping integrate our immigrants. But to ensure that CBC/Radio-Canada radio and television are able to fill these extraordinary shoes, Board members, management and staff must all truly buy into the concept.

I'd really like it if the CBC/Radio-Canada board managed to convince all Canadians, including all those of you who govern us, that this is one of public radio and television's most critical missions.

• (1115)

[*English*]

Inform, enlighten, and entertain.

[*Translation*]

Inform, enlighten and entertain... It looks like our work is cut out for us!

[*English*]

I look forward to working closely with your committee every time you see fit. I also look forward to working with Mr. Rabinovitch, with whom I have developed a good relationship since my nomination to the board.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

The Chair: Merci beaucoup.

Mr. Schellenberger, you are the first on the firing line.

Mr. Gary Schellenberger (Perth—Wellington, CPC): Thank you very much, and welcome this morning to the committee. I appreciated your comments.

This is asked of us lots of times as politicians, and I've always found it a little difficult, but my first question to you, sir, is: what do you believe makes you the best candidate for the position of chair of the board of directors of the CBC?

My second question, and I only have two at this particular time, is: do you have a personal relationship with the president of the CBC—the CEO—and if so, do you think this could be a conflict?

Those are my two questions.

Mr. Guy Fournier: My answer to your first question is simple. No, I am not the best candidate for the job, but I will do my best to become the best chairman.

As far as your other question is concerned, my relationship with Mr. Rabinovitch is.... I didn't know Mr. Rabinovitch except by name, and from having met him a couple of times, before I became a director of the CBC. So my relationship has been for six months.

Does that answer your question?

Mr. Gary Schellenberger: Yes, it does. Thank you.

Those are all my questions right now.

The Chair: Thank you.

Monsieur Kotto.

[*Translation*]

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

Mr. Fournier, I'm glad that you are here. I have a whole series of questions to ask you. I will not go into your biography; I know you by reputation and I have witnessed your cultural accomplishments. Instead, I am going to stick to the vision of the person facing us.

I don't know whether you want me to ask my questions all together.

• (1120)

Mr. Guy Fournier: Put them to me one at a time; I won't have to rely on my memory as much.

Mr. Maka Kotto: Okay. You just mentioned private sector competitors. I would like to talk a bit about competition. In your opinion, is it obvious that an open and democratic debate needs to take place in order to define the mandate of Radio-Canada? Some people have questions about that mandate.

On the facts, Radio-Canada tends to behave like a private entity, not like an entity that belongs to the citizenry and that is concerned with promoting education and culture. In Quebec, people tend to see it as a clone of TQS and TVA.

Mr. Guy Fournier: First, I think that a very clear distinction has to be drawn between radio and television. The two fields are obviously not alike. Radio programming, unlike television programming, is not dependent on advertising revenue. From the get-go, television has a unique problem, given that a significant part of its revenue comes from advertising.

As we all know, advertising depends greatly on ratings. The amount you bill is directly related to that. In my opinion, the fact that television has to rely on advertising revenue for part of its funding should not mean that it has to behave exactly the same way as private sector television. Coming up with original programming is the *raison d'être* of the CBC. In other words, it should not be necessary for the CBC logo to appear on the screen for viewers to know that they are watching CBC. Very often, you need a logo on the screen to know which channel you are watching.

As you know, the CBC mandate—inform, enlighten and entertain—can be interpreted in a number of ways. I would repeat that it is

possible, within that mandate, to come up with original programming. However, that mandate should not be interpreted too broadly.

Mr. Maka Kotto: Why are there virtually no more in-house CBC dramas? Why is this institution losing its production expertise? In other words, will the CBC continue producing in-house productions, or will it opt, as the private sector is doing, to purchase shows produced by independent producers?

Mr. Guy Fournier: You have to understand that once Telefilm Canada and the Canadian Television Fund got involved in television production and tax credits were provided, this situation became unavoidable. Those measures were aimed at promoting independent production, so it went without saying that it would take off.

Should the CBC keep on producing in-house dramas? Personally, I am convinced that public affairs and news have to be part of what I call in-house production. As for the rest, once again, it's a question of balance. The CBC has to maintain some in-house expertise, especially since it already has that expertise. In my view, restricting the corporation to in-house drama or variety show production would severely limit it. For one thing, that would deprive it of various forms of available support. Furthermore, it would not have access to all these creative people. You don't just find them at the CBC.

• (1125)

Mr. Maka Kotto: Are you in favour of automatically resorting to a lock-out during bargaining? There have been three of them in six years. That's a record. I would like to know how you feel about that.

Mr. Guy Fournier: Personally, I had some union involvement at one time, and in my opinion, strikes and lock-outs are tools that should only be used as a last resort. I have always been in favour of negotiation, because everyone knows full well that in any event, even when there's a strike or lock-out, negotiation is the only way to put an end to the conflict. If you are asking me if I am in favour of lock-outs and strikes, I would say yes, but only as a last resort.

Mr. Maka Kotto: From that standpoint, should we expect conflict in Quebec in the month of...

The Chair: Mr. Kotto, I must point out to you that there are limits.

[*English*]

I would ask you to respect—

[*Translation*]

Mr. Maka Kotto: But I am not going any further. You can see that I am asking very careful questions, Madam Chair. I don't want to solve the CBC's problems here.

The Chair: I would also ask Mr. Fournier not to answer questions that are out of order.

Mr. Guy Fournier: Thank you, Madam Chair. Mr. Kotto is asking very careful questions, and my answers will be careful too.

Mr. Maka Kotto: In light of recent events and according to what you have observed, can we expect conflict in Quebec in February, March or April of next year?

Mr. Guy Fournier: Mr. Kotto, I have no idea.

Mr. Maka Kotto: All right.

[English]

The Chair: Mr. Kotto, your time is finished, but I think that is straying beyond the capacities and abilities of our witness. Thank you.

Mr. Angus.

