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Mr. Gary Schellenberger

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• (0915)

[English]

The Chair (Mr. Gary Schellenberger (Perth—Wellington, CPC)): Good morning.

What a lovely day here in Winnipeg. I'm glad other people have had problems finding the right place. You just made my day. I'm forever having problems finding the right place.

We are very pleased to be here in Winnipeg this morning for meeting number 47 of the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage. Pursuant to Standing Order 108(2), this is a full investigation of the role of a public broadcaster in the 21st century.

This morning we welcome Judith Flynn and Douglas Riske from the Manitoba Arts Council.

Judith.

Mrs. Judith Flynn (Chair, Manitoba Arts Council): Thank you very much for inviting us to make this presentation. We're more than pleased to be able to do so. As you know, we have a strong stake in culture, and we hope the CBC does too.

The CBC is one of our most important national institutions, not only presenting Canadian culture, which I'll get back to in a minute, but on the radio, at least, providing a national forum. In many ways, Canada as a nation is an unnatural construct. With the bulk of its population spread out in a thin band along the U.S. border, the natural movement of people and goods is north and south. Our national institutions were designed to link east and west—the railways, the Trans-Canada Highway, and of course the CBC.

In its early days the CBC was an important showcase for Canadian talent, one of the few that existed. Some of you, probably not many—nobody here is as old as me—might remember the stage series that was on Sunday nights. It was a wonderful show that showcased talent like John Drainie, Tommy Tweed, and others whose names I can't remember. The thing is, they were our stars. Their voices were recognized from Halifax to Vancouver. To a considerable extent, CBC radio continues in that tradition, and through its local, regional, and national programs it has created an infrastructure that lets different parts of the nation tell their stories to each other. This is part of the important education of our children and our citizens. It's through the sharing of our stories that community identities are clarified and confirmed.

Who can forget, for instance, *Morningside* and the late Peter Gzowski, shows like *Cross Country Checkup*, *Tapestry*, *Quirks* and

Quarks, and *As It Happens*? These are nation-builders, and I could name more.

CBC television, however, is another story. While it is to be commended for important presentations like *Canada: A People's History*, which is a wonderful series, and its coverage of the recent events at the Vimy Ridge monument, it's becoming more and more like American television every day. Quality shows like *Da Vinci's Inquest*, *Intelligence*, *Opening Night*, and *This is Wonderland* are cancelled and replaced with more and more American-style reality shows.

To attract the advertisers it needs to support its programming, CBC television tries to appeal to a mass audience. That audience, they know, is mainly attracted to American television, which seems to be getting cruder and more brutal day by day. Is that the kind of course we want the CBC to follow, an imitation American channel?

Like CBC radio and the BBC—and I will shock you—I think CBC television should be commercial free. Perhaps we can buy licences as they do in Britain. It would probably never fly. One thing cable television has shown us is that people will pay sometimes quite significant amounts in order to be able to watch television. A better way still would be the government giving CBC enough money to let it play the role that its founders intended.

The CBC also plays an important economic role, in that in many communities it is the crucial professional organization that validates and pays professional artists for their work, who, believe me, are not overpaid. This enables the artist to remain in and contribute to those communities as they work in any number of arts-related fields and industries. This is an industry that creates work. As an arts council we have gone through pages of statistics after statistics to show job creation and so on, and they're out there by the thousands if you want to look at them. Anyway, it returns far more than its fair share to the community.

• (0920)

The CBC in Winnipeg has presented many of our clients. The Manitoba Chamber Orchestra and the Winnipeg Symphony Orchestra are obvious examples, as are the playwrights who've worked in radio drama in Winnipeg, and the actors, singers, and technicians. Along with the support provided to professional artists by the arts councils in various provinces and territories, the CBC work allows local artists to put down roots in the community and share their knowledge and commitment to excellence. The CBC also frequently provides especially promising young performers with their first national exposure.

We cannot underestimate the impact of the various documentaries that have emphasized the arts and culture of this country. Through these, many of us have come to value the arts and to understand the public value of the arts in our nation and in each community.

Just as an aside, when I was about 15 years old the CBC had a Saturday afternoon program on folk music. People went up into the Appalachians and recorded it. I found it fascinating, and I never missed a Saturday afternoon. I think you underestimate the capacity of youth to listen to the CBC, and what that can do. My mother had a grade 8 education. When we talked about books, I would be surprised at how much she knew about some Victorian writer. She told me that the CBC was her university.

We know that we can't go back to the good old days of when the CBC played a vital role in helping to keep the nation united and informed during the thirties and the war years. But we can share a vision of a new CBC, one that has at its heart a commitment to the arts and culture of the many regions, providing a national stage. We need a CBC that is committed to the sharing of this country through the exploration of its stories and dreams, sharing them with each other and the world. It is only through this that we will continue to grow—grow new ideas, new directions. It will be done not by copying and mimicking but by challenging ourselves as a confident and mature nation that values both its past and its future.

Thank you.

● (0925)

The Chair: Thank you very much for that.

We will turn to Ms. Keeper first.

Ms. Tina Keeper (Churchill, Lib.): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Thank you, Ms. Flynn, for your presentation.

I'd like to ask you a question based on one of the comments you made early in your presentation, that the TV portion of CBC is another story.

Mrs. Judith Flynn: Unfortunately.

Ms. Tina Keeper: Many reports over the years—over the last 12 years, I'd say—have said that the CBC needs to serve the public interest, that their dramatic programming, and all of their programming in television, should be alternative to the private sector.

You talked a lot about that in terms of fulfilling what you believe should be a mandate for the CBC. Could you elaborate a little bit on what kind of specific recommendations you may have in terms of CBC television?

Mrs. Judith Flynn: I'm recommending that you get rid of those reality shows. I know they're cheap, and often just imitations of American television. I don't think we should imitate American television, because I don't think that fulfills the CBC's mandate. A lot of the stuff that's shown on American television debases its audience.

So I would reject that completely.

Ms. Tina Keeper: I guess the other piece of that would be funding. One of the studies presented by the CBC in terms of television has shown that the CBC is poorly funded compared with

other public broadcasters around the world. In fact, compared with about 20 countries in the western world, it is in the bottom third.

You talked about a time when you felt the CBC was fulfilling its mandate.

Mrs. Judith Flynn: That was radio, and it still is.

Ms. Tina Keeper: In terms of radio and its programming, what do you think it provides Canadians that television does not?

Mrs. Judith Flynn: As I said, I think it provides them with a national forum. If you listen to *Cross Country Checkup* on a Sunday afternoon, people are phoning in from all over the country. The same thing happened with Peter Gzowski; people from different parts of the country talked to each other, and I think that's extremely important. There's even a program that helps some of us monolinguals learn something about French, which is certainly a good thing to do.

Ms. Tina Keeper: You are with the Manitoba Arts Council, as you have expressed. I have a background as an artist as well, and in terms of the economic spin-offs, you talked about that and the opportunity for CBC as a public broadcaster to serve the artists in the country.

Could you elaborate a little bit more on that?

Mrs. Judith Flynn: I'm not sure what you mean, Tina.

Ms. Tina Keeper: Do you see the CBC as an opportunity for artists in the country, a forum for them as well?

Mrs. Judith Flynn: Definitely for Canadian actors, like the ones who were employed in *This is Wonderland*, which I just loved and you cancelled.

Mr. Douglas Riske (Executive Director, Manitoba Arts Council): Perhaps I could speak to that.

My background too is in the theatre and the arts. I have moved over to what they call the dark side now in terms of being a funder and working for a provincial agency; however, in my 30 years in the regions I really relied on the CBC as the kind of foundation that I think Judith referred to.

But more than anecdotally, it is crucial to that synergy and the kind of ecology that you have across the country in terms of nurturing writers, directors, and actors, telling again stories of those regions and sharing them. We've lost a lot of that synergy because of the changes in CBC television, where the focus has become.... Yes, there still are some works done across the country, but the focus remains now on Toronto and to some extent Vancouver, although not even Vancouver has much anymore.

I can only again relate that there was a time in Calgary, as we were growing as a community, when the CBC was absolutely crucial, through its radio drama and then through its television productions based in Edmonton and to some extent in Calgary, to help create an enormous blossoming of the arts, believe it or not, in Alberta. They are blossoming, to a great extent, and they've come a long way in the last 30 years to 40 years. I think the vision now is on how to build on that and not let it go. What is the best of the past in terms of this synergy that exists between a public broadcaster and not-for-profit arts organizations, as well as—and I think we must not forget this—the cultural industries? Much of our cultural industry that has been developed in the regions in film and television has relied upon those who have been trained and brought through a CBC system. The kind of quality work that we now see, which is highly regarded by American film companies, has come about because they were trained in Canada and worked on fine-quality productions in Canada. How do we find that next formula, or the next mix of events and opportunities, so that the CBC can actually be a catalyst, if not a facilitator, if not a leader, in terms of the kind of work we expect?

• (0930)

Ms. Tina Keeper: Thank you very much.

The Chair: Thank you.

Ms. Bourgeois.

Mrs. Judith Flynn: I just wanted to see who you were, as I have no sense of the direction of sound. So that's you there? Okay.

[Translation]

Ms. Diane Bourgeois (Terrebonne—Blainville, BQ): Good morning madam, good morning sir.

Since I am a francophone and originate from Quebec, I attribute a great deal of importance to the cultural and economic aspects of this study.

Earlier, Ms. Flynn, you mentioned that there were some important cultural matters at stake and that CBC television was increasingly copying American television. Moreover, you say in your brief that Canadian viewers are fascinated primarily by American television which seems to be becoming increasingly vulgar and brutal.

I'm going to ask you a rather particular question. Is the CBC, and are our Canadian artists and producers, in touch with the tastes, needs and wishes of the viewing audience? Can the situation rather be explained by the fact that Canadian viewers have no other choice than to subscribe to American cable television?

[English]

Mrs. Judith Flynn: Douglas, you could answer that.

[Translation]

Ms. Diane Bourgeois: Would you like me to repeat my question?

[English]

Mr. Douglas Riske: It's a very serious question.

