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Chair

Mr. Gary Schellenberger

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● (0905)

[*English*]

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

Welcome to the 56th meeting of the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage. Pursuant to Standing Order 108(2), we are undertaking a full investigation of the role of a public broadcaster in the 21st century.

I must say we're very pleased to have our witnesses here this morning. The agenda has our witnesses split this morning, but what we're going to do is have both presentations, and then I think we can ask questions of either group. That might give us a little more time, because we have only 45 minutes for each. This way we'll have an hour and a half to ask those questions.

I welcome this morning, from the Centre d'études sur les médias, Florian Sauvageau. We also have Renaud Gilbert, former ombudsman, French services, Radio-Canada.

Welcome, gentlemen.

Mr. Sauvageau first, please.

Mr. Florian Sauvageau (Director, Centre d'études sur les médias): Thanks a lot, Mr. Chairman.

[*Translation*]

I will be making my presentation in French.

[*English*]

I'll be happy to answer questions in English if you wish.

[*Translation*]

It is quite a challenge that you face, to define the role of a public broadcaster in the 21st century, in the world that is completely different from the one we have known until now, and above all, in a world in which the public broadcaster was not designed. It was designed for a period that did not have the wealth of choices that we are experiencing now.

That image is a good illustration for the theme I wish to develop. I was told that I should be brief, and that you prefer to ask questions rather than listen to a long speech. In fact, that is more or less what the world is becoming, for professors as well as for journalists. Formal lectures are being replaced by seminars because students do not like long speeches anymore. I am not implying that you are students, but I think that that image defines clearly what the public broadcaster should be now, in my opinion. It is the blue fish in an aquarium of red fish. The title of this book—I have the English version but it exists in French as well—is *Making a Difference: The Blue Fish Among the Red Ones.*

[*English*]

This is what the public broadcaster should be in the 21st century—the blue fish, the different broadcaster.

[*Translation*]

Why? Because a great many of the missions that the public broadcaster had in the 21st century, of the roles it was trying to play in the last century, are now fulfilled by specialized broadcasters, sometimes public, sometimes private. In this way, some of the general ideas that we have about the public broadcaster... Furthermore, it remains part of the legislation. I am not saying that we need to change the act. However, when the latter says, for example, that the public broadcaster should contribute to shared national consciousness and identity, the principle is no doubt still valid.

And yet, when a network has only a 5 or 6% audience share, as is the case for the English network of the CBC, it is difficult for it to share this national consciousness; it is difficult for it to be what certain researchers call the “social link”; it is difficult for it to build a nation. We have long said that the CBC should be the nation builder. But 5% of the audience—I am speaking mainly about television today—does not add up to a lot of viewers to build a national consciousness.

In the 21st century, we must see the public broadcaster within the context of fragmentation. We conceived of our public broadcaster in the same way as we conceived of our broadcasting system during an era when we talked about *broadcasting*. I use the English terms, because in this case, the English says much more clearly what it is I am trying to say. *Broad* means big. We spoke of *broadcasting* and we continue to do so. But now, we live in a world that is one of *narrowcasting*. *Narrow* as opposed to *broad*.

All of this unfolded over a long, 20-year period. In 1985-1986, when my colleague Jerry Caplan and I wrote the report of the Task Force on Broadcasting Policy, the Groupe de travail sur la politique de la radiodiffusion, specialized channels were just coming into being. It was the beginning of this fragmentation. At the time, there were a few specialized channels, including several in English. It was also the beginnings of French-language specialized channels. Now, there is an infinite number of channels.

It is very clear that we can no longer conceive of the television role of the CBC and Radio-Canada in the same way we did 20 years ago. It is not possible. In the same way that the main stream private networks have financial problems because they survive on advertizing—on a commercial basis—because of fragmentation. The public broadcaster is also experiencing problems and must review its role in the current context, and much more, as this fragmentation will continue to increase because of the Internet and other new media.

We must therefore see the public broadcaster within the general context of this fragmentation. That does not mean—I particularly do not wish to be misunderstood—that the public broadcaster is no longer important. The public broadcaster is just as important as in the past, but in my opinion, the main principle that should now be guiding its activities... The public broadcaster was founded, was built up over the years on a certain number of principles: universality, that is to say servicing all the regions and all social groups, etc., diversity and independence. During the 1990s, a new principle developed: that of particularity, of specificity. This is what we must bank on for the future of the public broadcasting. Radio is playing this role very well.

What does specificity mean, concretely? When a viewer turns on his television and he is on the public broadcaster's channel, he must realize right away, very quickly, that he is on the public broadcaster's network. This is not always the case. Sometimes it is, but that is far from always being the case for television; for radio, on the other hand, this is always true.

● (0910)

When you turn on your radio and Radio-Canada is on the dial, you know immediately that you are not on a private channel. There is a difference. That is *Making a difference*. There is a specificity there. Public television must manage to do the same thing that has been done on the radio, that is to allow us to distinguish it from the private sector. We can come back to this issue, if you would like to speak about it in more depth during the question period.

What is the main reason for our being able to tell right away, to recognize the radio service as distinct whereas this is not the case for television? It is the absence of advertising on the radio. On television, it is the advertising that makes the difference. The more advertising there is, the less we recognize the distinctive character of public television. I am fully aware that the economics of television are not the same as the economics of radio. The distinction must be made. Perhaps we do need some advertising to finance television. However, the more advertising plays a part in the overall financing of television, the less we will be able to see the distinctiveness of public television.

I do not want to delve into the subject of programming, because I do not believe it is the role of analysts of public television to take themselves for television programmers. Therefore, I do not want to begin to discuss which programs correspond to what public television should be and which do not. I will however give you two or three examples of programs.

Another thing I would like to emphasize is that I would really not want to leave you with the impression that public television should be an elitist television. That's not the intention of distinctive television. Distinctive television must speak to the general public, because all taxpayers pay for this television. Therefore, there must be something in it for everyone. All kinds of programming must be present on public television: variety shows as much as current affairs, dramas as much as sports. On the other hand, what is important, is that each *genre* should be treated differently when it is on public television. We should not create variety programs in the same way on public television as is done on private television. Sports coverage should not be done in the same way on public television as it is on private television. Indeed, it is interesting to note that there is a difference. On the French network, since sports coverage of, say hockey for example, moved over to the Réseau des sports—Réseau des sports is the equivalent of the Sports Network—the way in which hockey games are covered is not the same as when the Canadiens matches were broadcast by Radio-Canada, the public broadcaster.

Nor is it true that when the public broadcaster does more difficult things, it does not attract viewers. Currently, there is an example in terms of information. There is a science show called *Découverte* which is always broadcast on Sundays at 6:30 p.m., and it is currently attracting many viewers because it is presenting excellent BBC programs in a French version.

The legislation and the spirit of the Canadian television system emphasizes canadianization before and above all else. We must not vilify foreign programs. There are foreign-made programs that can be of the highest quality. There are even American shows that can be of a very high quality. The BBC program that is reviewed by the *Découverte* team has drawn, I am told, up to one million viewers over the month of April. This is a dry program, a difficult program.

I will give you another example. It will be the last, because I am far from being the programmer. There is a program called *L'épicerie*, and it is the perfect illustration of what I am trying to explain: doing things differently. There are food shows on all the networks. On the private networks, what are the food shows? They are interesting, but they are cooking shows.