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

It's a pleasure to meet you, sir.

I am well aware of your qualifications. I guess for me it's important to balance.... A résumé is perhaps effective, but track record is more effective in knowing where we've been, so we know where we can go.

The board of directors of which you are a member stated that you thought it was a prudent and reasonable course of action to unilaterally pull the plug on programming across Canada.

The Chair: I'm sorry, Mr. Angus, that is not in order.

Mr. Charlie Angus: Anyway, as I was going to finish my question—because I want to know where we're going based on where we've been. I represent a very large region on the James Bay coast where there is nothing other than CBC, 40% of it francophone—people who have gone seven weeks without programming. What would you do as chair of the board to rebuild a trust with them? Many people in my riding feel that a trust has been broken. Where is your vision for rebuilding trust?

The Chair: Mr. Angus, I'm sorry, that is not to do with the capabilities and abilities of our witness to fulfil the duties of the position.

Mr. Charlie Angus: Can I continue?

The board has stated that you completely support the strategic vision of where CBC has gone, in terms of what has happened. Is that strategic vision something you think will continue?

Mr. Guy Fournier: Could you just expand a little on your question? I don't quite get the thrust of it.

Mr. Charlie Angus: Again, going to the issue, which—

Mr. Guy Fournier: I'm sorry; it might be my understanding of English that is not good enough.

Mr. Charlie Angus: The board of directors, of which you are a member, released a statement saying you “fully support the strategic vision of [the] management team”. Looking forward to the next year—

Mr. Guy Fournier: Which statement are you talking about? Is it the last one?

Mr. Charlie Angus: That was at the height of the...I can't say “lockout”, because my question will be dinged out of order.

At the height of whatever happened last month, you're on record as saying you “fully support the vision of [the] management team”. Is that the vision that will continue forward from here under you?

Mr. Guy Fournier: Let me tell you that at the last board meeting, the lockout—I'm sorry, Madam Chair—was discussed at length, and sure enough, we issued a statement after—

• (1130)

The Chair: I'm sorry, Monsieur Fournier, I am going to stop you. If you can't respond to the question with respect to the vision of the CBC without referring specifically to the labour problems and negotiations, then I have to rule the answer out of order.

Mr. Charlie Angus: Thank you.

In the *Toronto Star* today, an article on the event that I cannot mention says:

...it was the workers who, through their passion and creativity, innovation and imagination, kept producing what they could, even without a paycheque. They gave Canadians street fests, replacement radio, podcasts, online news sites, rallies, burlesque shows, concerts and uncounted blogs, both serious and entertaining, which made plain one thing, CBC does not belong to the managers who have been talking of “business models” while presenting PowerPoint flowcharts at endless meetings.

The workers proved that CBC is not about executives with corporate credit cards and fancy perks. It's not about packing off hundreds of managers to high-priced training retreats where they play-act and learn to “lead”. It's also not about shoving any old programming down a pipe purely for the ratings.

It's about passionate people who work even if they are not getting paid for it.

It's about public service and the public interest.

What is your commitment to taking CBC forward in light of the public interest?

Mr. Guy Fournier: I don't know if this will answer your question, Mr. Angus, but I've always been a very high promoter of public television. I know that public television is important. I know it's important for our culture. I know it's important to lead other television networks, because I think public television should be the leader.

I fully agree that there is a very creative staff at CBC. I do think that once the trust is restored, we can go ahead and make good public television.

I don't know if it answers your question, but...

Mr. Charlie Angus: I guess I'd say that in article after article, right across the country, it seems to me that people are talking about a serious legitimization crisis of where we're going with broadcast and where we're going with the CBC.

Do we have a plan going forward, or are we going to just continue with the plan we've had?

Mr. Guy Fournier: I can say that judging from the last three meetings I've been at, the new board—we can call it a new board because seven members are new—will endeavour to make distinct and high-quality television, which we deserve. I think public television should be that, and I think we're all geared to go in that direction. That will mean changes, that's for sure.

Mr. Charlie Angus: Okay. That is the end of my questions.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Mr. Silva.

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

If the question today is whether you're capable—without a doubt, in my mind, you are very capable—the fact that you've been appointed also means that a lot of people have faith in you. I respect your humility and also your honesty in answering the questions.

My question is—since we can't talk about certain situations and we will have another opportunity to talk about that—where do you think the CBC is going? What is your feeling about the mission of the CBC?

There are a lot of people who have raised serious concerns in my community—my riding of Davenport—about the management of CBC and about Mr. Rabinovitch. As appointed chair, you will in effect be Mr. Rabinovitch's boss. Do you share his direction? Do you have a different vision of where you want to take the board? I need to know exactly where you think this is going.

Mr. Guy Fournier: Do I share his direction? First of all, I know little about what Mr. Rabinovitch wants to do because I've only been on the board for six months. We are getting to know each other a little bit more.

If you ask me where I would like the CBC to go, as I stated in French to Mr. Kotto, I think the CBC has to be distinctive. In my mind, that's the first thing we have to do. We should not need a logo on the screen to tell us we are looking at a CBC program.

I also believe that CBC has to have news and information and public affairs that the private broadcaster does not have.

I also believe that the CBC has a mandate to be very present in the region. I personally believe we should be more present, and I'll be much happier if we are much more present in the regions in the coming years.

I'm not telling you these are the only things that need to be done, but you're asking me for my vision of the CBC and that's what I'm—

• (1135)

Mr. Mario Silva: You have a mandate to enlighten and to inform.

Mr. Guy Fournier: Yes.

Mr. Mario Silva: If you watch CBC and then you watch RDI, you don't get the same information on what's happening across the country. In fact there is, both in RDI...and I listen on occasion to the news there. It tends to be what's happening in Quebec City or maybe Ottawa. If you listen to CBC, it's what's happening in Ottawa and maybe Toronto. I'm from Toronto, so it's great, but there are so many parts of the country just not being covered, and the information is not being shared. In fact, on RDI, you'd think the NDP didn't exist, only the Bloc. On English CBC, you'd think the Bloc didn't exist.