Let's say this. In the not-for-profit arts, we have run into this through arts education falling off the table, and to some extent one could say that young people's experience of the arts through CBC television has been lost. A generation or two may have been lost to American television, or maybe more. But in terms of reintroducing

that experience for young people in Canada, that could be in fact a very important factor in rebuilding Canadian interest in its own stories—not *CSI* Calgary, but new stories about the past. I think even the extraordinary docudrama that was just done over the last two days on Vimy Ridge was an extraordinary mix of cultures and young people mixing with the past and experiencing the past in a way that I don't think we've seen on any American series, ever. It was a truly original Canadian experience.

I think those are the kinds of things that will connect again with our youth. We have to rebuild their connection to Canada, and maybe it has to start in the schools, with young people's work, as well as with the CBC producing young people's work, that is relevant to children in Canada.

• (0935)

[Translation]

Ms. Diane Bourgeois: Madam, sir, you're facing quite a challenge. Your Canadian culture is at stake. It is becoming Americanized. You say that cable television has taught us one thing, and that is that viewers are sometimes ready to pay quite a bit to see the programs of their choice.

Since the cable broadcasting invasion can be deregulated, I don't think that Canadians will have a choice. I wonder how you and the Canadian artistic community react in the face of this invasion of Canadian culture.

[English]

Mrs. Judith Flynn: One thing the CBC can do is to employ more Canadians. I don't think we can do much about the swamping of television by Americans. You are so lucky in Quebec that you don't have to do that. But if we could employ the artist, I think that would be one step in the direction against the American television.

Incidentally, a lot of Americans listen to Canadian radio because it has something to say.

[Translation]

Ms. Diane Bourgeois: Concerning the economic role that the CBC could play with regard to the artistic community, I would like know what form this could take.

Would it be done through agreements with Canadian artists or with groups such as yours? I would like to know more.

You say that the CBC could hire more artists, but agreements would need to be concluded beforehand, correct?

[English]

Mrs. Judith Flynn: Wouldn't the artist sign a contract, as they do now? I don't think the Manitoba Arts Council would be acting as some sort of impresario. The individual artist would negotiate with the CBC, just as they do now, and as I think they do for any broadcasting system anywhere.

Douglas may know more about this.

Mr. Douglas Riske: I can only say that I think there is an opportunity for more partnerships between Canadian private sector producers and CBC. That certainly has been happening, and it can happen more in terms of script development as well as program development and delivery.

Probably we're also missing a link here—a link that we're becoming more and more aware of—between our live arts and our... To some extent, I think, Quebec probably has more of that connection than we do, because we're so spread out and we don't have the access. Let's face it, we're Toronto-centric, and unless we're connected in some way to that world, we have to work that much harder to actually build a partnership with CBC. But I think the opportunities are there, and we have to be aggressive.

I was in Australia a couple of years ago for a couple of conferences, visiting a number of companies, and it was extraordinary to see how aggressive the Australians were in terms of... Of course, they don't have the elephant next door, but they are very isolated. Their own identity comes from their aggressive investment in the arts, in broadcasting as well as in all the live arts.

So I think we just need to open our minds a little bit in terms of creative ways in which we can actually build new programming and build new audiences.

[Translation]

Ms. Diane Bourgeois: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Angus.

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

I'm going to ask about the two issues of radio and television, and I'll start with radio.

When I used to tour the country as a professional musician, I guess my eyes were opened to the role that CBC radio played. As a young group, I don't think we ever listened to CBC. It wasn't on our radar—until we began to tour. In every city we came across, we were always brought into the CBC recording studios and radio studios for interviews, especially in western Canada. Calgary, for example, is the nation's centre, I would say, for folk group music on radio. It comes out of Calgary. So it was an eye-opener for us, travelling across the country, to see the role that CBC radio played in terms of exposing artists to a regional audience but also exposing regional artists back to the nation.

Can you give me your sense of how well CBC radio does in terms of presenting Manitoba on radio and also ensuring that Manitoba voices are heard at the national level?

• (0940)

Mrs. Judith Flynn: I think it could represent Manitoba better than it does, but it does broadcast the MCO and the WSO coast to coast.

Most of the programs I listen to happen to be programs that are broadcast nationally, so Douglas may know more about this.

I mean, we get news about Manitoba, and interviews. I think the Manitoba content is fairly small, but I haven't studied it, so I'm not sure about that.

Mr. Douglas Riske: Actually, I would say it's medium.

We do have a fairly reasonable...partly because Winnipeg and Manitoba are known as hotbeds of culture. We do produce, one way or another, with or without the CBC or funding sometimes from the Manitoba Arts Council, quite extraordinary artists. They can't help but be noticed, and they are picked up by producers either here or in other centres.

I'm not quite sure where that energy comes from. It exists here. I think CBC is a very important part of that energy, that ecology, if you like. It plays a different role in radio drama, for instance, than it used to, because it doesn't produce radio drama here anymore. That voice is gone. There were voices from this community, and they now have to go to Calgary or elsewhere.

In terms of music especially, I think we have an extraordinary voice. It's growing and changing in terms of popular as well as classical music. To have the CBC actually come here and spend, say, ten days for the New Music Festival is just extraordinary. Our presence in that world is very high and very significant, both nationally and internationally.

Mr. Charlie Angus: Yes.

In terms of television, I think we have to come forward with some realistic recommendations. I mean, *Don Messer's Jubilee* is not coming back. I wish it would, but it's not. So we have to look at what CBC does.

We hear regularly about how poorly Canadian television does compared to U.S. television. But you know, last night I did my little hotel surf and I watched, on American television, a bounty hunter reality TV show and a one-hour reality TV show about a tattoo parlour. I wouldn't watch it for 15 minutes; it was on for an hour. I saw some outrageously bizarre political discussion on some of the U.S. channels that would make us blush, they were so over-the-top. There were some very predatory humour shows. And then I saw an excellent PBS documentary, actually on Canadians in Afghanistan. There was a Mary Walsh comedy, which was actually very funny. There was a Canadian hockey game, and there was news that was fairly reasonable. I was thinking maybe we aren't as challenged as we think.

The question is, how do we better utilize our television resources? So I'm going to put it to you: we can't be all things to all people, so where should CBC television go? Should we look, for example, at restoring one-hour newscasts in regional markets? Should we be doing only drama? Should we be getting out of expensive TV drama and doing documentaries? What role should CBC television play in a multi-channel universe?

Mrs. Judith Flynn: Well, I think it should go back to producing drama, because that has helped actors all across the country and has made them known to other Canadians. I think the one-hour newscast is a good thing. And I made the same point about American television being brutalizing.

One of the things the BBC does so well is produce programs that are so good that they're sold around the world. I think some of ours are anyway, but if the CBC had more money, our shows would be shown around the world as well.

I don't know if I've answered your question.

● (0945)

Mr. Charlie Angus: Well, you've basically given me all the things I was saying people want CBC to do. I'm asking you to tell me, should we be getting out of news? Should we be focusing more on news, or should we be focusing more on drama? Some of these choices are going to be either/or, I would imagine.

Mrs. Judith Flynn: I can't see why there has to be a choice between drama and the news. We used to have both. Why would there be a choice?

Mr. Charlie Angus: Well, limited dollars in terms of television and television expenses. Should we be doing regional documentaries more so than...? I'm just asking. If we have to start making our top four choices of what television should do in this market, because we have limited resources, where should those resources best be spent? Is it in drama?

Mrs. Judith Flynn: Yes, I think so.

Mr. Charlie Angus: Okay. Thank you.

Mr. Douglas Riske: Perhaps I can add to that too, because I think it's interesting. It's like any arts organization that comes to us for funding. We ask for a vision statement and the mandate, and I know that's exactly what you're here to discuss, but then of course, when that vision statement is clear, the mandate is clear. And I think that's probably our challenge around what a public broadcaster should be.

The emphasis we now find ourselves in, in terms of this modern world...you can't get away from sports. I mean, there is hockey on every night now, for how long? But that's okay because that's part of our culture, and an important part of our culture. So I think the either/or is dangerous, because somehow there is a sharing of... I won't watch every hockey game, but you know what, I'm going to watch a few of them because they're exciting and interesting and they're a part of my world at different times, depending on who's playing.

But I think it's the same when you look at drama and when you look at news. You'll be attracted and then touched, we hope, by the work that is important to you. So there needs to be a bit of a menu. I think somehow it's how you actually shape that menu, you're saying, and what has emphasis and what doesn't, and that's a huge challenge for the Canadian government, period.

Maybe we do have to find some kind of new relationship between the regions and the national, as our public is shifting. How does Manitoba, which is not growing as quickly as it could or should, develop its voice and have a fair share of its voice in the community, not just based on its population but based also on its talent? We invest a lot of money in our artists and therefore we have a very high rate of return. CBC should be part of that in some way.

Mr. Charlie Angus: Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Fast.

Mr. Ed Fast (Abbotsford, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you for appearing before us today and for taking time out of your busy schedules.

This is a mandate review. We're reviewing the role of the public broadcaster in Canada. I suppose what's a little bit troubling and challenging here is the fact that the current mandate is quite broad, dealing with Canadian distinctiveness, the reflection of Canada and its regions, the French and English languages, and national consciousness and identity, but it doesn't tell us how we're going to fulfill that mandate. Depending on the leadership of the CBC, we've been taken in different directions. Most recently we've been taken in a direction where CBC appears to be trying to compete with the private broadcasters, and that, I think, is where the challenge lies. Is that the role of the CBC? The mandate could be construed to actually include that. It could also be construed as being quite different.

We've had other witnesses before us. In Ottawa recently we had a former president of the CBC together with the chief of staff to former Prime Minister Joe Clark. In many respects their comments reflected yours today, especially when it comes to the commercialization of CBC. One thing they came up with was that they would like to see CBC become less commercial, rely less on commercial revenues. They didn't take the position that CBC should become totally non-reliant on those revenues, but they certainly saw a lesser role for commercial revenues.

They also suggested that subsidies to the private sector, to the private broadcaster, should be eliminated, but as a trade-off they suggested that Canadian content requirements should be reduced or even eliminated for those private broadcasters.

What do you see as being the role of private broadcasters in supporting a public broadcaster? Do you have any suggestions for us as to how that could be fleshed out? Or should private broadcasters be released from some of those shackles in return for contributing towards a more robust public broadcaster?

● (0950)

Mrs. Judith Flynn: In the first place, I don't think the private channels would contribute to that. I don't watch the other ones very often, but they're not really that impressive. I think the Canadian content rules should be applied and kept, and the CBC should be fulfilling the mandate as it's laid out. It's pretty clear.