● (0915)

[*English*]

So on the difference between what we see on the French television regarding food, this is an explanation. This is real journalism about food, whereas we don't see anything like that on the private networks. On the private networks we see programs on cooking, and I feel this is a very good example of what I'm saying. In public television there should be all sorts of programming, but it should be different from the private sector. Journalism about food is different from making a program about cooking. This is the same area, but the journalistic treatment on public television makes the difference.

● (0920)

[*Translation*]

According to the data, *L'épicerie* has had an audience of over 700,000 people over the month of March, at 7:30 on Wednesday evenings.

This is not 3 million or 2 million people. We do not get 3 million people anymore. That era of 3 million people watching the same show is over. French-language television, which is exceptional, sometimes has an audience of 2 million people. Seven hundred thousand people is not 2 million, but for an information show like this, which is doing excellent work on a very specific subject, that is very, very good.

What does public television do differently? International news.

[*English*]

This morning in the *Ottawa Citizen* there is an article on the editorial page comparing Justin Trudeau and René Mailhot. René Mailhot died over the weekend. He had been doing foreign affairs for the French network, both radio and television, for I think 30 years.

[*Translation*]

René Mailhot explained foreign affairs very simply. He made things understandable to the audience. This is precisely another example of what public television should do and what does not exist on private radio or television. No one on private radio would spend 10 minutes explaining the geography of an international problem. That is the role of public television.

The public broadcasters must be present, as they are in fact, and CBC and Radio-Canada are doing good work on the Internet. In the current context and given the rise of the Internet, some analysts would like to do away with the traditional network, and see the public broadcaster become an agency that produces or has programs or other content produced that would be broadcast on various platforms, choosing the best platform in light of the program or the content. There would therefore no longer be a network. Programs would be produced by the public broadcaster and broadcast here and there, largely on the Internet.

It is an interesting idea, but I believe it is only a medium-term solution. The risk that not only the public broadcaster but the media in general are running today is that they prepare for the long term while forgetting about the short term, forgetting about tomorrow morning.

Traditional media like newspapers are in decline, and the Internet is rising, albeit slowly. There is never a revolution in the media world. History has shown that there is no revolution, but a slow evolution. The danger is to be getting ready for the long term by going forward only with solutions like those that I have suggested, that is to say abandoning the networks and producing programs that would be distributed across the country, and forgetting about the short term. Television is still a powerful medium.

In conclusion, I will read you the last three sentences of the short text that I sent you:

> We must be careful, it is wrongheaded to prepare for the long-term future while ignoring the immediate future. Television is still a powerful medium. The vast majority of people still watch television for their information and entertainment needs. Announcing its imminent decline is premature.

● (0925)

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Gilbert.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Renaud Gilbert (former Ombudsman, French Services, Radio-Canada, As an Individual): I would like to begin by thanking the committee for hearing me within the context of its investigation of the role of a public broadcaster in the 21st century. I consider it a privilege.

I will start with a few words, because I am not as well known as my illustrious friend, to tell you that I am originally from Saint-Georges-de-Beauce, Maxime Bernier's riding. I worked at Radio-Canada for 30 years, first of all as a reporter, but mainly as a manager. Before assuming the position of ombudsman, I contributed to the development of the Réseau de l'information project. Between 1995 and 2000, I headed the Réseau de l'information.

There are a thousand and one ways of addressing the issue which is the subject of your deliberations. Some may say it is an inexhaustible subject. One way of looking at the issue is to examine the needs of Canadians when it comes to having a public broadcaster. In my opinion, the need for quality information will remain in the 21st century.

I'd like to address a more specific issue, the role an ombudsman may play in terms of quality information. I will do so in two parts. I will first briefly describe the position of Radio-Canada's ombudsman, and then I will explain how the Broadcasting Act may support this role.

The role of the Office of the Ombudsman, created in 1992, is two-fold. Namely: to help maintain the high quality of CBC/Radio-Canada journalism; and to give the public the opportunity to refer complaints to an impartial and independent authority.

What exactly does the ombudsman do? The ombudsman determines whether the journalistic process or the broadcast involved in a complaint, relating to the radio, television or the Internet, does in fact violate the corporation's journalistic policies.

The corporation's journalistic policies is known as the Journalistic Standards and Practices. It is a small booklet I have here with me. In fact, it is a series of rules, like a code of ethics, which are provided for Radio-Canada's newscasters, and upon which Radio-Canada agrees to be assessed. If you would like to challenge or analyze Radio-Canada news, you can use this guide, which is based on three main principles: accuracy, integrity and fairness. You can assess the news on Radio-Canada. Generally speaking, Radio-Canada should agree to hear your suggestions and comments.

The ombudsman assesses your complaint in terms of this journalistic policy. It is up to management to address complaints when they first arise. The Office of the Ombudsman intervenes only when a complainant is not satisfied with the response from management. It is an appeal authority. What then happens? The ombudsman determines whether or not the complaint is well founded, in full or in part. The authority of the ombudsman is a moral authority, a power of influence, the power to make recommendations. The ombudsman may recommend a change to a journalistic policy and may also recommend an on-air follow-up or, in other words, some corrective action, if he believes that the journalistic conduct or the information that was broadcast violated journalistic policy.

Every year, the ombudsman submits an annual report to the board of directors. This report is available on the Radio-Canada website. The president and CEO advise board members as to the type of follow-up that will be made to the ombudsman's recommendations or what type of follow-up was made during the previous year.

● (0930)

In my seven years as ombudsman, I made approximately 30 recommendations, and most led to the outcome I had hoped for. For statistical purposes, each year, the office handles 1,500 complaints, or communications from the public. Of the complaints pertaining to information programs, more than half involve the principle of fairness.

How can the Broadcasting Act support the role of the ombudsman? First off, the legislation could specify that Radio-Canada may create the position of ombudsman. I do not think it would be advisable to say "must create", because Radio-Canada is a media outlet. The freedom of the press exists, so does that of Radio-Canada. I do not think it would be wise to have a coercive approach, but the fact of setting out in legislation that Radio-Canada may create such a position is obviously an incentive.

Second, and more importantly, are the conditions under which this role was exercised. On the one hand, legislation could grant the ombudsman immunity. What do I mean by immunity? Essentially, immunity would allow for the free and full expression of the ombudsman's opinion on the cases submitted to the office and would prevent the threat of a lawsuit being held over the ombudsman's head like a sword of Damocles. If you read the Official Languages Act or the Access to Information Act you will note that commissioners are granted immunity in the performance of their duties.

A second important condition concerns the application of the Access to Information Act. As you know, CBC/Radio-Canada will be subject to the Access to Information Act as of September 1st. Some information is explicitly excluded from the application of this Act, such as information relating to journalistic activities, creation or programming, with the exception of information relating to the administration of these activities.

So there are three pillars to the performance of the ombudsman's duties, impartiality, independence and confidentiality. Ombudsman's offices are not courts and do not have the power to compel testimony. There is no Crown prosecutor nor counsel. It is not an adversary process. The ombudsman must gain the trust of those with whom he works. To gain this trust, confidentiality is an important factor.

When you meet with people, if they know the information they share with you may become public at some point because people will file access to information requests, then all of the documentation which the ombudsman has, transcripts, notices, etc., all of this could call the ombudsman's role into question, in a worst case scenario.