If part of the mission is to inform and to enlighten about the Canadian reality, you're missing a big part of the story. You're not telling the full story of what's happening across the country, and you're also not telling what's happening in different communities across the country. I can see why a lot of people in Canada have a dislike for Toronto, because it is a major centre for the media, but there are so many other communities in this country, and we don't know about them.

So if it's important to inform and enlighten about what the Canadian reality is all about, how do you get us to better know that reality if you're not telling us those stories?

Mr. Guy Fournier: Let me answer that first of all in general terms.

Television is a very difficult industry. It takes a lot of money. In any country of the world, it's always very centred. So our public television—I agree with you—is very Montreal-centred, is very Toronto-centred. It can be otherwise, but it cannot be otherwise without creating some economic problems.

Sure enough, it's easier to centre production in two or three cities, but that doesn't mean we should not be less Montreal-centred and less Toronto-centred. I know this country very well. I've traveled this country all over in the last 40 years, and I know all the regions of this country. I completely agree that we don't hear enough about our own country. We don't hear enough about different parts of the country.

Last weekend I was in the Magdalen Islands and in Moncton, and I can tell you that we should know a lot more about regions. If the CBC doesn't do that, the others won't do it, because this is the job of the CBC.

Mr. Mario Silva: Thank you.

The Chair: Ms. Oda.

Ms. Bev Oda (Durham, CPC): Thank you very much, Madam Chair, and you, Monsieur Fournier, for coming before us.

I have three areas, but I know I'm not going to cover them all in the first round. One area is the distinction between the French and English operations. Your radio experience would be another area. But the third area is the one I'd like to start with.

You made reference to private broadcasting as a competitor, and you see yourself as a public broadcaster in a competitive situation. Just to simplify, where would you compete? You would compete maybe for programming, or productions; you would compete for advertising, as long as you have an advertising component; and you would compete for a skilled workforce. For the skilled workforce, you would want the most talented employees, the most talented creators, and the most expert technicians to be part of your operations.

My concern, and I would like your comments, is when the public broadcaster sees itself as a competitor to private broadcasting. If we could hypothetically take away the advertising component of it, is it a legitimate frame of mind to be driven—in your mandate, in your vision—with a competitive hat on versus what you believe the public broadcaster should be? In an environment you're going to have the private broadcasters....

But I'd like to have your thoughts on this. Should the public broadcaster see itself as...? I mean, for me, let the private broadcasters and the other services flourish, because you have your mandate, your vision.

Could I have your comments on this?

• (1140)

Mr. Guy Fournier: Let me tell you first that I don't think public television should be a competitor with the private sector. I think they have to compete, and we have to compete, for advertising dollars. That's all.

Unfortunately, and you know the business as much as I do, we haven't yet found a better way to look at the performance of television than to look at the numbers. This is sad. I remember in Miami a few years back, at the World Radio and Television Council, we worked on other ways to measure the performance of public television. Unfortunately, we haven't found anything better yet than ratings. Because we haven't found a better way to measure the performance, that's why I say we should not be driven by the ratings because this is not the way public television should be. I feel that even if we have to compete for advertising dollars, we should in no way be driven strictly by ratings, even if having good ratings is always very satisfactory for anyone.

Ms. Bev Oda: That's the dilemma.

I remember over a decade ago having this very same conversation with a former chair of the CBC. That is, how much audience, how many viewers, how many people, should be watching the programming on CBC to say that this is good for Canada, this is what we want as a country, a public broadcaster, but below which or at what level? I know there are people in the room who've had this discussion for decades as to how to find the measure of ensuring that we have strong support for a public broadcaster.

I would make one suggestion, that we change the vocabulary, that we just not use the word "competitor" when we're talking about the public broadcaster, but try to find a word that says it's a service unto itself, and it has to justify itself. One of the measures may be audience. I think that's what sometimes perpetuates this thinking. Even among yourselves you use the word "competitor" when you're talking about the service. That's very interesting. I don't think we'll ever find the solution as to how you do that.

Regarding your radio experience...I know you have extensive experience in television, both English and French, etc., on the creative side and in the news and information operational side. Can you just tell us a little bit about whatever radio experience you have and how you believe that experience will help you?

Mr. Guy Fournier: It's definitely in radio that I have the least experience. I was the host of a radio show for a couple of years, a year I think, at a private station. I also wrote drama for radio, at the time that Radio Canada International had drama. I started writing drama for Radio Canada International in 1957, I believe. Sure enough, I have a lot more experience in television than in radio.

But on the other hand, Madam, if you will allow me, I think our radio is in a much better position than our television.

•(1145)

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Fournier.

Mr. Kotto.

Mr. Maka Kotto: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I have a few more questions for you. Given your lengthy experience in the private sector, what do you see as your role within this crown corporation, in the position you have been given?

Mr. Guy Fournier: First, I began my television career when the CBC was all there was. To me, public television was television par excellence. In 1960, along came private television, and then later,

in 1985—and I know about this— another network came into being. Obviously, television was much easier when there was only one network.

That said, I have always been convinced that public television, in all western countries, should represent the ideal in television. I'm not sure exactly how long you have been in Canada, Mr. Kotto.

Mr. Maka Kotto: For 15 years.

Mr. Guy Fournier: The quality of private television in French Canada is excellent, and I think that is largely due to the fact that the CBC showed the way. The better the public television, the better the private television.

Mr. Maka Kotto: My question is about Quebec. What is your vision of the place of CBC regional programming currently? In other words, shouldn't the "montrealization" of programming be reconsidered or questioned?

Mr. Guy Fournier: I said earlier to the other member that the regional issue is extremely difficult in television. I have sat on the board of directors of Télé-Québec for four years and I can tell you that we discussed the problem of the regions at every board meeting.