Mr. Douglas Riske: Perhaps I could go back to our small metaphor around the arts organizations...or the similarity in terms of how we fund various arts organizations. It's interesting, because all the same realities apply. In the different disciplines we've actually taken a look at our level of subsidy based on that organization's ability to generate revenue, which is exactly what you're talking about. Dance is different from theatre, and contemporary dance is different from ballet, and ballet is different from a gallery, which sometimes doesn't charge entrance fees at all but is open to the public.

What our council has done, and what I think other arts councils across the country have had to do, is assess in some way the public value of what these different organizations are prepared to create. How much do we value that? How much do we value sharing our stories through the CBC? If we value them extraordinarily, then we will subsidize those areas more highly than others.

You're quite right, in some cases we don't subsidize commercial theatre at all. They're out on their own. But again, there's a synergy here; you can't get away from the fact that the industry crosses over all the time. People work in all of these different areas. They may work for a private for a couple of months doing a major production, but then, as an actor or as a designer or whatever, they will go and work on a CBC show, having made enough money on the private, hopefully, that they will be able to work at different rates for the CBC, which may not be that high or may be higher. That kind of analysis is interesting to do in terms of the way our world works today.

As for Canadian content rules, there's no question they've worked in terms of music and radio broadcasting. Is it time to have a look at that? If the focus truly of CBC is on Canadian content, and significant Canadian content, then why not suggest that others are free to do as they will? That's essentially what we do with commercial operations. They come to us many times, and we tell them they're indirectly subsidized in all kinds of different ways.

Mr. Ed Fast: And that has been the suggestion from some, that the private broadcasters want more freedom to do what they do best. They feel they're shackled right now by some of the Canadian content requirements. If in turn they recognize that public broadcasters have a significant role to play in Canada, if they in turn then contribute back and say, "Hey, we believe in the role of the public broadcaster, and here's what we're prepared to do to help government fund that organization to make it robust and vibrant", maybe that will work as a new approach to this.

I sense that you're perhaps agreeing, sort of.

Mr. Douglas Riske: Judith definitely is.

Mr. Ed Fast: I have just one other question that has to do with hockey.

You just had a dialogue with Mr. Angus on hockey, and there have been some suggestions again by Mr. Neville and by Mr. Manera, the former president of CBC, that CBC should get out of hockey altogether, that there are other broadcasters that can do as good a job of delivering that to the Canadian public, and that those efforts should be refocused on delivering drama, documentaries, perhaps children's programming. Do you concur with that assessment, or would you prefer that CBC keep its finger in *Hockey Night in Canada*?

• (0955)

Mrs. Judith Flynn: I find that difficult to answer, because there are avid hockey fans in my family, and especially when hockey is on every night for the playoffs, I just go and read.

I really don't know how to answer that. Hockey is such a Canadian thing that even though I never watch it, I don't think I would like to see it go. I just wish it wouldn't be every night during playoffs.

Mr. Douglas Riske: I guess I can only say maybe that's part of the formula that in some way has to be analyzed. Again, the public value is obviously in hockey as a cultural icon of Canada. The thrill of being there last night or even a couple of nights ago—I mean, you can't get away from that, and the emotional connection. But on the other hand, commercially hockey has become very different. I think we're going to have, what, one team in the playoffs that actually has a dominant number of Canadian players—the Anaheim Ducks or something—so cheering on Anaheim.... But I think the CBC's role in that might be diminished in some way, or depending again on the revenue generation, is it crucial and can it be replaced?

The Chair: Thank you.

I have a question. I love it when, as chair, I get an opportunity to ask a question or two.

Stratford, Ontario, happens to be in my riding, so when it comes to the arts, I do know a little bit about the arts. I know that the Stratford Festival has become quite a school, as time has gone on, to teach and train not only new actors and actresses but also technicians, whether it be for lighting or various other areas, to hone their skills.

You mentioned earlier that the CBC should be a teacher. Do you think it is really the mandate of a public broadcaster to be teaching? I know that right here in Winnipeg there are art schools, so some of those things are already being looked after. Again, the Canada Council for the Arts does help out the Stratford Festival and has over the years recognized the quality and the work that has been done there in production.

So do you think it is really the role of the CBC to be a teacher?

Mr. Douglas Riske: Again, just mirroring our evaluation, and to some extent Canada Council's evaluation, of organizations, it's not necessarily a teaching function, but arts education or education about the art form or education simply about the cultural industries is part of every organization's job. They determine how in-depth that is and whether they develop special programs. We've created incentives in some cases for organizations such as theatre companies to have arts education programs. It's an investment in your future audiences; if you deny that, they will not be there. Whether that's children's programming, or educational programming that's very specific, or entertainment programming, it's about building audiences and building awareness. So I think that function is really important, and I know Stratford has taken that on.

It's not only children's education, it's adult education, because there's such a gap sometimes that maybe the CBC has to figure that out. There are interesting new ways—and we see it happening already on CBC and other private stations—of connecting to the Internet and engaging people in very different ways in what is essentially a television drama, or a television sitcom, or whatever it may be. There are ways of connecting with audiences that help build their understanding as well as their entertainment factor, or whatever it may be called, in terms of their ratings.

The Chair: There is one other thing. I drive back and forth to Ottawa, and the six-hour drive gives me an opportunity to listen to various things on the radio. One channel that I do have on—I have XM radio; it happened to come with my car. It has old radio programs. I know a lot of them are Amos 'n Andy; they were mainly American programs. But with a lot of those old programs...if there was a movie, they would also do a radio show. That movie would be put on the radio and they would talk it out.

I know we have a lot of visual stuff now in our movies, and I guess that wouldn't show on radio. But what happened to radio drama, whether it be a world-class movie, an Oscar-winning movie...? Could there not be something put across radio? Maybe we could start that industry back up again in Canada.

• (1000)

Mrs. Judith Flynn: I don't think you'd do it through playing old films. What you need to do is invest in more drama. That means investing in more actors.

As for your question about teaching, I think all television teaches. The question is, what does it teach?

Mr. Douglas Riske: Just to add to the radio drama issue, I think there's a significant amount of radio drama still being produced, but we certainly have gone away from the type of radio drama you're talking about.

What we do now—and we do it extremely well, thanks to CBC—are the adaptations of Canadian novels and short stories. They're incredibly well done. Never mind just the simple reading of some of those novels on the radio...they're very engaging. Actually, you'll find that people are hooked on them. They have to listen at 10:15 every night because another section of a novel is being read. It's incredibly engaging. Then they hopefully go out and buy the tape and listen to it as they drive to Ottawa.

The Chair: Great. Thank you.

I'll just ask around the table if there is anyone who has any short questions.

Okay. Thank you very much for attending this morning.

Mrs. Judith Flynn: Thank you very much.

The Chair: We'll have a five-minute recess.

• (1000)

(Pause)

• (1020)

The Chair: Good morning, and welcome, Mr. McLeod. We're very pleased that you are here.

Perhaps you'd like to go ahead with your presentation, sir.

• (1025)

Mr. Dave McLeod (Executive Director, Native Communications Incorporated): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Honourable members of the committee, thank you for this opportunity to make a presentation before you today. My name is David McLeod. I am the executive director of Native Communications Incorporated, also known as NCI-FM. We operate a province-wide radio network that reaches 97% of Manitoba with 57 radio transmitters located from Winnipeg all the way to Churchill. Our

provincial reach equals that of CBC radio here in Manitoba. We've also been approved for a new site location in Kenora, which we hope to have up this summer.

NCI-FM is a non-profit broadcaster. We generate 80% of our total budget with advertising and fundraising efforts such as radio bingo. Twenty percent of our budget is received from the northern native broadcast access program, otherwise known as NNBAP, which is administered by the Department of Canadian Heritage. This program provides funding for the production and distribution of aboriginal radio and television programming. We are one of 13 regional aboriginal communications societies that are currently a part of the NNBAP program. NNBAP serves status and non-status first nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples in all regions of Canada.

I'm here today to share some thoughts on CBC from an aboriginal broadcaster perspective. In order to achieve a comprehensive understanding of my recommendations to the committee, I will need to take a few minutes to give an overview of the scope of aboriginal broadcasting in Canada today.

Firstly, since the mid-1980s the 13 NNBAP members have successfully grown to serve an estimated radio audience that exceeds 800,000 listeners each week. This audience also includes many non-aboriginal listeners. Seven of our members also produce television programming, which is primarily broadcast on the Aboriginal Peoples Television Network—APTN. According to BBM numbers, APTN has an average weekly reach of nearly three million Canadians, with peaks of almost four million viewers. Collectively, NNBAP members provide a unique public service that is greatly needed. We inform, we entertain, and provide a vital link and invaluable lifeline, particularly for northern and remote communities, where mainstream newspapers, for example, still arrive a day or two late.

We also offer a unique style of journalism, music, entertainment, and cultural content. We serve as the story keepers: archivists in gathering and preserving historic documents, photos, audio recordings, film, and video that will be passed on to the next generation of aboriginal broadcasters. Our 13 societies also serve a critical role in preserving and promoting aboriginal languages. In a sense, we serve as the life raft to over 5,000 communities and urban centres where native languages can only be heard through radio or on television via APTN.

What we accomplish is really quite amazing: 40,000 hours of aboriginal-language radio a year and 100 hours of aboriginal-language television. I will note that some members of the aboriginal communication societies provide this service on a daily basis with extreme challenges that include the high cost of living in the north, high transportation costs, and remoteness.

Like many of our colleagues, we at NCI-FM have ventured to serve listeners in regions of Manitoba where many commercial broadcasters simply will not go. Our profits have given NCI the ability to grow and make decisions in our operations and in our programming futures. Moneys are allocated where they're needed to ensure that we can remain relevant to the people we serve. We know we're on the right track, as an independent research study commissioned by the Province of Manitoba in 2005 found that 67% of first nations people outside of Winnipeg listen to NCI-FM. Those numbers are unheard of in the commercial broadcasting world.