Given the fact that the ombudsman's activities are a direct extension of journalistic duties at Radio-Canada, one could logically infer that the ombudsman's activities are excluded from the application of the Access to Information Act, but it would be wiser to have that stated in legislation. It would avoid the courts being asked to make that decision, sooner or later.

I will stop here; I would like simply to close by saying that I continue to believe that Radio-Canada, as the public broadcaster can play a significant role in enhancing democratic principles in the news and information sector by helping people understand the world around them, by helping citizens understand one another and live in society.

I am now prepared to answer your questions.

[*English*]

I'll try to answer some in English if I can.

● (0935)

The Chair: Thank you for those presentations.

We'll move to Ms. Keeper to ask the first questions.

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

Thank you to both gentlemen for your presentations. They were very informative.

Mr. Sauvageau, you made a really interesting statement. You said we're not broadcasting any more, we're narrow-casting. You talked about audience fragmentation. That is part of the reason for this review, and it's certainly the challenge we face with all the stations, and now with the new platforms.

On the public broadcaster, you said that the viewer must recognize instantly where they are, and you made a comment that there must be no advertising. You said you didn't want to talk too much about appropriate programming for a public broadcaster. But when you continued that conversation you talked about the type of quality programming. You referred to the journalistic style of reporting on a food show, or an excellent foreign project being shown.

Do you have any sense of what would be required of a public broadcaster in this new age of narrow-casting? Could you elaborate on that a bit?

Mr. Florian Sauvageau: Do you mean a broadcaster like CBC?

Ms. Tina Keeper: Yes, I'm talking about a public broadcaster in this narrow-casting day and age.

Mr. Florian Sauvageau: If you look at the BBC, in a sense it is a model because there is no advertising. But I didn't say there shouldn't be any advertising at all.

Everybody in Canada has something to say about the CBC and Radio-Canada, so other people might be as competent as I am on those matters, but making cuts in the eighties and nineties instead of trying to manage with less money was the wrong decision by the CBC.

[*Translation*]

I will continue in French because this is a very sensitive issue. I would not want to translate my own comments and do a bad job of it. I trust the interpreters to accurately do that.

At the time, CBC/Radio-Canada had a decision to make: work with a smaller budget or increase advertising to maintain a similar budget. In the 1980s, advertising's share in the total budget grew. I believe 20% is not enough to have an effect on programming. However, when 30%, 35% or 40% of the budget depends on advertising, things change. The greater the share of advertising revenue, the greater the spirit of competition. You want to draw viewers in, who in turn draw advertisers in, and public television increasingly starts resembling private television.

Since 1991 it has been clearly stated in legislation that the issues and solutions are not the same for English-language television and French-language television. CBC's ratings are so low that some may feel, at some point, that it is a marginal network.

I sent you a document, but I do not know if you have it. In fact, I sent two versions of this text, because the first version was incomplete. Second version which includes a quote, is better.

I will quote from two European authors, who say the following:

● (0940)

[*English*]

If public service broadcasting tries to compete more directly with its commercial rivals, it risks losing its niche. That is the problem with the French network.

[*Translation*]

Radio-Canada television is directly competing with private television. In may cases, TVA and Radio-Canada are identical when it comes to news. My apologies to the ombudsman. That is the problem with the French network. What I will now read describes the situation on the English side:

[*English*]

If it fails to go for a broader audience it risks losing its relevance to the general public.

[*Translation*]

The problems are not the same on the English and the French sides. CBC's share fluctuates around 5%. Radio-Canada's share remains at 13% or 14%. I believe the French network is nostalgic about the days when its viewership stood at 20% or 25%. It misses those days, which will never come again. This nostalgia, compounded by competition with private broadcasters for advertising revenue, explains why the French network is so different.

I could give you many other examples. As I stated, I have been looking at these issues for 20 years. I've always tried to look at the framework within which the public broadcaster should evolve and I've tried to make suggestions for the improvement of this framework, not to improve programming. I think the same should apply to legislators. I would find it regrettable for legislators to want to program Radio-Canada. It makes no sense.

Legislators must ensure that those who create programs are working within the best possible framework to express themselves. Legislators should define the framework. It is then up to those who design programs, and not legislators or analysts like myself to make these programs. If they can't manage that, they should be fired and someone else should be hired, but we should not be trying to do the job in their place.

One of the problems for Radio-Canada, in fact, is that there are too many cooks. There are too many people trying to find the perfect recipe for Radio-Canada. Let's give these people a framework and let them find their recipe.

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Mr. Kotto.

[*Translation*]

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

Mr. Gilbert, Mr. Sauvageau, I thank you for your contributions which will serve the committee in preparing to issue its recommendations. My question is for both of you. I will use the term "public broadcaster" to designate CBC/Radio-Canada.

History has shown that political and economic interests can turn the public broadcaster away from its mandate and alter its identity. How can we guarantee independence for the public broadcaster given these economic and political considerations?

Mr. Renaud Gilbert: That is not an easy question. At the moment, several things work to enhance CBC/Radio-Canada's independence from a political standpoint: the fact that the president is appointed for a given term, that the corporation is accountable to Parliament, and CBC/Radio-Canada has its own board of directors, the fact that there is a journalistic policy, that the company has chosen impartiality, imposed it on its journalists and attempts to impose it on the information programming services. There is a desire for independence, but I think it is very difficult to set that out in legislation. There are mechanisms in place to ensure a fair amount of independence from political powers. That is what I saw on the inside.

Economic independence is a very complex issue. I was the director of the Réseau de l'information. Our revenue was limited in that we only had eight minutes of advertising at the time. When I left, it had increased to 12 minutes. I had established an eight-minute limit for advertising, but the ever-growing thirst for revenue caused that jump.

Obviously, if there were less advertising... There are some universal needs. When I prepared my first brief, I dealt with the issue of advertising because it is very annoying to viewers and Internet users. I received complaints in my office regarding advertising on the Radio-Canada website. Increasingly, people are offended by this advertising which they find aggressive. Some people say there should not be any advertising on a public broadcaster's Internet site. I was told that the largest growth in advertising revenue is on the Internet.

There is no easy answer to your question on economic independence. There is no model available. I am one of those who believe that, in a way, advertising is information which cannot be excluded. Totally excluding advertising on television may not necessarily be the right approach. I think that there is a place for advertising because people want to have information. I do not know if you recall the *La Presse* incident. *La Presse* is a Montreal daily which published a regional edition devoid of advertising for Montreal department stores and other companies. People wanted the Montreal edition because they wanted to see that advertising. So, it depends.

I commented on what Florian said as an ombudsman. Obviously advertising affects content. The less there is, the better. For my part, I made a specific recommendation to exclude advertising in news stories. If you watch the *Fifth Estate*, which you all know, *Enjeux* or *Zone libre* and you see advertising in the middle of the program, there will necessarily be an affect on content and the small ads for the program itself. Say what you will, something needs to be done in those cases.

● (0945)

Mr. Florian Sauvageau: To reply, I could come back to what I told the member earlier when I began to talk about the BBC and I stopped. The BBC remains a model of public television because it does not have any advertising. Let's compare France and Great Britain. In France, ads appear on public television. Frequent criticism of French public television is similar to criticism of Canadian television, in other words, French public television is overly similar to private French television.