In my opinion, whatever we do with the regions will never be enough. It will always be hard, particularly on screen, to ensure that the regions are as well represented as we would like, because people who work in television, whether in Montreal, Toronto or Vancouver, tend to see themselves as the centre of the universe, and the regions as something secondary.

That is not how I see things, but it is not easy to fix. Too often, for people in the regions—and this can be seen particularly in the case of news, for example—it is obvious that for a successful journalist in Halifax, Moncton or Regina, the goal is to get to Toronto, Vancouver or Montreal. A guy from Rivière-du-Loup who is doing well wants to make it to Montreal. So it's very hard.

In general, private television doesn't have this problem, but CBC Television does. All public television corporations that I know—the BBC and French public television are the ones I know the best—constantly have the same problem. For career advancement, people want to go where there's the most production. It's always extremely hard to hold on to regional staff. So in the regions, with regional news, for example, public television often has a harder time establishing itself and keeping its audience than private stations, where there is much less staff turnover.

Mr. Maka Kotto: I'm sure you are sensitive to cultural sovereignty. I am referring to the Lincoln report. If my premise is correct, could you give us your point of view on CBC involvement with Sirius Canada?

•(1150)

Mr. Guy Fournier: I'll be quite honest, Mr. Kotto. In my opinion, the CBC's involvement with Sirius is a last resort. I would have hoped that satellite radio would be different and that the foundation for satellite radio would be Canadian. However, I am powerless to do anything about it. Based on that, in my opinion, it's a last resort, but it may be a last resort that we may be thankful for in a few years. I can't say anything more. I have mixed feelings about satellite radio.

Mr. Maka Kotto: As members of Parliament, we often get complaints about the CBC. We often have no idea where to forward them. Should it be to the Department of Canadian Heritage? Should it be to the board of directors? Or should it be to Mr. Rabinovitch? As you see it, what would be the most effective way to contact this entity, which is currently so impenetrable, in order to meet the needs of our constituents?

Mr. Guy Fournier: I think that for programming issues, it is in all of our interest to forward them to management. As for questions about the general direction the corporation is heading in, those can be forwarded to the board of directors. And I imagine that you will always have questions for the minister responsible.

Mr. Maka Kotto: Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you.

Ms. Bulte.

[*English*]

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

Welcome, Monsieur Fournier. It was certainly a great honour and a pleasure for me to meet you. Your reputation certainly precedes you. In looking at your CV, I was delighted to see that you're a member of the Writers Guild, because I must tell you that wonderful Maureen Parker does a great job in always trying to encourage us to appoint more artists to the board. So I'm delighted that you've received this appointment.

I was also delighted, I should add, that you mentioned the Lincoln report. I actually sat on that committee for two years, and we reviewed the Broadcasting Act and also the role the CBC plays in Canada. I'm sure you may not have had an opportunity yet, but I would ask you to please read chapter 6, which is the one about the CBC, and chapter 18, which deals with accountability and transparency, and perhaps at a later time we can talk about whether or not there is a role for you to play to move some of those recommendations forward.

Your résumé is impressive, with your award winning and your years in the broadcasting industry. We need people like you on the board of CBC. But one of the things I do notice, Monsieur Fournier, is that you don't have a lot of corporate governance experience. Do you think this affects your ability to do the work, or limits it in some way, or that perhaps it's better you don't? I think this was one thing I did note, that there is not a lot of corporate governance.

Mr. Guy Fournier: Let me answer that very quickly. I created a network from scratch when I created TQS, and it took me two and a half years to create that network. We were on the air exactly one year after having had the licence. I was told after that it was a big feat

because apparently no network has been on the air one year after having had its licence.

So I have some corporate experience, but mind you, if I have a choice between writing and governance, I prefer writing—not that it's easier.

Hon. Sarmite Bulte: No. I think it's harder.

In your opening statement you said that you will work closely with the management. I have a very important question that goes to your ability to take this job. Do you support the current senior management team?

Mr. Guy Fournier: Yes, I do support the team; I have to support the team. From what I have known up to now, because I have been on the board for only six months, yes, I support the management team, but I have also said in my opening remarks that I feel the board should be better informed and that I will try to get better information for the board. When I say “better information”, I mean better information about various options, alternatives, things like that. We are presented with very well-presented texts, that's great, but I think the board needs to do a lot more about options and alternatives and risks.

•(1155)

Hon. Sarmite Bulte: This will be my last question for now. After Mrs. Taylor resigned as the chair of the CBC, Mr. Rabinovitch acted not only as the president and CEO of the corporation, but he also acted as the interim chair. Do you think these two positions are compatible? Should they have been held by the same person? If you do not, what would you do to ensure that these positions are not held by the same person in the future? And what role, as a chair, would you have had in terms of labour disruptions?

Mr. Guy Fournier: I think the best situation is to have a chair and a president-CEO. When Madam Taylor resigned we chose to elect a lead director, Mr. McNutt; that's what we did. We were caught by surprise by the resignation of Madam Taylor. We decided on common accord to elect Mr. McNutt as a lead director, but it's Mr. Rabinovitch who became acting chair.

Hon. Sarmite Bulte: I don't understand. You're saying that the board had elected someone else to act as interim—

Mr. Guy Fournier: As lead director only, not as acting chair.

Hon. Sarmite Bulte: But do you not think now, in your position as chairman, that this is something the board should examine, as to whether you shouldn't have a vice-chair in the future?

In many cases, the vice-chair moves into that position. It just seems to me that having the chief executive officer in the same capacity as the chairman, even be it for a short but considerable time, as has been the case, it's very difficult. There is, as my colleague Ms. Jennings is saying, a conflict of interest. It just seems to be dysfunctional. Whether that indeed is the procedure in place right now, then—

Mr. Guy Fournier: I think that's a—

Hon. Sarmite Bulte: If it's in the act, perhaps it's something we need to look at changing.