CBC must know that the aboriginal population is quickly growing in Manitoba. In Winnipeg alone, the population is expected to be 150,000 aboriginal people by 2015. We have witnessed the effects of population growth first-hand. Our NCI Jam talent show, which features 25 amateur singers with a professional back-up band, began with 175 people attending the first event in 1987. Today we sell out the Centennial Concert Hall, with 2,300 seats sold and 300 people outside wishing they had made it in. We also saw the inaugural Manito Ahbee Festival and pow-wow draw 25,000 people into the MTS Centre last November. This event brought a whopping \$2.3 million into the Winnipeg economy in one weekend. Last year we created the Western Association of Aboriginal Broadcasters, also known as WAAB, with three of our sister networks, those being CFNR B.C., the Aboriginal Multi-Media Society in Alberta, and Missinipi Broadcasting Corporation in Saskatchewan. We have successfully worked together on several projects, which include a national aboriginal top 30. This is essential to the ever-growing aboriginal music industry. We also broadcast the Aboriginal Peoples Choice Music Awards. We broadcast them live across western Canada, with 225 transmitters all across the west.

• (1030)

We are at a point in our history where partnerships play an important role. In terms of APTN, partnerships have been established with CTV, CHUM, and Rogers Cable Incorporated. Last September NCI co-produced a radio game show with CBC Manitoba entitled *Neech for the Top*—yes, *Neech for the Top*. The new aboriginal word game show debuted at the Indian and Métis Friendship Centre and was an instant hit. CBC aired a segment of this show, and NCI gained two half-hour radio programs. Our Cree and Ojibway listeners were so enthusiastic about the language game show that we are currently in discussion with APTN and local producers to create a six-part TV series based on this concept.

The seeds for aboriginal programming can truly grow. An idea that became a radio segment on CBC in partnership with an aboriginal broadcaster became two half-hour radio programs and will now grow into six television shows.

I share these experiences to emphasize that over the last 20 years, in spite of funding cutbacks, our 13 societies have proven themselves to be both relevant and successful and have far exceeded the original intent or expectations of the northern native broadcast access program. It must be noted that compared to the \$1 billion that CBC receives in funding, the 13 societies receive a combined funding of only \$7.9 million to accomplish all of these objectives.

I would like to now submit several key recommendations.

First, Canada's Broadcasting Act must be updated to reflect aboriginal people.

I strongly agree with the results of a 2000 study of the national aboriginal broadcast program by Canadian Heritage that says that as aboriginal broadcasters we play a crucial role in our regions and in the communities we serve. We deserve to be recognized as an integral part of the Canadian broadcast system. I believe we provide a service similar to that of CBC, and that the broadcast industry underestimates the value of our contribution to both aboriginal and mainstream Canadian culture and society.

Currently we lack the statutory protection and recognition provided to the CBC within the Broadcasting Act. We are mentioned within the Broadcasting Act, but in a fashion that could be considered nothing more than a few words of common courtesy. We are not accorded the same protection as the CBC is granted. I believe we have proven to Canada, and certainly to our audience, that we offer a unique and specific public service that represents a segment of the Canadian population that is often marginalized or underserved.

The Broadcasting Act was last changed in 1991. It is time for the Broadcasting Act to receive a facelift that ultimately will be inclusive of Canada's fastest-growing population and the cultural diversity that is quickly becoming a reality in all regions of Canada.

Recommendation two is regional CBC round tables with aboriginal radio broadcasters.

Over the last year, we have worked on several special projects with CBC Radio Manitoba that have been successful. This has been a first step. What else can be achieved in working together with NNBAP members nationally? Why not share our expertise and come together to discuss possible partnerships? It's imperative that we form partnerships, as I predict that within the next two years our rural audience will outnumber CBC's here in Manitoba. Forming a relationship certainly speaks to the heart of CBC's mandate. The CBC network must not only accept such a role, but embrace it; the CBC must not only provide sporadic partnerships in order to claim to have met its mandate, but must act decisively and broadly deliver on its mandate of serving an inclusive audience.

• (1035)

Number three is about a national CBC program to bridge the gap between aboriginal and non-aboriginal people.

The Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples final report was released in 1996 and noted that an influential program, *Our Native Land*, was a weekly CBC radio program that was cancelled in the 1980s when the CBC reinforced regional radio programming. The commission also noted that aboriginal programming has since occurred only on an ad hoc basis. In the royal commission's official recommendations, it was noted that the aboriginal voice will only be heard if it is included as a regular part of the Canadian media landscape.

In 1999 I had the opportunity to talk with the late Bernelda Wheeler, who gained national recognition as the host, producer, and investigative documentary journalist of *Our Native Land*. She is referred to as the first lady of native broadcasting. Bernelda was very humble about her work but acknowledged that she was part of a journalism movement that achieved a better understanding of who native people are in mainstream Canada. Today this program concept is greatly needed in Canada to bring Canadians together, to hear the issues, to question aboriginal issues, and to gain a better understanding of aboriginal issues as a whole. The spirit of her legacy should continue on CBC radio with a weekly one-hour radio program. I would also recommend that an aboriginal producer oversee the program or be given the opportunity to be mentored in the capacity as a producer.

Number four is about re-examining the NNBAP recommendation study.

In this last point I would like to call on Canadian Heritage to re-examine the results of a 2000 study that outlined an analysis of northern native broadcast access program recommendations and concerns in eight key areas. I believe there are several important components that must be reviewed, which include funding toward the archiving of materials. We must ensure that the last 20 years of radio and television programming will be available for future generations of people seeking materials like traditional legends and news archives, etc.

Also, the equipment study conducted by Alex MacGregor for NNBAP identified replacement and upgrading of equipment as being urgently needed, particularly for members north of 60.

In closing, if these suggestions are realized and acted upon, I am confident that CBC can meet the challenge of serving all Canadians, including aboriginal people.

Honourable members of the committee, I respectfully submit that CBC is not the only public broadcaster making a difference. Aboriginal broadcasters must be considered in your overview of national media in Canada. I have faith and confidence in this process and believe that there will be far-reaching outcomes based on your final decisions.

I appreciate this opportunity to appear before you today and would be pleased to answer any questions you may have.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. McLeod.

We will turn now to Ms. Keeper.

Ms. Tina Keeper: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you, Mr. McLeod, for presenting here today. I'm very grateful that you're here. NCI has been a part of my life, and here in

Manitoba, as you mentioned, it has a long history. Not only that, but as an artist I was part of the emergence of the arts community and the development of APTN as well.

NCI and APTN have been part of my cultural life. One of the things I was thinking about in terms of the mandate review was that if CBC had met its mandate in terms of the aboriginal community in Canada, there wouldn't have been an APTN or an NCI; there's a particular role that NCI and APTN have provided.

I'd like you to talk a bit more about what that role is specifically and how CBC maybe hasn't met that part of its mandate. You mentioned the Broadcasting Act. I'd like you to talk more about how the Broadcasting Act maybe hasn't been clear enough in terms of what role public broadcasting should play in reflecting the aboriginal community.

● (1040)

Mr. Dave McLeod: First of all, when you look at the aboriginal broadcasting industry, it's a very young industry. It's about 20 years old. When you think about what's been accomplished over that short period, it's incredible.

I think what we have, as aboriginal broadcasters, is a real special connection to our listeners. The former chief of Tadoule Lake, Ila Bussidor, was visiting Winnipeg, and I remember she said, "I love coming to Winnipeg and listening to NCI because it reminds me of home." What other station could accomplish...? Because we have such a connection to the aboriginal people, we're part of home. We're not just another radio station. We're not just playing music and filling in the blanks with commercials. We're connecting with people, and language is really a big part of that. We broadcast Cree and Ojibway languages.

In terms of the CBC, the number one point that separates us from CBC is having native languages. I think I made the point with the game show: where CBC could air a segment, we can air a half-hour show, as opposed to a segment.

Ultimately, there's that distance between CBC and the aboriginal audience throughout Manitoba. As I mentioned, we have 67% of the first nation audiences listening in Manitoba right now outside of Winnipeg. That's going to grow. We're under a lot of pressure, actually, as an aboriginal group, because the population is rising in the urban centres. When we first came to Winnipeg in 1999, we saw events happen once every three months. Then they were every month, and now they're happening every few weeks. As broadcasters, we're to cover these events, we're to provide service of these events, and we have to keep a revenue base rising to meet the challenge.

Let me tell you this: in terms of aboriginal languages, there's not a lot of money to be made. We're providing services to remote areas that otherwise would not get language radio, and we're doing that out of our own pockets. We're also providing employment opportunities for people with language who otherwise wouldn't have those.

I see it continually growing. In fact, we're at a point where in the future there will be a secondary aboriginal station needed just for the city of Winnipeg, I believe, and a network for the rest of the province. That's where things are going. And I know that because I'm at the front lines of everything happening.

Ms. Tina Keeper: Could I ask you another question? There are two things I want to ask you about.

You talked about *Our Native Land*, and for people within the aboriginal community, of course, Bernelda Wheeler, Eric Robinson, all of this—and especially in Manitoba, where, you're right, CBC did have this show.... In fact, in Thompson, in the CBC office, we have photographs of Eric Robinson, of Sylvia Grier. Bernelda Wheeler was integral, as well, in the region. That momentum just sort of fell off the table and there are no producers being mentored currently within the north.

Mr. Dave McLeod: Yes, that's been a real loss, I think, for the north, where CBC did play a role with Sylvia Grier. She did a Cree program in the morning and during the lunch hour, and it was well received in the north and it put a stamp of "CBC cares about the reality of the people in the north". When that role was gone, there were questions: Well, what's NCI doing? Can NCI do more for us? Because CBC certainly isn't playing that role.

With a radio show, I don't think it's a native perspective speaking to non-aboriginal or mainstream Canada; I think it's a perspective where inclusiveness should come to the table. I think it should be a phone-in show. If there are major native issues going on in Canada, we need to hear all opinions and thoughts on those issues, and come to a conclusion at the end. That will promote a better understanding. It should be inclusive of all voices, but give the native voice an opportunity.

The difference between CBC and NCI is that our audience lives the issues, where CBC's audience hears the issues—and that's a real difference. We don't have to explain as much with our audience. We don't have to explain that there are third world conditions still in first nation communities here in Manitoba. People live those issues and they know what they're about, or they have family or they've come from a community or they have friends who are a part of that. So I think there's a real special connection that we have, and CBC should grasp some of that, if not all of that.