In Great Britain, the BBC is completely different. Other than the will to have public television, one of the main reasons for this difference is the absence of advertising. There is an interesting document from 2004, published by the BBC, regarding the notion of public value. This document explains, just as private television stations must ensure an economic return for shareholders, how to define the notion of public value as a foundation of public television.

Clearly, if public television is not providing different choices or doing something that private television is not, what is the point of having a publicly-funded commercial television station? There is no point. We could better use these funds if it makes no difference. It has to provide an alternative.

Before answering your question regarding policy, I want to add my comments to what Renaud said about Internet advertising. It is true that advertising is quickly moving to the Internet, which could cause a serious crisis for newspapers. They are the main source of information, not only in Canada, but throughout the world. As a result, if there's a sharp drop in the number of newspapers, caused by the quick movement of advertising to the Internet—I don't know; no one does—newspapers would no longer be able to play the informational role they currently do. The Canadian Press could no longer play the informational role that it currently plays in Canada. Perhaps the CBC or the State should pick up the slack here, but that is another problem.

We have long said that public broadcasters should have an Internet presence to prevent the Internet from becoming completely commercial. However, if the CBC has as many Internet ads as private media sites, the same logic holds true. What is the point of CBC having a web presence if ultimately the results are identical to what *La Presse* or the *Toronto Star* or I don't know who else is doing?

With regard to the policy part of your question, our Task Force on Broadcasting Policy had suggested in 1986 that the board appoint the CEO of CBC, to ensure, at the very least, a separation between the political branch and those managing the corporation on a daily basis. Clearly, this is not the panacea.

What else? Again, at the BBC, there is a 10-year charter. Renaud mentioned it too, when you are appointed for five years, you feel as if you have a bit more freedom. I think that the political branch, no matter who's in power, would not like this solution, but should Parliament not play a more important role with regard to the appointment, as is the case with the Quebec ombudsman, for example? The entire National Assembly must approve that individual's appointment. With regard to the President of CBC, one can imagine that this is such an important appointment that it should be approved not only by the Prime Minister, but by Parliament as well.

● (0950)

[*English*]

The Chair: Okay.

Mr. Florian Sauvageau: I'm sorry I went on too long.

The Chair: I'm trying to give everyone an opportunity, so try to keep your answers just a little shorter. But it's very interesting.

Mr. Angus.

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

[*Translation*]

I want to thank you for your presentation this morning. I represent a region with Franco-Ontarian communities that rely on Radio-Canada. I always hear it said that radio plays an essential role in the development of northern communities.

During this study, we have noted that francophone communities throughout Canada believed that Radio-Canada had abandoned them in relation to its duty to reflect the reality of and current events in francophone communities.

[*English*]

Particularly, I often hear that we never hear the accents of the region on SRC, or we don't hear the cultural development stories. We hear Montreal. As ombudsman, is this a complaint you've heard?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Renaud Gilbert: In fact, I have heard this complaint before and shared it with management, because it did not concern journalistic behaviour or information broadcast on the air.

I must tell you that Radio-Canada currently provides French services to 34 cities in Canada, including 16 in Quebec and 18 outside Quebec. There are reporters in 18 cities outside Quebec. These reporters have the mission to cover not only current events in local francophone communities, but news throughout the region.

I understand that some members of the local francophone community aren't happy at times because they believe that their community is not sufficiently reflected on the national station. In my opinion, these communities get a disproportionate amount of air time. If you calculate the relative weight of francophone communities outside Quebec, the percentage of francophones living outside Quebec and the percentage of information broadcast on these francophone communities, you will see that the percentage of information is higher than the weight of francophone communities outside Quebec.

Regional communities in Quebec also bear this criticism. People living in the regions in Quebec feel that there is too much Montreal content on Radio-Canada television. Others feel that CBC television is

● (0955)

[*English*]

much too orientated to what's going on in Toronto.

[*Translation*]

This is a problem.

[*English*]

If you watch *The National,* maybe 30% of the information you're going to see is international information. You have to know what's going on in the world. It's exactly the same thing in French. So it's a delicate balance. You have only a certain amount of time and you have to deal with all the communities. I know it's not very easy, but I think, inside the corporation, inside the French services, people are trying very hard to make the information of those francophone communities available to all the Canadians.

One other thing is that when you go to Montreal, many people come from those regions, so we can make sure that what's going on in their communities of origin is taken into consideration when people are building

[*Translation*]

Le téléjournal or other news shows.

[*English*]

Mr. Charlie Angus: I'd like to follow up on the role of ombudsman.

In another life, I was a part-time stringer for CBC, and I often ran afoul of that little book. I never saw the book, but I was always told, "Well this is not how we do things here. There are certain things we don't cover the way the private broadcasters do." For example, there was a poll that was released by a politician on a very controversial issue. I wanted to run the story, and they said "This isn't a scientific poll. We will not run this." And I said "This is a big story in the region. The private broadcasters are on there, and we're sitting on the sidelines." They said "We have a standard that we meet."

So I'm interested in this standard, because we often hear about how the CBC polices itself. I'll give you an example. Last summer, during the Lebanese invasion, on two consecutive days I received e-mails, one from someone who said that the coverage of CBC was outrageously pro-Israeli, and wanted me to check out a news show. The next day I got an e-mail that said it was outrageously anti-Israeli, and they wanted me to check out a news show.

News is fluid. It's moving all the time. In a controversial issue, how do you pinpoint one broadcast and say whether this one piece was over the line or not? When you're looking at an objective standard to see if someone has breached their role in terms of impartiality, do you look at it in the particular news clip? Do you look at it in a cycle? How is this done in order to maintain a sense of journalistic balance?

● (1000)

Mr. Renaud Gilbert: During the first three years I was ombudsman, the subject that was most often complained about was the coverage of the Israeli and Palestinian situation. We especially heard very much about the use of the T-word—terrorist. Are these people terrorists or militants or...? There's no easy answer to your question.

For an ombudsman, the main task is to make sure that each of the reports is accurate. If what's said by the journalist is accurate, well, okay—that's fine. The other thing is whether it's impartial. I think we can see if someone is biased, but it's a question many times of the integrity of the journalist. So you have to watch, and you have to take a look at many reports. Most of the time the management, since they have the right to answer first, look at many reports.

One of the things is that there are complaints about reports on newscasts. These are short reports, and most of the time they talk about only what has happened within the last 24 hours. So if you didn't watch the report the day before, or the day before that, and when management answers those questions about

[*Translation*]

biased reports on the Israeli-Palestinian issue or the conflict in the Middle East... Whenever anyone looks at series of reports, they ultimately have an opinion on the degree of partiality or impartiality of a particular story. That's how it works. There are never any easy answers, because quite often, people who complain have an opinion to start with, and we won't necessarily be able to convince them that the story was

[*English*]

accurate and fair. So there's no easy answer to that kind of question.

The Chair: Okay. Thank you.

Mr. Warkentin.

Mr. Chris Warkentin (Peace River, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you very much for coming in this morning. We appreciate your testimony and your insight into the whole issue of the CBC.

As you said, Mr. Sauvageau, we're embarking on a venture that I'm sure is a lot bigger than we'll ever get through in terms of finding how we're going to deal with some of the challenges the CBC has come into in the last number of years.