Mr. Guy Fournier: It's surely something that the board should look into. Knowing the board, I think we could easily find a very competent person to be a vice-chair.

Hon. Sarmite Bulte: Thank you.

I know my other colleagues would like to ask some questions as well here.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Bulte.

Mr. Brown, and then Ms. Jennings.

Mr. Gord Brown (Leeds—Grenville, CPC): Thank you, Madam Chair, and thank you to Mr. Fournier for coming today.

I have a number of questions coming from different angles. I want to start by submitting that it's my view that the CBC does radio exceptionally well. I'll get to the other side of that, what I think of the TV side, later.

You did say something about the fact that you thought satellite radio was not handled in the way that you would like to have seen it handled. What would you have seen differently?

Mr. Guy Fournier: Mr. Chair, I didn't say that. I did say, and I still believe, the actual situation is not ideal. I would have much preferred, for instance, that what I would call the structure is Canadian. Unfortunately, it's American. I would have liked the whole outfit to be Canadian, but unfortunately it's not. That's why I said in French, it's *un pis-aller*. I don't know how you say it in English. I think we are better off with what we have right now, but to me, that's not the ideal situation.

Mr. Gord Brown: In light of recent events that we can't talk about, there has become a real interest in the future of the CBC as a whole, and specifically CBC television, and that's the side I'm concerned about. It's my view that maybe we should move to somewhat of a more U.S.-style public broadcasting system. For example, PBS doesn't have advertising and does specific public interest stories. I'd like to see the CBC doing even more uniquely Canadian stories. Obviously it does some work in news, which I'll talk about in a second, but do you believe maybe we should move a little more to that sort of model, much the way radio is?

I said before I think the radio side has done exceptionally well, but the TV side has, in my view, a little bit of room to improve and better serve Canadians.

• (1200)

Mr. Guy Fournier: To tell you the truth, I would be a little reluctant to see the CBC become PBS. Not that I don't like PBS. I think it's a very interesting network. But we're talking about another country and we're talking about another type of situation. I think if the CBC is as relevant as it should be, nobody will question the CBC. But I don't think making the CBC like PBS is the solution. That's my own opinion.

Mr. Gord Brown: Just taking that back a step, you said you don't see yourself as a competitor to other private broadcasters, but then you said you have to compete for advertising dollars, which I think brings you back to be more of a competitor. How do you square that, saying you're not really a competitor, but you are?

Mr. Guy Fournier: Well, it's a tough dichotomy. You have that same dichotomy in Australia because they're in the same position we are, you see? It would be a lot easier, for instance, if we were funded like the BBC or French television, but even at that, French television has advertising.

It will always be difficult I think because we have to rely partly on advertising dollars. This is a very personal opinion, but on the other hand—and I remember, having worked on various commissions—I'm a bit against the disappearance of advertising on public television because I think it keeps public television closer to the public and closer to reality when they also have to work to get some advertising dollars.

To me, the ideal for CBC is not PBS. To me, the ideal is to make CBC so relevant that you won't have any more questions about its existence.

Mr. Gord Brown: Thank you.

I notice that when you were at Quatre Saisons you were the VP in charge of programming and information. I think there's a bit of a view out there that maybe current reporting—well, before the event we can't talk about.... I hear this from many of my constituents; they don't think there's balanced reporting on the information and news side of things. How do you see that going forward?

Mr. Guy Fournier: Is your question, should it be the same person who leads both information and drama, for instance? What exactly is your question?

Mr. Gord Brown: No. How do you see monitoring and ensuring there's balanced coverage? I might be thinking along the lines of the political side.

Mr. Guy Fournier: I'm sorry. Repeat your question, because I don't quite get it. Put your question in very plain words so I can exactly understand it.

Mr. Gord Brown: My question is, how do you see monitoring to ensure balanced coverage in the future? That's my question.

Mr. Guy Fournier: I think the board can see that we have balanced information, as you say, but I don't think that is the role of the board, to monitor the balance every day. Sure enough, I am personally concerned about balance in information. I know we hear a lot; especially in the last year I've read a lot of excerpts in papers saying there was some bias at the CBC. I think that public television has to be fair to all political parties.

Mr. Gord Brown: Thank you very much.

Mr. Guy Fournier: Thank you.

• (1205)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Brown.

Ms. Jennings.

[Translation]

Hon. Marlene Jennings (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine, Lib.): Thank you, Madam Chair. How much time do I have?

The Chair: You have five minutes.

Hon. Marlene Jennings: Mr. Fournier, I'm sorry, I wasn't here for your presentation. However, I have a few questions for you. First, I looked at your CV and it really impressed me. In my opinion, your appointment is an excellent appointment.

Personally, I used to work for a federal crown corporation, over 20 years ago, on the management side and as a unionized employee. I would like to know whether, in your vision, as chairperson designate of the board of directors of the crown corporation Radio-Canada/CBC, there is a role for employees on the board of directors.

There is a crown corporation in Australia where an employee representative of the corporation sits ex officio on the board of directors. I would like to know whether that is part of your business vision, or whether that is something that you have never considered but that you would think about. If so, could you let us know in writing to the chair? That was my first question.

My second question is the following...

Mr. Guy Fournier: If you don't mind, I will answer one question at a time.

Hon. Marlene Jennings: As a matter of fact, I would like to be able to ask all of my questions, since I only have five minutes.

Mr. Guy Fournier: All right, pardon me.

Hon. Marlene Jennings: Second—I'm still referring to my personal experience—I sat on a board of directors of a not-for-profit organization with branches in every region of Canada. Furthermore, I was chair of one of their standing committees. I had an experience in which management had a policy on something and presented its vision to the board of directors. However, what I was hearing from employees working on the ground was quite another thing. Given my role, I managed to convince the board of directors to hear the opinion of employees on the ground, at least so that the board would be aware of both points of view.