●(1045)

Ms. Tina Keeper: Can I ask a quick question about the partnership? You said a partnership must be embraced by CBC, and part of that would be to deliver on its mandate.

Mr. Dave McLeod: Yes. We've worked on a few projects with CBC Manitoba as an experiment, and they're seeing the light. When we did this game show, we had 200 people show up at the friendship centre. They were thrilled. That's something they don't have.

There is a distance between CBC and a direct connection to the aboriginal community. I think that needs to be fixed soon. I mean,

we have a national broadcaster here who is mandated to represent the people of Canada. Aboriginal people play a big role, particularly in the urban centres here in Winnipeg and as the audience outside of Winnipeg. That is the audience outside of Winnipeg. So if you don't have native languages on your radio station.... That's why we're getting 67% of the listenership and CBC will continually lose listeners as time goes by and that population grows. That is the reality.

The Chair: Thank you very much for that.

Ms. Bourgeois.

[Translation]

Ms. Diane Bourgeois: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. First, I would like to make a comment, and then I would have a brief question.

Mr. McCloud, I am very happy that you are here this morning. At other hearings we have held, aboriginal persons came to tell us that they did indeed need a lot of services.

Personally, as a member of Parliament from Quebec, I am very sensitive to aboriginal claims. You have several common languages that allow you to communicate, as well as your own culture which has to be protected.

This week we received a document from a large bank—the TD Bank, not to mention any names—in which it was said that the way to enrich a country was to educate and train its population. I am aware of everything Canadian aboriginal people have gone through. I am familiar with your claims since the arrival of white people in Canada. And in light of that, I think that it is extremely important that you too have a right to this education and training that white people have access to.

That being said, you referred to the creation of partnerships with the CBC. I want to know honestly and frankly whether, since your radio and television stations have been on the air, you have asked the CBC to partner up with you. What was its reply? What happened in the aftermath? I don't want a political answer; I want to know what actually happened.

[English]

Mr. Dave McLeod: My high school French picked up some of that, but can somebody...? I didn't have my headset on.

●(1050)

[Translation]

Ms. Diane Bourgeois: Should I repeat the question; must I start over?

[English]

The Chair: You might have to ask it again, at least the question.

Mr. Dave McLeod: Excuse me. I wasn't aware I was to wear a headset.

[Translation]

Ms. Diane Bourgeois: I was saying that it is important to the wealth of a country that its citizens be educated and trained. Since I am familiar with your efforts to create openings for aboriginal people and to give them access to Canada's wealth, which it can share with you, I think it is important that you have your own radio and television stations. That way, you will be able to communicate with each other and to contribute.

That being said, I want you to reply to my question in the most honest and open way possible.

You referred to partnerships. Since the advent of your radio and television stations, first of all, did you ask the CBC to enter into partnerships with you? Secondly, what was its reaction? Thirdly, what were the subsequent results?

[English]

Mr. Dave McLeod: In terms of our partnership with the CBC, I went to the CBC office on Portage Avenue and we had a meeting just to talk about what possibilities there were. There was no initial intention that we were going to do something; it was an exploration.

The CBC doesn't have an idea of what is really going on in the aboriginal community. They have a lot of non-aboriginal producers producing aboriginal content, and I think those producers are put in a situation where they're not equipped and they don't have the knowledge and background of the aboriginal community. In that situation there is an opportunity because they don't have that connection or knowledge of the aboriginal community, so they will ask questions and we will look and see what is going on and say, "Well, let's try this here" or "Let's try that there".

The game show idea was my idea. I said, "Why don't we do a game show with aboriginal languages?" I know at aboriginal language festivals they'll play some games like that in the gatherings. I said that concept could turn into a really good radio program. That's where it started. So it came from an open discussion, a seed of an idea.

The CBC had their input into that idea, with their expertise, of course, with some of the game show history they have. *Reach for the Top* was a game show in Manitoba here. It was a well-known game show, and part of the concept of that game show was used there.

That's just one idea. What other ideas are out there that haven't been thought of or discussed? If you collectively put all the societies together...there are hundreds of ideas that haven't even been thought about, which I'm sure would create exciting programming that the producers currently don't even know exist, that is out there.

I think storytelling is another area. I'm fascinated with traditional storytelling, and I think there are a lot of oral traditions that a lot of non-native people would be interested in, particularly Europeans. I've had the opportunity to travel through Germany, Scotland, and Holland, and people always ask about aboriginal storytelling and history: "Is it still there?" "Is it still alive?" "Are those legends still being told?" Yes, they are. Canadians generally don't even know that. That's just another little note.

[Translation]

Ms. Diane Bourgeois: Thank you.

[English]

The Chair: Mr. Angus.

Mr. Charlie Angus: Well, I find this a fascinating discussion, and I think your recommendations are excellent.

We're looking for a new chair for the CBC as part of our recommendations. Would you take the position?

Voices: Oh, oh!

Mr. Charlie Angus: I'm very keen to ask you about your recommendations, but I want to set this up with my own outsider's interest in aboriginal radio, because I've seen it in two contexts. When I worked with the Algonquin Nation in the Abitibi region of Quebec, we had a few isolated radio stations that were speaking to the aboriginal community, but we didn't have the framework that we see in Manitoba, of a much larger...where the communities could speak to each other. When I was working with the Algonquin community I certainly had the sense that regional alienation was probably exacerbated and the loss of language was exacerbated by the lack of a unifying Algonquin radio station.

In my region in the north we have Wawatay, which has done a phenomenal job in the northeast, where we have Cree Radio, and in the northwest, where they have Ojibwe Radio.

You've talked about lessons to be learned from the public broadcaster, but I would also argue that the lessons need to be learned by the private broadcasters. The reason I would suggest that you have such a large radio listenership is not simply because you have a large aboriginal audience but because aboriginal radio is a lot more fun and engaging to listen to than private broadcast radio or, often, CBC.

You talk about it as a sense of home. I listen to aboriginal radio wherever I can pick it up because I feel I'm listening to something that's fun and dynamic. One song is by Ernest Tubb, the next song is by Led Zeppelin. People call in. People share stories. I have a sense of immediacy that I don't hear anywhere else in radio.

Is that the experience that you see here in Manitoba as part of the success of your radio network?

•(1055)

Mr. Dave McLeod: Yes, I certainly do. We have really diverse programming, but I have to say this as well: when you have diverse programming like native languages and community information, it's difficult to make money from that.

What we've done is we're basically running two radio stations at the same time. We have a day format, which is very commercial. It's a hot country sound with some aboriginal music in it. Why we have to do that is because we have to sustain income for the station to continually grow. When NCI puts a site in Winnipeg, or outside of Brandon, that's \$220,000 of our profits we're putting into that. That doesn't happen by itself; that happens from investment in our fundraising, in our activities, and then we focus the moneys to where they're needed. Our continual growth has been very positive, but at the same time we're running the aboriginal sound and a commercial kind of day sound in order to raise the revenues through our commercial advertising.

I think what happens with the commercial broadcasters is they question some of that, but it's necessary that we do that. I just think that we are going to continually grow and I think we're going to get to a point where commercial broadcasters are going to be asking, "Why is the native station so popular? Why is the native station so large? Why is the native station still growing?" I think that's going to happen very soon.

Mr. Charlie Angus: You talked about the need for certain call-in shows on issues—again, not exclusive radio, but inclusive radio, or perhaps inclusive television as well—and that might be an area of partnership with CBC. I definitely feel that in our region, in the northeast of Ontario, people want to have that dialogue but it's just that there's no forum for that dialogue to take place in an interactive media. Have you begun to work on this yet, or is this the kind of partnership that you see moving towards down the road?

Mr. Dave McLeod: I think the CBC needs to pull up its socks in terms of serving the aboriginal audience. I think we need both. I think we need partnerships and we also need the CBC to say we are going to make a real commitment to aboriginal programming. The Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples in 1996 commented on ad hoc programming, that it's just done ad hoc, and I believe that's where it still is today, in 2007. So there has been some progress, particularly here in Manitoba, where some native staff are hired, which is great, but it's not at the level it should be to represent the populations. If you go to Portage Place right now, you're going to see a lot of native people, and that's Winnipeg—a lot of native people.

Mr. Charlie Angus: Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Fast.

• (1100)

Mr. Ed Fast: Thank you for appearing before us.

The 13 societies you referred to are non-profit broadcasting organizations within Manitoba—is that correct? Or is it all across Canada?

Mr. Dave McLeod: All across Canada. SOCAN as well is one of them, and there's a French group in Quebec as well. So yes, all across Canada, across every region in every province, particularly in northern Canada as well.

Mr. Ed Fast: And NCI is focused on Manitoba?

Mr. Dave McLeod: Yes, with 57 transmitters from Winnipeg to Churchill. We have two 100,000-watt transmitters in southern Manitoba. You can literally drive across Manitoba on the Trans-Canada and hear NCI the whole way across. We're neck-and-neck with the CBC. If you talk about CBC radio reach, you're talking NCI radio reach. That's how big we are.

Mr. Ed Fast: You focused most of your comments on what you're doing to meet the needs of your communities. You spent a little bit of time on the CBC and highlighted some of its shortcomings in meeting your needs. It sounds to me like the work that you're doing through NCI and through the 13 societies is actually quite successful, even commercially successful. You're making that a commercial success by using innovative strategies. To me, that's encouraging.

This focus, of course, is CBC's mandate per se. During your presentation, and I'm not sure I understood it clearly, were you suggesting there was a role for a second public broadcaster, or were you suggesting a more robust role for the CBC to provide aboriginal programming for your community?

Mr. Dave McLeod: I was referring to NCI. The community has so many needs that there needs to be an urban version of NCI and a rural version of NCI. That's because of the population growth. Right now, the aboriginal population is growing and succeeding. An example is at the University of Manitoba, where 10% of first-year students right now are aboriginal; in 1962 it was something like 0.5%. So we're seeing an educated base of aboriginal people growing and flowing into urban centres. Right now, in a lot of the communities, housing is an issue. Education money and opportunity in those communities are not high, nor are living conditions. Moving for the betterment of your children out of a community into an urban centre is the reality in the aboriginal community right now. That's what I was talking about there.

We see that, and when you look at CBC, where is that reflected? People look to us. I think CBC needs to play a role, as a provincial broadcaster, in reaching all people in Manitoba. Where is that voice? Where are those people?