You broached the issue of Canada having the CBC and Radio-Canada and the broadcaster playing a role of being a nation builder, being a significant part of what holds us together, reflecting our national consciousness from one end of the country to the other. Then you went further and talked about the fact that viewership is down to 5% in some regions and fewer people were watching it than ever in terms of percentages of the population.

I'm wondering how you see the CBC still playing an important role as a nation builder or a reflection of the nation in this changing world. I think it is a noble and important part of the CBC's role, to keep us informed of our country, and I think it's probably one of the more important discussions that we're going to have in terms of the future of the CBC.

So what are your thoughts on the challenge, and specifically on the issue of the CBC being a nation builder?

● (1005)

Mr. Florian Sauvageau: This is, as you've said, a big challenge, but it has to be seen, I feel, in terms of democratic choice of pluralism and diversity and all those components of democracy.

This is different from the glue holding the country together. What I was saying is that I frankly believe that it doesn't make sense any more to ask a network that has so little audience to be the glue holding the country together. But that doesn't mean—on the contrary—that this network doesn't have a democratic choice.

Let me take this example. In terms of foreign affairs and Canadian foreign policy, what other television network, except the CBC, can keep us informed on the role of Canada abroad? Only the CBC has many correspondents around the world. I know that what I'm saying has been said by many people before, but in the context of your question I think this is important to repeat.

If we want to have our own foreign policy, we need to have our eyes abroad explaining to us in terms of relevance for Canadians what is going on abroad.

Mr. Chris Warkentin: Yes, and it may have been said before, but I'll tell you that it hasn't been said in the context of the hearings that we have been holding. So I appreciate that, and maybe I'm just an idealist in believing that the CBC has an important role in terms of holding the country together.

I think specifically on the issue of foreign affairs or having an independent and totally objective view on some of these things, as you've identified, if opinion leaders and people who understand the issues had a platform that was totally free from other influences, maybe we would have something of significant value. So maybe Canadians wouldn't tune in to the CBC every day, but on an issue-by-issue basis there may be even more reason for Canadians to be drawn to this broadcaster.

My concern is that we have certain segments of the population that are never turning to the CBC. I guess my hope would be that we have a broadcaster maybe that not everybody watches every day but that everybody eventually watches at some point.

Foreign affairs obviously is something that you've identified as a thing we could discuss on this. Are there any other areas that you think would be important? I don't want to define for the CBC what they put forward or what not, but I do want to be able to provide some direction, I guess.

Mr. Florian Sauvageau: I'll just add something, for a second, and then I'll go back to your question.

Of course it is elitist to say that the leaders of opinion are listening to or watching CBC. I know this is elitist. But it is very important in every country in the world to have what are called "quality" newspapers—usually it's the newspapers that play this role—like the *New York Times*, or *Le Monde* in France, or the *Guardian* in Great Britain. Political leaders, civil servants, business leaders are kept informed through those quality papers.

In English Canada, hopefully, there's one, the *Globe and Mail*. On the French side, there are good papers, but not something similar to the *Globe and Mail*, which is a world-quality newspaper. I've always felt that CBC radio on the French side is playing this role of quality media.

To go back to your question, when we are talking about 5%, this is the audience share. There is another matter to look at in terms of audience. It's what we call reach—how many people over a week listen to the CBC? Of course, I use the figure of 5% or 6%, and this is not much. But if you look at the general population, which is your preoccupation, how many? I don't have the figures with me, but how many people are listening to CBC radio or watching CBC television once or twice a week ? That would be a better approach for evaluating public radio or public television.

● (1010)

Mr. Chris Warkentin: As a committee we've heard testimony with regard to the objectivity or the non-partisan nature of media, specifically the CBC. There have been groups and individuals who have very strongly stated that they feel there is a segment of CBC that has challenges in terms of being objective and non-partisan.

I'm wondering how, if we're going to move into a situation where CBC would be a better reflection of Canada, we could assure that doesn't happen or assure that it is objective moving forward.

Mr. Florian Sauvageau: Let me start with a general comment. If you go into journalism, I assume it's the same as when you go into politics—it's a little because you are idealistic and want to change your world, to have a better world. So when you want to have a better world, in a sense, you're going to be a little more militant—and I'm saying that in a positive sense.

I don't believe those who say that CBC journalists are more leftist than other journalists, and that they are so different from the rest of society. Having said that, if you go into journalism, you're a little militant.

I'll give you the results of a survey we did, a colleague and me, at the end of the nineties. We interviewed 500 journalists across Canada in all the media. We found that the CBC journalists, *en termes d'engagement politique*, not partisanship, but in terms of "Are you more on the left or on the right", are not so different from other journalists in other media. That's what our survey found ten years ago now.

The Chair: Thank you.

Because we went a little overboard on the first round, I made the questions about ten minutes each. So on this one, we're going to stick to five minutes. We have to be done as close to 10:30 as we can.

We'll go to Mr. Scarpaleggia.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia (Lac-Saint-Louis, Lib.): I want to continue along the same lines as Mr. Angus and Mr. Warkentin.

You sort of answered my question, Mr. Sauvageau. Some people, as Mr. Warkentin said earlier, truly believe that CBC/Radio-Canada leans to the left. Mr. Gilbert, you said that you do analyses and that you heard complaints when you were ombudsman. You heard complaints about this and you did audits. You didn't just analyze one particular clip, but a series of news stories.

Have you ever noted an excessive bent to the left, to the right or anything else?

● (1015)

Mr. Renaud Gilbert: During the 25 years that I spent at the French network, I was accused of being either a separatist or a federalist. I was the Radio-Canada Parliamentary Bureau Chief in Quebec City in 1980, and there was a referendum that year. I was also Director of the Réseau de l'information in 1995, when the referendum took place that year. So I was involved in considerable analysis of all of those issues.

When Christine Saint-Pierre spoke out after having decided to run for the Liberal Party, she reminded us that journalists do not often discuss their reciprocal or mutual positions among themselves. I must say that at Radio-Canada, there are probably people whose views reflect the views of society. What is important is keeping their views and preferences out of their reporting.

I spent a long time in management. During that time, we tried to avoid biased views from appearing, and if they appeared, we went to great lengths to correct them as quickly as possible. I am inclined to tell people who accuse the French Services at Radio-Canada of being separatist to watch TVA instead. TVA is a separate television network. Radio-Canada's French Services are in 18 cities in Canada.

My friend Florian said that a major difference between Radio-Canada and TVA is the fact that Radio-Canada provides a great deal of information on what is happening throughout the country, in all of the provinces. I clearly understand that that is not necessarily the role of private television, but I must add that TVA has only one correspondent outside Quebec.

When you analyze that, you realize that in terms of content, efforts are undertaken to reflect the country, period.

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: We often hear that given levels of advertising on private networks, private broadcasters are often more right-wing. Moreover, Lawrence Martin raised that yesterday in the *Globe & Mail*. Do you think that because of certain systematic or objective factors, private broadcasting will always be a little more to the right than Radio-Canada/CBC, which is in the centre? That seems logical to me, even if all journalists, according to your surveys, are working in good faith, if we use Noam Chomsky's argument.

[*English*]

The Chair: We need a very short answer, because we're at five minutes right now—very short.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Renaud Gilbert: There is another difference between Radio-Canada and private broadcasters. Radio-Canada broadcasts a much higher number of newsreports, current affairs programs and public affairs programs than private broadcasters do. That means that Radio-Canada investigates a series of topics that private broadcasters do not cover. In the private sector, current affairs programs are generally programs where individuals express their opinions.