You mentioned that you would have liked, given your experience, to have more than one option when management appears before the board of directors. So that is another reason why I asked my first question.

Mr. Guy Fournier: Actually, I am familiar with that experience, because I spent four years on the board of Télé-Québec, where the law requires a staff representative on the board of directors. If I recall correctly, that representative is elected by the staff, with a one-year term of office, I believe. So it's a different person every year.

I don't believe that it is up to me to decide whether the board of directors of the CBC should have the same policy. In my opinion, that is much more of a question for government than for the board itself.

• (1210)

Hon. Marlene Jennings: However, there is nothing to stop you, if you feel that it is actually an option that should be contemplated, from considering making the suggestion and referring to your own experience to show why it might be a good idea and warranted.

Mr. Guy Fournier: That is actually a good suggestion. I am very willing to put it to the board. Not only am I willing to put it to the board, but I know full well what that means, because I have experienced that for four years at Télé-Québec.

Hon. Marlene Jennings: Excellent. I have no other questions, Madam Chair.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Jennings.

Mr. Angus.

[English]

Mr. Angus.

Mr. Charlie Angus: Thank you, Madam Chair.

The Lincoln report has really become our broadcast map, our guide. The Lincoln report called for the board of the CBC to have the power to fire the president and CEO. Do you believe that power should be with the board?

Mr. Guy Fournier: Let me answer this way. I think the board will exercise every power it has, but right now we don't have that power.

Mr. Charlie Angus: Would you advocate for that power?

Mr. Guy Fournier: I don't know. I would have to ask the board members how they feel about that power.

Mr. Charlie Angus: I was talking to Mrs. Lorraine Price of Schumacher, Ontario, last night. Mrs. Lorraine Price phoned me to say she was very frustrated, she was very upset. She said she didn't know who the heck Mr. Rabinovitch was. She didn't know who Guy Fournier was, but she knew who Dan Lessard was. Maybe you don't know Dan Lessard, but if you live anywhere north of Sudbury, Dan Lessard is who you listen to every day. She said she knows who Marcus Schwabe is; she knows who Barry Mercer is. That for her is the CBC, and she feels she's been betrayed. She feels a trust has been broken. What would you say to Mrs. Price to restore that trust?

Mr. Guy Fournier: First of all, I'm sad that she doesn't know me.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Charlie Angus: Maybe we can appoint you to the morning show. Your relevance in the north might be a little more appreciated.

Mr. Guy Fournier: You see, I don't disagree that there's a hell for us, but I do believe that because of that unfortunate situation, we will, as we say in French, *prendre les bouchées doubles* to regain the confidence of our viewers and listeners.

Mr. Charlie Angus: The other question I have for you is this. Questions have been raised. Friends of CBC have raised it; it's come up in committee before. It's that the problem with the overseeing of CBC is that we've relied from the beginning on patronage appointments. In fact, for all our broadcasting and cultural institutions, it's always patronage; it's always friends of the ruling party. In the CRTC, 87% of the appointments since 1968 have been friends of the ruling party.

The Chair: Mr. Angus, can I remind you—

Mr. Charlie Angus: Can I talk about the lockout instead?

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Chair: Can I remind you of what the *House of Commons Procedure and Practice* says about that? It says, “Among the areas usually considered to be outside the scope of the committee’s study are the political affiliation of the appointee or nominee...and the nature of the nomination process itself”.

Mr. Charlie Angus: Thank you.

My dear, sweet, sainted mother always said, “Charlie, if you're going to get a penalty, you might as well draw blood”.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Charlie Angus: I'd like to say that in the *Toronto Star* today it said that senior management “stuck the knife in the public broadcaster and to the public”. How do you respond?

The Chair: That's an improper question, Charlie.

We will have other opportunities for you to draw blood. Frankly, I taught my girls and my son to play hockey in a nicer way, and they're very good.

Mr. Charlie Angus: Thank you very much.

The Chair: Ms. Oda.

Ms. Bev Oda: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I'd just like to pursue something I outlined; there was still an outstanding issue. Mr. Fournier, I would suggest, with your background and the experience you have had as a producer, as a creator, and as a writer, one of the challenges certainly for someone with your experience and your passion in what you've done in the past would be to remove yourself from actually getting into the program thing. You're not going to be able to read the scripts and do that kind of thing. I say that everyone who watches television thinks they're an expert and they know how to run a TV station, a network, etc.

So if I did have some question, it would be not on your experience but on your equal passion for the operations of the network, for the operations of the service. I know that as far as the public is concerned it's the content, it's the programming; that's what's very important. But this is a massive operation. This is many employees. This is stations across the country. This is more infrastructure and antennas than any other entity in this country has.

I do have one question, which is, how are you going to struggle with that within yourself, since you have people who are in charge of programming, etc.? How will you deal with that?

• (1215)

Mr. Guy Fournier: That's a good question, Mrs. Oda.

Sure enough, when you know the industry as much as I know it, you see how easy it would be to get into things that are not your responsibility. I'm not alone on the board with that particular problem, because we have other persons on the board who surely know the business as much as I do. But I also know the limits of a board, and I must say that my four years on the board of Télé-Québec have taught me where I have to stop, because the temptation to go beyond is surely always there.

Ms. Bev Oda: Thank you.

My final question is... We've had discussions, but I know that the francophone community is very different from the anglophone community: the marketplaces are very different; the communities themselves are very different.

There is a set of basic values that we share as Canadians. However, sometimes things are done differently. There is a different approach, or there is a different thinking about them. Again, from an operational point of view, the two divisions—we won't call them solitudes—the francophone and the anglophone divisions for radio and television, operate differently.

Can you tell us what observations you might have about being the chair of both or of all the entities? You can recognize this and allow the best to come out of them, because you did talk about bringing them together. I keep looking at Trina when I say this, but we've seen or tried different things. We've tried programming, we've tried co-productions, we've tried exchanging talent, and we've tried bilingual...etc.