Mr. Ed Fast: This begs the question: if you're doing the job so well, can CBC ever hope to meet the kinds of standards that I think you're setting for it? As you said, non-aboriginal programmers are trying to program for aboriginals, which is a huge disjunct and a huge challenge, and I'm not sure that's not going to deliver the results you're asking for. Is it perhaps not more effective to focus resources on assisting you in doing your job better than having CBC do something that it may never be able to do as well as you expect it to?

Mr. Dave McLeod: You need both.

I go back to the talk show. My dad was a big fan of *Our Native Land*. I remember he used to like that show. He wouldn't say much, but when he heard it he knew that was the reality, that was what was going on, and people were hearing it. That needs to come back.

In terms of what we do, yes, we're going to grow. There's nothing but growth for us. We see it in the population; we see it in the education system. Over 40% at University of Brandon are aboriginal right now. We're seeing doctors, lawyers, every profession graduating right now. The brother of a friend of mine is an architect, and he just graduated last year. We're seeing a lot of professionals on the rise in this province.

Mr. Ed Fast: As well as politicians.

Mr. Dave McLeod: And politicians.

That's the reality of Canada. That's not the aboriginal community; that's Canada. That's where Canada is at, and that's where the aboriginal people are at right now. It's an exciting time. We're all living through history right now, living history. Twenty years from now, people are going to look back at this time as when things started growing, when things started happening.

• (1105)

The Chair: Thank you very much.

I apologize to our next witnesses that we've had a little mix-up here this morning. Some people had notice and re-notice of change of venue, and that's why we have gone a little longer here this morning.

Ms. Neville, do you have any questions?

Hon. Anita Neville (Winnipeg South Centre, Lib.): I have many questions.

The Chair: I would like to give you—

Hon. Anita Neville: One is for clarification and one is on a sidebar issue.

Thank you for coming. These are fascinating presentations.

You obviously were talking about the CBC. You made a comment, just a few minutes ago, where I inferred that you said that the best that CBC does for the aboriginal community is hire a few staff. Is that your view at the moment, that that's the best CBC is doing for aboriginal communities?

Mr. Dave McLeod: I think it's a first step. I'm not going to say it's the best, but it's—

Hon. Anita Neville: Today.

Mr. Dave McLeod: Today it's the best it's doing, but it's not reflected when you turn on the radio. It's not reflected when you watch the news, which it should be. It's not there yet, but it is a beginning, and I am thankful that's where it's at.

I know Wab Kinew, who has recently been hired with CBC. He is a very talented young man. I just hope he gets the opportunity to become a producer, an executive producer, to hold a position of authority at CBC. You can open the door this much or you can open it this much.

Hon. Anita Neville: What you're saying is you want it to go beyond entry level.

Mr. Dave McLeod: Yes, that needs to happen, and I optimistically wait for those times.

Hon. Anita Neville: I have a total sidebar issue.

Yesterday I was in an inner-city school here in Winnipeg where it was largely early education classes. Ninety percent of the children in the school were of aboriginal ancestry of one sort or another.

How much is your programming used in the schools, or is it at all?

Mr. Dave McLeod: We all play a part in visiting schools. I visit schools. The last one I visited was a grade two. Ray St. Germain, a Métis person who works with NCI, visits the schools to explain who Métis people are. Gerry Barrett, a first nations person, visits schools in the north to talk about opportunities in broadcasting. I think that's

another area where people look to us to do that. That's because the population is growing.

I think that Manitobans and Canadians need to see that reflected when they watch TV. It should be open everywhere, not just this box here. It has to be everywhere. It has to be CBC, CTV, and CHUM. CHUM has that saying that diversity is the Canadian reality, or diversity is the face of Canada, and it's true. Look at Toronto: the visible minorities represent over 50% of the people in Toronto, as you probably know. That's where cities like Winnipeg are going.

As another note, the aboriginal population is on the rise, and we're seeing a Filipino population on the rise. There are over 30,000 Filipino people in Winnipeg. That needs to be looked at at some point. The reality is that the face of Canada is changing.

Hon. Anita Neville: Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

I've found it very interesting, and I wish you much success. Thanks for the questions and thanks for your testimony here this morning.

Mr. Dave McLeod: Thank you very much for the time. I appreciate that.

The Chair: We'll have a short recess, about five minutes.

• (1105)

(Pause)

• (1115)

The Chair: Welcome back to everyone around the table.

Welcome to our new witnesses from ACTRA.

Ms. Bajer, would you like to introduce the rest of the witnesses and give your presentation, please?

Mrs. Sharon Bajer (President, ACTRA (Manitoba)): Okay, great.

The Chair: Oh, just before we do that, we can't go the full hour, but we will go to five after if we need to. Okay?

Mrs. Sharon Bajer: Okay. I don't think we will.

The Chair: We've been running a little bit behind schedule here this morning.

Thank you.

Mrs. Sharon Bajer: This is Rob Macklin, who is our branch representative for ACTRA; Rea Kavanagh, the vice-president; and Claude Dorge, who is our lovely secretary. I'm Sharon Bajer. I'm the president of ACTRA, Manitoba branch.

First of all, I want to welcome the committee to Manitoba and thank you for inviting me to speak on behalf of ACTRA Manitoba. ACTRA is an association that represents professional performers in Canadian English-language film and television. We have more than 21,000 members across Canada.

I will be speaking to you in support of our national brief, which was submitted to the standing committee earlier. I also want to speak a little on behalf of our Manitoba members, of whom we have around 400, and relay to you the importance of the CBC to our region specifically. I'll begin by touching on some of the main points from our national brief.

ACTRA members have a vital stake in preserving and strengthening Canadian culture, and the strength of the CBC has a direct effect on whether or not our dramatic stories are seen and heard. ACTRA started and developed right alongside the CBC, and we have always maintained that the CBC should be the primary access for Canadian programming. In order to do this best, the CBC must be strong and well funded.

As a publicly funded broadcaster, the CBC has the opportunity to take risks and offer an alternative to private commercial broadcasters. This can only be effective if the CBC has the support it needs to fully realize its potential, the potential being to reflect Canada and its regions and to contribute to shared national consciousness and identity.

It is essential that the mandate of the CBC set the standard for high-quality Canadian programming. The CBC needs to take a leadership role in addressing the need for more Canadian drama, music, and dance and variety programs, which are currently under-represented throughout the broadcasting system. Since the trend towards more news and sports programming, we feel the CBC's mandate of providing a wide range of programming has not been met. ACTRA looks to the CBC to revitalize and re-establish its leadership role to the commitment of Canadian production and broadcasting of prime-time drama, movies of the week, and mini-series. ACTRA urges that this be a central question in the committee's review of the CBC mandate.

Since 1991 the CBC has seen a reduction in budgets, and they are placed in the impossible position of having to fulfill their mandate while having to compete with private broadcasters for advertising revenue. This has directly affected the programming of Canadian cultural content, which in turn directly affects our ACTRA members.

It is important that the CBC make necessary technological advances without compromising the mandate, and the appropriate funding should be allocated to allow the CBC to make this transition. We feel it is important culturally that Canada's public broadcaster reflect the changing reality in regard to the new media, while at the same time regulating the new media platform. ACTRA believes that the CRTC must re-examine its new media exemption order that was established in 1998.

• (1120)

Just to sum up the main points, we respectfully request that the committee recommend to Parliament that the current mandate is sufficient for the CBC to meet the needs of Canadians.

The mandate of the CBC as currently written needs to be appropriately supported with adequate public funding.

The CBC must be funded to make the transition to digital signals and high-definition television.

The CBC has to be adaptable to new media platforms, and as a consequence the CRTC must address its new media regulatory policy to ensure that the CBC will make the adaptation successfully.

The CBC must take the lead to ensure that Canadian English-language programs are available to Canadians.

On what the CBC means to our region specifically, I would like to address a few points. It feels as if the CBC dramatic film, television, and radio production in Manitoba has been declining steadily over the past 10 years. When I moved to Manitoba in 1998 it seemed to be a vibrant place to work as a performer, and CBC production was abundant. There were radio dramas being produced on a regular basis. CBC would often cover arts events, and it would record concerts and even the odd play.

As a young actor I thought the CBC was really cool. I loved the fact that my parents in Vancouver and my aunts and uncles in northern Alberta could hear about what was going on culturally in Manitoba, my new home. I often heard the phrase, "Wow, we're always hearing that something was recorded in Winnipeg or coming to us from Manitoba." They had the perception that although it was cold, the Winnipeg arts and cultural scene was thriving and exciting.

I often wonder what happened to that excitement, and I have trouble remembering the last time a CBC movie was shot here. Film production in Manitoba has been on a steady rise over the past five years, but the CBC is seen to be absent from that wave. As an actor I'm now more likely to get a part in an American cable B horror movie than a Canadian-produced story that has substance and meaning.

The CBC's mandate is to "reflect Canada and its regions to national and regional audiences, while serving the special needs of those regions," and "actively contribute to the flow and exchange of cultural expression". I honestly think it used to do that for Manitoba, but it no longer has enough resources to do so.

I urge you, on behalf of ACTRA Manitoba, to recommend that more funding resources be allocated to the regions again to stimulate the growth of Canadian production all across the country.

Thank you for allowing ACTRA Manitoba to participate in the review of the CBC mandate. We welcome your questions.

• (1125)

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Mrs. Sharon Bajer: Claude Dorge wants to say a few words.

The Chair: Go ahead, Claude.

[Translation]

Mr. Claude Dorge (Secretary, ACTRA (Manitoba)): Good morning, and welcome to Winnipeg.

Although ACTRA represents English-speaking actors, there are nevertheless in Manitoba a certain number of French-speaking actors. That is why I thought it might be useful to ask you to hear my brief comments.

I do not have figures to back up my brief, which may prove if any proof were needed, that I am an artist and not a public servant. Rather, I want to submit my impressions to you and ask you to consider one fact in particular.

I know that the Union des artistes has already presented or will be submitting its comments to you, but that organization only represents the interests—and I speak from experience—of its Quebec members. If you want the comments of a Franco-Canadian, I am here to deliver them.