I do not want to comment on all of those opinions, but it is clear that research makes it possible to delve more deeply into certain topics and to highlight aspects that would not come out in the context of an opinion-based program.

● (1020)

Mr. Florian Sauvageau: I would like to add a comment.

Surveys that we have conducted show a huge difference between Radio-Canada journalists and those on private radio and TV. The difference is not based on their political beliefs, but on how they perceive their jobs. There again, I think there is a link with advertising.

Radio-Canada journalists see their jobs as being much more closely linked to the idea of public service, whereas private radio and TV journalists have a much more commercial view of their jobs. They attach much more importance to ratings and to the need to attract a large viewing audience.

[*English*]

The Chair: We're having a hard time staying within our time limit.

Ms. Bourgeois.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Diane Bourgeois (Terrebonne—Blainville, BQ): Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Good morning gentlemen. This is rapid-fire questioning. Five minutes is not very long.

I am going to start with Mr. Renaud Gilbert.

If I understood correctly, in terms of dealing with complaints, you were a kind of second appeals level at Radio-Canada. When people were not satisfied with the way their complaint had been handled, the file was passed on to you. How is it that you had to deal with 1,500 complaints annually? Is it because Radio-Canada did not deal adequately with the complaints it received?

Mr. Renaud Gilbert: For starters, I want to clarify that there is also an ombudsman for English services. I did not say that at the outset.

I talked about 1,500 complaints. In general, one-third of them came from the public and did not concern the news service. Those complaints were sent on to the public relations services. For example, those kinds of complaints may be related to a change in the broadcasting schedule of a program or the fact that people cannot tune into Radio-Canada using their antenna. All kinds of problems exist.

As regards formal complaints, in any given year management receives about 250 complaints dealing with different topics. For example, during the leadership debate for the last federal elections, the English-language Services received 40,000 complaints linked to the fact that the leader of the Green Party did not participate in the debates. All of those cases dealt with the same complaint. There are approximately 275 areas of complaint. It is more or less the same on the English-language Services side. In general, a reply from management resolves most of the complaints. The ombudsman's role is to ensure that people receive a reply and that the reply is sent to them in a reasonable timeframe.

Ms. Diane Bourgeois: We have traveled to certain cities in Canada. At that time, francophones outside Quebec shared a large number of complaints with us. I would like to know if they frequently turned to your ombudsman service.

Mr. Renaud Gilbert: I have received complaints from people in Vancouver, Regina, Toronto and Moncton, and they dealt with radio.

Ms. Diane Bourgeois: But you did not receive any from people in Yellowknife, for example.

Mr. Renaud Gilbert: No.

Ms. Diane Bourgeois: You said that the percentage of programming for francophone communities outside Quebec was proportionally lower than their demographic weight. Given that assimilation is affecting these communities, would it not be helpful to give them preferential treatment and provide them with more services of journalists, in order to respect the famous equity principle you mentioned in your brief?

Mr. Renaud Gilbert: Your question would require a long answer.

Ms. Diane Bourgeois: Could you answer me in writing?

Mr. Renaud Gilbert: Yes.

Ms. Diane Bourgeois: I am sorry for going so fast.

Mr. Sauvageau, to implement this principle of distinction and specificity that you mentioned, could more local regional and educational programming enable CBC and Radio-Canada to distinguish themselves, innovate and perhaps offer this different approach?

● (1025)

Mr. Florian Sauvageau: I won't give you a straight answer: there needs to be a balance. Both of you talked about francophones outside Quebec. I realized 20 years ago—and listening to you, not much has changed since—that francophones outside Quebec had reason to complain about Radio-Canada. If you are in Vancouver, tuning into Radio-Canada is often surrealistic. There are two problems. There is a problem of balance between centralization and decentralization. It is the same thing in English and in French. There is also the specific problem of francophones outside Quebec, but we do not have time to talk about that, because I would have to elaborate on the issue. I could send you some information, if you want, on the specific problems of francophones outside Quebec. We must also avoid exaggerating the importance of local programming; a balance must be struck. All countries have an artistic centre that does TV, advertising and motion picture film production. That cannot be done in a wide and dispersed area.

Ms. Diane Bourgeois: There is another aspect, and I will conclude with that. In your brief, Mr. Sauvageau, you state that it would be premature to announce the imminent decline of TV. Could you send us a document on that? I find that important. People are tempted to go to cutting-edge media, to extrapolate and to stick to the flavour of the month to be “in”, but there are still people who only have ordinary television.

Mr. Florian Sauvageau: I can send you a study that our research centre has just completed and that shows that in terms of news, television continues to be very dominant. The share of the new media we are talking so much about—because the world of journalism is infatuated with new ideas, that is one of the negative aspects of journalism—is still very small in terms of news. I can also leave you a publication which...

[*English*]

Mr. Chairman, if you wish I can give you this publication we did with the World Radio and Television Council a few years ago, which has been translated by UNESCO into many languages. The title is *Public Broadcasting: Why? How?*

[*Translation*]

Ms. Diane Bourgeois: Thank you, gentlemen.

[*English*]

The Chair: Just on that point, if there are any written answers to come, send them to the clerk so they can be translated and sent to everyone on the committee. That would be great.

We'll go now to Mr. Brown for the final question.

Mr. Gord Brown (Leeds—Grenville, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I know time is short.

I want to thank our witnesses for coming. I found a lot of what was said today very interesting, especially some of the things about bias at the CBC. It's interesting to note that just a week or so ago, they admitted to a Photoshop-doctored photo about smokestacks. So that's interesting timing.

I know we've only got a couple of minutes, so I'd like to hear from both of you. We're doing this study, and we've heard from many witnesses. There are committee meetings going on across the country. What are the things both of you want to leave with us to have the most impact on our report, which we'll be doing in due course? When we think back about what both of you said, what are the two key points each of you wanted us to be left with?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Renaud Gilbert: Since I am answering first, spontaneously, I am going to be parochial. I believe that Radio-Canada's mission in terms of news is a mission that should prevail over all others. I say that because the quality of democratic life and a quality of life for every citizen depends on it. That is extremely important to my mind. Moreover, we must not hide the fact that the role of the ombudsman is that of a counterbalance. The ombudsman intervenes to establish guidelines and to ensure information is of high quality. In the end, it is a public service. If you put something in the act, it should be to facilitate the ombudsman's role. If I wanted to leave you with something, that is what I would leave you with.

● (1030)

[*English*]

Mr. Florian Sauvageau: I'm joking, but I'll give you a 30-second, made-for-television clip. Private television is linked to the market. Public television should be linked more and more to democracy. The way to link public television to democracy is through distinctiveness: the blue fish among the red ones.

Mr. Gord Brown: That's what we really see in other countries. Even in the province of Ontario we have TVO, which in my view does an excellent job of delivering shows with—

Mr. Florian Sauvageau: Yes, but the problem with TVO is the same as the problem with Télé-Québec: their audience is so small and the appeal is not broad enough. CBC should not be a kind of TVO or Télé-Québec. They should find another niche.

Mr. Gord Brown: What is that niche?

Mr. Florian Sauvageau: Ask them.