I'd just like to know your thoughts on this, because you did state that you thought there had to be more... If you have any specific ideas, maybe you could comment, and then you could give your observations about how you're going to recognize those differences.

Mr. Guy Fournier: I still feel that the two networks—and I'm talking about television, which is the part I know best, and where it's more critical—should work a lot more together, but I'm not necessarily thinking about having cross-programming or that type of thing when I say that.

For instance, I know that one of them has made research on news available on the English net, and I do believe this research could also be used by the French net. Right now, what I don't approve of—if I have to approve of this—or what doesn't make sense is that the four entities work so independently of each another, because I think that good governance calls for more integration, so that what one network does can be used by the other. For instance, in drama, I think the English net can learn a lot from the French net. In other matters, the French net can learn a lot from the English net. Again, to me it's not just a question of programming; it's having people in management work a lot more together, because what we discover in French can be used in English, and vice-versa.

• (1220)

Ms. Bev Oda: My final question....

On the French side, a new position has been created that would incorporate under one responsibility all the aspects of serving the francophone communities, including new media, the Internet, etc. Is there any thought in your mind of doing a corresponding thing on the English side? I think where integration has to happen as well is in the incorporation of new media and utilization of other kinds of new technologies, etc.

Mr. Guy Fournier: About a month ago, because I know the French net quite well, Mr. Rabinovitch talked to me about this integration, where radio, television, and the media would come under one person. I agreed fully with that, because it's a bit like “back to the future”. It was like that when Mr. Juneau was president of the CBC.

Should we do it in English? I can't tell for now. I don't think management has any intention of doing the same in English as of now. But as far as I'm concerned, I think what was done on the French side was a good decision.

Ms. Bev Oda: Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Simms.

**Mr. Scott Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Wind-
sor, Lib.):** Thank you, Madam Chair.

I want to pick up at the very beginning of where Mr. Angus left off. I'll try to take some of the rough edges off and attempt to be some kind of a velvet hammer in all this.

I want to touch on the regions issue in a big way. I have a statement and a matter of opinion, because I probably won't get this chance again, before I get to a final question.

This precedes your tenure. Some years ago the CBC took it upon itself to make a fundamental decision about supper-hour newscasts. In my province, we had a newscast that was an hour in duration. It was an incredibly important newscast that was watched by the vast majority of viewers.

[*Translation*]

It wasn't just popular, it was an absolute necessity for Newfoundland.

[*English*]

The decision was made to cut the supper-hour newscast from an hour back to 30 minutes. It was a fundamentally wrong decision for a particular market, but it was swept up into a national decision. Not only was I disappointed and not only do I think it was a bad decision, but with all due respect, I don't think you cared. That message was loud and clear.

What concerns me is a statement you made earlier regarding the talent, journalists, and producers. You said they are in Halifax and they are in Regina, and they want to go to the centre. That's not completely true. If you make the assumption that they all want to proceed to some centrifugal force within Toronto, Montreal, or Vancouver, then quite frankly, you still don't care.

It bothers me, because the only exposure that Daniel Lessard, in northern Ontario, or the gentleman who does a morning show in Goose Bay, Labrador, get to Toronto is through a postcard. They're okay with that. Not only are they okay with that, but the local market is okay. The recent example of what happened with events—it's best that we not speak of it here—certainly highlighted that in an incredibly big way.

I have a quick question. Do you think that in regional programming, on a story to be told in Goose Bay, for instance, the importance should be on telling that story to the whole country or to that market alone?

• (1225)

Mr. Guy Fournier: I think it first depends on the story. The story might be interesting for the whole country or the story might only be local.

But I must tell you that I care about the regions and have cared about the regions all my life.

It's a difficult situation. When I said that it's always a problem for public television, it is always a problem for national television because it is sometimes hard to keep the staff locally. I'm only mentioning a situation, that's all. I'm not saying we should not work in such a fashion that we keep the staff in the regions. I'm only saying that this is an added problem for public television, a problem that other networks mostly don't have.

I personally feel that local staff are very important, and it's very important that they have roots in their communities. If you look at local television and their news, most of their success comes from the fact that their staff are really implanted in their own communities.

Mr. Scott Simms: As comforting as that is, I wanted to put that point out there, because I have a hard time struggling with this, as to a national broadcaster. It's not that the national newscast has no importance to a local market; on the contrary. We've lost the aspect of what is regional, and it's not just Halifax or Regina. I'm sorry I'm picking on what you said; you may have wanted to use Sherbrooke or Goose Bay. But that is generally the feeling we get, which is the lack of importance. I understand that sometimes you have to...you know, because of declining markets, and so on, but there is no business case in some of these smaller markets for the private broadcasters. I think that's the importance of the public broadcast.

How much time do I have?

The Chair: On Ms. Oda's last round I gave her an extra minute and a half, so I'm going to give you an extra couple of minutes too—two minutes.

Mr. Scott Simms: Switching gears, let me get to the issue that you say you don't want to be in strong competition with the private market. Is that fair to say? But you were quite competitive about the Olympics coverage that you went for, which leads me to believe that you want to be right in there, certainly when it comes to sports.

Mr. Guy Fournier: Well, I wasn't there at the time, so I—

Mr. Scott Simms: I know, but I'm trying to get your view on that sort of thing—the Olympics coverage and other major sporting events.

Mr. Guy Fournier: Let's say that as a rule I don't think public television should be a leader in terms of programming—not necessarily a leader in terms of money that is offered. Does that answer your question? I mean, I don't think that public television should be the biggest bidder on everything. But we should lead in terms of good programming, not necessarily in terms of the money we offer for acquisition rights or things like that.

Mr. Scott Simms: Merci, Monsieur Fournier.

The Chair: Mr. Fournier, I'd like to ask a basic good governance question. You mentioned that you've been on the board since February, there have been three meetings in that period of time, and six other members of the board are brand new, either since February or since May. There's no question we have a very strong administration at the CBC.