Radio-Canada is an interesting name, but I wonder about the word “Canada”. I am of course referring to Radio-Canada, and not to CBC. Radio-Canada produces a large number of programs, comedies, dramas and variety shows. I think it may have produced even more than the CBC. However, almost all of these programs are produced in Quebec. As Franco-Canadians, we also have stories to tell and experiences to share. We have our authors, our actors and our directors. Almost all of Radio-Canada's French-language production is produced in Quebec. I find this insulting, and it is done in a very blatant way. It is Quebec production for Quebecers. However, Canadians are footing the bill, without being able to enjoy any of the benefits.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you.

Ms. Keeper.

Ms. Tina Keeper: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Thanks to ACTRA Manitoba for the presentation. There have been many reviews or reports done on Canadian television and broadcasting over the last 12 years. Almost invariably these reports say that CBC should promote Canadian culture and not reproduce programming that is being done by private broadcasters.

Ms. Bajer, you talked very clearly about the decline in CBC production for actors here in Manitoba and their ability to participate in Canadian productions done by the CBC.

Earlier we heard from an arts organization about the correlation between artists and the CBC and that forum, and how it was integral and an important instrument in reflecting our cultural identity in different parts of the country, or different cultures in Canada. I want to talk a bit more about that.

What recommendations do you have specifically for the CBC and how it could fill that need for Canadians?

• (1130)

Mrs. Sharon Bajer: It seems that they're starting to do it in radio. There was a call for submissions, for people to come up with pitch ideas for radio. I know of several people who submitted a pitch that was later accepted by the CBC. It was amazing. They were invited in to assist on *Definitely Not the Opera*, given a tape recorder, shown how the equipment works, and then sent out, and they are now able to develop their radio program.

I know it's larger and more complicated in television, but just that outreach to the community.... There are a lot of young writers. I have a lot of students who have ideas. They're just brimming with ideas,

but they feel they have no access. They don't really understand how it works, and they feel it's a closed shop.

With this radio initiative, they just sent out a call for submissions and pitches. What a pitch should look like was laid out very clearly, and they provided samples. That was really working—for radio anyway—and it was just great that they were able to pick up a couple of local people and give them that opportunity.

So I think that's one way it could be done.

Mr. Rob Macklin (Branch Representative, ACTRA (Manitoba)): I don't believe the CBC operates on the basis of specific funding envelopes for regions. I don't know if the best solution is always to make sure there's some sort of equitable distribution of resources across the country, but even if some regional funding resources were put into program development....

If you talk to somebody at the CBC about that, they'll basically tell you they'll go wherever the best ideas are. Well, it just seems very disproportionate that all the good ideas come out of Toronto, or possibly Vancouver. I don't know if we always believe that. It certainly would be helpful if there were more regional emphasis on program development. Even when it comes to MOWs and mini-series, if regional Canada were somehow put into the mix in terms of who makes those creative decisions, at least that would be a little bit better than it has been in the past little while.

I'm sure one of the reasons things work the way do currently is that CBC struggles with the funds that it has. Even with the one-time increase of, I believe, \$60 million, it needs to be funded very well to provide Canadian dramatic production for Canadians from all across this country, so that Canadians can relate to other Canadians.

Ms. Rea Kavanagh (Vice-President, ACTRA (Manitoba)): The need for regional programming and regional content has been well proved in the news sector of the CBC. When they had the massive cutbacks, of course there became far more of a national focus to the news programming. I do believe they've switched back to a more regional focus now, having failed in that experiment. That has proven to be a worthwhile venture for the CBC in terms of listenership and people watching, and I believe it's a sound model that can be applied to drama as well.

Ms. Tina Keeper: Thank you.

The Chair: Go ahead, Ms. Neville.

Hon. Anita Neville: Do we have more time?

The Chair: I'll let you have one right now, on this wave.

Hon. Anita Neville: Thank you very much.

He's a very gentle chair.

The Chair: I'm pretty easy.

Hon. Anita Neville: I thank you all for coming. We've met before on a number of your issues.

Ms. Bajer, I was stressed when you commented about the heyday of the CBC in the mid-nineties and what it meant to you, what it meant to families across the country, and the synergy that it created with the artistic community. What's different now, for you as an artist and for other artists here? Does CBC Winnipeg currently have the capacity to do what it did? I know money is an issue, but does it have the physical capacity to do what it did in the mid-nineties for you?

And just as one other question of clarity, when you talk about producing dramas regionally, I'm assuming you're not saying the dramas have to have regional content. They can be whatever, but just produced regionally.

• (1135)

Mrs. Sharon Bajer: Just produced regionally, yes.

I'll speak about radio. When I first came here, the radio drama component was very active. Now I think that room is used for other things at the CBC. But it was fabulous. They were commissioning theatre troupes. Primus Theatre was here for about ten years, and they produced many things for CBC radio. Many local writers were involved. Being hired as an actor to do radio spots was one of my regular gigs—not commercially, but dramatically—but I rarely have gotten a call in the past five or six years.

You can say the same? Yes?

Hon. Anita Neville: I know time is an issue, Mr. Chair, but I just have a quick follow-up.

Has this resulted in people leaving Winnipeg?

Mrs. Sharon Bajer: Yes. Primus is gone.

When I first came in the early nineties, there seemed to be a convergence of artists coming to Manitoba. I look around and they're not here anymore. There are one or two, but it just no longer feels vibrant. It's a struggle.

The Chair: Thank you.

Ms. Bourgeois.

[Translation]

Ms. Diane Bourgeois: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Good morning, ladies and gentlemen. I am very happy that you are here with us this morning.

I have some brief questions to ask, of course, Mr. Chairman, and I will begin with Mr. Dorge.

First, I find it important that you were able to speak to us in French and to tell us about the Franco-Manitoban community. I feared that the Franco-Manitoban community would testify about its problems here today. As you know, I am particularly attached to francophones outside Quebec.

I would like to know how many French-speakers there are here in Manitoba. Would you have an approximate figure?

Mr. Claude Dorge: We may make up about 10% of the population, but I am terrible with figures; I apologize.

Ms. Diane Bourgeois: Figures speak volumes, and this would be important. You deplored the fact that almost all of the programs broadcast here to Franco-Manitobans were produced in Quebec.

Does that mean that Franco-Manitobans enjoy practically no television coverage here?

Mr. Claude Dorge: No, insofar as drama and variety programs are concerned, there is none.

Ms. Diane Bourgeois: What coverage do they have?

Mr. Claude Dorge: We have the news. In western Canada, there is a program called *ZigZag*. It is a cultural program, but it is only broadcast in the west. That is all we have.

This afternoon I believe a representative from Productions Rivard is supposed to come and testify before you. That firm did indeed carry out a few projects, and its representative will be able to give you further details. If I'm not mistaken I believe that it has closer links with TVA than with Radio-Canada.

Ms. Diane Bourgeois: So there is no francophone coverage happening here, if I understand correctly.

Mr. Claude Dorge: Approximately 10, 15 or 20 years ago, locally, Radio-Canada filmed one of the plays put on by the Cercle Molière per season, which was enormous at the time. It was a privilege for us to see our actors on stage. Of course, since the cuts, all of this has vanished, but at the time, it was really extraordinary that a local theatre company saw one of its productions per season on the TV screen.

• (1140)

Ms. Diane Bourgeois: What happened? Why is this no longer the case?

Mr. Claude Dorge: It was the budget cuts that...

Ms. Diane Bourgeois: Are you sure? What year are we talking about, approximately?

Mr. Claude Dorge: This goes back at least 15 years.

Ms. Diane Bourgeois: At least 15 years.

Mr. Claude Dorge: Indeed, I took part myself in several of these productions either as an actor or as director. What the local Radio-Canada did at the time was simply film the play put on by the Cercle Molière either in the theatre or sometimes in a studio, according to the type of production.

Ms. Diane Bourgeois: In the other places we visited where francophones came to testify, we were told that you did not necessarily have access to the news in French, perhaps because of the different time zones.

So there is news being produced in Quebec, but nothing else is happening here. The problem may be due to time zone differences. Is that a possibility or not?

Mr. Claude Dorge: No, I can't see that. As you say, the only French-language television production broadcast by Radio-Canada here is the news bulletin. Occasionally, there is a special musical radio program that features local talent but that is the exception.

Ms. Diane Bourgeois: If I understand correctly Radio-Canada is not fulfilling its mandate to offer the same number of programs in both official languages. Are you criticizing the current mandate or the fact that Radio-Canada is not fulfilling its mandate?

Mr. Claude Dorge: I am criticizing Radio-Canada's lack of will. Montreal gets all of the money and the production is done in Quebec. You know as I do that there are a large number of television productions, but the majority of English-language programs that reach us are American programs. In Quebec, there is a great deal of production being done. As you know, Quebec has its stars. What is being done there is extraordinary, but it is entirely Quebec-based. There seems to be no will to go outside those boundaries nor even any interest in knowing what is happening outside Quebec. There is just no interest.

Ms. Diane Bourgeois: Has your association or another association from Manitoba discussed this with Radio-Canada? Have you ever made any representations in this regard?

Mr. Claude Dorge: As it happens, this afternoon I believe you will also be hearing from a representative from the Société franco-manitobaine, our political voice. He will surely be able to give you numerous examples of the work they have done with Radio-Canada to try and break this deadlock. He will be able to give you more concrete examples than I can.

Ms. Diane Bourgeois: We will be listening carefully. That's all, thank you very much.

[English]

The Chair: Mr. Angus.

Mr. Charlie Angus: Thank you for a very interesting presentation.

It's depressing to hear of the on-the-ground programming disappearance we're seeing here in Manitoba, especially in terms of radio drama.

You talked about there being no funding envelopes regionally. My sense is that with radio, even if we are seeing a loss of dramatic production coming out of the regions, at least they do seem to make a concerted effort to move certain national shows into various areas, particularly things like holiday specials. They've always moved out of Toronto or Vancouver. You hear Halifax. You hear Edmonton. Even provincially, in my area, Sudbury gets its own chance to do at least provincial and sometimes national shows. We don't see any of that in terms of television.

Would you have a recommendation for how television could start to move beyond the idea that all the good ideas come from south of Bloor and Danforth?

Ms. Rea Kavanagh: One of the challenges for the CBC is to take a position of taking risks. It's one of the things missing in terms of the programming, and it would actually bolster that idea of producing from regional envelopes.