Mr. Gord Brown: We're the ones who are going to be writing a report to make some recommendations. That's why you're here.

Mr. Florian Sauvageau: I think you should emphasize how they could be different and perhaps give some examples.

Sports television, for example, has improved the quality of the French language in Quebec. The Radio-Canada announcers were so good that they found terms in French to describe hockey games. Before, we were using English terms. They made super descriptions of hockey games, which is not the case any more now that—

Mr. Gord Brown: Are you maybe talking about the spinorama? Do you remember that Serge Savard used to do the spinorama?

I thought maybe you were talking about that kind of hockey term.

Mr. Florian Sauvageau: This is a an example that also shows that public television doesn't have to be at all elitist.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

I have have one thing I need to have clarified. As we've travelled around I have asked a question about BBC. It keeps coming up. BBC, as you stated, has no advertising. I'm told it does have some advertising. Am I right that they do have some advertising, or do they not?

Mr. Florian Sauvageau: No. The BBC is attacked because they are involved in many commercial operations abroad, with all sorts of things, but the main network doesn't have advertising. Those who attack the BBC say that because they are involved in commercial operations with commercial networks and all sorts of things—but that's mainly abroad—they have developed a commercial philosophy that is undermining their public service philosophy. I assume that's the difference people are talking about.

The Chair: Okay. Thank you very much.

I thank you both for being great witnesses here this morning, and I thank you for your answers to the questions.

We'll recess for a couple of minutes and then we'll get to our committee business.

● _____ (Pause) _____ ●

● (1035)

The Chair: We have a notice of motion from Ms. Keeper:

> That pursuant to Standing Order 108(2), the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage review the appointment of Mr. Timothy Casgrain as Chair of the Board of the CBC-Radio Canada.

Would you like to speak on the motion, Ms. Keeper?

● (1040)

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

Given the fact that we're currently undertaking a CBC mandate review, I thought that this would be an extension of that. It's a good exercise for us to participate in, I think, in terms of the work we're currently doing.

The Chair: I've just been informed by the clerk that I'm to ask you to move your motion.

Ms. Tina Keeper: I move my motion.

The Chair: Now you can talk about it.

Ms. Tina Keeper: Thank you.

Do I have to restate it?

The Chair: No. Thank you.

Would anyone else like to speak to the motion?

Mr. Warkentin.

Mr. Chris Warkentin: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I certainly agree with the intent of the motion. I do believe that Mr. Casgrain should come to our committee and share with us. Obviously we want to review and ensure that we hear from him.

I'm wondering if I might make a friendly amendment to replace the Standing Order from 108 to Standing Order 110(1). I think that's a more traditional Standing Order for this type of intervention.

The Chair: That's a friendly amendment.

Mr. Angus.

Mr. Charlie Angus: I understand my colleague's interest in this. I think Standing Order 108 is fine. Right now Mr. Casgrain is just a nominee. Right now he's Joe Public. I think it's a good time to have him come, before he's been gazetted and made official. One of the principles of accountability we talked about regarding appointments is the ability of the committee to vet a person before they are appointed. We would be wanting to see Mr. Casgrain before he is made official, to allow us to ask some questions.

The Chair: I think Ms. Keeper did accept the friendly amendment.

Mr. Warkentin.

Mr. Chris Warkentin: I do share that point—and I understand that may have been the question—but my understanding is, having talked to the clerk, that the appointment is in effect as of the date that it was announced. I don't think the date he's effectively taken the job changes anything. My understanding is that once the announcement is made, then he is on the job, effectively. Is that understanding correct?

Can I ask the clerk whether once the announcement is made he is effectively on the job already? Is that correct?

Mr. Chad Mariage (Procedural Clerk): Marleau and Montpetit, Mr. Chair, states on page 875 that

> Appointments are effective on the day they are announced by the government, not on the date the certificates are published or tabled in the House.

Mr. Chris Warkentin: Basically what I'm asking is that we go through the traditional process. Seeing as that has already happened, that the announcement has already been made, I'm asking that we now go through the traditional practice of how we usually carry out these exercises.

The Chair: Okay. I'm going to have the clerk just explain what this does.

Mr. Chad Mariage: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

By proceeding under Standing Order 110(1), the committee must wait to receive the order of reference from the House, which we have not received at this point. Once the order of reference is received, the curriculum vitae is asked for by the clerk from the government and the committee will then have 30 sitting days to consider the appointment but would not be able to consider it until we receive the actual order of reference from the House. So that's the only difference between 108(2)and 110(1).

The Chair: Okay. We'll call the motion.

All those in favour of the motion as amended?

● (1045)

Ms. Tina Keeper: Mr. Chair, could we have a moment, please?

Could you go back to this issue of...? In terms of the formal procedures of accepting the friendly amendment, I didn't understand that this was a formal acceptance, and I haven't had clarification. What we want clarification on is the Standing Order 108(2).

Could you review that, please, again, so that we understand it, in terms of the process, very clearly?

The Chair: Mr. Clerk.

Mr. Chad Mariage: Standing Order 108(2) gives the committee a broad mandate to study anything under Canadian Heritage's portfolio. So it is a broader standing order, whereas Standing Order 110(1) is narrower in scope, in terms of the kinds of questions you can ask—

Ms. Tina Keeper: I'm sorry, that was my mistake.

Then the announcement, that piece you had spoken to, in terms of the announcement and what it means...?

Mr. Chad Mariage: I'll reread the excerpt from Marleau and Montpetit so you can get that. I'll read it from the beginning:

> The government is required to table in the House certified copies of all Order-in-Council appointments to non-judicial posts not later than five sitting days after they have been published in the *Canada Gazette*.

So that's the first part.

> Appointments are effective on the day they are announced by the government, not on the date the certificates are published or tabled in the House. The Standing Orders provide that the certified copies be automatically referred to the standing committee specified at the time....

That's on page 875.

Hon. Hedy Fry (Vancouver Centre, Lib.): I have a point of information.

Let us imagine that this committee reviews the appointment and after reviewing the appointment the committee believes that this person, for various reasons, is not appropriate. Is there a process by which that person is removed, asked to be removed, etc.?

Mr. Chad Mariage: Mr. Chair, I don't know if you recall the example on the environment in the last Parliament. The committee can report back to the House, saying that it disagrees with the nomination. But it's ultimately the Governor in Council's call. It's ultimately the government's appointment. The committee can provide a recommendation through a report to the House, but ultimately it's a government appointment.

The Chair: Mr. Angus.

Mr. Charlie Angus: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

It does speak to the issue that we are dealing with in our recommendations about the issue of governance and how appointments are made. So at this point I feel that we are dealing with the creature that has already been created, in terms of how appointments are called and our limited ability to impact.

I would suggest that we invite him to come and we hear what he has to say and then we can make recommendations out of that, as a committee, whether or not we feel that this.... We don't know anything about him, so at this point I would just prefer he has the opportunity to come and we can hear him speak.

The Chair: Mr. Warkentin.

Mr. Chris Warkentin: I'm in full agreement. Obviously the government made the appointment and certainly does want you to hear why we think he's qualified to do the job. The change that I was suggesting certainly wouldn't change as to if he'd come or not; it was simply if we would use the process that is the traditional process or if we would do something a little bit different.

I'm proposing the traditional process just because I think it's the one that we have traditionally used. If there's something I'm missing, it's not with an intent of not hearing from him.