The administration is accountable to the board, so this appointment is extremely important. With the limited experience you and those six other members of the board have, how will you be able to play that role of providing direction for the corporation and holding the administration accountable for achieving its mandate?

• (1230)

Mr. Guy Fournier: If you'll allow me, Madam Chair, the actual board looks to be very well prepared for the job, because there is a good balance with people who know the industry. We're about half and half, which I feel is a very good balance. I don't think the board should be composed strictly of people who know the industry, but I also think that at least a good number of people on the board should be very well aware of the industry.

Right now, even if you have seven new members on the board, there are four or five who are very familiar with the industry. I have no doubt whatsoever that we can do a good job of governance and orientation.

The Chair: I kind of wish we had a little more time to hear how, but there's one question that hasn't been asked yet in terms of regional programming.

I am very concerned that if we provide less local programming, one of the victims of that will be francophone communities outside Quebec. How would you ensure that those communities got good enough public broadcasting to be able to live as francophones outside Quebec?

Mr. Guy Fournier: I must say that I'm also very concerned about the francophones outside of Quebec, because I personally know most of those communities. For instance, I was a bit surprised—and I mentioned it to the people involved—that only one program comes from Vancouver on French radio. There is no French program from Toronto or any other region. So I do believe we should not only cover the regions, but the regions should have their air time on television and radio. It might be easier on radio, because very often it's a more economical media.

The Chair: Thank you.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gagnon, would you like to ask a question or two?

Mr. Sébastien Gagnon (Jonquière—Alma, BQ): Yes, of course.

[*English*]

The Chair: Is there anybody else who would like to follow up?

Monsieur Gagnon.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Sébastien Gagnon: Thank you for being here, Mr. Fournier.

I'm a new member of the committee, so I may not have the expertise or the experience of the other members around this table. Since we've already discussed some regional issues, I'd like to have your ideas on this and would also like to tell you about a problem.

Unlike the ridings of some colleagues that may be less well served by the crown corporation, the Saguenay—Lac-Saint-Jean has regional programming, and I sense an increased level of CBC activity there.

However, more and more constituents in my riding are telling me about a problem. Because of the rural nature of some regions, there are some outlying small towns that still don't have access to cable. Traditional antennas are clearly a thing of the past. People are now turning to satellite television. Bell ExpressVu customers, for example, have access to regional programming offered by the CBC's competitors, including TVA and TQS. However, they don't have access to the CBC regional programming. So they watch the CBC shows from Montreal or Quebec City.

I don't know whether you can help me out here—as I said, I have just joined the committee—but how do you feel about that? There's a form of injustice toward a group of customers that would really like to get their hands on that news and regional programming.

Mr. Guy Fournier: I will give you a rather straightforward answer to that question. Many decisions are made in Montreal or elsewhere outside the regions. There is a tendency to forget that there are still many regions, particularly in Quebec, that don't have cable access. As a matter of fact, I believe that the regions where cable has penetrated the least, are in Quebec.

In my opinion, it remains extremely important for mainstream television not to forget that a part of the population does not have cable access, and thus does not have access to the other channels.

• (1235)

Mr. Sébastien Gagnon: In my region, Bell ExpressVu offers the regional programming of TVA and TQS, but not of the CBC. It offers the programming from Montreal, Quebec City and perhaps other regions. Those with traditional antennas have access to local programming, but all new ExpressVu subscribers no longer have access to that.

Mr. Guy Fournier: That's right. That is definitely a problem that will have to be studied in greater depth. I will convey that to Mr. Lafrance, the new executive vice-president of all French services at CBC/Radio-Canada. You are right, that is a problem that warrants more study.

Mr. Sébastien Gagnon: Thank you, Mr. Fournier.

The Chair: Thank you.

[*English*]

Hon. Sarmite Bulte: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Mr. Fournier, I have just one quick question about integrating television and radio news. I've been advised that there has been a push to integrate radio and television news, and there is some concern about this. The concern that is raised is what will happen with the integrity of radio itself, because of the possibility that TV will eat up the radio resources and thereby weaken radio as it is—as we've said, it's a gem.

What is your position with respect to this type of integration? Is there any reason for me to be concerned about this?

Mr. Guy Fournier: My position is simple. I'm all in favour of this type of integration if we are going to get better news because of it. What I've understood up to now is that we will be in a position to give more news and better news.

Hon. Sarmite Bulte: Then perhaps you could undertake to make sure that those resources that are so precious for radio are not taken away.

Mr. Guy Fournier: I agree with you on that.

Hon. Sarmite Bulte: Okay. Thank you, Mr. Fournier.

The Chair: Is there anybody else? Is that it?

Thank you very much, Monsieur Fournier.

[*Translation*]

The committee members found you very interesting.

[*English*]

Mr. Guy Fournier: Madam Chair, could I add a word? I would like everyone to know that I feel very small, looking at this job, and I hope I will fill it well and as best I can. Again, I think it was you who asked if I was the best candidate. No, I'm not the best candidate; I'll try to be a good chairman.

The Chair: Merci beaucoup.

We have need for a motion, and our clerk has proposed that the committee report to the House that it has examined the qualifications and competence of Mr. Guy Fournier

[*Translation*]

and finds him competent to perform the duties of the position of chairperson of the board of directors of the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation.

[*English*]

It is moved by Madam Bulte.

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: Mr. Angus is opposed. It is almost unanimous.

Thank you very much, committee members.

Could we take a few minutes to deal with upcoming committee business? Ms. Bulte and I both have to be at another meeting as soon as possible, but I would like to resolve our meetings for the weeks right after the next break.

If committee members are satisfied, we can deal with future business on Thursday, as long as we do it right at the beginning of the meeting. What's scheduled right now is a discussion on the film study. Is that okay?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Chair: Merci beaucoup. The meeting is adjourned.

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