If you are looking for your surefire bet, if you are looking for a production that is commercially viable, I think you're going down the wrong path. Just two days ago in *The Globe and Mail*, there was an article about the CBC's upcoming season. It was beyond bland. Though very safe, it was, as a result, very bland, and perhaps not even very representative of our need to express our culture and to, as a result, have a unity and an understanding across the country.

By taking a position that the CBC is uniquely able to take—to take risks in their programming—you will start to see more interest

from the public. I think you will see an increase in the number of people watching the CBC.

Also, if there is a recognition across the country—"Oh, I recognize that writer", or "Oh, my goodness, there's my cousin on television"—you will have more success. People tune out when they see a national broadcaster that seems to have one centre or two centres.

● (1145)

Mr. Charlie Angus: You talked about the need to be ready for high definition. I'm concerned about our inability to be ready for low definition.

For example, my kids don't watch TV, they watch YouTube, and what they watch on YouTube are BBC productions. They are very funny, very edgy. The quality is terrible, but it doesn't matter. My kids watch these in ten-minute segments and have to find the next one. The entire BBC catalogue is now online, and ours isn't. I know that ACTRA has just come through a strike on remuneration on Internet services.

When I put the question to CBC management about why our back catalogue is not out there for people to watch in the digital universe, I was shocked by their answer, that they wouldn't be able to get the rights. There are so many competing rights holders for various shows, and with the ultimate in technological protection measures, the shows are locked in a vault. Nobody sees them there.

What recommendations do you have to ensure that in a changing medium, where we don't know how to fully monetize, we are going to get our shows out there and ensure that people are remunerated?

Mr. Claude Dorge: Perhaps you should suggest to the CBC that they ask the BBC how they did it. That would be a start.

Mr. Charlie Angus: Yes.

Mrs. Sharon Bajer: But also, because we've just settled that part of the agreement in terms of the new media, I think any new media now is protected—

Mr. Charlie Angus: You're covered?

A voice: He's talking about different rights.

Mrs. Sharon Bajer: Oh, okay.

Mr. Rob Macklin: On that question, I don't think it's our job to tell the CBC how to get their programs on the air. If they're a professional company, shouldn't they be able to work this out? If there are competing rights, you negotiate the rights with the owners. I don't think it's our job to tell them how to get it on the air.

Mr. Charlie Angus: Well, I guess I'm looking for an answer on this because I believe that all of our talk about cultural sovereignty is going to be irrelevant if we're not on the air in a new medium. One of the criticisms we've heard about the Canadian Television Fund is that because it's all done through independent production houses, getting the secondary rights to get it on the Internet is not worth it. So they show it on TV and then it sits there. Meanwhile, the Internet services are happening elsewhere. BBC has the rights to its shows, so it's putting them on, but our production shows are mostly independent productions.

What is ACTRA's position on this?

Mr. Rob Macklin: If you're talking about Internet broadcast for CBC-owned productions, we're actually in negotiations with them on that right now. But my understanding is that currently there's nothing stopping them from broadcasting it. I don't believe we have specific words in an agreement around it. I know they're negotiating it now. I don't believe ACTRA is in a position of stopping them from broadcasting it.

• (1150)

Mr. Charlie Angus: No, I'm not saying ACTRA is; I'm asking what your recommendations would be to ensure that the productions you're part of are being seen after their first shot on television, that they're going onto a digital platform so that you're also being remunerated. It seems we haven't made that step.

Mr. Rob Macklin: We just negotiated terms in the independent production agreement—this isn't with CBC but with other producers—whereby we'll get a separate remuneration the day it goes onto the Internet, based on what we call distributors' gross revenue, the amount of money they make from distributors and broadcasters. We will get a separate percentage of that amount, which we've negotiated out, which ACTRA will get and disburse to the performers.

So with regard to independent production, that's what we've worked out. We've agreed to it. I'm sure something in terms of what the CBC and ACTRA will be doing will be very comparable. But I'm wondering if that's the real issue or if it is instead around co-ownerships, not really the ACTRA contract.

Mr. Charlie Angus: Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Mr. Fast.

Mr. Ed Fast: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you for coming today.

I have a preliminary question and then a main question.

With regard to the income your members earn, do you have any idea what portion comes from CBC programs?

Mrs. Sharon Bajer: Do you have any statistics...?

In Manitoba it would be totally insignificant.

Mr. Ed Fast: How about across Canada? Do you have those figures?

Mr. Claude Dorge: In Vancouver and Toronto, I'm sure they get... because there is production in Vancouver and Toronto, and Montreal.

Mr. Rob Macklin: The other thing to realize is that a lot of CBC dramatic production, production that you see on CBC television today, is actually made by independent producers. They have licence agreements with the CBC. So the CBC may have licence rights but not the ownership.

As an example, I would assume *Intelligence* is owned privately, with a licence agreement with the CBC, and for some of the series that have come out of Nova Scotia or the Maritimes, it's the same way. *Little Mosque on the Prairie* is probably an independent production as well, though I'm not 100% sure about that.

I find it very curious that *Little Mosque on the Prairie* is made in Toronto.

Mr. Ed Fast: Let me follow that up with another question, which I've asked a number of witnesses.

There is perhaps one comment that has been repeated time and time again: the whole issue of sustainable funding for the CBC. There is evidence before this committee that in terms of real dollars, CBC's funding is about half of what it used to be. Of course, one of the ways you get funding is for the federal government to increase funding to the CBC. However, that's not necessarily the only model.

I refer to testimony we heard from a former CBC president, Tony Manera, who was in Ottawa a few weeks ago. He made the bold statement that he believes "The federal government should cancel all tax subsidies and credits now going to private broadcasters and redirect those funds to the CBC." In return, he says, there should be "a relaxation of Canadian content requirements for private broadcasters, who should be free to offer whatever mix of programming best suits their commercial objectives."

So they're saying there might be a trade-off here.

One of the questions I had after that meeting, to Mr. Neville, who was also there, a former chief of staff to Prime Minister Joe Clark, was that obviously the private broadcasters would love to be freed of the shackles of Canadian content rules, but if in fact that happens, there has to be a trade-off, which is that they have to understand they have an obligation to support a vibrant and strong public broadcaster, and are they prepared to commit to providing funding that enhances the government funding to make sure that CBC is strong, that CBC can actually improve the number of Canadian dramas that are shown on CBC?

What are your comments? What would your reaction be to a very significant paradigm shift in the future?

Mr. Claude Dorge: About this idea of relaxing Canadian content, I just don't get it. We have a very vibrant and exciting music industry in Canada. Why? Because at one point, unless I'm mistaken, the CRTC said, look, guys, you have to play Canadian music" As a result, we have a Canadian music industry.

If you relax Canadian content as far as drama or comedy is concerned, what's going to happen? Why don't they follow the music industry thing and say, look, do it—and not talk shows and reality shows; that's not upholding Canadian culture. Do drama and comedy. Produce, and then we will have a vibrant industry.

Ms. Rea Kavanagh: I think that's very true. There's an excellent model, once again, that worked in another arts sector. I think that's an excellent point.

I also think it's important to note that at present the private broadcasters and the CBC are on a level playing field in terms of Canadian drama and how much is produced. Certainly I believe the CBC should step it up and perhaps be at a higher level than the private broadcasters, but the idea that you would relax requirements for the private broadcasters, who already spend only what they must and spend a great deal more importing American programming, I think is absurd.

I think it's very important for Canadians to see that their artistic contributions are recognized internationally as well, which is again what has happened in the Canadian music scene and is entirely plausible for Canadian drama and television.

● (1155)

Mr. Ed Fast: You're recommending that there be a review of the new media exemption. I'm assuming you're really saying you'd like to see the exemption removed. Is that right? This again begs the question Mr. Angus also touched on, of whether you can categorically state today that we are able to capture all of the content value. In other words, can we monetize that value and find a way of capturing that with all of the forms of new media as they're developing?

Right now we're competing with a huge market in the United States, which is flooding Canada with its own content on different media platforms. You can only regulate that if you have a way of capturing content and monetizing it. Are we there yet, or are we perhaps going down a road where we're going to find ourselves so frustrated because we're fighting the unregulated media that we can't protect against?

I've heard notions of geo-gating, trying to prevent American content from coming across the border, but I'm not sure that's going to be effective against all forms of new media. What are your comments?

Mrs. Sharon Bajer: This may not be answering the question, but I love the example of the BBC. If you have good stuff, people are going to go to it in the new media. If it's CBC-initiated stuff, it's available, and you get the right people in there who know how that whole thing works.... It's younger people who need to—

Mr. Ed Fast: I understand that, but regulating the new media platforms is a different challenge. Are we even able to regulate it the way you're asking us to?

Mr. Rob Macklin: I don't see why not. If regulations are put in place, the broadcasters or whoever owns the new technology will make the changes to fulfill them. I believe Europe has recently decided to go in this direction, so why can't we? We're not a third world country, so we should be able to be at the leading edge of this. We're at the leading edge of many kinds of technologies, and we should be at the leading edge of this. We have a wonderful music industry, but we should have a wonderful television and multimedia industry as well.

I don't have a technical answer for you, so I can't really speak to it very well. I just don't believe we are incapable of actually achieving this. We should be one of the leaders in the world.

● (1200)

Mr. Ed Fast: The CRTC disagrees with you. You know that.

Mr. Rob Macklin: They might, but maybe it's time for new people in the CRTC.

Ms. Rea Kavanagh: The review is three years overdue already, so....

Mr. Ed Fast: They were here before us and stated that it's still their position that the new media exemption should continue to apply, given the current environment within which new media is developing and the fact that it may be difficult to capture all of the content produced on the new media, especially from outside our borders.

Mr. Rob Macklin: It was important to us as a guild to make sure we had new media written specifically into our collective agreement, because if you don't start dealing with it now, you are not going to have the opportunity later on to backtrack and get stuff in place.

So I would say to the CRTC that they're missing the boat. The longer they put this off, the more difficult it's going to be later. Maybe that's what they want in the end; maybe they are just trying to head away from regulation. I think that will be a great detriment to the industry and the performers in this country. I don't see this as a beneficial development at all.

The Chair: Thank you.

I think that's it. Thank you very much for your presentations this morning and for answering questions that were put around the table. We've all had an opportunity, so we'll recess for lunch.

This meeting is adjourned.

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