The Chair: Mr. Scott.

Hon. Andy Scott (Fredericton, Lib.): I think perhaps the distinction is finer than whether he comes or not and whether we get to approve it or not. I don't know how I feel about it one way or the other, but I think it's important for the committee to be aware of the distinction between this being something that comes simply as a reference from the House because the rules send these appointments to us with a CV, and so on, or if we imagine in the future, in terms of the governance question that Charlie has mentioned, we would like to be a little more proactive on those things.

It may very well be that this is the occasion, at which time you say, "No, we want to do this under the authority of the committee, to do a review or a report, to do an inquiry," rather than "We're doing it because Parliament has sent us this appointment and a CV and asked us what we think of it."

I think is necessary to say on the record that there is a distinction, if I understand it correctly. So as a committee, we should decide, are we doing this as a *pro forma* thing because we always do, or are we doing this because we want to make a point that we think this is something that should be done, and as a committee we are proceeding in that way, particularly in face of the fact that some of these governance issues are going to be coming forward and I think we're going to have strong views on these things?

That's the point I'd like to make.

● (1050)

The Chair: Mr. Warkentin.

Mr. Chris Warkentin: Just for clarification, is it the intent of the motion, then, to bring forward a new study on this? Are we looking to write a report? From what was stated there, I'm just confused. Are you looking at doing an additional study to the one we're currently undertaking? My hope would be that we could hear from the appointee, make our decision in a single meeting, and then move on, to ensure that we can continue down the CBC mandate review.

From what I'm hearing, I'm not sure we're on the same page as each other on that issue. Are we, or am I getting something different?

The Chair: I'm informed that if we do it through a Standing Order 108, we will be starting a new study. It will be creating a new study.

Mr. Angus.

Mr. Charlie Angus: If I remember correctly, when Mr. Guy Fournier was announced, it was a "nomination pending review by committee". He was announced after the committee reported back to the House that it had approved the nomination. I think we should stick with the same procedure. So I think we have to stay with a Standing Order 108 at this point.

The Chair: I'm advised that it would be a new study under Standing Order 108(2). The scope is more broad.

I take direction on how you want to go. There has been a friendly amendment made. Is that friendly amendment accepted, or where do we go from here?

Ms. Tina Keeper: Mr. Chair, it is not accepted. I would like to stick with the original motion.

The Chair: Okay, then.

Mr. Warkentin.

Mr. Chris Warkentin: So that we have clarification, if we keep it as it was presented originally, are we effectively starting a new additional study?

The Chair: Mr. Clerk, would you answer, please?

Mr. Chad Mariage: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Under Standing Order 108(2), you would create a new study. A study doesn't necessarily mean that you have to have five, six, seven, or ten meetings on it. It could be one meeting, but you would be creating a new study to study this particular thing.

Mr. Chris Warkentin: Would we do this after the CBC mandate review?

Mr. Chad Mariage: That's entirely up to the committee. The only thing I should specify is that if you wait until after your study, chances are we'll be receiving the order in council papers, the order of reference, at which point the committee only has 30 sitting days, as Standing Order 110 automatically kicks in.

● (1055)

The Chair: Mr. Miller, I think you had your hand up first. Then we'll go to Mr. Angus.

Mr. Larry Miller (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Not having sat on this committee on a regular basis, I certainly haven't been dealing with this issue, but one thing that is very obvious and that bothers me is that it seems we're trying to come up with some new process, as opposed to a traditional way of handling things. If it's fair, through you, I'll ask the member what the reasoning is behind that.

Secondly, the mover of the motion initially agreed to a friendly amendment. I think your ruling on that.... Can you be in favour of something and change your mind more than once?

The Chair: We'll just hold on that, for a second.

Mr. Angus.

Mr. Charlie Angus: Thank you.

I think we're getting somewhat hung up on this. Under the Guy Fournier process it was clear: he appeared, we gave our recommendation, and at that time it was approved by committee. We accepted that this was a man the government had chosen and under the principles it worked. Then we reported and he was put forward.

If this is to be "a new study", well, it can be a one-day study, but I believe it is crucial to what we're discussing here. One of the key recommendations that would come out is on the future direction of governance. His position is one of the absolute, key pillars. If we do not take this in the midst of our existing study, we're losing a key opportunity.

I would suggest that as soon as possible we invite him here. We can hear his credentials and hear his vision for the CBC. It will also help us guide our future decisions, in terms of knowing where we need to go with our recommendations, which will be coming forward. A one-day study would be very helpful at this point.

The Chair: Thank you.

Ms. Keeper first.

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

I would like to clarify a couple of things. One is that I'm new to this process, and two, I don't feel that was a formal sort of questioning, and I was surprised that the chair would have done it. I don't think you should make a big deal out of it.

I think the reason has been stated: that we are in a CBC mandate review. It's important, I think, that we have the ability to move forward. This is an issue that has been raised by a number of our presenters. This is an enormous task that we have, particularly at this point in time, and if the committee would accept, then I think it would be wise for us to even interrupt the CBC study to do a one-day study, then do our report, and then continue with our CBC mandate.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Warkentin, make it very short, please.

Mr. Chris Warkentin: I'd like some clarification through you, Mr. Chair, from the clerk with regard to Mr. Fournier. I'm wondering whether Standing Order 108(2) has been used as a Standing Order for the approval of appointments before.

My understanding is that Mr. Fournier was approved through Standing Order 110(1). My issue is, I guess with regard to what standing order was used. I think we're effectively changing the Standing Orders if we don't defer to the one that's traditionally used for this.

The Chair: Let me say one thing. A friendly amendment has to be friendly, and right now it doesn't seem as if it's a friendly amendment.

Mr. Chris Warkentin: I understand that, but I just—

The Chair: If you want to make a formal amendment, we can do that and can vote on it. I do want to vote on this today.

Mr. Chris Warkentin: I'd be happy to make a formal amendment, then, to replace Standing Order 108(2) with Standing Order 108(1). That's not because I don't believe we need to—

The Chair: You mean Standing Order 110(1).

Mr. Chris Warkentin: That's right, yes.

The Chair: Okay. Is there any debate on the amendment?

Then we'll take the question on the amendment.

(Amendment negatived)

● (1100)

The Chair: We will now vote on the motion:

> That pursuant to Standing Order 108(2) the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage review the appointment of Mr. Timothy Casgrain as Chair of the Board of the CBC-Radio Canada.

All those in favour of the motion?

Mr. Chris Warkentin: Are we going to have the opportunity to debate this?

The Chair: The question's put. There's no more debate.

Mr. Chris Warkentin: A point of order, Mr. Chair. Earlier, Ms. Keeper asked that—

The Chair: The question was put.

Mr. Chris Warkentin: Mr. Chair, a point of order. We allowed Ms. Keeper to change her mind, and you changed your ruling on that. I just want some clarification here as to what, effectively, we're doing here.

I've asked the question with regard to Mr. Fournier, how he was appointed, as the committee's review of that, if it was using Standing Order 108(2) or Standing Order 110(1). I still haven't had clarification on this issue, and I'd like to—

The Chair: We can't have a point of order when the motion is put. The motion is put, and I'm taking the vote.

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: Seeing as it's 11 o'clock, we'll have to work on yours the next time, Mr. Kotto.

The meeting is adjourned.

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